

## PREFACE

This work is an indepth study of the 1919-1927 period of the national movement in Bihar. The existing writings on the national movement in Bihar have not adequately brought out the complexity of the movement and its varied facets and dimensions. The three volumes of K.K.Datta's work, *History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar*, do give valuable information on different aspects of the political movement but they are more like narratives of systematically arranged, chronological events and simple descriptive accounts of the freedom struggle. Besides, the work emphasizes the part played by the Congress and its leaders in the struggle with peripheral reference to peasant and tribal participation in the national movement. P.N.Ojha's edited book, *History of the Indian National Congress in Bihar, 1885-1985*, also gives a general account of the movement. Moreover, despite the significant contribution of the above works, many aspects of the national movement still remain relatively unexplored. Besides the writings on Bihar, the other existing studies on nationalism have also to a certain extent failed to bring out the complexity of the national movement. In most of the studies, the story of nationalism is built around the narration of certain well-known, memorable events. They give an account of the movement by isolating out of the great chaos of varying ideological events a simple thread, where nationalism is shown arising and moving to its destiny. This gives a very monolithic picture of the national movement.

The national movement, however, had varied streams. It stirred up feelings in many directions and unleashed a variety of protests. People got associated with the movement with different hopes, desires and aspirations, often bringing their own colour, style and expressions to it. The existing studies have failed to

adequately understand and assess the mass articulation of nationalism. Although in many works broadcasting of nationalist ideology has been analysed in considerable detail, there has been no intensive study as to how the people related to or assimilated nationalist ideology or what the popular perception of swaraj was. People adapted nationalist ideology to their own social and political needs based on their own world-views and experiences. Popular struggles converged with the national movement. There was a complex relationship between popular protest and nationalism. Peasants were in the forefront of nationalist agitation. But, the world of peasant nationalists or Gandhian politics of peasants have yet to be fully explored in studies on nationalism.

The movement, besides being marked by a series of popular protests, heralded resistance at different levels. People in a variety of positions taking wide ranging steps challenged the colonial powers. But to locate the other kinds of resistance one needs to broaden the definition of resistance. One has to consider the very processes by which colonial power is often challenged and eroded by the actions of the subordinated people. Sometimes commonplace actions within the bounds of legality or legitimate expression often undercut hegemonic projects and ideological presumption. It is the context and the consequences that render certain actions contentious. The other kinds of resistance become meaningful when one looks at the nationalist struggle as a hegemonic struggle. However, most of the studies have failed to highlight the significance of this hegemonic contest. In fact, it is in the weakening of the legitimacy or hegemony of the existing order that one can best understand the impact of certain phases of nationalist agitation on the world of subalterns. The basic objective of the movement was to destroy the notion that British rule could not be challenged, to create among the people fearlessness and courage and the capacity to fight and make sacrifice. It was also

to inculcate the notion that no people could be ruled without their consent. The mobilization of the masses would destroy those structures of domination through which the colonial government ensured its hegemonic dominance. Boycotts were the most effective means of undermining the prestige of the Raj. By refusing to collaborate with the “satanic” government, an epithet often used for unjust and oppressive government, Gandhi felt his compatriots might recover some of the self-respect and moral purity they had lost by allowing themselves to be subjected to foreign rule. The adverse impact of British rule was not only seen on the economy but also on society and culture. The struggle against British rule got linked up with the question of saving Indian civilization from British assault. It was also a contest to redefine and retrieve Indian cultural space vis-à-vis British cultural and ideological onslaught. The nationalists besides contesting British hegemony also indicated their own hegemonic ambitions in the form of constructive programmes, which would create the social and ideological bases for the future society. The movement charted a cultural domain and sought to forge a new national identity woven around the institutions of education, dress and indigenous judiciary through the medium of panchayats.

1919 to 1927 period of the national movement has been chosen for study for certain significant reasons. 1919 heralded a distinct era in the national movement. It was 1919 onwards that the masses began to associate with the movement. Non-Cooperation was the first mass based national movement which marked a fundamental transformation of the national movement. The study of the post Non-Cooperation Movement phase, that is, the 1922-27 period, would throw light on the so called “lull” phase of the movement. Generally, the long periods in between the mass movements have been a neglected area of study. But one cannot overlook the significance of the “lull” or “passive” phase of the movement. In this

phase, the forms of the movement changed but the anti-imperialist struggle continued. In fact both the phases, the active mass movement and the “passive” phase, were important and geared towards expanding the influence of the national movement among the people. Nationalists used both phases in their own way - to undermine colonial hegemony, to recruit and train nationalist workers and to build the people’s capacity for struggle.

