CHAPTER 4
MAITHILI LANGUAGE AND THE MOVEMENT – I

Maithils became far more assertive about the rightful place for the status of their language – Maithili, from the beginning of 1920s. An exclusionary form of Maithili identity began to take shape with an attempt to develop a geopolitical identity on the basis of language. The contestation between Hindi and Maithili was more intense in this period, with the expansion as well as consolidation of Hindi as the national language of India. All the attempts to classify Maithili as a dialect of Hindi were fiercely opposed. Yet Hindi was not completely boycotted.

A number of journals and magazines were published solely for the purpose of developing Maithili and Mithila. Maithili Sahitya Parishad was established exclusively for the development of Maithili language and literature. This period was important in the history of Maithili movement because on the one hand Maithili protagonists were fighting against Hindi’s claim that Maithili was its dialect and on the other hand they were also fighting against the appropriation of many Maithili literary figures like Vidyapati, Govindadas by the Bengali literary elite.

The support base of the Maithili movement was expanding, as the size of modern educated middle class was increasing. People like Babu Bhola Lal Das, Pandit Umesh Mishra, Ramanath Jha, Maharaja Kameshwar Singh, Sir Ganganath Jha, Dr. Amarnath Jha, Tantranath Jha, Baldev Mishra and many others played a very important role in establishing Maithili as one of the modern Indian languages. A sense of Maithili identity was already growing for the previous three to four decades among the tiny middle class that was emerging since the beginning of modern education in Mithila. But in the 1920s and 1930s this class of Maithils become far more assertive and through the cultural celebrations like Vidyapati Parva, Kavi Sammelans and Janaki Navami they were able to mobilise a large number of Maithils for the cause of Mithila and Maithili.

In this chapter I will discuss: - how Maithili identity was evolving in comparison with Hindi and what kind of antagonism was developing between the two? How the social constituency of Maithili movement was broadening? How other caste groups in Mithila
responded to Maithili and Mithila movement? What was the status of women in Maithili discourse? What kind of newspapers and magazines were published and what was their stand on Maithili vis-a-vis Hindi?

4.1 Maithili and Bengali Literary Elite: Cooption and Cooperation

The classification of Maithili has always been contentious. How it was arbitrarily classified and confused with other languages can be understood from the following statement – ‘Throughout Company rule and the early colonial period Maithili remained poorly understood by European scholars. Looking westward from the company seat at Calcutta, Maithili (sometimes called Tirhuti) appeared to be a dialect of Bengali. Looking eastward from the former Mughal Imperial seat at Delhi, Maithili appeared to be a dialect of eastern Hindi.'

This created a lot of misconceptions and confusions among the philologists and language activists about Maithili in the nineteenth century. However, there was a closer affinity between Maithili and Bengali than between Maithili and Hindi. The contribution of many Bengalis in support of Maithili rightful claim as an independent modern Indian language is widely acknowledged in Mithila.

It was a Bengali Narendra Nath Gupta who first published the Padas of Vidyapati entitled *Vidyapati Padawali*. Bengali intellectuals were also aware of the rich literary heritage of Maithili. Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, at a meeting of Patna College *Maithili Sahitya Parishad* said that fifty and sixty years ago the condition of Maithili literature was far better than Bengali. But since then Bengali had been developing at a greater pace while Maithili was lagging behind.

The affinity of Maithili with Bengali and the indebtedness of Bengali to Maithili can be understood from the following statement of Suniti Kumar Chatterjee: - “The Brahmans of Mithila did not despise their mother tongue, and we have an unbroken literary record

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2 Like the role played by Sir Ashutosh Mukherjee, Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, Sukumar Sen, Narendra Nath Gupta, Mathura Prasad Dikshit and others in the promotion of Maithili language and literature.
3 This meeting was held in 1944 or 45 (?). The statement of Chatterjee is quoted in Welcome speech by Dr. Vishwambhar Jha, Chairman of the Reception Committee of the Seventeenth Session of *Akhil Bhartiya Maithili Sahitya Parishad* at Sarisab in 1968; see Smarika, *Akhil Bhartiya Maithili Sahitya Parishad*, Lakshmiwati Nagar (Sarisab Pahi) Session, chief ed., Sadan Mishra, Darbhanga, Nav Bharat Press Laheriasarai, 1968, p. 3.
in Maithili from the beginning of the 14th century, probably even earlier down to the present day. The earliest Maithili work which we have is the “Varna Ratnakar” of Jyotirishwar Thakur, who wrote during the last quarter of the 14th century. Vidyapati Thakur (end of 14th beginning of 15th century) is the greatest writer of Maithili. Vidyapati’s songs, on the love of Radha and Krishna are among the fairest flowers in Indian lyric poetry. These exerted a tremendous influence on the Vaisnava lyric of Bengal. They spread into Bengal and were admired and imitated by Bengali poets from the 16th century downwards.\(^4\)

However, in the early decades of twentieth century in Bengal there were attempts to appropriate many Maithili cultural and literary figures as Bengali. One such attempt was the claim that Vidyapati was a Bengali poet. Another such attempt concerned Govinda Das. Many of his poems was collected and published in Bengali and to prove that he was a Bengali scholar, poet and Vaishnav Bhakta and the contemporary of Shri Krishna Chaitanya Goswami, an imaginary biography of him was also published.\(^5\) But then again, there were many Bengali litterateurs who clarified through their meticulous research that Govinda Das was a Maithili poet. Ganganath Jha had expressed that it was proud moment for the Maithils that a developed language like Bengali felt the need to claim Maithili literary figures like Vidyapati and Govinda Das as their own and it was they who also proved that these poets were Maithils. And he considered it was an embarrassment for the Maithils for not investigating seriously their own literary figures. He commended the effort of Mathura Prasad Dikshit (a Bengali) in this regard for collecting and editing the _Padas_ of Govinda Das and providing a biographical account as well.\(^6\)

\(^4\) Quoted in the Presidential speech of Rambhadra Jha, at the third session of the _Maithili Sahitya Parishad_, 3 & 4 June, 1934, Laheriasarai, Maithili Sahitya Parishad, 1934.

\(^5\) Dikshit, Mathura Prasad, _Govind – Geetavali_, Ramlochan Sharan ed., Laheriasarai, Pustak Bhandar, n. d., p. 2, particularly see footnotes no. 1 & 2 on page 2 about the books published in Bangla, and footnote no. 1 on page 3 about his imaginary biography. Its publication must be after 1932 as this year is mentioned in the avedan written by Sir Ganganath Jha. In this work Dikshit does acknowledge the independent status of Maithili but find its close affiliation with Awadhi and not Magadhi. And he considered Bhojpuri also as a part of Awadhi. Was this classification meant to strengthen the claims of Hindi against these vernacular languages? Awadhi, Magadhi, Shoursheni and almost all the languages of India was considered to be originated from Prakrit. See pp. 17 – 18.

\(^6\) Ibid., avedan.
4.2 Cultural Celebrations: Vidyapati Parva Samaroaha and Janaki Mahotsva

Vidyapati Parva had played a key role in Maithili movement. Its celebration was used as a cultural tool for social and political mobilisation. Although, the growth of Maithili literature has been remarkable over the years, it was Vidyapati Parva which provided a platform for the many Maithils to come together and fight for the cause of Maithili and Mithila. Over the time the Parva had expanded the social base of the Maithili movement. Babu Bhola Lal Das and Rajpandit Baldeva Mishra was the main instigator of Vidyapati Parva. First time it was celebrated on 14 and 15 November 1929 at Saraswati Vidyalaya, Laheriasarai. In the beginning of the Parva only the life and works of Vidyapati – whether he was a Shringari poet or Bhakta, Shaiva or Vaishnawa or Shakta, etc – was discussed. But after the promulgation of the Indian constitution, cultural programmes particularly Vidyapati songs and Maithili dramas were also included.\(^7\) This period also witnessed the expansion and growth of Vidyapati Parva celebration. In the beginning this celebration was mainly to commemorate the contributions of Vidyapati to Maithili language and literature. But gradually the Parva began to symbolise the richness of Maithili culture and way of life. And the Parva has played a crucial role in the cultural life of Mithila. The objective of the Vidyapati Parva was also to show to the other linguistic groups the richness and the independence of Maithili language. Now, it is celebrated all around the country and also abroad wherever Maithils lived.

There was also an attempt to use a symbolic figure – in the form of Janaki (Sita, wife of Rama and daughter of King Janaka of Videha) to which all inhabitant of Mithila could emotionally connect. This kind of symbolic image has played a crucial role in the formation of imaginary of modern identities in the form of nation states in the different part of the world – like the idea of Bharat Mata in the context of Indian nationalism. Similarly in Mithila the image of Janaki was used to form an identity of Maithilness among all the inhabitants of Mithila. The celebration of Janaki Mahotsava\(^8\) in Mithila began in 1930s. Soon, it began to be celebrated in many parts of the region – which

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continues till date. *Maithili Drama, Rangmanch* and *Kavi Sammelan* had all played a critical in the construction of cultural sense of Mithila and Maithili.

### 4.3 Growth of Maithili Journalism and Its Readership

The 1920s witnessed the rise of growing numbers of Maithili journals and magazines which had the ostensible objective of only serving the interest of Maithili literature and Mithila. This era produced a number of towering figures in Maithili journalism and literature – Babu Bhola Lal Das, Bhuwaneshwar Singh ‘Bhuwan’, Surendra Jha ‘Suman’, Ramanath Jha, Prof. Krishnakant Mishra, Lakshamipati Singh and others. They also provided leadership to the Maithili movement. Many magazines like *Mithila Mihir, Mithila Moda* and *Maithil Hitsadhana* were published earlier. But these, particularly *Mithila Mihir*, were not confined exclusively to Maithili. They were more open towards other languages like Hindi and Sanskrit although in these magazines demands were made for the rightful place for their mother tongue – Maithili. The publication of *Shri Maithili* from 1925 under the combined editorship of Udit Narayan Das and Nand Kishor Das from Laheriasarai mark a clear shift in Maithili Journalism. Its tone became much radical. The editor of *Shri Maithili*, for instance, proclaimed –

> [The primary objective of Maithili publication is to publicise the richness of *Mithilabhasha*. ...it is our primary duty to protect and promote a language through which different emotions of pleasure, mourning, pride, hate first arise in our heart.]

Though this magazine was short lived, mainly due to the untimely death of its editor Uditnarayan Das, it set a new trend in the publication of Maithili journals and magazines. Now these magazines were published solely in Maithili language alone. The space for Hindi in Maithili magazines of this era were done away with. The magazine to succeed *Maithili* was *Mithila* from Vidyapati Press Laheriasarai in 1929 under the

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editorship of Babu Bhola Lal Das and Kusheshwar Kumar. The editorial policy of the magazine is reflected in the very first issue of *Mithila*, that includes the controversy in Mithila between old (*Puran*) and the modern (*Naveen*). In the words of publisher –

> वादि प्रतिवादि दुनू ए हम, खण्डन मण्डन छापब ||
> उचित दोष गुण जे क्री हिंकर, नहिं तकरा हम झीपब ||
> ‘कुमर’ पुरातन नीति निरंत छाडि, ‘दास’ नवीन समाजी ||
> अछि आशा, दुनू दुनू के, राखि सब दिन राजी ||

[We will publish the comments and remarks of both pro and against,
We will not hide the apt appraisal, whosoever may write,
‘Kumar’ is adherent of traditional, but ‘Das’ is modern socialist,
We wish that both shall convince each other for ever.]

**Figure 2: Cover Page of Mithila**

![Cover Page of Mithila](Source: Mithila, Year – 1, Issue – 8)

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10 *Mithila*, year 1, issue 1, Vaisakh, sal 1336, p. 1.
Its editorial comments reflect a peculiar interplay of linguistic identities between Maithili, Hindi, Bengali and also Bihari. The editor had cautioned that the loss of language was worse than political defeat. It is asserted in the magazine that through the loss of a language, a community can be totally defeated which might not be possible through political defeat. Maithili was believed to have richer literary tradition in early and medieval times than Bengali. But in modern times it was way behind Bengali. Many Bengali poets were considered to be the imitators of Maithili poets like Vidyapati. If such was the case, then the editor asked in surprise how within 60 and 70 years, Bengali had become a leading modern language in India while the status of Maithili was diminishing. He did not agree that Maithils in comparison to Bengali had a lesser attachment to Maithili. He mentioned that he himself had shown many documents in Mithilakshar and Mithila Bhasha\textsuperscript{11} fifty to sixty years ago. The medium of Sanskrit Tolas was Maithili and people used Maithili in all their activities. He acknowledged the role of English education in developing a sense of attachment with the mother tongue. Prior to the introduction of English education, people were not attached to Maithili with any intensity. The chief reason, according to him, for the unprecedented growth of Bengali was that Kolkata - being the capital of colonial India - had an advantage over other languages and regions. Marathi was also believed to be developed in the same way. But the very existence of Maithili was threatened. Gradually English, Urdu and Hindi consolidated itself in courts, schools, pathshalas, stations, hospitals, market, committees and associations, in other words, in almost all the public institutions and places. Maithili was further pushed into the household and to social occasions. This led to the belief about Maithili being household language with very little or no relevance in public life. Even in the household it was increasingly believed to be the language of the womenfolk. Thus Maithili was also being feminised. Mithilakshar was no longer in use even there. And it was believed that this was due to the ignorance and indifferent attitudes of Maithils. There were many Bihari scholars and Hindi supporters who were trying to classify Maithili as the dialect of Hindi and even in Mithila, Hindi were considered as the mother tongue. This created confusions among many Maithils who were made to believe that Maithili was merely a dialect of Hindi.

