

# The Role of Saran District of Bihar in Non co-operation Movement and women

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## Abstract :

The success of this movement known as Khilafat Movement, was assured by the large measure of sympathy and support which the Muslims received from mahatma Gandhi. Mazharul Haque while addressing a meeting at Chapra on the 5<sup>th</sup> may, 1920, emphasized the importance of the Hindu-Muslim Unity. The Bihar provincial congress committee appointed a sub committee consisting of Mazharul Haque, Rajendra Prasad, Braj kishore Prasad of Darbhanga and Muhammad shafi of muzaaffarpur to give effect to the congress instructions about Non co-operation. Due to this all women or girls of saran district left out the government school and college, and start the study after the open of nation school in bihar.

**Keywords :** Movement, Non co-operation, policy, Turkish Empire.

## Introduction :

In 1920 the Indian Muslims started a vigorous agitation to bring pressure upon British Government to change her policy towards Turkey. The success of this movement known as Khilafat Movement, was assured by the large measure of sympathy and support which the Muslims received from mahatma Gandhi.<sup>1</sup> Mazharul Haque while addressing a meeting at Chapra on the 5<sup>th</sup> may, 1920, emphasized the importance of the Hindu-Muslim Unity. Referring to the Khilafat movement he described the conduct of the British Government as highly treacherous and pointed out that like a thief it had stolen Mesopotamia for herself, and distributed large portions of the Turkish Empire to others. He also advised to boycott the British goods.<sup>2</sup>

On the 28<sup>th</sup> July, 1920, Mahatma Gandhi announced that he would start Non co-operation movement against the British Government from the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1920. A significant decision was taken at the 12<sup>th</sup> session of Bihar Provincial conference which met at Bhagalpur on 28 and 29 August under the presidentship of Rajendra Prasad, who in his address in Hindi, "Put in a strong plea for Non co-operation".<sup>3</sup> One noteworthy feature of this conference was that among its delegates a large number came from the villages. The

resolution on Non co-operation was moved by Dharnidhar of Darbhanga and strongly supported by other members including Gorakh Prasad of motihari.

The Bihar provincial congress committee appointed a sub committee consisting of Mazharul Haque, Rajendra Prasad, Braj kishore Prasad of Darbhanga and Muhammad shafi of muzaaffarpur to give effect to the congress instructions about Non co-operation.<sup>4</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Bihar early in December, 1920, though short and flying, gave additional impetus to it and had the effect of rousing the whole province<sup>5</sup> subscriptions were collected at all the meetings addressed by Mahatma Gandhi. Over Rs. 7000 were paid in cash. The women gave away their ornaments including pearl and diamond bangles and rings.<sup>6</sup> Mahatma Gandhi was accompanied by Maulana Shaukat Ali and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, and in course of his tour in the province he delivered highly inspiring speeches at several places. Maulana Shaukat Ali and Sri Mazharul Haque also spoke at most of these meetings.

In response to his call on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1920, the shops were closed and business suspended at Chapra and the entire town wore a solemn and grave appearance. It was under Mahatma Gandhi's influence during his short tour in Bihar in the beginning of 1921 some schools were started here and some existing schools were nationalised by repudiation of affiliation to university and refusal to accept grants-in-aid from government.<sup>7</sup>

The new spirit of awakening had by this time penetrated into the ranks of the student, who began to play gradually an important role in India's battle for liberty till it was finally won. The various sacrifices and martyrdom of our unsophisticated, ardent and inspired youths for the achievement of our country's freedom will ever remain written in letters of gold on the pages of its history. By the end of the year 1920 several students of the colleges and schools, including no less than 110 students<sup>8</sup> of the Bihar school of Engineering, left their respective institution. Foundation of a national school was laid at Hajipur during Mahatma Gandhi's tour in Bihar.

In the Tirhut Division The Chapra Collegiate school developed into a national school and there was considerable unrest in the greer Bhumihar Brahman collegiate school at Muzaffarpur.<sup>9</sup> After Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Muzaffarpur, about thirty students (according to government report ) left the Bhumihar Brahman college there.

There were then some cases of Non co-operation in schools in the mofussil areas of the Tirhut Division. Among others, the headmaster of the Bhagha M.E. school in

Champan, took a prominent part in the movement, while one teacher and 34 boys left the Hajipur High school. The Northbrook school (Zila school), Darbhanga, and the Watson school at Madhubani were also affected to some extent.<sup>10</sup>

The students of Bihar had for some years an organization of their own called the Bihar students conference which functioned as a very important institution till 1920-21. Rajendra Prasad took the most leading part in starting it in 1906. This was then the first organization of its kind in the whole of India. The object was to supplement the education imparted in school and colleges and to create an spirit de corps among students.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, the student community in Bihar was intoxicated with the spirit of new patriotism and hundreds of them deserted schools and colleges at Muzaffarpur and other parts of the province to join the national movement. Rajendra Prasad the principal guide of the Non-co-operation Movement in Bihar reviewed its progress in schools and colleges till the middle of March 1921.

Many students, mostly belonging to colleges, devoted their time to village organization work. Three or four high English Schools Muzaffarpur B.B. Collegiate, M. L. Academy Darbhanga and Chappra collegiate School were nationalised. National schools were also started at Khagria and Begusarai.

In pursuance of a clause in the resolution on Non-co-operation passed at the Nagpur congress, Bihar provincial congress committee drafted the following rule which is approved by Mahatma Gandhi.

