Chapter 6: Another Cycle of Class Formation

6.1 Lasting Contradictions in Agrarian Society

The Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha emerged as an alternative platform for the Kisan. While it still kept its tie with the Congress in the first half of 1930s, the relationship gradually deteriorated as the Kisan Sabha took the radical course in its programme. A turning point for the Kisan Sabha has come in November 1935, when the third session of Bihar Provincial Kisan Conference was held at Hajipur and Sahajanand in his presidential address stated that zamindari system should be abolished. The address was later approved and published, and thereby became the first case in which the Kisan Sabha made a reference to the abolition of zamindari system. According to Sahajanand, he was confused with the ambivalent position of petty zamindars who were prevalent in this Hajipur tahsil. Nevertheless, he remembers, their injustice and evil character made him conclude that 'it is what is called zamindari that is evil. It does not deserve to exist'.

From 1936 onward, the atmosphere of meetings organized by the Kisan Sabha drastically changed and the attitude toward zamindars was far more confrontational (Table 6-1). 'Mahatma Gandhi Ki Jai', and chanting and recital of religious songs and poems were replaced by slogans as follows:

- Inqalab zindabad (long live revolution)
- Angrezi raj nash ho (demolish British Raj)
- punjabad nash ho (demolish capitalism)
- zamindari pratha nash ho (demolish Zamindari System)
- kisan raj kaem ho (may Kisan’s Rule be achieved)
- mazdoor raj kaem ho (may Labourer’s Rule be achieved) ... 2

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1 Swami Sahajanand, Merajeevan Sangharsh, p. 237.
2 Memo No. 1174 S. B., dated 24th Jan. 1940, forwarded from Deputy Inspector General of Police, C.I.D., Patna to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bihar, File No. 573 of 1939, Political (Special), GB, BSA.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Venue (Audience)</th>
<th>Major Speaker</th>
<th>Contents of speech, Resolution</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6/1/1939</td>
<td>2:30-5PM</td>
<td>Jagdishpur Tola, near Reora, p.s. Waralisanganj, Gaya (150)</td>
<td>Sahajanand</td>
<td>Sahajanand: About dispute between Kori tenants and zamindars’ labourers, rajwars. Persistence of non-violence. Not to leave the land in any case. Tenants have the right to self-defence (especially against attack on women).</td>
<td></td>
<td>28(A)/1939, PS, BSA</td>
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<tr>
<td>12/1/1939</td>
<td>3-5PM</td>
<td>Pajna, p.s. Mokameh, Patna (1,000)</td>
<td>Kant Prasad Singh, Gajadhar Mahto, Ramkishun Sharma, Karjanand Sharma, and Siyaran Singh</td>
<td>K. P. Singh: Zamindar system and capitalism is the cause of poverty. The British Govt., capitalists, and zamindars should be overthrown. Present Bihar Govt. consists of the rich. Karjanand Sharma: Criticism against casteism and the Congressmen of the local zamindars. Recovery of bakasht lands. Abolition of zamindari system.</td>
<td></td>
<td>28(A)/1939, PS, BSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/1/1939</td>
<td>2:22-3:45PM</td>
<td>Roh, p.s. Govindpur, Gaya (2,000)</td>
<td>Mahant Bhagwat Das, Pt. Dwarka Dutt, and Sahajanand.</td>
<td>Mahant Bhagwat Das: Criticism against zamindars and police. Fulfillment of Panchayati Raj. Sahajanand: Kisan should have courage and solidarity to oppose to unlawful zamindars, and reject illegal cesses. Non-violence. Donation to AIKS.</td>
<td></td>
<td>28(A)/1939, PS, BSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/1/1939</td>
<td>5-6PM</td>
<td>Kawakol, Gaya (1,500)</td>
<td>Ambica Ram and Sahajanand</td>
<td>Ambica Ram: Criticism against local zamindars and the police. Sahajanand: Kisan should have courage. Govt. should take action against oppressive zamindars.</td>
<td>a song in the local dialect was sung by a boy, ‘zamindari system could not be allowed to exist’</td>
<td>28(A)/1939, PS, BSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27/1/1939</td>
<td>12:10-12:45PM</td>
<td>Sherdilla, p.s. Rajauli, Gaya (1,000)</td>
<td>Anant Singh, B. Mathura Singh, and Sahajanand</td>
<td>Anant Singh, B. Mathura Singh, and Sahajanand: Instructions in case zamindars refuse to divide crops harvested. Talk about peasants in the Russian Revolution and Bakasht struggle. Promotion of joining the Kisan Sabha.</td>
<td>Sahajanand joined just 15 min due to busy.</td>
<td>28(A)/1939, PS, BSA</td>
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<tr>
<td>27/1/1939</td>
<td>4:15-5:18PM</td>
<td>Misari, p.s. Fatehpur, Gaya (500)</td>
<td>Sahajanand</td>
<td>Sahajanand: Criticism against Govt. and zamindars. Kisans should not rely on even God. Kisans’ grievances could be removed only when the British Govt. and zamindari system is overthrown.</td>
<td>Sahajanand gave up to go back to Patna for a meeting next day.</td>
<td>28(A)/1939, PS, BSA</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/2/1939</td>
<td>4:40-5:06PM</td>
<td>Khizirsarai, Gaya (200)</td>
<td>Sahajanand</td>
<td>Sahajanand: Solidarity among kisans will bring the end of British rule and zamindari system. The solidarity should be made irrespective of caste and belief. Social boycott against zamindars and their amlas. Ask for Hindus’ generosity toward the sacrifice of cow on the day of Bakr-Ah.</td>
<td>1/3 of participants were children.</td>
<td>28(A)/1939, PS, BSA</td>
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<tr>
<td>19/2/1939</td>
<td>3:30-5PM</td>
<td>Bataurha, p.s. Sarnera, Patna (near the boarder of Patna, Gaya, Monghyr) (3,000)</td>
<td>Karjanand Sharma, Sahajanand, Babu Shyam Nandan Singh, and Awadhesh Prasad Singh</td>
<td>Karjanand Sharma, Sahajanand, Babu Shyam Nandan Singh, and Awadhesh Prasad Singh: praised women’s participation in the struggle. Criticism against the Police and Congress ministry regarding the Barhiya Tal issue. Solidarity between Bhumihar and lowcastes in Barhiya Tal. Agricultural Labourers should join the struggle. Babu Shyam Nandan Singh: zamindars’ amla and Bhumihars should join the struggle. Resolution: Continue of satyagraha in Barhiya Tal.</td>
<td>zamindars conducted counter-demonstration at the opposite river bank.</td>
<td>28(A)/1939, PS, BSA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Venue (Audience)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/11/1939</td>
<td>11:30-11:35AM</td>
<td>Bankebazar, p.s. Sherghati, Gaya (100)</td>
<td>Sahajanand</td>
<td>Sahajanand: Chanting of mantra and establishing Hindu temple or mosque would not redress the grievances of kisans. Agricultural product and land belong to kisans. Kisans should have organization and panchayat irrespective of caste and religion.</td>
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<td>573/1939, PS, BSA</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/11/1939</td>
<td>3-3:30PM</td>
<td>Maighra, p.s. Dumaria, Gaya (300)</td>
<td>Jaglal Mahato and Sahajanand</td>
<td>Jaglal Mahato: Criticism against the oppression by local zamindar (Ram Bhajan Singh) and his amlas. Sahajanand: Criticism against Ram Bhajan Singh and the Govt. 'To hungry men temples and mosques were of no value.' Support for the non-cooperation policy of the Congress toward the W.W. II.</td>
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<td>573/1939, PS, BSA</td>
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<tr>
<td>1/11/1939</td>
<td>6:30-7:35PM</td>
<td>Raniganj, p.s. Immanganj, Gaya (500)</td>
<td>Sahajanand</td>
<td>Sahajanand: Some Capitalists of the Congressmen were exploiting kisans. Support for the non-cooperation policy of the Congress toward the W.W. II.</td>
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<td>573/1939, PS, BSA</td>
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<tr>
<td>21/12/1939</td>
<td>3:30-4:30PM</td>
<td>Neamatpur Ashram, p.s. Belaganj, Gaya (400)</td>
<td>Rambhajan Dutt and Sahajanand</td>
<td>Rambhajan Dutt: 'the awakening among the kisans was growing less.' Sahajanand: The stagnation of movement is due to carelessness of some kisans. The struggle would not stop unless grievances of kisans are removed. Gandhi is like 'a beggar who was cherishing his hopes to be fulfilled in imagination.' Call for mass demonstration at Gaya to protest against the imprisonment of Jadunanadan Sharma. Support for the mill-workers' strike.</td>
<td></td>
<td>573/1939, PS, BSA</td>
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<tr>
<td>22/12/1939</td>
<td>2-2:35PM</td>
<td>Kurtha p. s., Gaya (300 or 400)</td>
<td>Sahajanand</td>
<td>Sahajanand: Zamindars' oppression is awakening kisans, and who could bring about a revolution. Only the revolution can overcome this difficulty. Social boycott against kisans who sided with zamindars. Do not accept the danabandi system offered by Tikari.</td>
<td></td>
<td>573/1939, PS, BSA</td>
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<tr>
<td>22/12/1939</td>
<td>3-5:45PM</td>
<td>Madhusarma, p. s. Arwal, Gaya (1,000)</td>
<td>Sahajanand</td>
<td>Sahajanand: Take and eat the crop of zamindars who do not allow to harvest. Call for 'Kisan Day' on coming 26th Jan. Solidarity beyond the differences of caste and religion.</td>
<td></td>
<td>573/1939, PS, BSA</td>
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<tr>
<td>23/12/1939</td>
<td>3-3:30PM</td>
<td>Chapra, p.s. Rajauli, Gaya (300)</td>
<td>Sahajanand</td>
<td>Sahajanand: about dispute between Bhumihar zamindar and his tenants. Lands belong to cultivators, who have right to take the product. Kisans and labourers should get united irrespective of</td>
<td></td>
<td>573/1939, PS, BSA</td>
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<tr>
<td>23/12/1939</td>
<td>5-5:45PM</td>
<td>Oobindupr, Gaya (400)</td>
<td>Sahajanand</td>
<td>Sahajanand: Criticism against a local zamindar whose crops were still standing.</td>
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<td>573/1939, PS, BSA</td>
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<tr>
<td>24/12/1939</td>
<td>3-4PM</td>
<td>Warisaliganj, Gaya. (800)</td>
<td>Dr. Radha Krishan and Sahajanand</td>
<td>Sahajanand: Disappointment at the stagnation of the Kisan Sabha Movement. Criticism against zamindar of Reora and the Govt. Kisans were ready for the revolution. Kisans should take their shares by means of law.</td>
<td></td>
<td>573/1939.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4:30-5:30PM</td>
<td>Nawadah Bazar (400, mostly men)</td>
<td>Sahajanand</td>
<td>Sahajanand: Criticism against the zamindar of Reora. It was essential for Hindus and Muslims to get united in order to fight against zamindars.</td>
<td></td>
<td>573/1939.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/1/1940</td>
<td>4:30-5:30PM</td>
<td>Pahari Bigha, p.s. Jahanabad, Gaya</td>
<td>Sahajanand</td>
<td>Sahajanand: Criticism against Gandhi who took moderate way. First remove zamindari system, then the independence should be achieved</td>
<td>On the arrival of Sahajanand, loud shouts of radical slogans, 'Ingilab zindabad', 'kisan raj', 'mazdoor raj'</td>
<td>573/1939.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-23/6/1940</td>
<td>Tangrail, p.s. Naubatpur, Patna (800)</td>
<td>Dutt Muzamdar, Ram Prasad Singh, Abul Hayat Chand, Sri Ram Yagya Singh, Pt. Dharanand Sharma, and Jadunandan Sharma</td>
<td>Dutt Muzamdar: Sahajanand and Subhas Bose are the representative of the revolutionary kisans. Kisans and mazdoor should think of the independence and revolution. Creation of difference in castes and religions should be avoided. Follow the resolution of AIKS at Palasa. Revise the price of sugarcane in accordance with rise in price. Govt. should resolve the bakasht problem. Govt. should offer relief for kisans who suffered from heilstone. Panchayat should be established in all villages. Jadunandan Sharma: Kisan Sabhas opposed to Hitler but kisans are not ready to help the British Govt. Arrest of Kisan leaders by the District Kisan Conference co-sponsored by the Forward Block.</td>
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<td>307/1940.</td>
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This radical turn was caused by unsolved and further deepening agrarian problems which had originated from the Depression. BPKS soon after the reactivation had paid more attentions to the desperate conditions of kisans especially in south Bihar. When a meeting of Provincial Kisan Conference was held at Patna in June 1933, it was decided to form an inquiry committee on the condition of kisans of Gaya district. The committee consisted of Sahajanand, Yamna Karjee, Jadunandan Sharma, Yugal Kishore Singh, and Babu Badrinarayan conducted the enquiry in July 1933 and visited several villages in Gaya district such as Dhanganwa, Muhammadpur, Majhiyawan, Bhor, Pursawa, Paraiya, and Fathpur. A Hindi report written by Sahajanand with a title, Gaya zila ke kisanon ki karun kahani (the pitiable story of the kisans of Gaya district), was published next year.3

The report first indicated as general situation that rent receipts were not granted to tenants by zamindars. The section 58 of Bihar Tenancy Act enabled tenants to institute a suit against landlords who did not deliver rent receipt. By the suit, the tenants could legally 'recover from him such penalty, not exceeding double the amount of value of that rent...'4 But in practice most of tenants could not afford to institute a suit because regular suit cost too much. In the same manner, the Section 75 also did not prevent landlords from collecting excessive amount of rent or any other kinds of exaction despite it enable tenants to institute a suit against those landlords.

Variety of illegal cesses and harassments by zamindars were also mentioned in the report. Tenants of Tekari Raj had to pay *salam* at the beginning of collection season. They were also obliged to give contributions in occasions of several religious and social

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ceremonies held at the house of the landlord. The bakasht lands of the zamindars were cultivated by begars of low-caste tenants before they cultivated their own holdings. The low paid amlas of zamindars made good business at the times of first ploughing, transplantation, harvesting, and appraisement. Among those oppressed tenants, the report pointed out, tenants cultivating bhaoli lands were being in the worst condition. They could not cut the crop of their lands without assessment of product, danabandi. If the danabandi was not done in time, the delay of harvesting caused damage in their crop.