\textsuperscript{11} It is interesting that even in 1930s terms like Mithila Bhasha for Maithili was being used.
Against such a move it was reasserted by the protagonists of the Maithili movement that Maithili was older than Hindi. And it was not the language of Maithili Brahmans alone but all the inhabitants of Mithila – Shakaldwipi, Bhumihar, Rajput, Vaishya, Shudra, Muslims, Christians, Bengali, Marwari, and even Englishmen. However, they considered it a different matter that many of these castes did not accept Maithili as their mother tongue. For the protagonists of the Maithili movement the greater threat to Maithili was those Maithils who also believed that Maithili was merely a dialect of Hindi. This does not mean opposition to Hindi. The editor of the magazine had expressed that there was no struggle between Hindi and Maithili. He considered it more satisfactory if Vidyapati was considered a Bihari rather than a Bengali. Those Hindi supporters, who were afraid that the growth of Maithili could threaten the expansion of Hindi, were cautioned that this kind of attitude could give rise to an opposition to Hindi and not the other way round.

One important and bold move made through the publication of magazines in this period was gradually moving away from the dependency on the landlords and the Maharajas (though there were attempts to seek their patronage as well) and seeking the support of the common Maithili speakers. Its shows the rise of middle class in Maithili society and their growing self confidence and belief in the common Maithils. This shift also reflects their aspiration for directly engaging with the Maithili speakers and winning their support. The main purpose of the Mithila was said to be the struggle for the proper place of Maithili among the Modern Indian Languages. Although, Mithila was supposed to be a literary magazine, it covered social and religious issues as well.\textsuperscript{12}

Many Maithils who studied Hindi, Sanskrit and English, were not working equally for the promotion of their mother tongue, although they spoke Maithili in their informal conversations. Even among these it was only two castes – Maithil Brahmans and Karna Kayasthas – who were worried about the status of Maithili. The Maithil Mahasabha was considered the chief reason for that. Though the other castes spoke Maithili they did not associate themselves in the Maithili movement. Hence, it was felt that efforts should be made to get their co-operation.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{12} Mithila, year 1, issue 1, Vaisakh, sal 1336, pp. 2 – 7.

\textsuperscript{13} Jha, Murlidhar, ‘Mithila Bhasha’, in Mithila, year 1, issue 1, Vaisakh, sal 1336, pp. 11 – 14.
the people of Ara and Chhapra in Bihar, which was based mainly on their jealousy of Maithili and Mithila-Desha.\textsuperscript{14} The people of Ara and Chhapra had already adopted Hindi as their language at the cost of their own vernaculars. They considered the insistence of the Maithili’s supporters for the consideration of Maithili as a language independent of Hindi, unwarranted. They were also of the view that Maithili as modern language was too uncultivated to be fit for modern education. When the number of Maithili students increased in Patna University, a committee was formed to get recognition of Maithili in Patna University. To oppose such a move, an essay “Bihar me Mithila Bhasha” (Mithila Bhasha in Bihar) was published in the magazine Desha, which was published from Patna. In the article it was stated that there was no existence of a Mithila province let alone the language. What was contemporary Maithil was not the same as the ancient Maithil. Though, the existence of Maithil was acknowledged, the author asserted that during the Magadh annexation of Mithila they all became one and now they were all Biharis and that Hindi was their mother tongue with Bihar as their Desha (country). It was interesting to note that the author of this essay claimed himself a Maithil.\textsuperscript{15} For those who opposed Maithili the main reasons of oppositions were three:

1. Maithili is part of Hindi and its progress will hamper the growth of Hindi;
2. Maithili literature is poor and for the people of Bhagalpur, Champaran and others, learning Maithili would be as difficult as learning Hindi;
3. There is a possibility that Maithils on the basis of their different language would claim a separate province and because of the similarity of scripts with Bengali, they could even be included in Bengal.\textsuperscript{16}

The underlining assumption of this opposition was not just the support of Hindi but also a fear of the difference of Maithili and Mithila. Compounded with this was the fear that Mithila might demand territorial separation, a suspicion that stiffened their political opposition to Maithili. Against such opposition, Patna Maithili Samiti sought the

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Possibly he was Janardan Mishra of Munger who opposed the promotion of Maithili while accepting Hindi and working for its promotion in Bihar.
\textsuperscript{16} Cited in Jha, Bhuvaneshwara and Ramanath Jha, ‘Bihar mei Mithila Bhashak Stathan’, in Mithila, year 1, issue 1, Vaiksh, sal 1336, p. 18.
opinions of seven scholars of repute which included Sir Ganganath Jha\textsuperscript{17}. These scholars unanimously supported the claim of Maithili to be recognised as an independent language. It was believed that the sacrifice of one’s mother tongue for the sake of the national language would threaten the very existence of the Maithils, especially when the literary traditions in Maithili has been so rich with Vidyapati, Umapati, and Harshnath as its great literary figures. For the promotion of Maithili the followings demands were made:

1. There should be the establishment of a “Maithili Sahitya Parishad” at Darbhanga and Maithili scholars should be requested to write books in Maithili and give it to the Parishad.

2. As Maithil Mahasabha was the only big organisation for Maithils, it should pass a resolution to ask the government to include the teaching of Maithili in Patna University.

3. Associations should be set up in different regions and demands should be made to the government for the same purpose and the Darbhanga District Board should be requested to open at least one primary school in Maithili medium.

4. If necessary a deputation should be sent to the Minister of Education and Vice Chancellor of Patna University for the recognition of Maithili on behalf of the Maithil Mahasabha.

5. A Maithil Samiti should be established in every city and everyone should participate in its activities.\textsuperscript{18}

In the issues of Mithila the concerns of women’s education, child marriage, polygamy, and unequal marriage were also raised. The famous novel of Shri Harimohan Jha, \textit{Kanyadan} was first published in serialised from in Mithila (Darbhanga, 1929). This novel provided the much needed readership in Maithili. This helped in the further expansion of Maithili literary sphere and common speakers of the language began to associate themselves with the literary production in Maithili. But they remained by and

\textsuperscript{17} Ganganath Jha was a great scholar of Sanskrit, vice chancellor of Allahabad University and also a champion of Maithili language. For details about him see the appendix on the short biography of Maithil intellectuals.

\textsuperscript{18} Jha, Bhuwaneshwara and Ramanath Jha, sal 1336, pp. 18 – 19.
large indifferent towards the Maithili movement. In other words the protagonists of the Maithili movement could not sufficiently harness the interest of the common Maithili speakers in Maithili literature or literary activities. But contribution of Kanyadan in terms of creating a reading public in Maithili was very significant.\(^{19}\)

There were various attempts to reform Maithili society as well. There is a report published in *Mithila* about the constitution of the *Akhil Bharatiya Maithil Yuvak Samiti*, Calcutta (Kolkata) under the chairmanship of Kumar Ganganand Singh and Pandit Rambhadra Jha. The apparent purpose of this committee was to bring equality in Maithili society through social, political and economic growth. How far this attempt was successful is hard to assess due to lack of any report on this in the further issues of *Mithila*? However, such attempt shows the willingness of the leaders to bring social reforms in Mithila.\(^{20}\)

There is a report in *Mithila* about the *Mithilaksharankan Prabandhak Samiti* Laheria Sarai, Darbhanga. Its chairman was Pt. Jeevanath Rai. The committee was involved in getting a *Mithilakshar* typesetting prepared from Kolkata based on modern Bangla script.\(^{21}\) There was also a report about the existence of *Maithil Karna Kayastha Mahasabha* in Darbhanga.\(^{22}\) This was probably on the lines of *Maithil Mahasabha*, but it was meant for Kayasthas only. This shows that caste remained the organising principle in Mithila even when the Maithili language movement was increasingly gaining ground.

In the twentieth session of the *Maithil Mahasabha* at Munger, Pt. Janardan Mishra, a Professor at Patna College, refuted the importance of Maithil, *Mithila Bhasha*, Mithila *Desha* and *Mithilakshar* in his speech and said that to make efforts for their progress would be a worthless exercise.\(^{23}\) By this time the *Mahasabha* had lost its popularity.

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19. There was a practice of reading *Kanyadan* in Maithili speaking area where a literate person used to read it out for the group of illiterate persons. The interest in the work shown by the masses was unprecedented in the world of Maithili literature. Later on a film was also made out of this novel by the same name in 1970s.

20. Those who wanted the membership of this committee were asked to send their application to the Mantri of the committee on following address 208, Harish Mukherjee Road, Kalighat, Kolkata. It was also advertised that Maithils could give financial assistance to the committee through Gopi Raman Jha of Mangarauni. For details see *Mithila*, year 1, issue 1, Vaisaksh, sal 1336, p. 38.


Very few people had come to this session from the other districts of Mithila. It was even called Munger-Zila-Sabha. Searchlight and Desha were very critical of this session and in Desha it was mistakenly written that the demand of Maithili was rejected and the Maithil Mahasabha ended with the triumphant acceptance of Hindi. Contrary to this report, resolutions regarding the promotion of Mithila Bhasha and publication of Maithili books and magazines were passed besides others relating to social and religious reforms in Mithila. Even a subcommittee was constituted for this purpose. In his presidential address, the Maharaja of Darbhanga stressed the need to preserve and promote Maithili and Mithilikshara but he also accepted the necessity of learning Hindi. He said –

मैथिल के मैथिली के उन्नयन कस्बे एका ई तत्त्वयों वक्ता जो हिन्दी को देता है नहीं भव सकिया जो हिन्दी को देता है नहीं भव या अन्या भवकाल करने जा रहा। समय आता रहल आता जो सब से शिक्षा स्थान साहित्यिक क्षेत्र में हिन्दी की देता है उसके सो तलाक। अंक समय देता वार्ता अनिवार्य रूप से देता है प्रकाश को कर्मधे अच्छे संगीत है मैथिली के विषय से मैथिलनक्षु से यथिय प्रस्ताव ते मैथिल की ध्यान देता अत्यन्त नायकक

[Maithils should promote Maithili. But it does not mean that Hindi is of no value and we should disrespect it. The time is coming when Hindi alone will be accorded the major place in the field of literature. Its growth, as per available time, is the compulsory duty of every one, at the same time forgetting Maithili will devoid us from Maithiliness. So it is indispensable for the Maithils to focus on Maithili and Tirhuta.]

There were many Maithil writers who used to write in Hind as well and Babu Bhuwaneshwar Singh ‘Bhuwan’ was trying to compile a directory of Maithil poets and writers of Hindi. However, how Hindi was understood by the Maithils, especially women, can be understood from the following exchange in Kanyadan, a novel written by Harimohan Jha. A postman in Khakhi dress approached a household where the male members were absent. Just his dress terrified the women of the household. When he

24 Mithila, year 1, issue 2, Jyestha, sal 1336, p. 42.
25 Ibid., p. 43.
26 Ibid., p. 44.
asked - "पंडो भोलानाथ ज्ञ ने के नाम से एक तार आया है। कोई अन्दर से आकर ले जाईए?", [in Hindi – A letter has come for Pt. Bholanath Jha. Someone should come from the inside and collect], an old lady replied to this - "तार आया है त दरबज्झे पर रह दीजिए। एकसती आक्न में क के उठा आनेगा." [in Maithili mixed Hindi – If the letter has come then let it be at the door. Someone will bring it to the inner courtyard of the house.] Here what is evident is that though the women of the household understood the Hindi statement of the postman, was unable to reply in Hindi. And in her reply Maithili words, syntax and sentence structure is quite evident.

Darbhanga Raja was criticised by Mithila for his token sympathy for Maithili. It concluded that the contribution of the Raj to the promotion of Maithili was very little. However, in the Munger session of the Maithili Mahasabha, Maharaj Kumar Kameshwar Singh, who was present on behalf of his father, made two points which became the guiding force for the Maithili movement. The – first was कियाकेवलमुकारिण (work alone is the answer) while the second claimed संघर्षाचितः कल्याणे (organisation is the only power in Kaliyuga). Against those educated Maithils who became critical and indifferent towards Mithila and Maithili, there was growing contempt which is well captured by the poet Janardan Jha ‘Janaseedan’ in the following words –

जे निज देश के ज्ञान के रखलिंह, नहीं किखु उन्मति कैलिङ़ह।

निजभाषा–प्रचारदिश कहियो, ध्यान करैको देललिङ़ह।

उलटे निजदेश के निधि के अर्थ भार सिर लेलिङ़ह।

"जनसीदन" से वृथा जन्म ले, माता की दुख देललिङ़ह।

जी मिथिलावासी चाहिय, निजदेशमहत्व क रख।

जी चाहिय हो उच्च साहित्यों अपन समाज क कः।

जी निजभाषा शेष भाव पर राखः अनुदेदि ध्यान।

‘जनसीदन’ तैतेन बुझकाढिक निज देश क उत्थान।"

[Those who did not keep the knowledge of their country, did not develop at all,

Those who did not care for the promotion of their own language,

Instead condemning own country they earned contempt,

28 Jha, Harimohan, ‘Kanyadan’, in Mithila, year 1, issue 2, p. 76.
29 Ibid., p. 60.
30 Ibid., p. 70.
For ‘Janseedan’ their birth was worthless, and only caused pain to mother,
If Mithilavasi want the protection of the importance of their country,
If they want the status of their own country higher than the others,
When they consistently consider the importance of their own language,
apparel and emotions,
For Janaseedan, only then it is to be understood that country will grow.]