The thesis begins with the Introduction which provides the geographical, caste and class configuration of Bihar. It traces the popular protest in Bihar in the early twentieth century. It also sketches the nationalist movement in Bihar from 1885 to 1919. Chapter One - Non-Cooperation Movement, 1920-22: An Overview - gives an outline of the Non-Cooperation Movement in Bihar. It discusses the different phases of the movement and the various issues-national and local-taken up by the movement as it intensified. The movement took different forms in different areas. It received impetus from social tensions, agrarian tensions and anti-indigo protest and also provided a vehicle for the expression of a variety of discontents. The government’s response to the movement is also critically assessed. Chapter Two - Boycotts: Contest for Hegemony - studies the various boycotts which were the crucial programmes of the Non-Cooperation Movement. The aim is to understand the nature of boycotts, their ideological thrust, the forms of campaign, the manner in which they spread in different areas and their impact on government authority. The study of various boycotts throws new light on the nature of the national movement, broadening its concept. It highlights the fact that the national movement was not merely a political struggle but was also a cultural and ideological encounter with the British. Chapter Three – Non-Cooperation: Contours of Popular Protest - looks at the nature of protest in the tribal and planters belt during the Non-Cooperation Movement. It focuses on how the

peasants and tribals interacted with and related to nationalism. An attempt has been made to delineate this process by associating it with popular perceptions of Indian nationalism. The peasants and tribals often transformed the codes of their nationalist leaders on the basis of their own world-views and experiences. This popular translation of nationalism pitted the peasants and tribals in a struggle not only against colonialism but also against their internal exploiters. Anti-feudal aspirations, for example, converged with the national movement. The peasants and tribals perceived swaraj as a millennium where all exploitation and oppression would come to an end. Chapter Four - Police and the Non-Cooperation Movement: Its Varied Trends - examines the interface of the subordinate police force, the constables who formed the bulk of the police force, with the mass based national movement. There was a visible trend in the movement of the nationalists trying to befriend the police. The movement succeeded in striking a sympathetic chord amongst the lower rungs of the police. The movement also became a vehicle for demonstrations of popular hostility against the police force. There were also police protests during the movement. In many places, the subordinate policemen also went on strike, demanding better service conditions. How does one look at the simultaneous existence of these varied trends during the Non-Cooperation Movement? In fact, the diverse responses were the manifestation of the same national movement which challenged British authority and its symbols of power. Episodes such as police protest have yet to be made a part of the contemporary reassessment of the national movement. Chapter Five - Non-Cooperation Movement: The Aftermath - looks at the post-non-cooperation phase of the national movement. The chapter examines the state of affairs in Bihar immediately after the Non-Cooperation Movement was withdrawn. It brings out the dilemma of the Congress leaders as to how to keep the nationalist fervour alive

after the withdrawal of the movement. Swarajist politics and constructive programmes were the main activities of the Congress during this period. The chapter studies the relevance of constructive programme to nationalist politics. Constructive work played a crucial role during the passive phase in filling the political void left by the withdrawal of the movement. It sustained a sense of activism in the non-mass movement phase of the struggle. This programme also had the advantage of involving a large number of people because it was within the reach of all. Chapter Six - Swarajist Politics - analyses the Swarajists' role in the Provincial Council and local bodies. The Swarajists used these bodies to advance the nationalist cause. The chapter also highlights the other significance of Swarajist politics which has not been the focus of most studies so far. This refers to the Swarajists' role in the elections and how their election campaigns furthered nationalist politics. The Swarajists used the elections to erode the hegemony of vested interest in these bodies. Besides, most of the works on Swarajist politics have concentrated on their role in the Provincial Council. Their role in the local bodies has so far not received much attention. This chapter also underlines the crucial role played by the local bodies in furthering the cause of nationalism.

I have consulted various sources. These sources range from official to non-official. Official sources comprise of Home Department Political Files (National Archives), Political Special Department Files, Freedom Movement Papers, Annual Reports on the Vernacular Newspapers and Periodicals and Police Abstract of Intelligence (Bihar State Archives), Intelligence Records and Special Section Files (CID Record Room, Patna) and official publications like the Census of India, District Gazetteers, Reports on Native Newspapers, Excise Administration Reports, Police Administration Reports, Annual Administration Reports and Legislative Council Proceedings (National Archives). Non-official

sources comprise of Newspapers and Periodicals, Private Papers of local leaders, (Manuscript and Microfilm section, NMML), Institutional Papers, (Manuscript section, NMML), Transcript of local leaders (Manuscript section, NMML) and Memoirs and Autobiographies of leaders. Proscribed pamphlets and nationalist songs were another valuable source.

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