Problems caused by the commutation of rent were also mentioned. Rent commutation had been done intensively in the period between 1920 and 1929. Those tenants whose rent was commuted by private arrangement were now facing difficulty to pay the too much high rent. On the other hand, rents commuted by court in the early years were said to be still payable. In connection with the commutation, the report alleged that zamindars came to neglect the maintenance of irrigation system after the commutation. This was especially the case with estates of petty landlords. The fixed cash income irrespective of crop situation made those landlords reluctant to commit themselves to the management of irrigation system. There were also complaints of canal rate being too high and the staffs being corrupted. 

Many officers of the authority were compelled to admit, though not all, what Sahajanand pointed out in the report. A. P. Middleton, then the Commissioner of Patna Division, was, by and large, critical of the allegations in the Sahajanand's report. However, he admits 'the law seems to help the Zamindar as against the raiyat . . . . A raiyat who complains that he has paid his rent but not got a receipt is generally unable

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prove that he has paid his rent.⁶ In reply to Middleton, R. E. Russell, then Chief Secretary to the Government of Bihar said 'no action is necessary'.⁷

As was discussed previously, both provincial governments of Bihar and UP regarded the slump in prices of agricultural product caused by the Depression as temporary matter and, therefore, thought that it would not affect overall revenue and rent assessment and the collection. It was not until 1937 when the first Congress ministry in Bihar finally took some actions against the lasting and growing contradictions in the agrarian society. The ministry decided 'that action should be taken under section 112, Bihar Tenancy Act, to reduce the rentals of the occupancy tenants of certain areas in the interest of local welfare'. This kind of emergency use of the section was the first time.⁸

This emergency settlement operation dealt with five categories of occupancy raiyats,

(1) whose rents were fixed by commutation under section 40, Bihar Tenancy Act; (2) whose rents were fixed by private commutation; (3) whose rents were enhanced under section 30 (b), Bihar Tenancy Act; (4) whose rents were privately or illegally enhanced; (5) whose rents were fixed in new settlement. The operation was applicable only to those rents of above five classes which had been commuted, enhanced, and settled during the period from January 1915 to December 1933. In addition, the area was also limited to 11 subdivisions: Patna Sadr, Dinapore, Barh and Bihar subdivisions of Patna district; Gaya Sadr, Jahanabad, and Aurangabad subdivisions of Gaya district; Arrah and Sasaram subdivisions of Shahabad district; Sadr and Jamui subdivision of

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⁶ D. O. No. 278-C, from A. P. Middleton, the Commissioner of Patna Division, to Russell, dated 10th Nov. 1934, File No. 163 of 1934, Political (Special), GBO, BSA. For other comments of justifying Sahajanad's allegations by other officers, refer to Das, op. cit., pp. 123-4.
⁷ D. O. No. 5218-C, from Russell to Middleton, dated 16th Nov., 1934, File No. 163 of 1934, Political (Special), GBO, BSA.
Monghyr district. Although the overall reduction in rent came to 24.6%, it was only in May 1940 that the operation completed. Due to the delay, the emergency settlement could not provide tenants with timely relief.9

But the report which was published in 1943 almost took the same line of Sahajanand’s report and gives us enough evidences to prove that the deplorable condition of tenants in south Bihar remained intact even in the latter half of 1930s. In all the subdivisions under this operation, it was reported that rents fixed by commutation by court or private agreements in 1915-1933 was excessively high in comparison with cash rent paid at the time of the preparation of the last settlement operation. The cause was first attributed to the mismanagement of commutation officers, who ignored prevailing rate or old cash rate as reference and calculated the rate simply based on the estimate of harvest. Secondly it was also pointed out that incidence of old cash rates recorded in last survey and settlement operations themselves were high. The report says it was because the produce rent system prevailing in south Bihar had the effect of pushing up the scale of cash rent. Zamindars who took their rent in kind were usually responsible for the investment in and maintenance of facilities for agricultural production and, hence, prone to shift the cost onto tenants. For example in Patna district, landlords used a threat of neglecting irrigations facility to make their tenants agree to the enhanced rents.10

But more significant problem was the difference between the recorded rent and the rent actually paid. The large number of cases were reported, where landlords continued to realize illegal abwabs and forced their tenants to accept the rate of rent much higher than recorded rent with threatening of rent suits for fictitious arrears of

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9 Ibid., p. 2-5. Later application of the section was extended to subdivisions of Buxar and Bhabhua of Shahabad district, and Begusarai subdivision of Monghyr district.
10 Ibid., pp. 41-8.
rent. There were also widespread attempts on the side of landlords to institute rent suits. In most of those cases, decisions by the civil court were made in favour of landlords without complete investigation into the facts. Since landlords as usual did not grant rent receipts to their tenants, tenants could not prove their allegation in courts.\(^\text{11}\)

The report rejects to accept the well-known argument that as a result of commutation landlords has lost incentive to maintain means of irrigation by their own because amount of harvest did not affect the fixed rate of cash rent. But it admits the fact that there were many cases of landlords' negligence in some subdivisions of south Bihar.\(^\text{12}\)

The tenants in UP was in a similar situation to the counterpart of Bihar. A report published by the UP Congress Committee reveals tenants in the province too had not recovered from the Depression and indeed the desperate situation was increasingly intensified. In terms of legal condition, there was steady increase of non-occupancy tenants and decrease in occupancy tenants. The report says the trend was created by the Agra Tenancy Act of 1926 applied to the province except Oudh. The Act 'deprived the peasants of their prescriptive right of becoming occupancy tenants after 12 years of continuous cultivation and, instead, empowered the Zamindars to confer these rights at their own discretion'.\(^\text{13}\) Receipts were not given to tenants as a matter of fact to conceal the rent actually paid. Given the legal condition in Oudh where most of tenants could enjoy only the status of 'statutory tenants' under the far more powerful taluqdars and zamindars, the province as a whole also 'need complete overhauling' of tenancy

\(^{11}\) Ibid, p. 54.  
\(^{12}\) Ibid, pp. 39-42.  
laws.\textsuperscript{14}

In addition to the unfavourable legal condition and natural condition of population pressure which was increasing, the report pointed out illegal exactions still continued to be taken by landlords. One of the most common methods was \textit{nazaran\(\)a} as it had been. In Pratapgarh district, \textit{nazaran\(\)a} comparable to nearly 20 per cent of the total rent was said to be realized. In Lucknow, it was reported, 'for a bigha of land whose rent was Rs. 10/- the Zamindar takes Rs. 10/- as Nazarana, and the Karinda and Patwari get one rupee each'.\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Hari} and \textit{bega} were also observed 'almost all over the province'. To meet the former obligation, every tenant had to spend at least one day in a season at the land of their zamindars. For the latter, they were forced to provide labour force to zamindars for carrying load, building houses, tiling roofs etc. at free of charge or at a nominal payment. As we have already seen in the Mehta’s report of 16 years ago, this Congress report also mentions compulsory provision of commodities such as \textit{ghee}, oil, milk, and \textit{gur} at special events as well as donations when zamindar purchased elephants and motor-cars.\textsuperscript{16}

\section*{6.2 Bakasht Struggle: Radicalization of Kisan Sabha Movement}

The situation discussed above changed the stance of BPKS toward zamindars from conciliation to confrontation. However, the radicalization was reflected not so much in the actual demands of peasants as in the form of struggle. From 1936 onward, BPKS launched a new form of struggle throughout the province of Bihar. The distressed condition of tenants created a large amount of rent arrears, and on the ground of which zamindars could evict their tenants. Such ‘recovered’ lands which were ostensibly

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 53.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 64-7.
recorded as lands for zamindars' own cultivation or personal use were called *bakasht* land. In fact, many *bakasht* lands were rented out to non-occupancy tenants at higher rent. It is re-recovering of this *bakasht* land that the new form of agitation waged by Kisan Sabha aimed at. The agitation was generally called Bakasht struggle.

The Gaya district got a head start on the change. Despite much attention having been paid by BPKS, it had not conducted any radical movement to overcome the plight of Kisan fundamentally up to the mid-1930s. The activity of BPKS remained to be moderate tactics such as petitioning the Congress or district and provincial authorities for intervention. After the reactivation of the BPKS in 1933, the leaders such as Sahajanand, Jadunandan Sharam, and Jugal Kishore was repeatedly visited villages in dispute with landlords, hold meetings, and called for Kisan to collect in thousands to lay their grievances before the District Magistrate and demand remission of rents.\(^{17}\)

In the Tekari Raj, the biggest estate of the district, a moderate organization, Tekari Raj Parja Sammelan, had been existed and functioning as a conciliatory body between the Raja and kisans. But the organization reached a turning point in 1935 when a debate was going on over the strategy to redress the existing condition of kisans. In a meeting held at Tekari on 14th July 1935, the attendants considered two options to take 'either they should form a committee and approach the Raja Bahadur for the redress of their grievances or they should organise themselves'. One party consisting of Anugrah Narain Singh, Bhawani Dutta Missir, and Jamuna Prasad Singh insisted on taking the former strategy with saying the Raja's 'prosperity entirely depended upon the zemindars'. Anugrah also said that 'he was sure the Raja Bahadur was bound to hear their united voice. . . If Raja Bahadur would fail to do anything in

\(^{17}\) A report from a Inspector, S. B., C. I. D., Camp Jahanabad, dated 17th June 1935, File No. 16 II of 1935, Political (Special), GBO, BSA.
the matter God above will help the tenants'. On the other side, Jadunandan Sharma opposed to the formation of enquiry committee and contended that 'the tenants had equal rights over the land and the only way by which they would be able to achieve success was "satyagrah". At the end of the meeting, a conciliatory resolution was passed. But when the resolution said that 'Tikori Raj Parja Samelan should be under the Provincial Kisan Sabha', the future course of Kisan movement in Gaya was determined.¹⁸

Thus, kisans in Gaya set the condition to start Bakasht struggle to create a model followed by other Bakasht struggles which lately appeared all over the Bihar. In fact, Bakasht struggle-like Kisan activites for the first time appeared in Tekari Raj and the neighbouring estates much earlier than the BPKS officially launched it. As we have already seen, Gaya district saw in the period of the Civil Disobedience Movement a lot of peasant activities which went further to no-rent campaign beyond the Congress official policy. Such situation continued even after the Civil Disobedience Movement and another development emerged. Landlords, as opposed to the non-payment of rent by tenants, sought the help of the civil court and obtain rent decrees so that they could obtain khas possession (possession of land for personal utility). Tenants aggressively reacted to this.

In the Jahanabad subdivision of Gaya district, land disputes occurred in several villages such as Manjhiawan in Kurtha P. S., Inderpore in Makhdumpur P. S., Dhangawan and Joga Bigha in Jahanabad P. S., all of which were owned by Tekari Raj, and Mali Mahal situated in Arwal P. S. Tenants of these villages were in difficulty due to the Depression as well as commuted cash rents. A report of the Subdivisional Officer

¹⁸ Extract from the confidential diary of the Superintendent of Police, Gaya, dated the 16th July, 1935, File No. 16 II of 1935, Political (Special), GBO, BSA.
said 'the produce and rental being almost same'. At the same time, commutation into cash rent has also made landlords indifferent to the village irrigation schemes such as ahar and other types of water reservoir and channel. These tenants were allegedly under the influence of Kisan Sabha and local Congress workers. For example, village Manjhiawan had been 'the recruiting place for Congress volunteers and workers during the non-cooperation period of 1930'. Agitation in the village was further intensified under the initiative of resident leader, Jadunandan Sharma. A Sub-Inspector of Police said that they had been withholding their rents for last 3 or 4 years and because of that Tekari Raj had sued these tenants for the arrear and then purchased the land of the tenants in rent decrees. Those lands have now become landlords' bakasht lands. An incident happened at Majhiawan in the beginning of March 1934, where raiyats were reported to have assaulted the patwari of the malik.

Another Sub-Inspector of Police refuted the allegation by Pratap, a Hindi weekly from Kanpur, of landlords' oppressing tenants and insisted that tenants were rather 'aggressors'. In Mali Mahal which consisted of 9 villages, according to the Sub-Inspector, a group of tenants, Sham Narain Singh, Kharagdhari Singh, Gohand Lachmi Singh and others in collective manner tried to interfere with the possession of bakasht land by zamindars. In village Mali, landlord, Ramdeo Singh, had purchased the land of Janki Mahto and others in execution of rent decree more than ten years ago. The group of tenants attempted to 'disturb the peaceful possession of the malik'. In village Kurmi Bigha, a landlord, Ramchander Singh purchased the lands of his tenants, Ramdin Kandu and others in execution of rent decree. But again the group allegedly

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19 D. O. No. 1482, Khan Saheb Chaudhry Muhammad Nazer Alam, Subdivisional Officer, Jahanabad, to the Collector of Gaya dated 15th Sep. 1934; a report of R. N. Pandey, Sub Inspector of Kurtha P. S., dated 3rd Sep. 1934, both in File No. 10 of 1934, Political (Special), GBO, BSA.
20 A report by R. N. Pandey, Sub-Inspector, Kurtha P. S., dated 3. 9. 1934, File No. 10 of 1934, Political (Special), GBO, BSA.
drove landlord’s men, who came to plough, out of the land. The Sub Inspector of Police, Arwal, filed a criminal case allegedly for their having attempted to take forcible possession of the land. In village Mangabigha, tenants, Bishoon Ahir, Nnhoo Ahir and Gopi Mahto, whose holdings were purchased by their maliks in execution of rent decree, allegedly have taken possession of those lands forcibly.21

These radical forms of struggle appeared more intensively and widely in the end of 1930s. Reora, a village in Nawada subdivision owned by a zamindar Rameshwar Prasad Singh, became one of the most important stages of Bakasht struggle in Gaya. The struggle here took a very aggressive course under the leadership of Jadunandan Sharma. In the end of 1938, an attempt of settlement between tenants and the zamindar over the dispute of bakasht land failed and satyagraha started. Kisans repeatedly made ‘illegal trespass’ into lands which they had lost and which had been purchased by the zamindar. Kisans cut the standing crops and took up plough to cultivate those fields. Police armed with guns resorted to grab kisans’ ploughs. After the arrest of Jadunandan Sharma, Sahajanand and Jayaprakash Narayan came to succeed the initiative on behalf of BPKS and a camp was pitched for satyagrahis. Facing the persistent satyagraha, the zamindar had to compromise to some extent. In the end, both side of kisans and zamindar reached a settlement by the arbitration of district authority. While most of kisans were admitted their occupancy right while zamindar’s occupancy right was also admitted for 1,500 bighas of land out of total 15,000 bighas which was in dispute.22

The Kisan Sabha waged another type of struggle against a capitalist, Dalmia Sugar Mill in Bihta. The factory was established in 1932 and Sahajanand provided some help

21 A report by Illyas, Sub Inspector of Arwal P. S., dated 1st Sep. 1934, File No. 10 of 1934, Political (Special), GBO, BSA.
22 Sahajanand, Mera Jiwan Sangarsh, pp. 276-8; Sho Kuwajima, Sakshathar · Bihar ke Kisan Beta Pandit Jadunandan Sharma se Batchet, Patna, 1996, pp. 29-34. (translated into English).
in its initial years. But the factory started the exploitation of cane producers by purchasing their cane at much cheaper rate than that of British factory and the government rate. There were also low-paid labourers in the factory. Sahajanand tried to improve the condition by requesting the company and establishing a suppliers association to fix the price at higher rate. When those efforts were turned out to be in vein, Sahajanand and the Kisan Sabha launched a campaign. They called three strikes respectively in January 1936, January 1938, and the winter of 1938-9. The first strike was waged only by cane producers who refused to sell their cane to the factory. The second one was only by the labourers seeking for higher wage. The third one was a concerted struggle based on the alliance between cane producers and the labourers.