In this period we find that on many occasions even Magadhi was considered a branch of Maithili.31 The Maithili protagonists were claiming that, in principle, Maithili alone could be considered as a language in Bihar and Hindi was certainly not a language of Bihar. ‘Pure’ Maithili was supposed to be spoken in north and south part of Madhubani sub-division but the total number of Maithili speakers was considered to be more than a crore. It was claimed that in North Bhagalpur, West Purnia, East Muzzafarpur, North Munger, and in whole of Darbhanga, a pure form of Maithili was in circulation. But in south Bhagalpur, Munger and in some part of Santhal Pargana a perverted form of Maithili was spoken. It was called the *chhika chhiki* dialect of Maithili.32 Referring to the census report of 1921 they demanded that the speakers of Maithili, Magadhi and Bhojpuri should be clubbed together and this would take their total number to more than two and half crores.33 Ironically the editor was aware that the refined form of ‘dialect’ could be developed into a language and so the language, through perversion over time, might be reduced to ‘dialects’. And he also believed that transformation of language into ‘dialects’ and dialects into ‘language’ were common and obvious.34 Again and again it was asserted that in Bihar though the number of Oriya, Bengali and Urdu speakers was 77 lacs, 16 lacs, and 18000 respectively, all these languages were recognised by the Patna University with their scripts but Maithili having more than a crore of speakers had been denied such recognition.35 They believed that for the

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31 *Mithila*, year 1, issue 3, p. 86; here the opinion of George Grierson is also cited where he said “‘Magahi, indeed might very easily be classed as a sub dialect of Maithili, rather than as a separate dialect’.”
32 *Mithila*, year 1, issue 3, p. 84 – 89; now there is growing demand by the speakers of these ‘dialects’ to be considered as a separate language.
33 Ibid., p. 88.
34 Ibid., p. 87.
35 *Mithila*, year 1, issue 4, Shrawan, sal 1337, p. 1.
progress of Maithili four things were important – first, recognition of Maithili in provincial University and creation of syllabus; second, establishment of Mithilakshar press; third, publication and propagation of Maithili books; and finally, management of magazines and journals.\textsuperscript{36} On the occasion of coronation of Maharajadhiraja Kameshwara Singh Bahadur \textit{Maithil Mahasabha} sent an \textit{abhinandan patra} (felicitation letter) in which he was expected to help in fulfilling two extremely important demands of Maithils – first, an ‘English’ college for higher education in Darbhanga; and second, recognition of \textit{Maithila Bhasha} in Patna University.\textsuperscript{37}

There was growing concern among the Maithils to look into the reasons for the degraded status of Maithil society. The chief reason for this was considered the poor condition of women and the caste division.\textsuperscript{38} Demands were also made about defining a uniform writing style in Maithili. But in response to that it was asserted that what was needed at that time were more and more writings in Maithili, and over a period of time, a distinctive, standard maithili style would develop on its own.\textsuperscript{39}

The sixth issue of \textit{Mithila} was very important. The tussle between tradition and modernity revived between the editors – Kumar and Das. Kumar seems to support traditional mores, \textit{Parda} system, \textit{Varnashram}, and accommodating ‘modern’ elements in such a way that it could not challenge the tradition. On the other hand, Das was very radical in his approach. He went on to criticise \textit{Varnashram} system and the present condition of women and lack of education in caste Hindu society, which according to him, was the chief reason for their degraded condition. He went on to discuss the socialist revolution and its appropriateness. He emphasized the role of youth in social upliftment.\textsuperscript{40} In his opinion society could no longer be controlled through religion. And, the standardisation of language was thought to be necessary for social organisation.\textsuperscript{41}

The growing consciousness about Maithili was reflected in the following assertion of

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p. 138.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p. 158.
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Mithila}, year 1, issue 5, Bhadra, sal 1337, p. 188.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., p. 226.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Mithila}, year 1, issue 6, Ashwin, sal 1337, pp. 230 – 237.
\textsuperscript{41} Jha, Ramanath, ‘Maithil o Maithili’, in ibid., p. 247.
Ramanath Jha, and it also gives a glimpse of Hindi – Maithili relationships of that period as well –

मातृभाषा प्रबंध से शिक्षा में वृद्धि होगात्। दिल्ली में हम हिन्दू कहाय हिन्दी बाज़ब परंच पटना में मैथिल कहाय मैथिली कियॊक नहीं बाज़ब?\textsuperscript{42}

[With the promotion of mother tongue there will be expansion of education. In Delhi being called Hindu we will speak Hindi, but why we should not speak Maithili and be called Maithil in Patna?]

*Mithila* was very radical and courageous in its opinion about social reforms. It consistently supported the cause of women education. Similarly issues like abolition of *Parda*, unmatched marriage, child marriage, widow re-marriage, were raised against stiff challenges from the traditional forces in the society. There was an interesting episode regarding the Sharda Act (1929) and its reactions in Mithila. Maithil Brahmins were very critical of this act as it rose the minimum age of marriage for the girls. Their critique of this act was supposedly based on scriptures. They did not oppose the Act in any organised way as some Muslims did. But due to the fear of this act, it was reported that more than 300 marriages were to take place in December 1929 among the Shrotriya Brahmins. All girls above three years of age were to be married. *Mithila* categorically criticised such move of the Maithil Shrotriya Brahmins.\textsuperscript{43} It was quite vocal in its critique of the ill practices of Maithil society.

A meeting was organised by Patna University on “*Maithil Kavi Govindadas Jhak Kavita Kshetra mei Mahatva*” (Importance of Maithil poet Govindadas in poetry). This meeting was chaired by Sachidananda Sinha and the Patna University Registrar was also present. Narendra Nath Gupta presented his essay on the topic. In this meeting no renowned Maithils took the trouble to attend while many Maithil students were present. More importantly, Dr. Sinha in the meeting said that, in Bihar if literature was available to any language, it was *Mithila Bhasha*.\textsuperscript{44} But his later opposition to Maithili’s recognition by Patna University made Maithili speakers suspect the political motives of the Bihari elite and its leaderships. In fact Sachidananda Sinha later went on to say that

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p. 248.

\textsuperscript{43} *Mithila*, year 1, issue 8, Agahan, sal 1337, pp. 314 – 318.

\textsuperscript{44} *Mithila*, year 1, issue 9, Paush, sal 1337, p. 392.
Maithili was merely a language of a few Lal’s and Das’s (चंद लाल दासों की भाषा है). This infuriated Maithil representatives and encouraged many to make serious efforts for the recognition of Maithili; an important activist among them was Babu Bhola Lal Das.

Akhil Bharatiya Maithil Yuvak Sammelan Adhaidenga (Maldaha) on 9, 10, and 11 November 1929 was new development in the Maithili movement. This Sammelan was attended by the Maithil representatives of Bihar, Samyukta Pranta, Bengal, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Rajputana, Bombay and Madras. Kumar Ganganand Singh was the chairman of the Sammelan. It developed a new interest among the Maithils of Bhagalpur, Purnea, Munger and Santal Pargana. The Maithil Yuvak Sangha was organised on a large scale. All the proceedings of the Sammelan were conducted in Maithili and there were many resolutions passed for the promotion of Maithili language. However, the Sammelan was not confined to discussions on Maithili language and literature. The social, political and economic condition of Mithila and its improvements were also discussed. The main focus of the Sammelan was on the social reforms – particularly reforms in marriages, untouchability, and prospect of alignment with Hindu Mahasabha. It should be noted that Maithil activists, in the beginning, were very critical of the reformist policies of the Hindu Mahasabha.

Mithila Mitra was published from Patna. In an article entitled “Maithili Sahityonnatik Upay”, Pulakit Lal Das ‘Madhur’ provided a plan for the promotion of Maithili and the protection of the interest of Maithils and Mithila. According to him, Maithili was reduced merely to an oral language by the increasing use of Hindi and English. In a magazine called Desha a series of essays by the name of “Bihar mei Mithila Bhasha” sought to prove the inappropriateness of Maithili. And it was only Babu Bhola Lal Das who tried to respond to such misgivings other Maithils did not take any serious note of that. The need for an independent literary organisation was also felt by the Maithili protagonists which was supposed to work on the line of Hindi Sahitya Sammelan. There was the plan for the establishment of branches of such organisation in all the main parts of Mithila. Provision for the distribution of awards, certificates and titles were also sought and discussed. The provision for the conduct of examination at government colleges, high and middle schools and other appropriate place was also demanded. The

organisation was supposed to have following branches – *Nibandha, Sahitya, Prachar, Pariksah* and *Anveshan*. Then there was stress on the creation and publication of all genres of literature in Maithili including translations and text books for other subjects of learning. The organisation was supposed to launch a serious movement for the recognition of Maithili by Patna University and Sanskrit Association and also for the inclusion of Maithili as a medium of instruction in the primary education. The need for the publication of Maithili songs and *Keertans* and the correct edition of Vidyapati’s and Chanda Jha’s writings, preparing a list of present and old Maithili unpublished books and their publications, preparing a detailed history and geography of Mithila, a history and geography of India in Maithili, establishment of *Maithili-Natak-Mandali* were also discussed. Like Bangla language and ‘*Sasta Sahitya Mandal Ajmer*’ Maithili books were also to be published and distributed at relatively cheap prices. To attract common Maithils to study Maithili, a compilation of essays on its utility was also expected to be prepared by the Maithili speaking Sanskrit and English scholars. And it was believed that with the support and contribution of rich Maithils, within a year, thousands of good books could be published in Maithili. 

*Bharati* was another very important Maithili magazine was published by the *Maithili Sahitya Parishad*. Babu Bhola Lal Das was its editor. The magazine became identical with the Maithili movement of this period. It played an important role in the fight for the recognition of Maithili in Patna University. Nevertheless, there were competitive clashes now and then between *Bharati* and *Vaidehi*. Once it resulted in a legal battle between the editors. But this only shows the growing dynamism of Maithili journalism.

There was an essay – ‘*Maithilik Maang*’ (Maithili’s Demand) in the first volume of *Bharati* which was published by Thakur Surya Narayan Singh. 

He was the headmaster of the Training School, Muzzafarpur. In this essay he mentions the following demands of Maithili – the establishment of *Rashtrasabha*, free primary education through Maithili medium, appointment of preachers for the promotion of Maithili, the need to make Maithili the official language of Mithilesh (Maharaja of Darbhanga was affectionately called Mithilesh as well) and to make the knowledge of Maithili compulsory for the each member of the official staff of the state, the establishment of a registered Maithili *Vidvatparishad* (Committee of the scholars) for the translation in Maithili from different languages texts and finally creation of One

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46 Ibid.
lakh rupees fund, was suggested to the Maharaja, for the development of Maithili language. These only suggest the growing consciousness among the Maithili speakers about their language and the formulation of the demands on the basis of that. But, how far such demands were pursued by them is hard to ascertain?

When the Wardha Scheme - in which the significance of mother tongue in primary education was deliberated – was set up, the Maithili Sahitya Parishad was also asked to share its view on the matter. Parishad gave its opinion in favour of the use of mother tongue in primary education. When this was accepted as a policy Bharati considered it as a golden opportunity for Maithili. It also cautioned the Maithili supporters. For Bharati it was an opportunity for the Maithils to assert that their language was Maithili and not Hindi or Bengali. It cautioned the Maithils that if they missed this opportunity, then it would pave the way for the hegemony of Hindi supporters in Maithili speaking area. There was a column by the name of Jhajiki chitthi in Bharati which gives the glimpse of the indifferent attitude of common Maithil speakers and inter rivalry of Maithili magazines in that period. It was about the policies and status of Mithila Moda, Mithila Mihir, Bharati and Vibhuti –

मिहिर के विषयमुद्र मैथिलीक पत्र कोना बनाऊल जाय? एक बात और छेक केवल मैथिली रहने लोक कैं हिंदी सिखावक अपसरे कोना मेट्टेक? हमर बिघार पुरस्क जाय त मिहिर मे अंग्रेजी, उर्दू, बंगाला सबके जोड़ी देशक चाही अनंत्या ऑकार सब समाज पर एक रंग कृपा रखनिहार रज दर्मंगाक पत्र कहेंबाक योग्यते के सहतै? अन्याय तीनु पत्र पदि केवल मैथिलीकः अपनैने अछ, त ऑकार कारणे प्रत्येके छेके जे भिन्नी संस्कृत के मूल नियम और भारती कायस्थक और मिहिरक बात भिन्न छेक? 

[How could Mithila Mihir, be made into a purely Maithili newspaper? There is one more thing, if there were only Maithili, then how would people get the opportunity to learn Hindi? If my views are solicited then I will suggest that English, Urdu, Bangla should also be given space in Mihir, otherwise how can it protect the credential of being the Raj Darbhanga’s newspaper, with equal respect for all? If the other three newspapers are to stick to Maithili, then their reasons are also obvious that it is Vibhuti which is the Sotriya’s newspaper, Moda is of Brahmin’s, and Bharati is of Kayastha’s and Mihir’s condition is different.]

49 Bharati, p. 435; cited in Ibid., p. 414.
50 Bharati, p. 138; cited in Ibid., p. 415.
Mithila Mihir was criticised for its linguistic policies. It was believed that it was a Hindi paper with marginal space for Maithili. From 1930 English was also incorporated in it. It was ridiculed by saying that this trilingual – world language, national language and provincial language - paper now should also include Urdu.\textsuperscript{51} In this period a film on Vidyapati was shown by the New Theatres in which his character was apparently ridiculed. In protest, a subcommittee was formed. In its meeting on November 23, 1937 a protest letter was sent to New Theatres and the Censor Board, Bengal and Bihar.\textsuperscript{52} These all shows the growing sense and assertion of identity among the Maithils.