In a village of Saran district, Amwari, another historic Bakasht struggle was fought under the leadership of Rahul Sankrityayan. The entire village of 2,000 bighas were under the possession of or held by notorious zamindar Chandreshwar Singh, who, with his father Nanda Kumar Singh, accumulated those lands allegedly by variety of unjust activities with the support of local authority. Kisans of the village were suffering from begar and abwabs provided to the zamindas and natural calamities such as annual floods and earthquake in 1934. The zamindar did his best so that no tenants could get any legal right of occupancy and they remained to be only sharecroppers. In the end of February 1939, tenants under the instruction of Sankrityayan launched satyagraha of harvesting sugarcane standing in the land of zamindar. Chandreshwar Singh beforehand had called up his caste fellows from neighbouring villages with saying that the Kurmis were spoiling the dignity of the Rajputs and therefore the men must respond to the caste outcry for help. Those who assembled to support the zamindar were armed with lathis. They were reinforced by zamindar's two elephants. Although most of cultivators belonged to Kurmi, zamindar's such outcry originating from
casteism was unfruitful and many kisans including Muslims joined the *satyagraha*.\(^{23}\)

The common feature appeared in these Bakasht struggles is strong presence of and central role taken by tenants of cultivating castes such as Ahirs and Kurmis who were in the ‘middle’ of the caste hierarchy. But they, with tenants of other castes, behaved as a class of Kisan into which many sections of cultivators were encapsulated.

6.3 Bakasht Struggle in Barhiya Tal: Pressures from Below

Barhiya Tal in Monghyr district also became a place of major Bakasht struggle and marked the climax in the series of Bakasht struggles launched by BPKS. However, more significantly, it was to show fragile aspect of this newly formed class, or united front, of Kisan. The longest Bakasht struggle lasted from June 1936 to the mid-1939. This area of about 100 sq. miles lying west of the main line of the Eastern Indian Railway stretched in Lakhisarai and Sheikhpura P. S. of the district. A dozen of villages existed in the Tal area. The tract was subject to yearly inundation of the Ganges and its tributaries and it remained under the water throughout monsoon season. But thanks to the fluvial action and the deposit of silt, the rich soil made the agricultural production in the area easier. Cultivators engaged in the simple process of scattering seeds and reaping *rabi* crops which was the only harvest of this tract.\(^{24}\)

In the most of plots held by landlords or privileged tenure holders, *kastkars*, tenants had enjoyed occupancy rights. However, those tenants gradually had lost such secure holdings on account of default of rent or ‘machination’ of some landlords and *mahajans*. But till the trouble occurred over *bakasht* lands, landlords ‘used to settle some portion of their *bakasht* lands with the tenants in lieu of *begar* and other


\(^{24}\) A report on Bharhiya Tal by Sadr Subdivisional Officer, Radha Raman Ghosh dated 1st June 1939, File No.29 (II) of 1939, Political (Special), GB, BSA (hereafter Ghosh report), pp. 1-2.
supplies for cultivation such as ploughs, bullocks, and cowdung cakes. In the middle of 1936, a Congress-cum-Kisan worker, Karyanand Sharma, started his tour with lecturing to the kisans in the areas of Sheikhpura and Lakhisarai P. S. He questioned the begar and abwabs imposed by their landlords. His activities seem to have caused aggressive reaction from the side of kisans. Several cases of uprooting crops in zamindars' bakasht lands were reported in the harvest season of 1936. In the District Kisan Conference held in February 1937 at Sheikhpura, he allegedly instigated kisans to take forcible possession of those bakasht lands. In reaction to his call, more serious cases of looting by tenants occurred in March 1937 and some 60 or 70 kisans and Karyanand were arrested.

After the incidents, an inquiry and attempts for arbitration were made by Rajendra Prasad and other provincial and local Congress leaders. Both landlords and tenants reached a compromise called 'Rajendra Babu's award.' By this compromise, kisans and Karyanand who were in police custody were released and it was determined that 'the zamindars must settle at least that much area of their Bakast [sic] lands with the Tal tenants which they used to settle with them before the agitation of 1936'. No major trouble happened after the compromise till the harvest season of 1937-8.

Before the sowing season of 1938, Karyanand revived his activity and distributed his handbills. This time, his effort was concentrated on Tal area and the campaign got more organized than before. Red-shirt volunteers were raised from amongst kisans and they were trained in drill with lathi. Their satyagraha commenced with the sowing season. Some bakasht lands were forcibly cultivated by the volunteers and in such lands zamindars' men were not allowed to plough. Men, women, and children also
I've joined the satyagraha. In the meantime, Karyanand's propaganda got increasingly radicalized. On 31st of December 1938, a large meeting was held in Barhiya Tal attended by about 1,500 kisans. Karyanand gave a lengthy speech in which the satyagraha in Barhiya Tal was compared to the Russian and French Revolutions. He advised the kisans to prepare a 'list of kisans who were ready to die and to go to jail'.

In another meeting held two weeks later at Mokameh P. S. of Patna district, just north of Barhiya Tal, Karyanand stated, 'the Kisan Sabha would ruin the zamindari system'.

But such observations in some official reports that real 'aggressor' was not landlords but kisans was not appropriate description of the Bakasht struggle in Barhiya Tal. It seems that the kisans of Barhiya Tal not necessarily waged one-sided 'aggression.' In fact, zamindars and the authority were well prepared. In opposition to the satyagraha, zamindars employed lathials from outside. At Sadikur in Barbigha P. S., for example, Karyanand reported that zamindars 'collected 300 men and harvested the paddy crop ... and assaulted the Kisan volunteers ...'. They also filed many complaints before the Subdivision Officer against the kisans allegedly for uprooting of crops. The authority also deployed additional forces to get the situation under control.

In January of 1939, many cases of mischief and damage toward crops of zamindars were reported. A training camp for Kisan volunteers was opened at Lakhisarai under

27 Ibid., p. 6
28 Extract from the confidential diary of the Superintendent of Police, Monghyr, dated 1st Jan. 1939, File No. 29 (II) of 1939, Political (Special), GBO, BSA.
29 Memo No. 501 S. B., Copy of a report dated 13rd Jan. 1939, from two S. B. Reporters, File No. 28 (A) of 1939, Political (Special), GB, BSA.
30 From Karyanand to G. K. Gokhale, the Collector of Monghyr District, dated 31st Dec. 1938, File No. 29 (II) of 1939, Political (Special), GBO, BSA.
31 D. O. 16-C, from G. K. Gokhale to R. E. Russell, Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Bihar, dated 10th Jan. 1939, File No. 29 (II) of 1939, Political (Special), GBO, BSA.
32 D. O. No. 37-C, from Gokhale to Russell, dated 6th Jan. 1939, File No. 29 (II) of 1939, Political (Special), GBO, BSA.
Karyanand and his lieutenant, Anil Mitra. Sahajanand in somewhat restrained tone instructed the Kisan 'to take what ever crops they require for their daily use from the disputed area'. Then the Collector of Monghyr district interfered with the matter and an attempt of arbitration was made. A meeting was held on the 20th and 21st January among the local Congress leaders, Karyanand Sharma, number of prominent zamindars such as Bahadur Devnandan Prasad Singh, and the Collector. The meeting determined to form a new arbitration committee in order to settle all the disputes in the Tal area. The member of committee consisted of 3 Congress representatives, and Babu Chunkeshwar Prasad and Babu Bechu Narayan Singh respectively on behalf of Kisan and landlords.

On the basis of 'Rajendra Babu's award', the new committee tried to prove who were eligible to be settled with disputed lands. But many tenants including Karyanand himself were reluctant to appear individually before the committee to show the evidence for verifying that he or she used to cultivate a certain land before 1936. Instead, they collectively demanded to simply distribute 60 to 100 per cent of bakasht land in possession of landlords in each village. 'In some villages, the tenants claimed the entire area of the village, while in others they were gracious enough to leave a small area for the landlords.' At the beginning of February 1939, total area claimed by tenants was as many as 8,500 bighas out of 13,000 bighas in villages where claims were filed. This number was said to have a basis that each individual including women and children in the Tal area could get at least 2 bighas of land, though the Collector doubted the calculation. The reason why tenants did not claim individually lay in its

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33 Memo No. 56-58-C, a copy of special report regarding the agrarian situation in Barhiya, dated 10th Jan. 1939, File No. 29 (II) of 1939, Political (Special), GBO, BSA.
34 D O. No. 40-C, from Ghokale to Russel, dated 24th Jan. 1939, File No. 29 (II) of 1939, Political (Special), GBO, BSA.
35 Ghosh report, pp. 7-9.
difficulty for 'illiterate and uneducated' tenants to present satisfactory evidence and answer supposed to be questioned in front of the committee. Fodder for tenants' cattle and *gora* land were among other issues taken up by the committee. In the meantime, G. K. Gokhale, the Collector of Monghyr district, was struck to see 'the feverish activity going on in every house in village Pali where the women and children were busy threshing the crop which they had harvested.\(^{36}\)

To avoid further troubles, the arbitration committee decided unanimously to harvest and store *bojhas*, bundles of grain, of all disputed lands. The work was entrusted with the Subdivisional Officers. The commencement of harvesting made the situation better. But the situation again became critical when five to six hundred kisans collected with 100 cattle on 16th February and surrounded the camp of arbitration committee which was pitched in the village Pali. Following the instruction by Karyanand Sharma, they demanded food for themselves and fodder for their cattle and on next morning they went further to uproot standing crop of the land of Babu Rameshray Prasad Singh, a zamindar of Barhiya Tal. A large number of kisans, then nearly 2,000, and 80 zamindar's lathials faced each other across the river Halluhar. Except minor scuffle occurred between the two party, outbreak of serious clash was avoided by the intervention of police and the Subdivisional Officers.\(^{37}\)

Nevertheless arbitration committee kept trying to establish an agreement. Kisans and zamindars joined the arbitration again in March. But in the beginning of April when the process of consideration by the committee was going on, some zamindars of Khutaha, Chintamanchak, Reupa, and Turkairjni withdrew from the arbitration to see tenants' 'exaggerated demands'. These zamindars started harvesting and threshing

\(^{36}\) D. O. No. 86-C, from Ghokale to Russell, dated 11th Feb. 1939, File No. 29 (II) of 1939, Political (Special), GBO, BSA.

\(^{37}\) Ghosh report, pp. 10-12
the crop which had not been stored yet by the authority. Thus the stage of Bakasht struggle shifted from fields to *kalihans* where crops were being threshed. On 9th April 1939, two zamindars of village Repura, Bindeshwari Prasad Singh and Raghunath Narayan Singh started at their own *kalihans* threshing of *bojhas* harvested from the lands which were claimed by tenants. On hearing this, 150 kisans including women and children rushed to the Bindeshwari's *kalihan* to stop thrashing. The zamindar's men armed with *lathi* struck kisans and some 10 kisans got injured. Police officers also rushed to the spot and got the situation under control.  

On 27th April, after the consultation with zamindars and Karyanand, the committee decided to thresh attached *bojhas* in the Government *khaliyas* and keep the grains in the custody of a third party. But Karyanand did not actually join the agreement. He organized a celebration of 'May Day' on 1st May 1939, at his Lakhisarai Ashram where kisans and red-shirt volunteers gathered. Then, Karyanand took them again to *satyagraha*. After the celebration, 147 of kisans together with 'a communist kisan worker', Anil Mitra, travelled from Lakhisarai to Monghyr without purchasing train tickets and next day got started *satyagraha* in front of cordon of police to enter the Monghyr fort where district headquarter situated. Binode Bihari Mukharji, the Secretary of the Monghyr District Students Federation also joined the *satyagraha*. Anil Mitra stated that 'their intention was to court arrest and to go to jail where they would be fed and clothed.' On 3rd May, Karyanand also came to the spot with additional 108 kisans. Following two days saw arrests of Karyanand and Anil Mitra, and repeated *satyagraha* by Kisans of trying to enter the fort and laying themselves on

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38 From R. R. Ghosh, Sadr Subdivisional Officer, to B. K. Gokhale, District Magistrate of Monghyr district, dated 10th April, 1939; A report of B. N. Singh, Subinspector of Police, Repura, dated 9th April, 1939, both in File No. 29 (II) (B) of 1939, Political (Special), GB, BSA.
the railway track as a protest against the arrest of their leaders. Karyanand sent a letter to Sahajanand requesting to come to Monghyr with Jayaprakash Narayan to observe the situation and support his Satyagraha. Finally Sahajanand and Babu Ganga Saran Singh, a member of the arbitration committee, has come to the spot. They did not justify this satyagraha. In a meeting where Sahajanand spoke to kisans, a report of the authority says, 'it seems as if he was deprecating the action taken by Karjanad . . . .' He also persuaded kisans to go home. Some were sent back home by the authorities' lories and others voluntarily returned to their home.