Mithila Moda was published again under the editorship of Upendranath Jha. He was the nephew of the former editor of Mithila Moda, Mahamahopadhyaya Murlidhar Jha. He was earlier associated with the Mithila Moda. It again tried to form the required co-operation among the different magazines published in Maithili, which it thought extremely important for the development of Maithili literature. In one of the issues it stated –

करूँ 'विभुति' गाथ पर राखूँ, जिज्ञा उपर 'भारती' थीर।
सेबू 'मिहिर' क फिरण, किन्तु हो बिनु मोटक नहिँ पुनः शरीर।\textsuperscript{53}

[Keep ‘Vibhut’ on the head and let ‘Bharati’ remain on the tongue,
Serve the rays of ‘Mihir’, but growth will be incomplete without Moda]

Mithila Moda refuted all the attempts to reduce Maithili to a particular caste.\textsuperscript{54} It shows the aspiration of Maithili protagonists to forge a collective identity on the basis of language. Published from 1936 to 1941, Mithila Moda provided the platform for Baidyanath Mishra ‘Yatri’, Dr. Kanchinath Jha ‘Kiran’, Upendra Thakur ‘Mohan’, Kashinath Thakur ‘Kalesh’ and others. It received the co-operation of all the renowned Maithili writers of that time and played a critical role in the development of Maithili movement through the promotion of Maithili Diwas, Janaki Navami, and Vidyapati Smriti Diwas etc. In the presidential speech of the special session of Maithili Sahitya Parishad at Sitamadhi, Rajpandit Baldeva Mishra a great champion of Maithili language and literature expressed the interdependent relationship between the

\textsuperscript{51} Mithila, year 1, issue 12, Chaitra, sal 1337, pp. 413 – 414.
\textsuperscript{54} Mithila Moda, new edn., Udgar – 6, p. 24; cited in Ibid.
readership and standard literary works. He went on to assert that without taking into account the interest of masses, in Maithili, no publishers and writers could flourish. And according to him this could be done through proper publicity. Though, he was not satisfied with the standard and number of publications in Maithili, but acknowledges the gradual growth of it, wherein three journals were published simultaneously. He envied, in this regard, the publication of Oriya magazines and journals which according to him were publishing more than one hundred and fifty journals and magazines within one and half years of the separation of Bihar (in 1936). He was also not satisfied with the standard of Maithili magazines (Here he was referring to ‘Vibhuti’ published by Bhuwaneshwar Singh ‘Bhuwan’ where the editor brought his personal enmity with the Maharajadhiraja of Darbhanga in the magazine and published some disgraceful remarks against him). He did not want such magazines to do well. However, he expressed that other magazines in Maithili needed promotion and protection. Expressing his opinion about Maithili movement he said –

[Though our movement has been started late, and also very little work has been done, yet it is discussed throughout the province and some people still protest against us under the sway of nationalism. Look at the speech of Rahuljee (Rahul Sankrityayan), the President of the recently held District Hindi Sahitya Sammelan in nearby Muzaffarpur. It makes us believe that as soon as Maithili is recognised, the provincial status of Bihar would be jeopardised. This objection of our opponent is quite old. We are not frightened by that. If the people of Bihar do not respect Maithili, if they do not sympathise and cooperate with us, then what is the use of such a province for us? Why should we not launch a movement for independence? Not just hope, but I believe that the wise leaders of Bihar would not let such a situation to arise.]

He was clearly explaining not just the status and gradual development of the Maithili movement but also cautioning the leaders of Bihar and Hindi supporters that if they did not recognise and appreciate the Maithili language, then it could lead to the demand for a separate statehood for Mithila. *Mithila Moda’s* contribution in this sense was commendable as it fearlessly gave coverage to such issues and expressions.

*Vibhuti* was published by Bhuwaneshwar Singh ‘Bhuwan’ from the Vaishali Press, Muzzafarpur. It too was a short lived magazine, published from 1937 to 1938. The stated purpose of the magazine was to contribute to the social progress of Mithila and Maithili through impartial and fearless publications.\(^{56}\) The fearlessness of the magazine was made known in the very first issue when it categorised *Maithili Sahitya Parishad* as a Kayastha organisation and its magazine *Bharati* as *Kaithini Patrika* (Kayastha’s magazine) and by cautioning against its false claims and hollowness.\(^ {57}\) It also criticised the *Maithil Mahasabha* and the Maharaja of Darbhanga. At the reader’s page it was written—

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\text{स्मलग राख, निर्गुलि करके से नहीं खोलनिहर समक पोल खोलनिहर एक निर्मित पत्र थीक। लल्ले–कण्णो में ई नहीं पड़ता। समक विषय में निर्मेय बात कहता। अधिकार के हेतु शाजित नहीं लड़ता।}\(^ {58}\)

[Remember that ‘Vibhuti’ is not afraid of anyone, and is a whistleblower, a fearless newspaper. It will not indulge in false admiration. It will publish unbiased reports on every issue. It will fight for rights as per its capacity.]

It gave the details of the further special issues of *Vibhuti*, which were—

1. Kathank,
2. Kavitank,
3. Sahityank,
4. Sharadank, and
5. Mithila Rajyank.\(^ {59}\)

[Special issue on prose, poetry, literature, Sharda (the goddess of learning) and on Mithila State]

\(^ {56}\) *Vibhuti*, March 1937, varsha – 1, ank – 1, pp. 27 – 29.
\(^ {57}\) Ibid., p. 27.
\(^ {58}\) Ibid., p. 24.
\(^ {59}\) Ibid., p. 25.
This fifth issue of Vaidehi was planned to cover the Mithila State. This showed that the demand for the separate statehood of Mithila had already entered the public discourse of Maithils in the 1930s. But he himself was not completely impartial in his approach. And this was perhaps the reason that the publication of magazine had to be stopped soon.

The publication of Maithili Sahitya Patra from 1937 to 1939 by Ramanth Jha in many ways opened up a new direction in Maithili publications. Its contribution to Maithili literature, particularly in standardising and enriching the language, was immense though some scholars believe that it cannot be considered a Patrika (magazine) as it did not have any editorial column and carried no news, Chandranath Mishra preferred to call it a Granthmala (book-series). Sahitya Patra’s main contribution was publication of some valuable literary works and it made and attempt to standardise Maithili prose by following a uniform style of writing in Maithili.

Swadesh was the first magazine in Maithili published after the political independence of India from the British rule. Only six issues of this magazine were published. But its contribution in terms of circulation and literary production was valuable. When Maithili was recognised as a mother tongue by the government of Bihar and a Gadya Sangraha (prose collection) of Maithili was compiled for metric examination, most of the essays were taken from this magazine. It created a new class of readership in Maithili. According to Chandranath Mishra ‘Amar’, its readerships included betel sellers, cobblers, less educated Grihasthas (householder) of rural Mithila. And its circulation was more than 2000. Another achievement of this paper was it managed to keep the controversy and rivalry with other groups and magazines away. Through this paper we also come to know about the policies and programmes of the Maithili movement. It included protection and promotion of culture and literature, preservation of Maithili language and scripts, question of separate statehood, establishment of Mithila University, solution to the Koshi problem etc. From 1955, the Swadesh was published

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61 Such as – Udayan Katha, Wakefieldak Padari, Chinik Laddu, Shakuntala, Shringar Bhajan, Ekawali Parinaya, Keechak Vadha, Ibid.
62 Its chief editor was Surendra Jha ‘Suman’ and the members of the Editorial Board’s were Dharmapriya Lal, Shrikrishna Mishra, Suryakant Thakur, Kanchinath Jha ‘Kiran’, Chandranath Mishra ‘Amar’, Ibid., p. 423.
63 Ibid., p. 424.
as a daily newspaper and for three months. According to Chandranath Mishra ‘Amar’ it was published due to the commitment and the enthusiasm of many Maithili supporters. But without sufficient economic support it had to be closed very soon. This was followed by many magazines and papers like *Vaidehi* published from Sitamadhi as fortnightly, *Mithila Jyoti* published from Patna and a monthly magazine for the children *Batuk* published from Allahabad. There was also a growing enthusiasm for the publication of new and older manuscripts of Maithili.64

However, the publications in Maithili in this period were caught in a condition where Maithili speakers themselves were not very enthusiastic about Maithili magazines and journals. In such a situation its publications were seriously handicapped due to economic considerations and editors were dependent on the patronage of the rich landlords. Besides, there were serious threats from newly emerging Hindi zealots of Bihar to subsume Maithili within Hindi as its ‘dialect’. And finally, Maithili’s recognition as an independent language of study was granted in Kolkata University and then Banaras University, but in its home state - Bihar, it had to fight almost for two decades to get such recognition.

The attitude of common Maithils was not very enthusiastic about the publications in Maithili. Even the educated Maithils did not take very keen interest in the cultivation of Maithili literature.65 A letter by an unknown Maithil reader that was published in *‘Vaidehi’* edited by Bhuwneshwar Singh ‘Bhuwan’, gives a sense of the perception of the common Maithils towards Maithili magazines as late as in 1930s:

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64 *Rag Tarangani* widely regarded as lost by then was being published by Maharaja from the Raj Press, Darbhanga. There was also a hand written manuscript by Chanda Jha – *Govind Geetawali*. It too was considered as lost but a copy of it was later found with Prof. Amarnath Jha and he was requested to publish it - though an edition of *Govind Geetawali* was published by Mathura Prasad Dikshit from Vidyapati Press. But it was considered as a Bengali edition and it was believed that the cause of Maithili would not be served unless a Maithili edition of the book is published. Mukund Jha ‘Bakshi’ was to publish the history of Mithila in *Padya*. Sitaram Jha published *Alankar Darpan*. Dr. Sri Umesh Mishra edited and published *Krishna Janma* of Manbodh. He had also published a history of Maithili in Hindi. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee was involved in the edition and publication of *Varnaratnakar*. Chandra Dhari Singh of Madhubani’s Chandranagar Deodhi was supposed to have written many texts in Maithili which it was expected that he would publish it soon. Mithila Press at Sultan Ganj published *Krishnawatar* of Gunvant Lal Das. Vidyapati Press published *Kanyadan*, the famous novel of Prof. Harimohan Jha. *Maithili Sahitya Samiti* of Kashi also published some books in Maithili; see *Maithili Sahitya Parishadak Triteeya Karya Vivaran*, Laheria Sarai, Vidyapati Press, 1933, pp. 09 – 11.

65 Ibid., p. 13.
(Some reach us as ‘Mihir’ of Mithila, some talk of entertainment by being ‘Moda’. Some talk of appreciation about ‘Bharati’. Some sing of praise about ‘Vibhuti’. All are ghosts of Gaya. All are desperate for charity. Not Purana, not Saptasati Geeta, but what they ask to read is a newspaper? These sons of Kaliyuga, nothing is impossible for them. But I am also an old thug (spoof). I don’t even perform the libation of my forefathers, what then to talk about the satisfaction of agents. But yes, as a sample, I have swindled all, of one or two copies. If they want their wellbeing then they must be cautious now)

It is quite obvious from the use of words like Kaliyugi Avatar, Durgasapta Sati, Geeta, Tarpan, Pitarahu – that, this response was from a Maithil Brahmins and not the other castes of Mithila. This kind of response also points out Brahminic and Sanskritik holds on the minds and practices of the Maithils. The reading of Durgasaptasati and Geeta was permissible and praised, but the reading of newspapers was looked down upon with contempt. To purchase these newspapers and magazines, in their eyes, was mere waste of money. Although they don’t mind reading the free samples but subscriptions of these magazines was not what they were looking for. All the magazines and newspapers of that time were suffering from this discouraging attitude of not only the common speakers of Maithili but also of many literate ones. All the magazines were suffering from critically low number of subscribers. Hence even the best magazines by some of the committed writers of Maithils met with their untimely death.

One of the crucial moments in this period was publication of a special issue of Mithila Mihir’s – Mithilank, in 1936 by its editor Surendranath Jha ‘Suman’.

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The editor used both Hindi and Maithili in the issue. In fact following the policies of *Mihir*, in this special issue also there are 192 pages in Hindi but only 100 pages in Maithili. However, Hindi is used to explain the distinctive features of Mithila and Maithili. It contains a storehouse of information about Mithila and Maithili. And many distinguished scholars of the time (Writers in Hindi and Maithili both) contributed in this compilation, covering different aspects of Mithila, its culture, its history, its language, the relationship of Maithili to Bengali and Hindi, Sanskrit scholars and their traditions. S. M. Ane, Sachidanand Sinha, Bhai Parmanand had a very high opinion about this issue and accepted the importance and contribution of Mithila in Indian culture and civilisation.

Suniti Kumar Chatterjee in his *Maithili Bhasha aur Sanskriti* not only acknowledged the independence of Maithili but was critical of many Maithils who supported Hindi at

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the cost of their mother-tongue Maithili. Though he supported Hindi as a national language and wanted every Indian to learn it, he also felt that, it should not be at the cost of the mother tongues. He said –

मैं उन मैथिलियों के तर्क को नहीं समझ सकता जो किसी बड़े हित के विचार से इसको दबाना चाहते हैं। भारत माता की गलाई की धुन में क्या कोई अपनी जननी को भूल सकता है?68

[I do not understand the rationale of those Maithils who suppress this (referring to Maithili) for larger good. In serving the interest of Bharat Mata can anyone forget his own mother?]