After the further deliberation by the committee, an award was finally determined on 20th of May with the consent from Sahajanand and Karjananad. Karyanand sent letters to tenants to accept the award. On the basis of award the crops were distributed among kisans and zamindars. By this award, however, only about 800 bighas of land went to tenants of 8 villages. Though this award finally brought a peace in the Tal area for the time being, it also reflected the official policy of the Congress that difference among classes should be settled with compromise.

Thus as we have seen in above cases of Bakasht struggle, character of kisan agitation has changed toward confrontation with landlords. Kisans ceased to use the tactics of negotiation and conciliation with zamindars and instead began to take more direct actions. This change was caused not so much by Sahajanand's decision or official policy of BPKS as by pressures from local voices. As was observed in Tekari Raj and Barhiya Tal, Jadunandan Sharma and Karyanand Sharma, both of who had strong

39 D. O. No. 264-C, dated 4th May 1939, from Gokhale to Russell, File No. 29 (V) of 1939, Political (Special), GB, BSA; Ghosh report, pp. 12-16.
40 Memo No. 4282 S. B. C. 1. D. dated 6th May 1939, Translation of an intercepted letter dated 3rd May 1939 from Karyanand to Sahajanand, File No. 29 (V) of 1939, Political (Special), GB, BSA.
41 D. O. No. 280-C, dated 6th May 1939, from Gokhale to Russell, No. 29 (V) of 1939, Political (Special), GB, BSA.
42 Ghosh report, pp. 12-16
43 Ibid., pp. 17-19.
local connections in respective area, waged more 'radical' agitation sometime without consent of BPKS and the supremo, Sahajanand. These local leaders' decision to start such 'radical' agitation was neither personal nor arbitrary. Rather it reflected the voice of local kisans. Sahajanand explains how Jadunandan Sharma was persuaded by kisans and had to take the radical course of struggle.

Then Sharmaji said, 'Plough field and uproot the crop, however small was the amount of paddy sown'. Kisans replied, 'We do not want advice. We had understood that you would find out any path. If you also give us lecture, please leave and allow us to die. Otherwise, please proceed with plough and cultivate. Please cut paddy. We will also follow you and die with you. On hearing this word, Sharmaji was determined and sent me a message saying 'Now I will go to jail. The situation here is like this. Please come and observe it. Please forgive me for not consulting you. In fact, both Sharmaji (Karyanand and Jadunandan) had never taken a step forward without consulting me and had never done even any special activity. I went there. There was an extraordinary meeting of 5,000 kisans including women, men, and children. I was also surprised to see the situation. 44

Though the way in which Kisan behaved in later half of 1930s was 'radical', however, their demands were inherited much from that of previous period. What was stressed in meetings were recovery of bakasht land with occupancy right, fair division of product between zamindars and tenants, fair rent rate, abolition of illegal cesses imposed by landlords such as begar and variety of abwabs and so on. Those demands had nothing to do with Russian Revolution or abolition of zamindari system which were repeatedly mentioned in Kisan meetings. At the same time, they were almost universal issues shared by all the kisans and had been significant issues in 'Goala movement of 1920s too as was discussed elsewhere. In this sense, it could be possible to say that Kisan agitation in this period was imagined on the basis of existing agrarian society.

44 Sahajanand, Mera Jeevan Sangarsh, p. 277.
6.4 Who is the Kisan?: Cracks in the United Front

But it was not only those issues that kisans inherited from the previous experience of caste movement. They also inherited caste-based relationships, both brotherhood within the same caste and enmity with the conflicting caste. As the tendency of confrontation rather than conciliation got stronger in the Kisan agitation, some cracks based on such relationship which had potentially existed but hidden within the class of Kisan came to the surface. These cracks were observed even in Kisan agitations against large scale landlords, which are usually considered to be easier than that against petty landlords in mobilizing various strata of agriculturalists by incorporating concerned interests into a simplified class of Kisan. Landlords often took the strategy of appealing to tenants of their caste fellows in the name of caste cause and its dignity and thereby tried to avoid class conflict. It sometimes worked. In Barhiya Tal, for instance, zamidnars seems to have advocated caste-based cause saying 'the Tal Kisans were Suder [sic](low caste) and Karyanand Sharma had mixed with them . . . '. Sahajanand opposed to this plea and laid a stress upon the solidarity among Bhumihars and other 'low castes'. 45 But after the Baksah struggle ended with trivial achievement, Bhumihar tenants at their own discretion made attempts of settlement with landlords. They 'held a meeting and have decided to approach the landlords to request them to settle their baksah land with them at a reasonable rent and not to bring outsiders on competitive rates of rent.' 46 In the Tekari Raj too, Bhumihar tenants opposed to the distribution plan of land made by Jadunandan Sharma and demanded larger land than other 'lower' castes. 47

45 Copy of a report dated 20th Feb. 1939 from two S. B. Reporter-Inspectors of Police, File No. 28(A) of 1939, Political (Special), GB, BSA.
46 D. O. No. 485-C, from M. M. Philip, the Collector of Monghyr district, to Russell dated 14th Sep. 1939, File No. 28 (I) (I) of 1939, Political (Special), GB, BSA.
The position of petty landlords within the Kisan was getting ambiguous. As was discussed in the previous chapter, BPKS officially included petty landlords as its members when it released the manifest of 1936. Therefore, it is not surprising to see Bakasht agitations where petty landlords as 'Kisan' fought hand in hand with tenants against large scale landlords, 'zamindars'. In a Bakasht struggle waged in Darbhanga district, we can see tenants and petty landlords who allied in a single class of Kisan. In Raghopur estate and village Deukli of Bahera P. S., Darbhanga Sadar Subdivision, kisans claimed 1,100 and 400 bighas of lands respectively and resorted to usual form of Bakasht struggle as was observed elsewhere under the leadership of the Kisan Sabha. The dispute in Dekuli clearly shows how the Bakasht agitation was waged under the alliance between petty landlords and tenants. This dispute developed from 'a private quarrel' between Ajab Narain Rai, 'the biggest co-sharer malik,' and Satyadeo Rai, 'a petty co-sharer malik and cultivator.' Satyadeo became local leader of the Kisan Sabha and led the kisans to satyagraha with Ramnandan Mishra and Jamuna Karjee. Kisans allegedly cut the tobacco crop of land in dispute and the malik instituted a police case against those kisans. The local police as usual was on the side of zamindars. Kisans alleged that a police constable 'instigated the malik's men' to suppress kisans. But in Raghopur estate, on the contrary, petty landlords became target of the Kisan Sabha's Bakasht struggle. The five sets of co-share maliks in the estate clamed direct possession of 150 bighas of bakasht land which was cultivated by tenants. Attempts to form arbitration committee and make a settlement among them often failed.

As Sahajanand also suggested in the case of Muzaffarpur district, the Kisan Sabha

48 See Ch. 5.
49 Searchlight, 6th June 1939.
50 D. O. 255-C, from K. P. Sinha, District Magistrate, Darbhanga District, to Russell, dated 13th Mar. 1939; Extract from D. O. No. 130-C, dated 26th Mar. 1939, from the Commissioner of the Tirhut Division; Searchlight 6th June, 1939; all in File No. 79 of 1939, Political(Special), GB, BSA.
found it generally difficult to launch agitation or take up issues simply in support of tenants in the area where landlords were predominantly petty landlords.\footnote{Sahajanand, \textit{Mera Jeevan Sangarsh}, pp. 237-8.} When those small landlords confronted with tenants, especially with better-off and powerful tenants, the confrontation developed into what remind us of violent clashes which intensively occurred in 1920s between upper castes and upward mobile castes. This was much the case with Shahabad district, where Maharaja of Dumraon Raj, petty landlords, tenure holders, and tenants had been competing side by side since 19th century.\footnote{For example, in 1863, Rajput raiyats attacked the Cutcherry of thier landlord and allegedly took away a sum of Rs. 1,300 in Beyrut, a village 14 miles from Arrah. They were said to protested against the landlord's attempt of raising rent. Progs 214-34, May 1863, Judicial, WBSA.}

In Bhabua P. S., a long standing conflict got connected with the Bakasht struggle of Kisan Sabha. The land dispute between Kurmi tenants and the widow landlord at a village Betari, 2 miles from Bhabua town, was first recognized and reported by the authority in May 1939. But it originated from a criminal case of couple of years ago in which husband of present landlord was allegedly killed by the Kurmi tenants, who had been finally acquitted.\footnote{D. O. No. 813/C, Confidential Report for the Fortnight ending the 11th June 1939, Arrah, S. No. 18, Freedom Movement Papers in Bihar(FMPB), BSA.} The widow no longer could stay at the village due to the pressure from them and was then staying at Kanpur. The tension between them had become further strained by retaliatory activities of both parties. On 12th of June, Sahajanand visited Bhabua town and spoke at a meeting of 800 kisans. The meeting passed resolution to start \textit{satyagrah} at Betari for the \textit{bakasht} lands of the landlord. On the complaint of the zamindar, the Subdivisional Officer of Bhabua has taken action under section 144 Cr. P. C. against 21 tenants. For a precautionary measure, a small force was also deployed there.\footnote{D. O. No. 879/C, Confidential Report for the Fortnight ending the 23rd June 1939, Arrah, S. No. 18, FMPB, BSA.}
In July, the authority attempted to make a settlement between the two parties. While the landlord initially offered 320 bighas of land, and which was raised to 600 to 700 bighas afterward, the tenants demanded 1,500 bighas. The landlords then opposed the settlement without taking nazara. In the meantime, the neighbouring localities of south Shahabad district also saw similar cases of rioting, assaulting, and 'marpit' between landlords and tenants, most of which seemed to have originated from issues over bakasht land or begar. Although the term 'satyagraha' was being still used by kisans to indicate whatever action taken, in practice both tenants and landlords adopted 'violent' ways such as beating with lathis their opponents.

Another and more significant feature which could in future undermine the unity of Kisan was observed in the strongly caste-based politics of Shahabad district, although colonial officer, on whose report we mainly rely on, was likely to have exaggerated it to some extent. In the end of 1930s, as we shall discuss later, leadership within the BPKS was fluctuating among the hands of Congress Socialist Party, Forward Block, and Communist Party of India. But kisans of this area, while receiving certain support from BPKS, adopted a political agenda different from any existing political parties. Tribeni Sangh was said to be the first established in 1934 and mainly supported by the middle-ranging cultivating castes of Ahir, Kurmi, and Koeri. The Sangh contested elections in district board level with own candidates against the Congress. Afterward they established the provincial-wise organization. It is said that approximately 1 million of backward castes paid 4 annas and registered as the muster-roll member of

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55 D. O. No. 959/C, Confidential Report for the Fortnight ending the 11th July 1939, Arrah, S. No. 18, FMPB, BSA.
56 Weekly confidential diary of the Deputy Superintendent of Police Sasaram for the week ending 20th Aug. 1939, S. No. 17, FMPB, BSA.
57 D. O. No. 751/C, Confidential Report for the Fortnight ending the 23rd May 1939, Arrah; D. O. No. 1637/C, Confidential Report for the Fortnight ending the 10th October, 1939, both in S. No. 18, FMPB, BSA.
the Sangh. Along with the aspect of political organization to which the colonial authority paid attention, Tribeni Sangh had another aspect as a caste sabha which had been observed till 1920s and proclaimed 'the moral, intellectual and physical improvement of the Ahirs, Koeris and Kurmis'. Despite the proclamation, the Sangh actually could gain support from other than that of the three castes. In the Shahabad District Board election held in May 1939, for instance, the Sangh defeated Congress candidates in several constituencies collecting votes from other 'backward castes'. Thus Tribeni Sangh can be seen a strategic caste-allied organization with support from broader caste groups to stand against 'upper castes'. But at the same time, the very existence of this alternative political and social platform suggested uncertainty and fragility of the Kisan on which the BPKS was based.

6.5 Cracks in the Lower Levels of Kisan: Kosi Diara Bakaasht Struggle

The cracks came to be more noticeable in the lower part of Kisan too. Legally existing agrarian categories were landlord, under-proprietor, tenant, and agricultural labourer. As was discussed before, however, tenants became excessively multi-layered. There usually had existed under those tenants a large number of sharecroppers or under-raiyats without any legal protection. While the Bihar Tenancy Amendment Act of 1937 passed under the Congress ministry created a category of statutory tenants with strengthened legal protection, the act was also applied to the section of under-raiyat. This was to cause conflicts among the multi-layered cultivating classes.

Kosi river originates from Himalayan mountains and flow down to the western part of Purnea district to join the Ganges. The catchment area of the river is vast and

59 D. O. No. 650/C, Confidential Report for the Fortnight ending the 11th June, 1941, Arrah, S. No. 21, FMPB, BSA.
subjected to heavy rains. It also receives additional water of Gogri which come from North Monghyr and North Bhaglpur. Thus enormous amount of water flows into the western plain of the district. As it goes almost flat plain, the water creates numerous broad, shallow and frequently changing channels. The huge amount of water also causes inundation annually and often had caused serious floods. The stream is so rapid that the destructive power could wash away villages, factories, farms, and anything on the surface leaving behind enormous volume of sand and many swamps. For example, village Nathpur was often swept away and compelled to change the site whenever it received flood water. An indigo factory at Nipaniya 'was covered with sand up to the top of the chimneys within 4 years'. Thus the landscape of this area was 'split up into an infinitude of islands, and recticulated [sic] everywhere by a network of dry channels and shifting sandbanks'. The soil was far less fertile and large extent of uncultivated land was spread. There were few flourishing villages or substantial market. It was in this poorly productive portion of the district, Kosi Diara, that another kind of agrarian dispute occurred.

Among the western part of the district, Dharampur Pargana which consisted of three zillas, Gondwara, Birnagar, and Bhawanipur, developed very unique system of land tenure which enabled oppression of cultivators. Due to the severe ecological environment and distant location from any administrative centre, by tradition the area had been a stronghold of intermediary. Darbhanga Raj which recovered the pargana in 1760s created a lease system of istemardars, milikdars, and thikadars. These leases were generally given to friends and relatives of the Mahajara and the former two were believed to be permanent lease. While istemardars could hold their holdings so long as they paid the nominal revenue, milikdars, or rent-free tenants, could profited greatly

by easily acquiring newly fertile land from which water of Kosi receded. The frequently changing landscape made the revenue authority impossible to record all the lands held by these tenure holders until the survey and settlement operation of 1923-1931. Darbhanga Raj was indifferent to the affairs in the di81'a and did not notice these newly added properties. Thus, these middlemen could establish quasi-independent control over the land.61

These tenure holders did not cultivate by themselves. Instead, they invented unique sharecropping system fit to the severe ecological environment. There were three types of sharecropping tenure introduced according to the soil of each plot. Jotjama was very flexible tenure whose main purpose was to make raiyats resettle with fallow land and re-cultivate it at low rent rate. This tenure came to attract many raiyats especially from Santhal Pargana by 1880s. Raiyat of jotjama was allowed to sow whatever, wherever, and whenever he wants and he could give up the tenancy at any time. Halhasila was also flexible tenure for more fertile land with certain period, by which also raiyat was not obliged to grow particular crop. The rent was determined according to the crop grown. The more land became fertile, the severer became a contestation between tenure holders and raiyats over the growing profit from the land. Birawari was a fee for fallow ground imposed by tenure holders on the raiyat. Because of the vagary of Kosi which inundated and washed away cultivable lands frequently, these tenures were used in cycle.62

But Hill says that by 1920s this area had reached 'raqba limit' at which the ratio of agrarian population to cultivable land is so high that it does not permit further expansion of cultivation. Under the 'intermediary dominance', such flexible tenure

62 Ibid.
was at the mercy of them and the power relation between those tenure holders and sharecroppers was one-sided.63

A report by the Collector, N. P. Thadani, attributed the cause of dispute to the penetration of 'the Congress Workers and the Kisan Agitators anxious to canvass the newly bestowed franchise'.64 However, as we have already seen in the case of popular activity during the Civil Disobedience Movement of United Provinces or as Anand Chakravarty rightly suggested, this view stemmed from the tendency that 'officials were inclined to see the hand of Congress behind almost any kind of protest activity'.65

The dispute between the tenure holders and their *bataidars* has begun by a petition of Dhaturanand Choudhary, a local leader, who attempted to draw the attention of then Congress ministry in the provincial government to the plight of Santhal *bataidars*. The another origin of dispute was reported to be the Bihar Tenancy Amendment Act of 1937, by which under-raiyats who had been cultivating his holding for 12 years was supposed to enjoy occupancy right. In the beginning of 1938, 'the Congress workers and Kisan workers' started preaching among Santhal *bataidars*. They instructed the *bataidars* not to pay *abwabs* and to insist on rent receipt against their *maliks*, thereby they could prove the continuous cultivation for 12 years to get the occupancy right. The *maliks*, tenure holders, refused to give their *bataidars* receipts to avoid the accrual of occupancy right. Their attempts were made even to oust existing Santal *bataidars* and settle fresh non-Santhal *bataidars* from among maliks' relatives or servants. Initial sporadic cases over *abwabs* within a locality in 1938 soon developed into larger scale *bakasht* dispute of violent character from the beginning of 1939. By this time, the

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64 Report on the Agrarian trouble in Dhamdaha and Dharahara Police Stations of Purnea District by N. P. Thadani (hereafter Thadani Report), p. 3. File No. 121 (D/ 1940, Political (Special), GB, BSA.
Santhal \textit{bataidars} came to have an idea that they could forcibly take possession of lands. The local authority received number of criminal cases such as 'criminal trespass' institutioned by both \textit{bataidars} and their \textit{maliks}. Although several attempts of arbitration were made, those \textit{maliks} simply wanted to oust the existing \textit{bataidars} and authority admitted the fact that some \textit{maliks} continued to hold entire products with them and gave \textit{bataidars} invalid receipt without date and signature. Finally arbitrations failed and the situation further deteriorated toward the middle of 1939. While Santhal \textit{bataidars} kept doing forcible possession of land and even of other lands not in their holdings, the \textit{maliks} tried to put new \textit{bataidars} in lieu of Santhals.

One novel feature in comparison with other disputes in this period is that local authorities such as the Collector and the Subdivisional Officer sided with agitators, Santhal \textit{bataidars}. In May 1939, the Collector of Purnea district, Rameshwar Singh, who was to be succeeded by N. P. Thadani, and the S. D. O., C. H. McNeill, formed arbitration committees at the four centres and the situation almost reached the settlement. But \textit{maliks} 'had held up the entire produce of their Bataidars. They promised to divide the produce: but in most cases successfully avoided giving of the Bataidars' share of that particular harvest'.\textsuperscript{66} Other \textit{maliks} even gave invalid receipts in which the land and date were not mentioned. The \textit{Maliks'} reluctance to accept arbitration made the district officials take harder lines against them. Rameshwar Singh issued instructions and openly encouraged \textit{bataidars} who had been ousted by \textit{maliks} to take possession of the land gains under the provision of Section 49A of the Bihar Tenancy (Amendment) Act, 1938, and also to demand rent receipts. From June 1939 onward, violent efforts of forcible possession by \textit{bataidars} as well as the counter action of evicting \textit{bataidars} by \textit{maliks} increased. 'There were about 45 cases fought and

\textsuperscript{66} Thadani Report, pp. 7-9.
pending since April, 1939.\textsuperscript{67}

Situation had changed when Thadani, who was not as sympathetic with \textit{bataidars} as his predecessor, took the seat of Collector. The new Collector conducted an intensive enquiry and interviews with both parties separately, with halting in camp at Dhamdaha from the 7th to 12th March, 1940. He understood that the central issue of dispute was on the period of \textit{batai} contract. When the Collector was preparing a \textit{kabuliyat} for settlement, the \textit{maliks} demanded to specify the period as one or two years so that \textit{bataidars} could not get the right of occupancy whereas Santhal \textit{bataidars} did not want any mention about the period and demanded perpetual lease. After repeated discussions with both parties, Thadani finally made a draft \textit{kabuliyat} which consisted of three parts. The term of lease, along with signatures of both lessor and lessee, was supposed to be mentioned in the foremost section of the form. The Part I was allotted to mentioning ‘Specification of the holding’. The Part II regulated ‘terms and conditions of the lease’ as follows:

1. The lessee will put in his full labour, diligence and application with a view to grow maximum amount of crop in the land, so that the lessor may not suffer in enjoying the full amount of profit arising out of this land.

2. That the crop will be cut and gathered at a common \textit{khalihan}, the site of which will be fixed at the harvest of each crop with the consent of both the parties. The lessee shall give due information to the lessor for attending and watching the cutting of the crop before cutting it.

3. The crop will be threshed, made ready and divided between the parties on the common \textit{khalihan}. Nobody shall remove any portion of the crop from the common \textit{khalihan} before division.

4. The lessee will not encroach upon the adjoining lands of the lessor forcibly or surreptitiously or cultivate any other land than specified herein without a proper settlement from the lessor.

5. The lessee will not refuse to grow any particular crop which can be grown suitably

\textsuperscript{67} Anand Chakravarty, op. cit., p. 1858.
on the land if desired and asked by the lessor. In case the lessor desires or requires
the cultivation of such expensive crops such as tobacco, sugarcane or other money
crop, or so required by the lessee, the lessor will advance seeds, implements of
husbandry and other expenses. The value of these advances without any interest
will constitute the first charge on the produce grown and will be realised and paid to
the second party before division. In view of the fact that such advances will benefit
both the parties, the cultivation of such expensive crops will be carried on in
consultation with and under the close supervision of the lessor and both the lessor
and the lessee will be entitled to keep accounts of such cultivation.

(6) The lessee will not in any manner neglect the cultivation of the land or allow it to
remain *Parti*, whole or part, or use it in a manner which renders it unfit for the
purpose of the tenancy.

(7) The lessee will not transfer the land to anybody without the consent of the lessor.

(8) The lessor will not be entitled to anything in the share of *Abwabs*, such as *Khakhri, tari, lorah, khetutar* etc.

(9) The lessor will never claim nor will be entitled to any Nazarana or Salami for the
land.

(10) The lessor shall maintain counterfoil receipt books and issue there from receipt to
the lessee no sooner the division of a crop takes place. Any neglect or refusal on the
part of the lessee in this connection will be punishable under the law.

(11) That in case of the breach of any of the conditions mentioned in paras 1 to 8 above
by the lessee the deed will stand cancelled and the lessor will be entitled to
immediate re-entry on the leased land. Otherwise the lessor will grant such renewal
as a matter of course though not as a matter of right.68

This *kabuliyat* clearly reflected the interests of tenure holders. The term of *batai*
lease had to be mentioned even if some *bataidars* had already got the right of
occupancy. In preparing the *kabuliyat*, Thadani thought that *bataidars* demand of
perpetual lease or no mention in the *kabuliyat* was 'unreasonable', and that *maliks*
‘must have the right to terminate settlement of an undesirable Bataidar on various
grounds.’69 Therefore the clause (11) that allows *maliks* to cancel *batai* lease

68 Thadani Report, pp. 23-5.
69 Ibid., p. 69.
immediately on breach of the conditions was incorporated.

High rank officials such as the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bihar criticised the kabuliyat as being 'essentially beneficial to the landlords and against the interest of the bataidars' and also being the violation of Bihar Tenancy Act. Santhals remained to be declined to execute the kabuliyat and most of maliks also did not show their willingness to give bataidars rent receipts despite their general acceptance of the terms and conditions in the kabuliyat. Although the dispute was once interrupted by the storm of Quit India Movement in 1942, the principal issues between the two parties had remained intact even after 1942.70

6.6 The Second World War and Political turn of the Kisan Sabha

After 1939, Bakasht struggle gradually lost its momentum as an organized peasant movement. It is partly because of tenancy legislation under the Congress ministry which, though not adequate but to some extent, provided upper strata of tenants with legal protections. The Second World War, however, more significantly changed the environment for the peasant movement. In terms of economic situation, firstly, increase in demand of every kind of commodity including agricultural products made those prices increasingly higher and consequently brought profits to agricultural producers who had been suffering since the Depression. Secondly, the war brought about differences among political groups as regards their stance toward the war. Until the war, Congress, Congress Socialist Party, Communist Party of India respectively had played certain roles in guiding the Kisan Sabha movement without any determination on which party taking the decisive leadership. But the war widened the differences among those political parties and thereby caused conflict over the

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leadership of peasant movement.

When the war broke out in September 1939, Gandhi suggested his sympathy with England and France from the purely humanitarian standpoint by saying ‘I am not therefore just now thinking of India’s deliverance. It will come, but what will it be worth if England and France fall, or if they come out victorious over Germany ruined and humbled?’ But the Congress, as an organization, did not show any sign of cooperation with the British Government. Prior to the beginning of war, on 11th August 1939, Congress Working Committee passed a resolution reminding provincial governments of not giving any support for the war preparation. And again on the 10th September, another resolution was passed by the Working Committee on the similar line and defined the war as Imperialist war. By this time, as we have already seen, the relationship between the Congress and Kisan Sabha increasingly got worse and different stand points over agrarian issues was apparent in Bihar. This difference was turned out to be not provincial matter but all-India tendency on the 29th of September 1938, when AICC passed a resolution ‘aimed at Kisan Sabhas and particularly mentioned the Kisan activities in the Andhra and Bihar’ and ‘accusing of some Congressmen of the charge of having carried on a campaign inciting people to violence, arson and murder and asking Congress Committees to take action against them’. Nevertheless BPKS initially followed the policy of the Congress on the war. In a meeting held at Maigra, P. S. Dumaria, Gaya district on 1st November 1939, for instance, Sahajanand defined the war as Imperialist war and asked Kisan to obey the Congress orders to come.

73 Memo No. 11481 S. B. Copy of a report dated 3rd Nov. 1939 from a Special Branch Report – Inspector of Police, File No. 573 of 1939, GB, BSA.
But Sahajanand was not satisfied with the Gandhian leadership and sought to form alternative one irrespective of political party. Then, he, with N. G. Ranga, formed the Left Consolidation Committee and called for the participation of Leftists. Here, within the Congress emerged a potential ally, Subhas Bose who had been in a rival position with Gandhi over the leadership of the Congress. Since the beginning of 1940, Subhas Bose began to appear in meetings organized by BPKS, where he delivered speeches against the Congress leadership in harmony with Sahajanand. In the 7th session of Monghyr District Kisan Conference held on 3rd February 1940, Bose stated that India should utilize this opportunity of war so that socialism could win over imperialism. 'He vigorously opposed any compromise on the issue of Complete Independence.' Sahajanand, in the same occasion, appealed to the audience 'to banish from their mind the idea that God or Gandhiji would free them from their difficulties.'

But one of the most important elements in the BPKS since its formation, CSP was not ready to leave the Congress to join such an alternative 'united front' of Leftists. According to Arvind Das, CSP was then 'of the view that any prospective mass movement for freedom could only be initiated by Gandhi and his Congress'. Hence a division appeared in the BPKS and it was clearly showed in the 7th session of Bihar Provincial Kisan Conference held on 24th and 25th February 1940 at Motihari. In the discussion of draft resolution, 'Swami's groups' including Rahul Sankrityayan proposed to form and strengthen Anti-Compromise Conference to 'create in the Congress High Command the desired revolutionary urge'. They also accused Gandhi of 'betraying the country by entering into compromise with British Imperialism'. On the other hand, J. P. Narayan, with other CSP members such as Acharya Narendra Dev and Rambriksha

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74 *Searchlight*, 9th Feb. 1940.
Benipur, 'did not believe that Mahatma Gandhi could sell India to British Imperialism' and refused to accept such 'subjective leadership' which could disturb Congress solidarity. This division further culminated in alienation of CSP members from the BPKS next year with the formation of a rival Kisan Sabha.