Rambriksha ‘Benipuri’ in his *Vidyapati aur hamara Kartavya* raised the issue of language, particularly of Hindi and Maithili. He avoided the question whether Vidyapati was a Hindi poet or Maithili. But he said that Vidyapatis’s language was *Avahatta* which was called ‘*adhunik Maithili*’ (Modern Maithili). He made the following suggestions for the Maithils –

1. His (Vidyapati’s) works should be published, but its language should be kept as it was and not made into modern Maithili.

2. A *Vidyapati-Sahitya-Mandir* should be established in Darbhanga, where all the manuscripts of Vidyapati should be collected. And not just Maithili but works of other poets should be collected as well.

3. Some events should be organised in the memory of Vidyapati in his village at Bisafi.

4. *Vidyapati-Jayanti* celebration should not be left on individuals but it should be organised systematically and collectively.

5. A literary trip should be organised at least once a year to places connected to Vidyapati.69

Although, *Mithilank* was a very informative issue of *Mithila Mihir* but there existed certain apprehensions regarding its usefulness as well. In a satirical essay on *Gonu Jhaki*

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Nasdani, the very purpose of Mithilank was ridiculed. It was said that what would be the worth of the issue as “we” (Maithils) have little faith in newspapers; who then would read Mithilank? Would it be the other Castes (non Brahmins and non Kaysasthas) of Mithila, who lived there but did not call themselves Maithils? Why would they read it? The essay went on to assert that there was a general opinion even among many Maithils that if you talk about Maithili and Mithila it might be considered anti national. According to this essay if, Mithilank was meant for the outsiders (non Maithils) to give them some glimpses of Mithila, how it would be of any interest to them as for them Mithila was either merely a colony of Bengal and Maithili was merely a part of eastern Hindi. This satirical essay acutely provides a glimpse of trivialities in which the issues of Mithila and Maithili were caught and had to cope up with in that period.

The slogan of Mithila-Maithil-Maithili enters into the public discourse prominently after the publication of Umesh Mishra’s essay in Mithilank by the same name – Mithila-Maithil-Maithili. Mishra discussed the growth of Maithili and Mithila from ancient times, its contemporary relevance and necessities of its preservation for the Maithils. Without which, he believed, national or world service by the Maithils would not be valuable. Babu Bhola Lal Das in his Maithili: Bhashak Rupme writes that though some Hindi supporter acknowledged the literary capacity of Maithili, but as a language it was considered a part of Hindi. The author of Hindi Bhasha Vigyan Babu Shyam Sunder Das and Jayachandra Vidyalankar, author of Bhartiya Itihas ki Ruprekha classified Maithili as part of Hindi and Mithila as Hindi region. He also shows that how, even in the census, Maithili was classified as a part of Hindi. Rambriksha ‘Benipuri’ and Mathura Prasad Dikshit also did not consider Maithili as independent of Hindi. For Babu Bhola Lal Das this was the greatest misunderstanding of the time. Although, he said it was fortunate for the Maithils and Mithila that scholars like Dr. Grierson, Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, Pt. Mahaveer Prasad Dwivedi and many others considered it as an independent language. He was very critical of the fact that, despite having all the

70 Jha, Gonu ‘Gonu Jhaki Nasdani’, in Mithilank, Darbhanga, Mithila Mihir, 1936, pp. 165 – 167; possibly it might be a proxy name, Gonu Jha was a Maithili Brahmins and known for his wit and humor.
requisite qualities Maithili was denied its rightful place in Bihar. According to him the main quality of Maithili was that it had preserved its culture from the onslaught of many foreign attacks and maintained its distinctiveness.  

4.4 Maithili Movement and Promotion of Mithilakshara

Attempts were made to preserve Mithilakshara – Maithili script – as well. A Mithilaksharankan Samiti was formed in Darbhanga for this purpose with Jeevnath Rai as its chairman. The Samiti played an important role in preparing a type in Maithilakshar font. This font was based on Bangmala. In its meeting of March 16, 1930 Mithilaksharankan Samiti expressed that though many Bengali letters were used in the Mithilakshar font yet there were more than 200 letters and combined letters were in Mithilakshar alone. It was decided as soon as the entire font was ready 50,000 books would be published in it with the Devanagari (Hindi script) and it would be distributed at a low rate. It was also proposed that as soon as the font was ready, Mithila should give Mithilakshar its appropriate place. On this a proposal came from Ramlochan Sharan who said that, first it should be discussed how Mithila could be made permanent and only thereafter could any new proposal be decided. His suggestion was referring to low subscriptions for Mithila. It was discussed that the main reason for this was that the magazine had become too critical of orthodoxy, who were non supportive of Mithila. These radical essays, unacceptable to the orthodoxy were promoted by Babu Bhola Lal Das. Therefore it was decided that he should go on leave for a year. But the other editor of the magazine Kumar did not agree. As a result Babu Bhola Lal Das continued to work as its editor however it was decided that orthodox viewpoints should also be given more space in Mithila.

The editorial in the eleventh issue of Mithila was written in Mithilakshar. In the next issue of Mithila all the titles of the essays or poems are given in Mithilakshar.

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73 Mithila, year 1, issue 8, Agahan, sal 1337, p 361.
74 Mithila, year 1, issue 10, Magh, sal 1337, p. 444.
75 Mithila, year 1, issue 11, Falgun, sal 1337.
76 Mithila, year 1, issue 12, Chaitra, sal 1337.
In the 21st session of Maithil Mahasabha at Darbhanga, Bhola Lal Das made a proposal with regards to the promotion of Mithila which was opposed. Though it was discouraging he considered it beneficial for Mithila which he thought belong to all the Maithils and not just Maithil Brahmins and Kayasthas whose interest Maithil Mahasabha used to serve. Those who opposed the proposal were of the opinion that Mithila’s policy was too radical and it adversely affects the youth.
4.5 Maithili Sahitya Parishad and Maithili’s Recognition in Patna University

For the sole purpose of promoting Maithili language and literature, the Maithili Sahitya Parishad was established in 1930. It was the first institution constituted solely for such purpose. Maithili’s recognition in syllabus of Patna University was the result of the enthusiastic efforts of this institution. This institution was born out of the Maithil Mahasabha. Kalikumar Datta, Nageshwar Mishra, Shashinath Chaudhary, Bhola Lal Das, and Dhanushdhari Das played key role in its formation. The objectives of the institutions were - preservation and promotion of the Maithili language and Maithili (Tirhuta) script, Maithili literature and Maithili culture. The means to achieve those objectives were – collection of early works in Maithili and the promotion of a modern Maithili literature with facilities to help the publication of new works; second, the establishment of a museum and libraries; third, provision for the examination in Maithili; and finally, efforts through legal means to get the appropriate recognition for Maithili by the government. For many reasons, the second session of the Parishad at Ghonghardia was extremely important.

Figure 6: Cover Page of the Maithili Sahitya Parishadak Triteeya Karya Vivaran

78 Ibid., p. 4.
79 Though there is confusion about when the session was held. Many like Chandranath Mishra ‘Amar’ believes that it was the third session of the Parshihad, but I have the third annual Karya Vivaran of the Parishad in which it is clearly mentioned that the previous second session of the Parishad was held along with Maithil Mahasabha at Ghonghardiya and Mahamahopadhyu Umesh Mishra delivered his speech on 16 – 4 – 1933. See Maithili Sahitya Parishadak Triteeya Karya Vivaran, p. 1.
This session of the Parishad was held along with the Maithil Mahasabha and was chaired by Mahamahopadhyaya Umesh Mishra. His speech in this session was considered historical for Maithili movement. In this speech he explained the origin of Maithili literature, its progress and development and the geographical boundaries of the Maithili speaking province. He also explained how Maithili literature and Mithilakshar affected the growth of many eastern languages in India. In one of the meetings of the standing committee in 1933, a resolution was passed in which gratitude for Banaras Hindu University (Hindu Viswavidyalaya) was expressed for recognising Maithili as a subject of study from matriculation to B. A. It was decided to place the evidence before Patna University about the competency of Maithili. The Parishad had its branches in different parts of Mithila as well – in Pahitola under the chairmanship of Pandit Deenbandhu Jha, and in Samastipur under Babu Modeshwar Singh.

The President of the Swagat Karini Samiti (Reception Committee), in his speech at the third session of the Maithili Sahitya Parishad, cautioned that the other caste of the Mithila though speaking Maithili, do not consider themselves as Maithils. He also asserted that all the castes of Mithila were Maithils and at least in term of language, Maithils of all castes should be organised on this basis. In this speech he asserted the essence of Maithili culture as integral to Indian culture. Therefore its progress and preservation was considered important. And unless its language was promoted, Maithiliness could not be preserved.

Regarding the demand of Maithili he vociferously said that –

The demand of Maithili he vociferously said that –

80 He was a Sanskrit scholar based at Banaras and later at Darbhanga. He was a staunch supporter of Maithili in Mithila against Hindi. He proactively participated in the activities concerning Maithili, Mithila and Maithili. For details on him see the appendix on famous Maithili personality.
81 Maithili Sahitya Parishadak Triteeya Karya Vivaran, pp. 1 – 2.
82 Ibid., p. 4.
83 Ibid., pp. 4 – 5.
84 Speech of the President of the Swagatkarini Samiti at the third annual session of the Maithili Sahitya Parishad at Laheriasarai.
[As long as education is not provided to us in Maithili, as long as Maithili is not included in the curriculum, like other languages of the government’s education of the Bihar province, till then its real and appropriate growth is impossible. Maithili was recognised by Kolkata University long time ago, now even Banaras Hindu University also recognised Maithili. Still it is not recognised as subject of study in all the classes in provincial University. This is a great injustice. With the establishment of Rameshwar Maithili Chair in Patna University it is most likely that some or the other place be granted to Maithili, but due to the ignorance of Bihari people about Maithili literature it is possible that complete success may not be achieved. Hence, it is our primary duty not to sit idly until Maithili is recognised in the all the classes of Patna University as an independent language.]

He also said that, besides demanding recognition, Maithils should also work together for the publication of old and valuable Maithili works. A museum should be established to showcase Mithila art, photographs, manuscripts, tamralekha, shilalekha, coins and other historical material. These should be preserved. The government was asked to recognise old and historical sites, monuments and temples of Mithila by following Old Monuments Act and preserve them accordingly. Finally, he demanded that they should encourage the full growth of Maithili literature, appropriate preservation of Maithili culture and proper respect of Mithila.85

Vidyapati Jayanti was celebrated on October 31 and November 1, 1933 with Maharajadhiraja Kameshwar Singh as its chairman in Darbhanga Town Hall. He announced a cash prize of Rs. 100 annually for five years for the best essay on Vidyapati.86 In the same year a pamphlet – The Case of Maithili before the Patna University87 - was published and distributed by the Parishad and a series of essay was published in Indian Nation and Searchlight for the recognition of Maithili in Patna University.88

85 Ibid.
86 Maithili Sahitya Parishadak Triteeya Karya Vivaran, pp. 5 – 6.
87 The Secretary, Maithili Sahitya Parishad, The case of Maithili before the Patna University, Darbhanga, Raj Press, 1933.
88 Ibid p. 12.
In this booklet it was said that the total number of Maithili speakers was two crores which also included Magahi. Further, it claimed that the beginning of literature in Maithili was from the eighth century. To substantiate their viewpoint, the recognition of Maithili by Calcutta and Banaras Universities and donation of Rs. 1, 20, 000 by the Maharajadhiraja of Darbhanga to Patna University for the Rameshwar Maithili Chair, is mentioned on the front page of the booklet. The booklet is divided into two parts. Part – I presents a study of Maithili by modern philologists and an analysis of their opinions; Part II tries to prove the independence of Maithili by applying the criteria used for distinguishing language and dialects. Its relation with Hindi and other dialects of Bihar is also analysed.