Thus calls for an alternative leadership to Gandhi and more direct struggle against imperialism resulted in Anti-Compromise Conference, which was held at the same venue of Congress session, Ramgarh, in March 1940. This conference was organized jointly by the Kisan Sabha and Bose's Forward Bloc which was formed in 1939. The Palasha session of AIKS, in same March 1940, also passed anti-compromise resolution. In this period, the Kisan Sabha had very close relationship with the Forward Bloc in their political programme. Some leaders of BPKS such as Pandit Dhanaraj Sharma and Mathura Prasad Mishra joined it although Sahajanand himself did not. These members, however, were to leave the Kisan Sabha when Soviet-German War started in June 1941 and the alliance between the two collapsed. Now only communists and 'sabhaties' remained within the Kisan Sabha.

Communists changed the definition of the war after the breakout of Soviet-German War. CPI declared the 'Imperialist War' now became 'People's War'. Sahajanand seems to have changed his political sympathy to communists when he was in jail. According to M. A. Rasul who was then the General Secretary of AIKS and corresponding with Sahajanand personally, Sahajanand said in his letter 'with a sense of grievance that his Forward Bloc colleagues in the Kisan Sabha had “quit me”, while the CSP colleagues in it had “stabbed me in the back”, that now it was the turn of the "National

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76 *Searchlight*, 28th Feb. 1940.
Fronters" (CPI members). On 13th February 1942, the Central Kisan Council of AIKS held at Nagpur passed a resolution of clear sign of adopting CPI’s ‘People’s War’ line, with saying ‘the Council has therefore no hesitation in exhorting the Kisans of India to align themselves on the side of Russia, china and the allied progressive forces in waging relentless war for the final extermination of Fascism’. The resolution was also endorsed at the 6th session of AIKS at Bihta in the end of May 1942.

Thus, the AIKS along with BPKS was to come under the leadership of CPI, though Sahajanand still maintained incomparable position within it. Until the end of the war, AIKS’s official programme was to be occupied with war-related issues like ‘Grow More Food Campaign’ while agrarian issues such as bakasht question and abolition of zamindari system which had been in the centre receded into background.

6.7 Quit India Movement: Circulation and Appropriation of Propaganda

In spite of Kisan Sabha’s political turn and its concentration on war-related issues, kisans were very keen on their familiar and immediate interests, and continued to stick to agrarian issues. Irrespective of their political stance, those kisans tried to utilize whatever chance available. The Quit India movement of 1942 was an event which provided kisans with such chance. In economic terms, the period just before the movement broke out throughout India was of high prices and shortage of food grain due to the war demands. Some small landlords and rich peasants benefited through grain-dealing and black-marketing. Middlemen such as beparis, paikars, and gomastahs, were also actively engaging in speculative trading to profit as much as possible. Measures of price control by the central and provincial government turned

out to be less effective (Table 6-2, figure 6-1).  

In addition, as most scholars invariably indicate, there was a widespread fear especially among the people in the eastern part of India including Bihar and UP that India might become British war-front against Japan, which had captured Rangoon on 8th March and the whole of Burma by the 20th May, and was advancing further to the territory of British India. The fall of Burma stopped the import of Burma rice to India and thereby escalated the shortage. But what is equally significant was the phenomenon of influx of refugees from Burma and return of casual workers to their native villages in Bihar and UP, which created great psychological uncertainty among people in that area. Because this phenomenon made the people believe prevailing rumours with more reality that the British might get defeated against the advancing enemy.  

Table 6-2: Retail Prices of Rice and Wheat, Annual Averages 1938/39-1943/44  
(Rupees and Annas per maund of 82.5 pounds)  

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Figure 6-1: Index Number of Wholesale Prices of Selected Foodgrains, 1939-46
(Last week of August 1939=100)

AICC resolution adopted on 8th August and Gandhi’s call of ‘Karenge ya marenge’ on the same day, and the wholesale arrests of major Congress leaders on the following day were final and immediate triggers for the breakout of ‘open rebellion’ throughout India. After the arrest of many senior Congress leaders on 9th August, a handful of leaders, including Maulana Azad, Sadiq Ali, Dhayabhai Patel, Pyarelal Nair, Ram Manohar Lohia, Achyut Patvardhan, and Mrs Sucheta Kripalani, who had not been arrested yet met secretly on the same day and discussed what the movement would take shape of. In the end, they made a set of instructions to the people of country, which, called the Twelve-Points Programme, was published and distributed widely all over India. As is shown below, the Programme itself was hardly revolutionary. It was rather based on ‘Draft Instructions for Civil Resisters’ with the principle of non-violence, which was prepared by Gandhi on 4th August.

(1) There shall be a hartal throughout the country in all the cities and villages of India. The hartal will be peaceful. The hartal will be country’s protest against the arrest of Gandhiji, the Congress President and members of the Working Committee. It will also be symbol of our determination to carry on the struggle, which started with the arrest of Gandhiji, to its successful conclusion. If participation in a hartal carries with it any penalties, they should be cheerfully borne.

There will be a meeting in the evening in villages and cities where we shall deliver the Congress message “Quit-India”. If there are bans on the meetings, they should be resisted.

(2) Salt is a prime necessity of our life. Our countrymen should consider themselves free to manufacture it wherever they can do so whether in coastal or inland areas. Laws prohibiting the manufacture should be resisted and all consequences taken.

(3) Our struggle is “non-violent non cooperation” on the widest possible scale. The teeming millions that inhabit the 700,000 villages form the backbone of our struggle. They have the biggest and most vital part to play. Let them withhold all co-operation

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from the alien administration that reduced them to servitude and abject poverty. Let them when the time comes withhold payment of all revenue to the Government. Where there is zamindari system, the zamindar may be given his share of the revenue provided he throws in his lot with the people and refuses all co-operation with the Government.

(4) The students are the vanguard of our struggle. It is their solemn and sacred task to rouse and awaken and vitalize the dumb millions from one end of the country to the other. It is unthinkable that they can be passive spectators of the grand fight for freedom that is going on about them. Let struggle to its victorious conclusion. They are the intelligentsia of the country and know full well how our leader wants them to act. Our leaders have been arrested. The few that remain will soon be clapped, if worse does not befall them. Students alone can fittingly supply the gap. There is no doubt they will prove worthy of the great call that has come to them.

(5) The members of the Government services are faced with a choice. In this titanic clash between the people and the alien Government, what is their place? Must they earn their livelihood by betraying their country at a time when it is engaged in a mortal and deadly struggle? Is it part of their duty to suppress, to betray the people? Do they like to have the blessing of the present and future generations or their curses? The days of the administration which is giving them their bread and butter are now numbered. Why lean on a broken read?

If those who do not have the strength to resign their jobs have at least the courage to say 'no' to all orders that are designed to suppress and crush our people. If the saying of 'no' involves dismissal let it be cheerfully courted. Every such dismissal will be a nail in the coffin of the Empire that is throttling us.

(6) As Gandhiji said let every soldier in the army consider himself a Congressman. If his officer issues an order which hurts his conscience as Congressman let him disobey them and take the consequences cheerfully. It can be no part of their duty to lathi charge, tear gas or shoot non-violent crowds, peaceful processions or meetings. India hopefully looks to them to play worthy part in the great struggle. The fellow soldiers in other lands fraternized with the people when they rose in revolt against misrule and oppression whether indigenous or foreign. Let the Indian soldiers follow their glorious example.

(7) The Indian States are a part and parcel of India. The struggle today is as much theirs as of the so called British India. Gandhiji at the A. I. C. C. issued an appeal to the Princes to make common cause with the Indian People and throw off the common yoke. Whatever the response of the Princes to Gandhiji's appeal let our brothers in Indian
States make the struggle their own. Their fight today is not with the Prices but with the alien master who is keeping them and the people in subjection. If the Princes side with the alien masters it will be the painful duty of the people to wage a struggle against a combination of the Princes and the alien master.

(8) Gandhiji has time and again stressed the vital and decisive part that our womenfolk can play in the non-violent struggle. It is for them to justify Gandhiji's faith in them. If they bring to the struggle the non-violent sacrifice and suffering of which they are capable our struggle will inevitably be short and swift. Let it fall to them to infuse and energise the people of India at the fateful period in her history.

(9) Let every man and women in the country carry on his or her person a badge bearing the motto “Do or Die”. This will proclaim our determination to be free or perish in the attempt to be free.

(10) This is a struggle in which all Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis and Christians have to participate. Freedom's struggle know [sic] no communal or racial distinctions. If there must be competition between Communities let it be one in sacrifice and suffering for the great cause.

(11) With the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi every man and woman in India is his successor. Victory or death should be the motto of every son and daughter of India. If we live we live as free men, if we die we die as free men. There can be no rest for us so long as Gandhiji is in jail.

This is our final struggle. If all do their duty, the struggle should finish in two months time. All classes of men are called upon to join the fight. Millions have to move and break the chains that bind India. The struggle will include all activities that a non-violent mass struggle can include. Let our struggle gather momentum from day to day till it becomes an irresistible force and we regard our previous heritage. Let us be true to the message which Gandhiji has left us “Do or Die.”

Ending of foreign rule is our objective. Whatever helps in the attainment of that objective, subject to inexorable condition of non-violence, is permissible and legitimate. People in the Provinces have to devise and adopt all non-violent ways of paralyzing the administration. Every man is his own guide and leader. All Provinces have full Provincial autonomy in the matter of carrying on the struggle. Let them remain true to non-violence and all will be well with the struggle. There is no place for fear in the struggle: it should be banished from our minds and hearts. Each one of us should feel and assert that he is a free man. Suffering that comes our way as a consequence of this assertion and our action on it shall be cheerfully borne. Our leaders have done their part, it is for those who are left out to do theirs. The burden of carrying on the struggle
falls on them. Let them carry their burden worthily.

(12) Last but not the least let us not forget spinning so dear to Gandhiji. If millions spin it will administer a powerful stimulus to struggle.

"DO or DIE"\textsuperscript{85}

In Bihar, according to a report of the authorities which wanted to show that the movement was well prepared and the Congress was responsible for it. The provincial Congress leaders who did not attend AICC meeting in Bombay made ‘hurricane tours’ visiting such as Gaya, Hazaribagh, Monghyr, Bhagalpur, Chapra, Champaran and Muzaffarpur, and where they gave people instructions on the lines of Twelve-Points Programme issued by AICC.\textsuperscript{86} On 16th August, for example a meeting was held at village Dakhin Gawan, police-station Wazirganj, Gaya district, where about 100 people including the local school boys assembled, and a 16 points instruction ‘from the Congress High Command at Bombay’ were given to them as follows:

(1) After the arrest of Mr. Gandhi and other leaders there should be a complete Hartal for a day in which teachers, students, vakils, Moktiars, labourers, Ekka drivers, cartmen, rickshaw-pullers, Government servants, Zamindars, cultivators, etc., should take part. In the evening there should be a meeting in which the same resolutions of the Congress Working Committee ratified by the All-India Congress Committee on 5th August 1942, should be passed.

(2) Workers should move about in villages and towns and explain the programme of Mr. Gandhi and Congress and prepare the people to make sacrifice for freedom of the country.

(3) In all villages and towns meeting should be held and procession started. In the processions national slogans be shouted and matters regarding freedom should be explained. If meetings or processions are prohibited by the British Government they should not care for these restrictions.

(4) Vakils and Moktiars should give up their professions and take part in the Congress struggle.

\textsuperscript{85} The Indian Annual Register, 1942, Vol. II, pp. 212-6

\textsuperscript{86} Report of the Civil Disturbances in Bihar, 1942, Patna, 1944, p. 2.
(5) All students and boys should leave their collages and schools and should join the movement for freedom. There is a great hope from the students and it is hoped that they will respond to it.

(6) Police Officers should be requested not to use *lathi* charge or firing. The workers should face bravely *lathi* charge or firings. They should on no account be violent.

(7) People should cease to pay Chaukidari-tax and Union-tax.

(8) Chaukidars and Dafadars should give up their services.

(9) Police and Jail Warders are requested to give up their Government service because acts of high-handedness will be taken through them, to the great loss of the country. They will be compelled to use, *lathi* charge and firing against Congress workers. Therefore it is very essential to give up Government services in order to keep themselves free from such actions. If Police Officers resign the services a big support of the Government will be lost.

(10) All Government servants are requested to resign their posts and support the movement.

(11) Railway, Steamer, Post Office, Factory, Mine-workers should cease to work.

(12) Those who will resign for the sake of the Congress movement will get their jobs with full pay when the Congress Government will be in power.

(13) Those who will lose their landed properties and houses on account of joining this movement will get them back when there will be swaraj.

(14) In villages, *Panchayat* system should be organised in order to get sufficient foodstuffs and to protect their life and property and thereby there will be great impetus to the movement.

(15) There should be an arrangement to get information regularly about the movement. National flags should be hoisted on all the Government buildings and Government servants should be appealed to join the movement. Police arms should be taken and preserved in a safe place. They should close the Government Officers and publish that Government servants will be re-appointed when Swaraj will be achieved.

(16) No secrecy should be allowed in this struggle because it produces deteriorating effect; therefore all works should be done after giving notices.87

Although the number of instruction increased from 12 to 16, the content makes little difference either from the 12 points programme or Gandhi's 'Civil Resisters'. The

leaflet containing above 16 points instruction printed in the name of Bihar Provincial Congress Committee and Rajendra Prasad seems to have been most widely circulated. The authority confirmed the circulation in the districts of Muzaffarpur, Champaran, Purnea, Palamau, and Ranchi. The authority also seized some variants of the leaflet, although which had minor differences in its rhetoric and the number of instruction, they were, by and large, within the framework formulated by AlCC and PCCs. On the other hand, there were also many other literatures written in English, Hindi, Urdu, and Bengali, whose contents were clearly different from such official programme. The following leaflet distributed in Champaran, for instance, not only contains destructive instruction to damage means of communication and transportation but also states rent to be paid by tenants to landlords.

Bande Mataram
Do or Die

The fight for India's independence has commenced. We consider we are independent to-day and we do not recognise the sovereignty of government. We should not, therefore, obey any law or orders of the British Government. Besides we should act up to the following programme and make the fight a success.