It was asserted that among European scholars, Maithili was for the first time mentioned in 1771 in the preface to *Alphabetum Brahmanicum*.\(^8^9\) Colebrook and Aime Martin also referred to Maithili as a separate language. In 1874 Sir George Campbell classified

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\(^8^9\) Amadutias’s, Johannes Christophorous, *Preface* in Cassiano Beligetti *Alphabeticum Brahmanicum*, Rome, Italy, 1771. In this volume Maithili was referred to as Taurutiana (Tihutiyaa) and it was considered as one of the eighth languages of India. See also, Chaudhary, Radhakrishna, *A Survey of Maithili literature*, Ramvilas Sahu, 1976, p. 14. He refers to the term used for the language in the volume as Tourtiana.
Maithili as a dialect of Hindi in his ‘Specimens of languages of India’. Campbell’s classification was explained by the general belief of that time that ‘Maithili was a corrupt form of Hindi’. The study of this language, it was asserted, was biased and it remained more or less obscure until Dr. George A. Grierson exposed the richness of this language to the English speaking world through his work. It was regretted that despite so many authoritative studies of Maithili language that demonstrated its independence, Maithili continued to be regarded in many quarters as a dialect of Hindi. It was said Mithila remained an internally independent territory and there was uninterrupted literary production in Maithili. Although, Hindustani had become the state language of nearly the whole of north India including Mithila, literary production in Maithili did not stop because of the continuing patronage of the rulers of Mithila and Nepal. And till the commencement of the British Raj, Maithili literature was as developed as any other modern vernaculars of India. Indeed, in comparison to some languages, its literature was more developed. But when the Court of Wards took over the administration of Darbhanga, Raj Maithili lost her state patronage. Maithili were neglected even at home and Maithils could not adopt modern education for a very long time. In the meantime Mithila’s town were full of Muslim settlers, western traders and outside officials who rarely took any interest in the language of the people, let alone attaching any importance to it. Hence, they reported wrongly that Hindustani was the language of the people and Maithili was a dialect of Hindi, as they were mostly living in town alone and rarely mixed with people of the country. (Emphasis mine) This gave Hindi undue importance in the region due to official support. But, despite official ‘indifference, neglect, ill treatment, and atrocities’ Maithili remained the living language of the

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90 The Secretary, Maithili Sahitya Parishad, 1933, p. 1.
91 Grierson examined the language thoroughly in his Linguistic Survey of India [hereafter LSI]. By the time the report of the LSI on Bihari languages was out, he wrote another book with Hoarnly namely “A Grammar of the Eastern Hindi compared with other Gaudian Languages”. In this book the independence and distinctiveness of Maithili from Hindi was clearly mentioned. Other Europeans who took interest in the language were - Fallon, S. H. Kellog, Beames, Engelling and others. Besides many Indologists – Dr. S. K. Chatterjee, Rai Bahadur Dinesh Chandra Sen, Nagendra Nath Gupta, Nalini Mohan Sanyal, Har Prasad Shastri, Mahavir Prasad Dwivedi, Dr. Umesh Mishra took a keen interest in Maithili language and literature. Ibid., pp. 1 – 3.
92 Ibid., p. 3.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid., p. 4.
region. The essay goes on to mention the text available in Maithili. In comparison to Bengali – the most advanced language of India, it is said that ‘it had no better materials than Maithili a century before. On the contrary it had to depend for its very existence and mode of living on the precious materials of Maithili. All Bengali scholars admit this great indebtedness of Bengali to Maithili. Assami (sick) and Oriya also had to do the same.... But whereas these languages developed with due recognition in proper time, Maithili lagged behind for want of recognition. Hence, for the proper growth of the language, education through one’s own mother tongue was demanded.

In the second part of the booklet, it was asserted that Maithili suffers not because of its inherent weakness but because of the lack of adequate knowledge about it. It was merely understood as a dialect of Hindi without a separate existence. To remove this misconception about Maithili it was asserted that its claim as a separate vernacular of India ‘is as strong as that of Hindi, Bengali, Oriya or Assamese’. These were all considered to have descended from earlier Indo Aryan language and to bear a natural affinity with them. With a little modification of Suniti Kumar Chatterjee’s classification of modern Indian vernaculars in his *Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* (Part – I, p. 6), a chart of modern Indian language is given below –

![Figure 8: Chart of the Modern Indian Languages](image)

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95 These were – 14 prose compositions, 43 poetic compositions some of which were big epic works, 20 songs and prayers, 46 plays, 9 books of Grammars and Dictionaries, 8 on Rhetoric and Prosody besides 35 on sundry subjects. In all, a list of 187 books was prepared, though the list was considered incomplete, Ibid., p. 5.

96 Ibid., p. 7.

97 Ibid., p. 10.
Through this chart, the independence of Maithili from Hindi was established. In the booklet it is explained that they differ from each other not just in vocabulary but also in grammar, idiom and phonetics. It expressed that Maithili represent a culture and civilisation too which was distinct from Hindi. Therefore, it demanded that Maithili’s categorisation as a dialect of Hindi must be stopped and it should be treated as an independent language.98 It is interesting to mention that in this booklet, Maithili and Magahi is claimed to be as one and the same language. Hence, it was opined in the booklet that with the recognition of Maithili there would be no need to recognise Magahi separately.99 These all explain not only the growing antagonism between Maithili and Hindi but also the expansionist ideas of the Maithili supporters. With regard to Bhojpuri, it was considered as different from Maithili since it had been more influenced by Hindi. It was claimed that the Bhojpuri speaking people were not so conscious about their mother tongue and they did not care to cultivate it. Similarly, Sadari (Santhali?) which was spoken in certain parts of Chhotanagpur, was considered a corrupt form of Magahi and Bhojpuri. And it was not even considered as a distinct dialect.100 Hence, in comparison to the other dialects of Bihar, the richness of Maithili was shown and its rightful claim to be recognised in the curriculum of Patna University was demanded, particularly when the Calcutta and Banaras Hindu Universities had already recognised it as an Independent language.101 Its recognition was in no way considered as suppression and boycott of Hindi.102 Hindi’s claim for Maithili as its dialects was rebuffed by Pt. Rambadhra Jha103 also. He argues that if this claim was based on similarity of some of the vocabulary between Hindi and Maithili then why not this was applicable to other languages like Marathi, Gujarati and Bengali, which also shared some of the words with Hindi. He showed the difference between Hindi and Maithili on the basis of grammar and phonology.104 He questioned the census for not showing the number of Maithili speakers separately. He doubted whether this was done by the biased supporters of Hindi? He was surprised even more as educated Maithili did

99 Ibid.
100 Ibid., pp. 15 – 16.
101 Ibid., p. 17.
102 Ibid., pp. 17 – 18.
103 Presidential speech of Rambhadra Jha, June 3 & 4, 1934.
104 Ibid., pp. 5 – 10.
not seriously notice it. He suggested that if it was difficult for them to oppose this explicitly, then why did not they approach Maharaja to intercede on their behalf.\textsuperscript{105} He again reasserted the stand of Maithili supporters with regard to Hindi that they were not against the status of Hindi as the national language, but it could not be accepted at the cost of other provincial languages.\textsuperscript{106} The mood of Maithils is reflected in this statement which he made: -

न्यायालय के कोन कथा प्रान्तीय शिक्षा विभाग में मैथिली के स्थान नहीं, विश्वविद्यालय में मैथिली के स्थान नहीं। मैथिला के ई अवज्ञा, ई तिरस्कार, मैथिली के ई अवहेलना हमारा लोकनि के असाह्य आँखे।\textsuperscript{107}

[Forget courts, Maithili has no place even in the provincial education department, not even in University. This dishonour, this disrespect, and disregard for Maithili is intolerable for us]

A copy of the recommendation of the Parishad to recognise Maithili in Patna University was sent to the university in 1933. Maharaja Kameshwar Singh also wrote a letter to the Vice Chancellor of Patna University. The Vice Chancellor replied with some objections. The Maharaja informed the Parishad about those objections. In response, the Parishad published a memorandum in English (possibly the above mentioned booklet) and through the Maharaja, sent it to Patna University. A meeting of the Hindi Boards of Studies was convened on November 21, 1933 for this purpose. Balmukund Mishra B. A. B. L. Jyotish Teerth (Madhubani), Narendranath Das Vidyalankar and the Mantri of Maithili Sahitya Parishad (Babu Bhola Lal Das) went to Patna to represent the case of Maithili. In the Hindi Board of Studies, except for Prof. Hari Govind Chaudhary, no one knew Maithili. So, despite his opposition, it was recommended that the study of Maithili should be permitted only in M. A. The next day on November 22, in the meeting of Faculty of Arts, the recommendation was brought for the discussion. The representatives of Maithili tried to convince the members of the Boards and the Faculty about the status of Maithili without success. Many members of the faculty known for their anti Maithili stand made every effort to obstruct the recognition of Maithili. But due to the stand of many Bengali members of the faculty,
particularly Niranjan Niyogi (he was in favour of the study of Maithili in all the classes), the recommendation of the Board was not only rejected but a subcommittee was formed to investigate and report to the faculty about the claim of Maithili.\textsuperscript{108} The subcommittee rejected the demands of Maithili on the following grounds:

1. There was no loss to Maithili speaking students due to non-recognition of Maithili;

2. The teaching of different languages would create apprehension among the speakers of different languages in Bihar like Bhojpuri and Magahi. It would block the growth of any one language in Bihar;

3. Recognition of Maithili would have negative impact upon Maithili students. Their prospect would be compromised;

4. Increase of class rooms in the schools would cause extra expenditure.

This decision of the subcommittee was considered biased, one-sided and unjust by the Maithili leaders. Against these objections they argued that:

1. The non-recognition of Maithili would be a great loss to the Maithili student. This could be proved through the investigation of Schools, Pathshalas, Tola (Sanskrit schools) and Colleges in Mithila.

2. The recognition of Maithili would not hamper the growth of a common language in the province nor would it give rise to the competition among the speakers of the different languages in Bihar. The demand of Maithili as an independent language was not new. This demand had been put forward before Patna University for 15 – 16 years, but no such demand had been made by the speakers of the other languages. Maithili’s demand was accepted by the Calcutta and Kashi (Banaras) Universities but no such demand was presented by the Bhojpuri and Magahi speakers. And recognition of Maithili did not cause loss to the common language of those provinces.

3. The reasoning that the study of Maithili might cause negative impact upon the future of Maithili students reflects the unawareness of the committee as the truth

\textsuperscript{108} Maithili Sahitya Parishadak Triteeya Karya Vivaran, pp. 6 – 7.
was that precisely because of the lack of recognition of Maithili; expansion of education was very limited in Mithila.

4. The fear of expenditure was unrealistic. Maithili knowing teachers were available in almost every school in appropriate numbers. Even if there was a need for some extra expenditure, the ‘Faculty of Arts’ should not mind it considering the interest of the large number of Maithili students.

5. In the colleges the provision for the study of Maithili could be made without expenditure because of the donation of the Darbhanga Maharaja. It was also seen that even the accepted languages like Hindi, Bengali and Urdu were not taught, yet the students had the liberty to opt and sit in the examination for papers in those subjects.109

In this regard the sixth session of the *Maithili Sahitya Prashad* at Muzzafarpur in 1936 was very important. It brought a new life to the *Parishad.* Rai Bahadur Jayanand Kumar was the President and Bhuwaneshwar Singh ‘Bhuwan’ was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. In this session of the *Parishad*, for the first time, members of many castes participated as their name suggests.110 But the internal differences within the elites were also visible. In the *Parishad Samachar* column of *Bahartii*111 Babu Bhola Lal Das writes that Bhuwaneshwar Singh ‘Bhuwan’ was campaigning in *Sotipura*112 for sending a representative to the vice chancellor of Patna University for the recognition of Maithili and also for seeking subscribers for *Vibhuti* (a journal published by Bhuwaneshwar Singh ‘Bhuwan’ from Muzzafarpur). Babu Bhola Lal Das was critical of this approach of Bhuwans’, as he wanted that the *Maithili Sahitya Parishad* should

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112 Basically this refers to Darbhanga and Madhubani region of Mithila, where *Shrotriya* Brahmins lives.
have been informed before any campaign had been undertaken. According to him the effort should have been collective and not personal or individual. In the editorial column of the Bharati he informs the reader about the decision of Yunus (Prime Minister of Bihar province at that time) in which he had introduced Urdu script in the court. This decision was to be implemented from June 01, 1937 and court papers were to be published in Urdu along with Hindi. Criticising this decision he mentions that there were virtually no demand by the people of Bihar to introduce Urdu in the court. He writes that there was strong opposition to the use of Urdu in the court by the people of Bihar except some literate Muslims. According to Das despite all these difficulties and the huge expenditure that it might cost, the minister ordered the use of Urdu. Similarly, at Patna University, Santhali was recognised by Blare because of his sympathy with that ‘language’. He then asked why Maithili was not recognised. Would it cost more the cost involved in the introduction of Urdu in the courts? Was the recognition of Maithili any less important for the people of Bihar? Babu Bhola Lal Das was of the view that with the support of people in authority Maithili would get its due recognition. He expected the vice chancellor of Patna University (Sachidanand Sinha) to take a decision in favour of Maithili

Thakur Suryanarayan Singh wrote an article on Maithil Rashtra Sabha O Mithilak Sangathan in which he explained the political aspirations of the Maithils. He defended those Maithils who believed that Maithil Rashtra Sabha should only work for the political organisation of the Maithils. In their opinion Maithili should not be made the language of the Sabha. They believed that Maithili movement related work could be done by the Maithili Sahitya Parishad. Against this he asserted that Maithili alone was suitable for the Sabha. Although, he agreed that those representatives of Maithil unable to speak in Maithili could use any other language, the proceedings and deliberations of the Rashtra Sabha should be held in Maithili alone. He mentioned the growing formation of various caste based and communal organisations in Mithila like Rajput Sabha, Kushbhaha (Koiri) Sabha, Yadav (Gop) Sabha, Bhumihar Sabha, Gohlot

\[113\] Bharati, 1937, pp. 109 – 110.
\[114\] Bharati, year 1, Apr 1937, pp. 85 – 89.
\[115\] Whether such organization was formed or not is not yet clear. But it was very much part of their discourse.
(Dusadh) Sabha, Nagawansi (Tamoli) Sabha, Jaiswal (Kalwar) Sabha, Hindu Sabha, Sanatan Dharma Sabha, Kurmavanshi (Kurmi) Sabha. These local Sabhas were linked to national Mahasabhas. There meeting used to take place from time to time in Mithila, but because of their links with national Mahasabhas they used Hindi for deliberations. It was only the Maithil Mahasabha which used Maithili in its deliberations. Does not it show that Maithili as mother tongue and struggle on behalf of it was fought and led by the upper castes Brahmins and Kayasthas alone? Though, the efforts were made to include the other castes as well. But these castes either adopted Hindi in their separate caste association or remained indifferent to Maithili. They were not sufficiently mobilized by the Maithili organizations despite their tremendous efforts to that purpose. What could be the possible reasons for that? Was it because of Maithil Mahasabha as some scholars argue? Or was it because of the high level of caste consciousness among the masses which was quite usual and happenings in almost all parts of the country? Did they adopt Hindi to oppose the upper caste challenges? Or was it because of their lack of awareness about the struggle for Maithili, though they were the speakers of the language? Or was it because they found standardized Maithili as difficult as Hindi and less lucrative than the later? Formations of these caste associations show their political awareness but why did they not actively participate in the Maithili movement? Was this a strategic move or a deliberate attempt?

The Maithil Rashtra Sabha believed that besides social reforms, education and village upliftment, it could also accommodate the different caste associations and represent the voice of all Maithils. It was hoped that gradually all public association could be recognised by the Rashtra Sabha and in its meetings common subjects would be discussed collectively. Caste specific issues would be discussed by the concerned department on which experts could give their opinions. This kind of deliberation would gradually reduce the internal divisions in society and develop a new sense of fraternity among them with the slogan of Mithila, Maithil, and Maithili. It was expected that the Maithil Rashtra Sabha should be formed independently of competitive political

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116 Bharati, year 1, Apr 1937, p. 87.
117 It appears this slogan of Mithila-Maithil-Maithili increasingly being used from 1930s and it gave the agitators a new and in some senses a secular way of being and belonging to develop a common fraternity.
parties. Later on, if it were to become a political organisation and serve the interest of Maithils, there should not be a problem.\textsuperscript{118} However, there is no report on to what extent the Sabha was successful in its endeavour.

4.6 The Ambivalent Maithil Elite and the Hindi – Maithili Debate

Dr. Amarnath Jha was a strong supporter of Hindi as a national language of India. Although he wanted the promotion of Urdu as an important language of India, but when it comes to the national language of India, he wholeheartedly supported Hindi against Urdu or Hindustani. When there were attempts by the nationalist leaders like Rajendra Prasad and others to promote a new language as the national language of India – Hindustani – in order to ease the language tensions in the country, Amarnath Jha categorically opposed that move.\textsuperscript{119} He was a great supporter of his own mother tongue Maithili too. This he boldly emphasized in his Presidential address at the Abohar, 30\textsuperscript{th} session of Akhil Bharatvarshiya Hindi-Sahitya-Sammelan in December, 1941. There he clearly stated that Hindi was not his mother tongue. In this speech he also mentioned that how his proposal to provide primary education to the Maithil children in their mother tongue Maithili – with its rich and valuable literature, in its script that was distinct from Devanagari – was objected by the member of the Education Committee formed by the Bihar government to make recommendation for education in Bihar. Although all the members were agreed on the point that the primary education should be imparted in mother tongue, Hindustani was imposed upon Maithili children.\textsuperscript{120} That Amarnath Jha proclaimed these sentiments as the President of the Akhil Bharatiya Hindi Sahitya Sammelan in itself shows his attachment to Maithili. He expressed these beliefs on other occasions as well. The dual support for Hindi and Maithili was common to other members of the Maithili literati as well with a very few exceptions. Their support for Maithili did not make them anti Hindi in any way. These sentiments among the Maithili speakers developed when the very existence of Maithili as an

\textsuperscript{118} Bharati, year 1, p. 89.
\textsuperscript{119} Presidential address of Amarnath Jha ‘Hindi Bhasha aur Sahitya’, at the Abohar, 30\textsuperscript{th} session of Akhil Bharatvarshiya Hindi-Sahitya-Sammelan, Dec 27 – 30, 1941. In this connection his other speeches are also important ‘Hindi aur Hindustani’ a Presidential speech of Suhrid Sangh at Muzzafarpur, March 14, 15, 1943, ‘Hindustani’ published in Bharat (Prayag) May 11, 1937, These are published in his Vichardhara, Allahabad, Kitab Mahal, 1948, pp. 24 – 77.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid., p. 54.
independent language was challenged. In one of his essays, *Maithili evam Hindi* published in *Mithilank*, Dr. Amarnath Jha argued that it was the duty of all Maithils to serve the interest of Maithili. But it was important for the Maithils and for their progress that they must learn Hindi and English as well.\(^{121}\) Similarly, in his presidential address to the *Maithili Sahitya Parishad* at Darbhanga in 1943, where he rebuked the fear and anxieties of Hindi supporters that support for Maithili would obstruct the growth of Hindi as the national language. He said:

…हम ई इस्स्सा नाही जे भैरिली हिन्दीक स्थान लेअय। हिन्दीक हम राष्ट्रभाषा मानेत छी, हिन्दीक हम यथार्थ स्थान लेर खरबं तु हो, तरह हम उपाय करू। पर्यंत, हम्रा इहो कहैल संकोच नाही जे हिन्दी हम्र मातृभाषा नाही सिक। हिन्दी हम्र मातृभाषाक स्थान नाही ल सकेन्त आदि। हिन्दीक यवहार हम अपन नेना समेत, अपन स्त्रीरंगमे, अपन घरक काजमे नाही के सकेन्त छो। राष्ट्रभाषाक प्रारंभ अथवै ई नाही जे भारतीय भाषा सबक हानि हो अथवा ओकर लोप हो।\(^{122}\)

[It is not my intention that Maithili should replace Hindi. I adore Hindi as the national language, I will serve it according to my capacity and I shall also try to promote it in the whole country. But I have no hesitation in saying that Hindi is not my mother tongue. Hindi cannot take the place of our mother tongue. We cannot use Hindi amongst our children, amongst women, and in our household work. The promotion of the national language does not mean that provincial languages should be at a loss or vanish.]

He then went on to compare Maithili with Bangla and Hindi. According to him, sixty or seventy years ago the status of Bangla and Hindi was not better than Maithili. But these languages achieved remarkable success within that period. A similar development could be achieved by the Maithili as well, if it was promoted as the medium of instruction at the primary level and printing and publishing in Maithili encouraged.\(^{123}\) However, it is also true that their approach towards Maithili was somewhat compromised. It is reflected in the many issues of *Mithila*. It was said that –

आई कालिं अनेको बी ए ए ए भवरह जनिका चुद मिथिला भाषा के परिणामो नाही होएत्तिं हहै ने ओलेकानिए हे हेतु किचु चेष्टा करें छधि।\(^{124}\)

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\(^{121}\) Jha, Amarnath, ‘*Maithili evam Hindi*’, in *Mithilank*, Darbhanga, Mithila Mihir, 1936, p. 8.


\(^{123}\) Ibid., p. 4.

\(^{124}\) *Mithila*, year 1, issue 7, Kartik, sal 1337, p. 300.
[Nowadays one may find a great many number of B.A.s and M.A.s who might not have the knowledge of correct Mithilabhasha, and they do put effort for that.]

There was a growing contempt for the ‘English’ educated Maithils who did not bother to use Maithili. A couplet by Kaviavar Sitaram Jha express it thus -

पटि लेखि कढ़ जे नहि बजे़् जा मातुमाणा मैथिली।
मेन हेछ एहिना कपूरक, कान बुड़ खेंचि ली।।
छाउङ लेपि झट दस खितुकि सँ जीह ओकर खेंचि ली।
पर हाय ई अधिकार हमरा ने देलानि “मैथिली”।।

[Those literate who do not speak mother tongue Maithili,
I feel like pulling both ears of such a worthless son,
And, pull his tongue through potsherd*, applying ashes,
Alas! Such right to me is not given by “Maithili”.]

This reveals the internal tensions among the Maithili speakers. Although, harbouring contempt against those literate Maithils who did not bother to speak Maithili, Maithili activists suffered from a sense of helplessness. They were unable to do anything about that. Does not this helplessness suggest a lack of opportunities in Maithili? What if opportunities were available in Maithili too? Would not their attachment with Maithili have been different?

The fourteenth All India Oriental Conference (October 15 – 18, 1948) was organised at Darbhanga. The event was not only a great success but brought all the scholars of Oriental studies, particularly the scholars and Pandits of Mithila together at a common platform where the history, culture, tradition and language of Mithila – Maithili was deliberated. The event had a tremendous effect on the consciousness of many Maithils and many other institutions also organised their events on the sidelines of the conference like – Rameshwarlata Sanskrit University, Lakshmishwar Public Library and the meetings for the creation of separate Mithila University. The members of the Proposed Mithila University Committee also observed ‘University Day’. In the meeting many distinguished scholars were present like Dr. P. V. Kane, Vice Chancellor of the Bombay University, Dr. R. C. Majumdar, Dr. Amarnath Jha, the minister of education}
of Bihar Badrinatha Varma, the minister of Local Self Government of Bihar, Shri Vinodanand Jha and others. It is interesting to note that in the name of the place of the event, instead of Bihar, Mithila (as a territorial unit) was mentioned after Darbhanga. During the conference a symposia was also organised on the problem of Maithili. This brought out the need of giving Maithili language its due place amongst the regional modern Indian languages and also in the administrative and educational fields in Bihar'.

In the Symposium on the ‘Problem of Maithili’ participants included Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, Dr. Subhadra Jha, Prof. Tantranath Jha, Rajpandita Baldeva Mishra. According to Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, Maithili fulfil all the criteria to be classified as an independent and competent language. These were – grammatically on several factors Maithili was considered as different from the other north Indian languages; secondly, referring to the work of Jayakant Mishra, he said it had a sufficiently rich and independent literary heritage. Regarding the question as to whether the language was desired by those who spoke it, he suggested that Maithils alone could testify to this and advised them to not to be shy in speaking out and using their mother-tongue. Finally, he mentioned the difficulties experienced by Maithili speakers in learning Hindi.

Dr. Subhadra Jha supported these points and talked about the difficulties experienced by Maithili speakers in being forced to adopt Hindi as their mother-tongue. He also regretted that Patna University and the Bihar Government were not helpful to Maithili. Prof. Tantranath Jha demanded the inclusion of Maithili as a medium of instruction from the primary to the post graduate levels of education. Rajpandit Baldeva Mishra demanded the support of all the Maithils, irrespective of their caste, creed and nationality, in the development of Maithili. It was envisaged that early acceptance of Maithili should be given in administrative and educational fields of the province.

Although all the proceedings in this symposium were conducted in Maithili, Dr. Chatterjee’s third and fourth criteria indicates the prevalent mentality among the Maithili speakers, particularly among the modern – English educated Maithils. Why should a speaker of a rich language shy away from using it in public

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125 Mishra, Umesha, ‘Foreword’ in Proceedings of the Fourteenth All India Oriental Conference Darbhanga (Mithila), volume – 1, Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Umesh Mishra, Local Secretary, XIV All India Oriental Conference, University of Allahabad, 1949. pp. 7 – 8.

126 Ibid., p. 136.

127 Ibid., pp. 136 – 137.

128 Ibid., p.137.
places? Why was learning Hindi made compulsory? The competence of their own language was supposed to be judged on the basis of their difficulties while learning Hindi. So, in other words, for the supporter of Maithili, the problem was not just to contest the claims of Hindi supporters for whom Maithili was a ‘dialect’ of Hindi. More importantly, there was a need to develop confidence among the Maithils, particularly educated ones, to use their own mother tongue Maithili in public. This was perhaps the greater struggle for the supporters of Maithili, and despite the many achievements of the movement, it could not be achieved unless proper arrangement were made to use Maithili as a medium in primary education.

**4.7 Away from Orthodoxy: Swadeshi – Videshi Movement in Mithila**

This *Swadeshi – Videshi* movement of the 1930s was the culmination of all the internal contestations through which Maithili society was undergoing for four or five decades. However, this movement was confined to Maithil Brahmins, particularly the Shrotriya, and other caste groups had nothing much to do with it. But it was mainly through these Brahmins that new idea – modern English education, women education, social reforms - perceived for a long time as irreligious, began to make its inroads in Mithila. As I have discussed in the previous chapter that all these ideas were deeply contested and most of the Maithils followed the traditional pattern of living and were averse to any kind of change. It deeply disturbed these ‘reformers’ who again and again termed Maithil Samaj as ‘*sutal samaj*’ (Sleeping society). But they themselves were divided about these changes and reforms. Until the 1930s it was the followers of *Parampara* (traditions) who were strongly critical of and opposed to any changes in Maithil society.

The hold of the orthodox can be understood from an incident that occurred in the last decade of the nineteenth century. According to the Maithili Pandits, Hindu shastras forbade them from crossing the ocean. It was a commonly accepted norm among the Pandits controlling their movement (journey). On the grounds of health, Maharaja Lakshmishwar Singh was told to visit England, for which he had made all the arrangements. But he could not go because he feared that it might hurt the religious sentiments of his uncle. Four decades later, in 1931 trip of his nephew, Maharajadhiraja Kameshwar Singh, to England for participating in the *Round Table Conference*, divided
Maithil Shrotriya Samaj into two groups – popularly known as Swadeshi and Videshi. Those who accepted and welcomed this visit were called Videshi and they were in tiny minority but had the support of Maharajadhiraja. But those who opposed this visit were called Swadeshi. They were in large numbers and migrated from Mithila fearing that they would be polluted by staying in his Raj (Darbhanga). Their resistance to this visit was so strong that they excommunicated the Maharaja and called him a Patit (irreligious). The Maharaja organised a feast to win the support of this large section of his own community. This infuriated many of the orthodox Shrotriyas and they opposed the feast and even picketed at the Manigachhee Railway Station to protest against those who wanted to participate in it.\textsuperscript{129} Some magazines like the Mithila Mitra were not so critical of this travel. It criticised those Shrotriyas for daring to take rajshakti (power of the state) in their hands. At the same time the magazine, adhering to Sanatana principle, emphasized the need of launching a movement that could respond to Mahatma Gandhi’s criticism of untouchability and the Shastras and Smritis be protected.\textsuperscript{130} Though gradually such opposition died down, this move of the Maharajadhiraja was successful in opening up a new path for the Maithils. Later, many Maithils were able to visit different parts of Europe and other countries.