What you should do.
1. Teachers and students should quit schools and colleges.
2. *Vakils* and *Mukhtears* should stop going to courts.
3. The police, military and Government servants should give up Government service.
4. Labourers working in factories, especially those who are employed in the railways and factories producing materials for Government, should stop doing work and resort to Hartal.
5. The railway lines should be removed, big bridges destroyed, telegraph and telephone wires cut and roads breached.
6. Courts, police-stations and post offices should be captured, their records destroyed and tri-colour flag flown over the premises.
7. Payment of chaukidari and other taxes should be stopped.
8. The arms of the police and military should be taken away peacefully.
9. Salt law should be broken by manufacturing salt.
10. Kisan brethren should stop payment of rent, but a small portion of rent should be paid to those zamindars who help us in our struggle and stop paying revenue to Government.
11. The police and military should not use lathi and fire-arm.
12. Slogans of 'police are our brothers', 'military are our brothers' 'Hindus and Muslims are brothers', 'India is independent', and 'non-violence is our weapon', should be shouted.
12. All such acts that go to weaken British Government's power and amount to the defiance of its law should be done non-violently.
14. You should ever remain non-violent.
15. More public sympathy should be won.88

In fact, there were other printed political messages, which even did not pretend to be the 'official' programme of the Congress and openly instructed people to take very violent measures. Students, Forward Blockists, socialists, and Communists also spread their own propaganda of inflammatory tongues.

As G. Pandey indicated, this was also the case with a district in UP side, Ghazipur, where 'message of destruction' and Gandhi's principle of non-violence 'coexisted uneasily'.89 Indeed, as a report on UP side suggests, the course of the movement had been well discussed in the secret meetings held at various centres among the selected leaders.90 Then the outline of proposed 'ALL-out' movement had been made to circulate verbally. But 'the instructions as to the nature of such action were varied, indicating that no definite detailed plan had been given from the centre. One

88 Ibid., pp. 70-71
noticeable feature was the earnest invitation to all beyond the Congress to join in and assist the movement in whatever way they can. The following suggestions were reported to be approved generally at the various centres:

(1) Boycott
Quit India slogans to be posted on road crossing, public places, parks and residences of Englishmen. Social boycott of those assisting in the war. Approach to Government servants to join the movement. All connexion with Govt. servants, Govt. Officers and Courts to be severed.

(2) Payment of Rent
Generally rent is not to be paid. The Zamindars who do not pay rent to Government will be allowed to realise rent from the tenants, the portion already due to Govt. being retained by the tenants. The Zamindars who do not agree will not be paid their rents by the tenants. Travelling by train without ticket.

(3) Strikes
The movement is to start with a general strike of schools, colleges, Govt. Offices, mills, workshops, aerodromes and markets.

(4) Sabotage
The cutting of telegraph wires, removal of railway line, occupation of police stationes and Government offices; lying down in front of military trains is envisaged. All will be encouraged to help in their own way using their own weapons, though Congressmen are asked themselves to remain non-violent. To paralyse Government is the main object. The movement will not be called off because of acts of violence.

(5) Army
People will be persuaded not to enlist and at the same time recruits will be sent to the army to tamper with the loyalty of the troops. Military contractors will be asked to terminate contracts.

(6) Modus Operandi
Dictators to be appointed in districts each dictator nominating his successor. Name to be kept secret. A central committee in the province will direct. Couriers where possible to be
women. The province is divided into six group areas. Arrest to be resisted when actually being made. Until the movement started arrests to be avoided by restricting speeches to moderate public utterances. Students to be asked to leave their colleges and join the movement in organising strikes, etc. The Quami Sewa Dal to be renamed the A. R. P. organization. Jail rules to be disobeyed.91

Ironically, however, circulation of those inflammatory messages appeared to be more noticeable as the authority increasingly put more strict vigilance against every kind of publication activities after the outbreak of the movement. *The Searchlight*, which had been warned for several times for publishing 'prejudicial' and 'harmful' headlines and articles, was finally banned on 17th August and other newspapers and periodicals published from Bihar such as *The Indian Nation, Yogi*, and *Rashtravani*, also stopped publishing.92 The authority also seized cyclonical machines and controlled the stock of paper so that seditious publications would not be distributed in large numbers.93 But those papers did not cease to circulate. Instead of printed papers, carbon copied or hand-written leaflets began to circulate and hand-written posters were pasted. A pamphlet found on the table of the Chairman of Darbhanga District Board, which was entitled 'Freedom or Death! Long Live Revolution!!' and contained false information on the disturbances, stated 'it is the duty of a reader to make five copies and distribute the same.'94

Thus general situation of the war and the disturbances as well as the Congress programme were to be transmitted by manual means. This left very large room for those hand-writing writers to insert their own demands and desires. Leaflets which

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contained instructions to destroy railway lines, bridge, and telegraph wires, and to loot post offices and police stations widely circulated. In fact, the disturbances which followed the wholesale arrest took the way in which those hand-writing leaders instructed.

6.8 Quit India Movement: The Character of the Agitation

The Quit India Movement in Bihar started as the demonstration by students of colleges and or other educational institutions, who played a very important role as ringleaders in the early stage of the movement. They along with their teachers and professors were very quick to react to the arrest of Gandhi and other Congress leaders, and started processions and picketing their schools since the 10th August.95 Once people other than students joined the agitation, the movement soon took violent turn. The animosity of agitators was directed toward everything symbolizing British colonial rule such as police station, court, jail, railway station, and the British themselves. On 10th August, there was a huge procession from Patna city to the Secretariat. On the next day a crowd more than 5,000 rushed to the southern compound of the Secretariat and tried to hoist Congress flag.96 In Shahabad district, 'the police were heavily stoned on more than one occasion' and the Civil Court was damaged at Arrah. At Buxar, 'the records of the police station were burnt' and 'telegraph wires were cut at Bikramganj.' Two days later, in Gaya town, 'violent mob' came out in a procession in front of residence of Hindu Mahasabha leaders and tried to proceed to the Kotwali P. S. with throwing brickbats. Police opened fire toward them to disperse.97 On the same day, at Siwan town, Saran district, 'a mob of about 5,000 persons' first came to the Criminal

95 Ibid., pp. 18-9.
96 Ibid., Appendix pp. 1-2.
97 Ibid., Appendix p. 4.
Court, then the Civil Court, and finally the Jail to plant Congress flag at the roof. With additional agitators from Chapra, they clashed with police party and consequently some police officers got severe injuries. Further on the same day, a train was stopped half a mile from Fatwa station, Patna district, by a crowd and killed 2 European R. A. F. officers who were on board. The bodies were taken through the bazar and thrown into the Ganges.

Within a few days, the movement spread throughout the province like except for some southern districts of Chotanagpur (Table 6-3). Activities of destruction were directed against every means of communication such as railway, road, boats operating in rivers, and telegraph and telephone lines. In the face of this total loss of communications, most of the local government offices and police stations were isolated in the vast terrain of fierce uprising against them. Many local police stations could not be defended from serious attempts of attacks by agitators. In the districts of north Bihar where the disturbance was said to be more intensive, many cases of attacking and capturing police station were reported, where police officers and constables were killed or got severe injuries, police records and their properties were destroyed, and the buildings were burnt down. 17 thanas out 23 were attacked in Muzaffarpur district, 5 out of 20 in Champaran, 15 out of 25 in Darbhanga, and 14 out of 28 in Saran. In the districts of south Bihar too, many police stations were seriously raided and captured. Some police stations had to be closed down and the police officers evacuated due to the shortage of fire arms and reinforcement.

From the mid August onward, the authority began to take repressive measures to cope with the agitations. Additional constables and extra peons were appointed to

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100 Ibid, Appendix pp. 32-6.
Table 6-3: Major Incidents of Quit India Movement in Bihar (1) (Aug-Sep. 1942)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Town/Village</th>
<th>P. S.</th>
<th>S. D.</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Overview of Incident</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>11/8/1942</td>
<td>14:15-17:30</td>
<td>Patna Secretariat</td>
<td>Patna Sadr</td>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>A crowd more than 5,000 rushed to the southern compound of the Secretariat and tried to hoist Congress flag at the gate. Mounted Military Police fired and the crowd dispersed. 4 killed, 25 injured.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>13/8/1942</td>
<td>9:12~</td>
<td>Half a mile from Fatwa RLY St.</td>
<td>Patna Sadr</td>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>A train was stopped by a crowd. 2 European R. A. F. officer killed. The bodies were taken through the bazar and thrown into the Ganges.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>22/8/1942</td>
<td>8:30</td>
<td>Naubatpur</td>
<td>Dinepur</td>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>Murder of a man by eight Congressmen because they could not persuade him to induce his brother to leave the Army. Later, the body was snatched by the accused and thrown into a river.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>13/8/1942</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gaya Kotwali P. S</td>
<td>Gaya</td>
<td>Gaya</td>
<td>Gaya</td>
<td>Violent mob came out in a procession in front of residence of Hindu Mahasabha leaders and tried to proceed to the Kotwali P. S. with throwing brickbats. Firing by police made them dispersed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>14/8/1942</td>
<td>Afternoon-21:30</td>
<td>Bhabua Kotwali P. S</td>
<td>Bhabua</td>
<td>Shahabad</td>
<td>Shahabad</td>
<td>First the Post Office of the town was burnt down. Arrest of the ringleader got the Congress meeting excited and proceeded to the police station to free the leader. 1,000 men armed with bhalas and lathis appeared and was finally dispersed by police firing. 1 killed, 3 injured.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>15/8/1942</td>
<td>12:00</td>
<td>Buxar Jail</td>
<td>Shahabad</td>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>A crowd of 'about 2,000 strong' came to the jail with the object of releasing relatives from it. They hoisted the Congress flag at the gate. Their attempts failed due to gate being locked and armed guard.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4/9/1942</td>
<td>14:40</td>
<td>Bhagalpur Central Jail</td>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>500 to 600 prisoners attacked the jail officers and attempted to break gate to go out. Failing the attempt, they burnt officers alive D. M. with armed force brought the situation under control. 28 killed, 87 injured.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>10-30/8/1942</td>
<td>16:00</td>
<td>Bariahi Bangaon</td>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>Local Congress leaders call for the hartal of bazaar and frequently threatened a European and looted his residence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9(a)</td>
<td>18/8/1942</td>
<td>16:00</td>
<td>2 miles east of Pasraha RLY st.</td>
<td>Monghyr</td>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>Patna</td>
<td>A Blenheim bomber crashed 2 miles east of Pasraha RLY st. One of three R. A. F. officer was killed in the crash and other two survivors were beaten to death by the people who assembled seeing the bomber having crashed. Subsequently plane was looted. A 'mob' looted the station and police party had to open fire to reach the station.</td>
<td>All the accused acquitted due to no evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Town/Village</td>
<td>P. S.</td>
<td>S. D.</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>Overview of Incident</td>
<td>Remarks</td>
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<tr>
<td>30/8/1942</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ruihar</td>
<td>Chautham</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monghyr</td>
<td>A Blenheim bomber crashed into the place. All three airman survived the crash but assaulted 'rioters' in boats with lathi and spears. All the three were killed and the plane was looted. Military detachment had to open fire in starting enquiry.</td>
<td>all the accused acquited due to no evidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/8/1942</td>
<td>14:00</td>
<td>Rupauli P. S.</td>
<td>Rupauli</td>
<td></td>
<td>Purnea</td>
<td>A riotous mob led by a Congress leader attacked the police station. The Sub-Inspector and two constables were burnt alive and killed.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27/8/1942</td>
<td>14:00</td>
<td>Treasury</td>
<td>Madhubani</td>
<td></td>
<td>Purnea</td>
<td>A large crowd of about 1,000 mostly Santals armed with bows and arrows, proceeded to the Treasury. Police fired with Bren gun and the crowd dispersed. One killed Santhal had stated that Santhal were brought to Purnea on the understandin that he was to be paid Rs. 300 from the Purnea Treasury. 1 killed.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/8/1942</td>
<td>17:00-20:00</td>
<td>Deoghar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Santhal Pargana</td>
<td>A suspect of attacking Srawan Police Station was witnessed at the chowk. Police who attempted to arrest him received severe attack in the locality. But the police managed to capture him. 1 killed and 2 injured.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16/8/1942</td>
<td>17:00</td>
<td>Minapur P. S.</td>
<td>Minapur</td>
<td></td>
<td>Muzaffarpur</td>
<td>A mob about 5,000 strong led by local Congress leader with the flag and arms attacked, looted, and burnt the police station. Police officers including Sub-Inspector were also burnt alive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>24/8/1942</td>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Madhuban Bazar (4 miles from Pupri)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Muzaffarpur</td>
<td>A car in which S. D. O., Divisional Inspector of Police, Head Constable etc. were on board was attacked by a 'mob', who seemed to have been waiting for the car. All the passengers were killed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15/8/1942</td>
<td>17:00</td>
<td>Katra P. S.</td>
<td>Katra</td>
<td></td>
<td>Muzaffarpur</td>
<td>An armed mob about 5,000 strong headed by local Congress leaders attacked the police station. One constable was killed and others including Sub-Inspector were severely injured. The building with property was burnt.</td>
<td>All the accused acquited</td>
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<tr>
<td>13/8/1942</td>
<td>11:45</td>
<td>Siwan</td>
<td>Saran</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A mob of about 5,000 persons' first came to the Criminal Court, then the Civil Court, and finally the Jail to plant Congress flag at the roof. Police attempted to disperse meeting of the mob with additional persons from Chapra. In return, however, the police party was assaulted and got severe injuries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>18/8/1942</td>
<td></td>
<td>near Marhowrah</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saran</td>
<td>Local Congress leaders held a meeting of 1,500 person, where attack of the Saran Engineering Works of Marhowrah which produced war materials was discussed. Authority sent a party of British troops with heavy weapons. All of the troop were killed by mob and the dead bodies were said to be thrown into the Gandak river.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>16/8/1942</td>
<td>15:30~</td>
<td>Maharajganj</td>
<td>Siwan</td>
<td>Siwan</td>
<td>Saran</td>
<td>a mob of about 10,000 strong led by two ladies burnt the post office and the Ry station. Firing and reinforcement of police made the mob recede.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>13/16/8/1942</td>
<td>13:00</td>
<td>Ghorasahan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Champaran</td>
<td>A train which came from Sitamarhi crowded with 'Congress hooligans' reached the Ghorasahan Station. They also attacked the residence of Rev. Coombe. He managed to escape to Motiahri.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>24/8/1942</td>
<td>15:10~</td>
<td>Court, Bara Ramna, Bettiah</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Champaran</td>
<td>A crowd collected at the court was dispersed without violence. Another meeting at Bara Ramna developed into serious clash between people with arms and police. Firing by police made them dispersed. It was reported that 'ultimate intention was to loot the Treasury.' 3 killed, 30 injured</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>17/8/1942</td>
<td>15:00</td>
<td>Singhia, P. S.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Darbhanga</td>
<td>Meetings had been held for previous 3 days and it had been decided to attack the police station. On 17th a mob with weapons and Congress flags attacked the police station. The Astt. Sub-Inspector was killed. 3 killed.</td>
<td>All the accused acquitted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>15/8/1942</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pusa estate</td>
<td>Tajpur</td>
<td></td>
<td>Samastipur</td>
<td>A mob of about 1,000 came to a shed of the estate, loot the properties, and burnt the building.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>20/8/3/9/1942</td>
<td>22:00~</td>
<td>TISCO, Jamshedpur</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Singhbum</td>
<td>General Strike as opposed to the arrest of Congress leaders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>20/8/1942</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jamshedpur</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Singhbum</td>
<td>In accordance with the strike at TISCO, 70 constables of the district put forward economic demands. More constable joined the attempt subsequently. Some leading constables were arrested.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>17/8/1942</td>
<td></td>
<td>Domchanch</td>
<td>Kodarma</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hazaribagh</td>
<td>A crowd collected at the Domchanch bazar and set fire to a liquor shop. Police's attempt to extinguish the fire was interrupted by the crowd's showering brickbats and stones. The Magistrate ordered to fire and 7 were injured. 7 injured</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>30/9/1942</td>
<td></td>
<td>Manbazar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Manbhum</td>
<td>Concerted attempts of attacking the police station were made in intervals by mobs supposedly including armed police.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

guard vulnerable points of strategic importance such as electric power house, telephone exchange, petrol and kerosene oil depots, and railway stations. Military troops were deployed initially from within the province and their presence turned out to be efficient. As other troops from outside the province such as Punjab Regiment and Jat Regiment began to reach the province toward the end of August, the situation was gradually brought under control. 102 Further repression such as imposition of collective fines in many villages pushed the agitation underground activities, which continued well into the next year.

Hennigham points out that the Quit India Movement did not take the shape of agrarian protest. The initiative of the movement was mainly taken by small landlord members of the Congress, who had occupied dominant position in the central Gangetic Plain and whose participation was derived from nationalism. He says that there were also subaltern participants who joined the protest only subsequently with thinking the colonial government was responsible for their depressed economic condition. But such subalterns' grievance was not incorporated into the movement and thereby a kind of duality was remained in it. 103 Pandey seems to agree with this view. Taking examples of three localities in Azamgarh district, he says, the leadership and heavy representation of upper-castes was the general pattern of those agitations. On the other hand, the untouchables and other depressed classes joined the movement but 'only when the signs indicated that the established authority had completely collapsed'. 104 He contends that this picture of the very limited participation 'provides an important perspective on the boundaries of the 'nation' and the nature of the

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102 Ibid., pp. 12, 15-16.
103 Stephen Henningham, 'Quit India in Bihar and the Eastern United Provinces', pp. 150-160.
104 Pandey, The Indian Nation in 1942, pp. 149-152.
ascendancy that the Congress had established.105 Ironically, while they criticise middle peasant thesis, explanation by Henningham and Pandey on the subalterns’ passive and negative character in participating in the movement was very similar to that on poor peasants by Hamza Alavi, who says ‘[h]e (poor peasant) finally and irrevocably takes the road to revolution only when he is shown in practice that the power of his master can be irrevocably broken and possibility of an alternative mode of existence becomes real to him’.106

As Pandey pointed out, message of the Congress and Gandhi were open to different interpretations. In Patkania of Ghazipur, villagers launched no-rent campaign, raided the Court of Wards office, and declared the village ‘independent’. They said ‘[t]he British Government has ceased to exist. Rents were not to be paid to the zemindars as it was Swaraj’.107 Some leaders of the Kisan Sabha were individually involved in the agitation, although the Kisan Sabha did not officially join the movement as it followed the policy of CPI. In Bhagalpur, despite the expectation of the Authority108, Jamuna Karjee actively participated in the agitation and was said to have instigated the attack on Pusa, a Government estate, in which a mob of about 300 people appeared at the Range Office and took away agricultural instruments on 14th August. They appeared again on the next day in larger number of 1,000 and set fire to the flax straw of 2,212 mounds.109 But such appropriation of the Congress message that would allow poor peasants to demand their interests did not happen as a general phenomenon. Even if kisans resorted to action to redress their economic condition, it was all the same

105 Ibid., p. 157.
107 Ibid., pp. 133-4.
108 T. A. Stewart, the Governor of Bihar, had wrote ‘Jamuna Karjee ... will oppose the Congress move even if it takes the form of a no-rent campaign’. From Stewart to Marquess Linlithgow, MSS, Eur. F 125/49, dated 11th Aug. 1942, Transfer of Power, Vol. II, p. 660.
against the British authority and their property that they targeted. Despite the absence of apparatus to maintain law and order, the depressed section of Kisan did not take advantage of the favourable situation to resort to radical actions as they did in the Bakasht struggle in late 1930s.

As we have already seen, Bakasht struggle and other developments in late 1930s showed a lot of signs of division in the class of Kisan. By the early 1940s, these divisions in the cultivating class had further deepened resulting in significant phenomenon as 'differentiation of the peasantry'. It seems that Kisan could no longer operate as a unified class. Henningham explains that the 'duality' prevented the Quit India Movement from taking shape of agrarian protest. This 'duality' should be understood in this context of the differentiation. This made it difficult for the Kisan to resort to a concerted effort as a class. However destructive the Quit India Movement was in its character, it developed within the Congress programme of all class inclusive movement against the British Raj. This could be testified by the geographical spread of the movement. Major incidents of the movement in Bihar were concentrated in the districts of north Bihar while the situation was less intensive except some sporadic cases in the district of the south of the Ganges, in which Kisan Sabha had been the most active in 1930s.

6.9 Reactivation of Agrarian Protests and Vanishing of Kisan

The Quit India Movement was a short interval for the lack of peasant agitation, which soon got reactivated and gained momentum. This is partly because of food crisis caused by steep rise in price of foodgrains. The prices once reached alarming level in 1943 and rose again in 1945-6. Especially the crisis of latter period began with the bad harvest of winter rice and it became more serious when the subsequent rabi of the year
also turned out to be not favourable. 'It was estimated that Bihar would run short of 8.5 thousand tons of foodgrain in 1946.' Another reason for the re-activation of peasant agitation was increase in land transfer. This happened partly because poor tenants could not help but selling their holdings due to the less beneficial high price for them. On the other hand zaminars wanted to convert those lands into either zirat or bakasht lands so that they would not lose their lands in the future zamindari abolition. 110

This situation became more critical as the second Congress ministry accelerated the plan of zamindari abolition. Landlords interfered with the tenancy right to avoid the loss of their ownership by claming to be owner-cultivators, by using the threatened lands as sites for erecting sugar mills, and by resettling the lands at higher rents with tenants. Those tenants who have lost their occupancy holdings were degraded to sharecroppers or landless labourers. 111 Thus a fertile ground was created for the revival of Bakasht struggle all over Bihar.

The area of Bakasht struggle in this period includes some areas which had experienced Bakasht struggle in 1930s. The mode of agrarian protest also indicated similar tactics such as forcible possession of landlords' bakasht lands and stealing of crops from the fields. In Bhabua subdivision, Shahabad district, which had a long history of enmity between tenants and landlords as we have seen before, 75 villages were involved in the agitation over the land of 20,000 acres. The Kisan Sabha, CSP, and the Radical Democratic Party joined hands to initiate Bakasht struggle. Zamindars retaliated by usual means of hired lathials and fire arms. Gaya district also observed typical type of Bakasht agitations on bhasoli lands as they had done before. Many cases of forcible cutting of crops were reported to the authority. In Monghyr

111 Ibid., pp. 322-4.
district too, tenants waged Bakasht struggle in some places including Barhiya Tal.\textsuperscript{112}

Districts of north Bihar saw more active Bakasht struggle than that of late 1930s. In addition to Bakasht agitations in Champaran and Muzaffarpur, very aggressive bakasht struggle erupted in Darbhanga district and continued all through 1946 and 1947. In Warisnagar P. S., Samastipur Subdivision, well known leader of the Kisan Sabha, Ramnandan Mishra, other socialists organized meetings, where, it was alleged, they proclaimed that zamindari system had already been abolished and instructed tenants to take forcible possession of all bakasht lands 'even if they (landlords) were in actual possession of such lands.' In March, 1947, the Khanpur estate was targeted by kisans, who took away the standing wheat crop and surrounded the kutchery in large number of 2,000 with arms of bhalas and garasas, and almost looted it. The S. D. O. also alleged that 'out of fear the landlords did not bring or institute cases in respect of some other offences committed by these persons.'\textsuperscript{113}

Far more aggressive activities against zamindars were seen in the Sadr Subdivision. 'A sort of guerrilla force' or 'gang' led by Ramlochan Singh, called 'Tiddi Dal', was wandering from village to village of this area and repeatedly attempted to loot the crop of zamindars. As the description of the group by a Police officer indicated, this party was supported by the local residents:

They suddenly go to fields of zamindars with a sickle, a 'Danta' and a rope of cutting and carrying away paddy and to offer resistance to those who stand in their way. They fall in on the call of bugle and whenever any police party is seen anywhere nearby, they disperse on hearing the bugle and disappear in the villages. With all the villages having some sympathies it is easy for them to conceal themselves and escape arrest.\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{112} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 325-9.
\textsuperscript{113} 876-C, from B. Sinha, S. D. O., Samastipur, to A. Prasad, the District Magistrate, Darbhanga, dated 4th Sep. 1947, File No. 6 (vi) of 1947, GB, BSA.
\textsuperscript{114} Memo No. 4426/SP dated 5th Dec. 1947, from S. A. Abbas, Superintendent of Police, Darbhanga, to the D. I. G., N. R., Muzaffapur, File No. 6 (vi) of 1947, GB, BSA.
Other kisans of this area also seems to have joined the looting itself and they often made even police parties be afraid. In a case occurred at village Mekha, where 'a big mob' collected from different villages looted the paddy on the lands of the Mahanth of Sonkiasthon, a Sub-Inspector 'feared that he might be overwhelmed' in the face of kisans' bold demand of releasing arrested man at least on bail.\footnote{Ibid.}

Thus, when the most awaited political desire, freedom from the alien rule, came true, Bihar was again seeing wide spread peasant agitation in 1946-7. However, this series of agitation was not as it was in 1930s. First of all, Kisan Sabha, the most important platform to organize Kisan, had experienced serious difficulty of division. Partisanship prevailing inside the AIKS led to the split into several rival organizations. When a controversy occurred at its Netrakona session in 1945 over the right of Muslim members' self-determination on the Pakistan issue, Sahajanand's 'disciplinary action' of suspending the work of Bengal Provincial Kisan Sabha and some district Kisan Sabhas, which demanded the right to the AIKS, was widely criticised. This deepened his distrust towards the Communist-dominated leadership over AIKS and also precipitated Sahajanand's alienation from it.\footnote{All India Kisan Sabha, Organizational Reportage, No. 1 of 1945-6, Report of the Ninth Annual Session of the All India Kisan Sabha, Netrakona: Mymensing: Bengal, 2nd to 9th April 1945, pp. 34-6, 48-65.} He finally left the AIKS and joined a rival Kisan Sabha, Hind Kisan Sabha, in the same year with Purshottamdas Tandon and several socialists and Forward Blockists. As a result, three separate Kisan Sabhas of, Communists, Socialists, and Sahajanand's group, actively waged each agitation in Bihar.\footnote{All India Kisan Sabha, Organizational Reportage, No. 1 of 1947-8, 21th September 1947, pp. 23-4.}

Secondly, by the time of Sahajanand's split from the AIKS, another divide based on
provincial boundary came to be created among kisans of central Gangetic Plain. As mentioned above, Bakasht struggle had revived in Bihar after the Quit India Movement. On 17th and 18th June 1944, a huge kisan rally of 25,000 was held at Lakhisarai of Monghyr district under the presidentship of Jadunandan Sharma. Sahajanand and Karyanand Sharma were also present. The rally passed several resolutions regarding cane and gur policy of the Government and the cess enhancement. In Gaya district, a training camp was opened for training Kisan Sabha workers of Jehanabad Subdivision, one of the hot-bed of Kisan agitation in Bihar. On the other hand, however, we can observe a contrastive feature of Kisan Sabha across the provincial boundary. Just 5 days before the huge Kisan rally at Lakhisarai, Sahajanand presided at the UP Provincial Kisan Conference held at Hathras of Aligarh district. But ‘[t]he total attendance was about 7,000 of which only 3,000 were kisans’. Several cultural programmes including ‘grow more food dance’, ‘staging of a drama on Bengal famine’, ‘village poets’ conference’, and ‘Bhooka Bengal’ (beggers’ Bengal) exhibition, were arranged on the occasion. Perhaps these ‘attractions’ were the last resort of UP Kisan Sabha to attract kisans by any means. As another report of AIKS admits, UP Kisan Sabha was ‘a weak Kisan Sabha organization . . . owing to serious political differences . . . ’ There were important issues of rising number of ejectment and sir land questions which was almost comparable to bakasht land question in Bihar. But all of the 26 district Kisan Sabhas were ‘not functioning properly’.

Thus, the category of Kisan, which was once formed as a class and waged a concerted action to push their united demands forward, no longer worked in the

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119 All India Kisan Sabha, Draft Report for 1944-45. Submitted by the General Secretary at its Ninth Annual Session held at Netrakona (Mymensingh, Bengal) on 8th and 9th April 1945, pp. 35-8.
central Gangetic Plain. It vanished in the midst of the 'differentiation of the peasantry', the political differences, and the emergence of provincial boundary as decisive framework to replace the regional delineation for the peasant formations.