4.8 Maithili as a Medium of Primary Education

The demand for the use of Maithili as a medium of primary education had been raised since the beginning of the twentieth century. The Bihar Education Reorganisation committee was formed by the government of Bihar to make recommendations about the schools education in Bihar, particularly about the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction at the primary level. Dr. Amarnath Jha, Rajendra Prasad, Sachidanand Sinha and others were members of this committee. The committee accepted in principle the use of mother tongue in primary education. But when it came to the use of Maithili in primary education, it dramatically reversed the earlier decision of the committee in which Maithili’s use was accepted. About the meeting, Amarnath Jha writes – ‘I regret that owing to a last minute change in the dates of the meeting from February to March, 1940, I was not able to attend it. I regret it all the more as I find that a decision arrived at a

\textsuperscript{130} Editorial notes, \textit{Mithila Mitra}, Oct, 1931, year 1, issue 10.
general meeting of the full committee on March 7, 1939, is now being reversed. The decision to allow Bengalis and Maithilas to use their mother tongues as media of Basic Instruction was made when I was present’.\(^{131}\) Rajendra Prasad wrote to him about dropping the claim of Maithili as he believed it was ‘opposed to public opinion’.\(^{132}\) Dr. Sinha feared that if such a position was granted to Maithili, then Bhojpuri speakers could also demand that their children should be taught in mother tongue and not in Hindustani.\(^{133}\) Dr. Jha was of the opinion that the mother tongue should be the medium of instruction at the primary level while at the secondary and higher stages, the student should be taught in Hindi or English. Ultimately Dr. Jha was permitted to ‘append a Minute of Dissent’, which he did, but not without regret. Thus, through deliberate political interference, Maithili was denied its rightful place of being the medium of instruction at primary schools - though, Maithili was recognised already by Kolkata, Banaras and Patna Universities. Later on the Tribhuvan University of Nepal also recognised Maithili as a major language. Other Universities of Bihar like Bihar University, Bhagalpur University, Ranchi University, Magadh University recognised Maithili as a subject of study at the highest level since their inception. Later, in 1949 the Government of Bihar accepted Maithili as the medium of instruction from class one to seven. But this was not earnestly implemented. Some of the leaders of the Maithili movement argue that this amounted to token official acceptance and nothing was actually done to implement the decision. Textbooks were not available, either it was never published or even if some texts were published, arrangements were not made for its proper distribution. Biased approached of the government of Bihar towards Maithili can be understood from the following report of the Commissioner of Linguistic minorities. According to the 17th Report of the Commissioner of Linguistic Minorities of India in pursuance of the provisions given in the article 350 A of the Indian constitution, there were 358 separate classes or sections (as against 283 for Bengali, 317 schools and 78 sections for Santhali, nil for Oriya and 2,471 for Urdu) where instruction was imparted through Maithili. About 358 teachers were employed (as against 915 for Bengali, 398 for

\(^{131}\) Amarnath Jha wrote a long note of dissent. Jayakant Mishra quoted the entire text of this ‘note’ in his lecture delivered at the All India Maithili Sammelan held at Bombay in 1969; cited in Jha, Hetukar, Amarnath Jha, New Delhi, Sahitya Akademi, 1997, p. 60.

\(^{132}\) Ibid.

\(^{133}\) Ibid., p. 62.
Santhali, and 6,466 for Urdu) for teaching Maithili in the primary sections for 2,937 students opted for the Maithili medium. At the secondary level of education, there were 186 sections with 2,888 students taught by 186 teachers as in 1975 – 76. During the 1980s, once again demands were made to implement Maithili as medium of instruction at the primary level; committees were formed by the Bihar text book society and books were also published but these were not properly distributed. Some local organisations – mainly Akhil Bhartiya Maithili Sahitya Samiti, Prayag and Mithila Sangharsha Samiti, and individuals like Jayakant Mishra and Kamlesh Jha organised many meetings for encouraging people to opt for Maithili. One such meeting was held at Dharaura Primary school and the teachers of primary and middle school of the Benipur block (Madhubani District) participated in the meeting. It was decided that in the Benipur Block, teaching would be imparted in Maithili. But these efforts were not very successful and ultimately failed due to many rumours and fears that it would reduce the opportunities for the Maithil children. Further, the fact that it was not recognised in the eighth schedule of the Indian constitution already diminished its status, while the non-cooperative attitude by the Hindi book sellers and administrative apathy towards Maithili ensured its failure.

4.9 Mithila: The Demand for a Separate Statehood

The history of Mithila, its legends, language and culture gave rise to a sense of distinctiveness among the Maithils when the province of Bihar and Orissa was created out of Bengal (1912). This sentiment was expressed in some magazines and journals like Mithila Moda. For the first time this demand was formally made by the Maharaja Rameshwar Singh of Darbhanga. In this connection he submitted a memorial to the then Governor of Bihar and Orissa, Baron Sinha of Raipur in 1921. This memorial was based on the principle of Mr. Montague which he expressed in the House of Commons on 10th of July 1917. He stated the following principle of “not one great Home Rule Country but a series of self-governing provinces and principalities federated by one


Central government”. This proclamation was made in a context when the demand for Home Rule was raised by the Indian nationalists and the colonial government was seriously contemplating the viability of local self-government in India. The language of this memorial represents the mood of the many Maithils in this period. It says that “(t)here are tracts in this history which by reason of history, associations, traditions, language and similar factors are marked out as distinct political individualities. It is submitted that it is those tracts to which the Reform should be extended in the first instance in the way of erecting “New Principalities.” In other words, where tracts had been organisms – ‘principalities’ – in the near past, where life is still traceable in traditions and institutions, the scheme of self-government in this aspect be applied to them and the tracts be revived in full life, into full political persona. I beg to submit that the necessary conditions, environments and qualifications are to be found in that part of Tirhut which has been known as Mithila since Vedic times – since the facts related in the Epics (the Ramayana and Mahabharata). It lies mainly in the districts of Darbhanga and Muzaffarpur extending north right up to the foot of the Himalayas. It stands out in Northern Bihar by its history, language (Maithili) and literature as a national unit, a separate entity. It has been the seat of a Hindu Kingdom since earliest times. Mostly the kingdom of Mithila was territorially identical with Tirhut; at times that kingdom included the whole of Northern Bihar and beyond. Under my own ancestors the whole of Sirkar Tirhut, greater portion of the district of Purnea, a portion of north Bhagalpur and also a small portion of Champaran, had come within its limits. For centuries even before the rise of my House, the rulers of Mithila had been Brahmans. Its literature flourished under them and continued under my House; it is distinctly national. So is the very language and the script in which that language is written.” …Nor are her political

137 Cited in Ibid., p. 2.

* “Mithila,” he (Sir G. Grierson) writes, “a country with an ancient history, traditions of which it retains to the present day, is a land under the domination of a sept of Brahmans extraordinarily devoted to mint, anise and cummin of law. For centuries it has been a tract too proud to admit other nationalities to intercourse on equal terms, and has passed through conquest after conquest, from the north, from the east, and from the west without changing its ancestral peculiarities.”

(Mr. O’Malley, ‘Darbhanga,’ page 29.)

“Maithili, with its strangely complex system of verbal conjugation, has been described by Dr. Grierson as the dialect of a nationality.”

(Ibid.)

“The head-quarters of this dialect … are in the north and centre of the district, where the Maithili Brahman muster in large numbers.”

(Ibid, p. 27.)

“The Maithili character proper, which is closely akin to the Bengali, is used by the Maithili Brahmans.”

(Ibid, p. 28.)
traditions a forgotten past without living traces of her institutions. The ancestors of this humble memorialist maintained armies and fought battles, exercised powers spirituals as well as temporal, kept law-courts and administered justice, carried on education and patronised learning, down to the advent of the British Power. Even my humble self and former “Maharajas of Darbhanga” have been popularly known as Mithilesh (Ruler of Mithila) all over India amongst the Hindu population, and looked upon and treated in Northern Bihar with ancient courtesy and respect which no amount of new, non-political dignities can confer on any landed family. Mithila if not the whole of Tirhut, has thus the strongest claims to be raised again into its former political persona – an Indian State, a Principality”. Then Maharajadhiraj Rameshwar Singh went on to give extensive reasons for justifying his claim of being the ruling chief by citing almost all the Sanads in which the Maharajas of Darbhanga were called independent rulers. However, the government did not look upon this proposal favourably. The government was aware of the opposition of the peasants to the Maharaja. This claim was considered to express the personal ambitions of the Maharaja. But such feeling for distinctness was expressed by the growing middle class of Maithil society. Their feelings got impetus after the creation of Orissa on April 1, 1936 on linguistic basis. In the 1940s there was also such demand for the separate state of Mithila. Maithil Mahasabha passed a resolution for the creation of separate statehood for Mithila and a memorandum was also prepared. When Maharajadhiraja Kameshwar Singh was elected as a member of

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“Maithili is the only one of Behari dialects which has a literary history. For centuries the Pandits of Mithila have been famous for their learning, and more than one Sanskrit work of authority has been written by them. One of the few learned women of India, whose name has come down to us, was Lakshima Thakurani … Nor was the field of vernacular literature neglected by them. The earliest vernacular writer…was the celebrated Vidyapati Thakur…His songs were adopted and recited by the celebrated Hindu reformer Chaitainya … Amongst the writers in Maithili may be mentioned Manbodh Jha, who died about the year 1788 A.D.”

(Ibid, p. 28.)

“Than can be little doubt that the character of the people has been influenced by their geographical isolation… while the countries to the west of the Gandak and north of the Ganges were constantly subjected to the turbulent influence that accompanied the rule of the Mughal dynasty, the country of Mithila, the Modern Tirhut, remained more or less at peace under Hindu Kings. The result of this seclusion may be seen even in the present day… In the time of the Mutiny the rebels found fighting recruits in Saran, but none in Muzaffarpur or Darbhanga.”

(Ibid, p. 29)

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138 Memorial of the Maharajadhira of Darbhanga, pp. 2 – 4.
constituent assembly of India, efforts for the creation of Mithila state increased. The *Mithila Mandal Central Committee* was formed for such purpose with Kumar Ganganand Singh as its President. He wrote to the secretary of the Constituent assembly of India that the ‘Indian nation has gained political power and in accordance with its repeated resolutions is going to constitute provinces on linguistic basis. We place our claim for a separate province on those accepted principles and earnestly request the members of the sub-Committee and the Constituent Assembly to examine our claim...’

In this regard several letters were exchanged between Ganganand Singh and Pt. Girindra Mohan Mishra, Assistant Manager, Raj Darbhanga. Later on, apprehending the difficulties in the viability of such demand, they pressed for a sub-province of Mithila within Bihar. Maharajadhiraja himself proposed the creation of three sub-provinces within Bihar – *Mithila, Magadh and Bhojpur, and Jharkhand*. In this regard he also made a speech in the constituent assembly and pressed for the creation of the ‘sub-province of Mithila with autonomous administrative powers’. Efforts were made for the next one or two years but then eventually it had to be dropped because of the lack of the popular support. Though, all of them agreed that such demand could not meet with success yet activists did very little for mobilising support. The movement was sadly regarded as an attempt of the Darbhanga Raj to save its Zamindari. There is no evidence of their support for separate statehood demand of Mithila launched by Janaki Nandan Singh and others in 1950s during the linguistic re-organisation of the Indian states.

In this period of the Maithili movement, we find increasing stress on the following aspects - Maithili and Hindi Maithili debate, internal organisation of Maithili and expanding notion of Maithil, writing, printing and publishing in Maithili, *Vidyapati Smriti Parva* and the cultural aspects of Maithili. The Maithili movement was pitted against not just the Hindi supporters who wanted to subsume Maithili within Hindi’s fold. A more intricate battle was being fought within, where a great many individuals

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142 Ibid., pp. 136 – 147.


and professionals adopted Hindi. And though they were aware of the richness of Maithili, many of the educated shied away from using it publicly. Even hard-line supporters barring one or two of the Maithili activists did not completely oppose Hindi.

This period was remarkable in the history of Maithili community in other ways as well. Three major events which deeply affected and influenced Maithili community were – Sharda Act, and Swadeshi – Videshi movement. It also helped in different ways to organise the society in modern ways which was facing stiff opposition from the traditional orthodoxy. On the other hand, beginning of the celebration of Vidyapati Parva, Janaki Mahatosha, establishment of Maithili Sahitya Parishad and recognition of Maithili in Patna University and later on official recognition of Maithili as a medium for primary education in Mithila helped in the progress of Maithili movement. Since 1940 there were attempts for the creation of separate Mithila state. One of the drawbacks of the movement was that the small middle class of the society that was emerging were not completely independent in their social and political outlook. For financial and other supports they were dependent on the landlords who were not very enthusiastic about Maithili per se, though they did support it. A major section of Maithili speakers were indifferent towards the Maithili movement. It appears that they were speaking the language without realizing any threat to its existence as Maithili writers and literary elite want them to believe. So there was a huge gap between the protagonists of the Maithili movement and the common speakers of the language. However, efforts to mobilise the masses through cultural celebrations like Vidyapati Parva and Janaki Mahotsva had enormous impact on the growth of Maithili movement. In many ways some of the foundations for Maithili movement were laid down in this period on the basis of which many new demands were made and most of them achieved in later decades, which I have discussed in the next chapter.