The Provincial Congress Committee will be in future controlled propaganda in the Mufassil. District committees will act on receipt of instructions from the provincial congress committee who will be advised by a sub-committee to be called "The organization committee". The following gentlemen of Tirhut division were appointed to the orgainsation committee. They were Braj Kishore Prasad of Darbhanga, Rajendra Prasad of Chappra, Dharnidhar of Darbhanda, Md. Safi of Muzaffarpur.

By the beginning of 1921 non-violent Non-co-operation for the country's independence and regeneration has become a confirmed faith with many in Bihar. Rajendra Prasad and the other leaders of the province began to undertake extensive tours and to hold frequent meetings to propagate the message of Non-co-operation among the people in general. These were attended by thousands of people.<sup>12</sup> We read in a government report : "the situation was most serious in the Tirhut Division, where

Muzaffarpur was the storm centre. Between the 25<sup>th</sup> January and the 5<sup>th</sup> February (1921) no less than 56 Non-co-operation meetings were held in this district alone".

There was rapid progress in the establishment of panchayats. At Saran, Rajendra Prasad and Mazhrul Haque gave personal attention to it. It is started in a government report that panchayats had been established in a large number of villages in the following districts and were being established every day :- Saran, Muzaffarpur, Champaran, Darbhanga and other parts of Bihar.<sup>13</sup> In a statement on this subject, issued by Rajendra Prasad in the searchlight of the 16<sup>th</sup> March, 1921, he mentioned that the number of panchayats would be several thousands. Cases were tried in the panchayats courts. But at some places the people carried their zeal so far as to resort to social boycott to enforce their decisions.<sup>14</sup>

Non-violence was an essential condition to the Non-co-operation movement. The Bihar leaders and its people did their best to follow it in their words and deeds. At some places in Tirhut Division and the Bhagalpur Division there was some departure from it when persons driven to desperation by economic distress, caused by scarcity of food, looted hats. The Non-co-operation leaders of the province were non responsible for what the government described as 'Epidemic of hat looting'.<sup>15</sup>

With this development the women of Tirhut Division actively participated in the Non-co-operation and Khilafat Movements. It also brought about a great change in the whole province. It is worthy to mention that Rajendra Prasad the guide of the Non-co-operation movement in Bihar became a great leader of the country later.

At the special session of the congress held in Calcutta from the 4<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> September 1920, resolution regarding the Non-co-operative movement was passed. The chief ingredients of the Movement were as follows:-

- (a) Surrender of titles and honorary offices and resignation from nominated seats in local bodies.
- (b) Refusal to attend government levies, durbans, and other official and semi-official functions held by government officials, or in their honour.
- (c) Gradual withdrawal of children from schools and colleges owned, aided or controlled by government, and in place of such schools and colleges, the establishment of national schools and colleges in the various provinces.

- (d) Gradual boycott of British courts by the lawyers and litigants, and the establishment of private arbitration courts by their paid for the settlement of private disputes.
- (e) Refusal on the part of the military, clerical and laboring classes to offer themselves as recruits for service in Mesopotamia.
- (f) Withdrawal by candidates of their candidature for election to the reformed councils, and refusal on the part of the voters to vote for any candidate who, may, despite the congress advice, offer himself for election.
- (g) Boycott of foreign goods.<sup>16</sup>

All the districts of Tirhut Division took a leading part in the Non-co-operation Movement launched by the Indian National Congress. Mazharul Haque addressed the following letter to the Editor of the Searchlight, withdrawing his candidature from the council election.

A letter of Braj Kishore Prasad was published in the searchlight on the 29<sup>th</sup> September' 1920, which shows that the following gentlemen of the district of Saran had withdrawn their candidatures from the ensuing elections to the Reformed council from various constituencies in the province.<sup>17</sup>

Home District	Candidates	Constituencies
Saran	Rajendra Prasad	North Champaran (Bettiah)
Saran	Gorakh Prasad	South Champaran (Motihari)
Saran	Chandradeva Narayan	North Chapra(Siwan-Gopalganj)
Saran	Bankey Bihari Lal	North Chapra(Siwan-Gopalganj)
Saran	Braj Kishore Prasad	Tirhut Urban area.

Though elections were boycotted still the people of Saran continued to take interest in the political activities of the district. On the occasion of the tenth anniversary meeting of the Nava Yuwak Samaj at Aphaar in the district of Saran held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October'1920, Gorakh Prasad in his presidential speech dealt with the following problems: "Desh Ki Adhunik Dasha Aur Hum Logo Ke Kartavya" (i.e. the present condition of the country and our duties). He also thoroughly explained to the audience the meeting of Non-co-operation and asked the people to use Swadeshi goods. He also requested the voters not to vote for anybody who is a candidate for the council election.<sup>18</sup>

On the 8<sup>th</sup> November'1920, a meeting of the Swarajya Sabha was held under the presidentship of Maulvi Wazir Hussain, Vakil at Jamo Bazar (Saran) where more than three thousand people assembled. Pandit Chandrika Sharma gave an elaborate speech in which he dwelt at length on the collapse of the indigenous industries and exploitation of India by the Britishers and suggested the adoption of Swadeshi as the only means for the restoration of the former industrial greatness. Kamleswari Sinha dwelt on the necessity of the establishment of panchayat system. In this meeting, Narayan Prasad Sinha advocated for encouraging and supporting the Non-co-operation movement.<sup>19</sup>

On the 14<sup>th</sup> November'1920, at Kashdewuraun Bangra (Saran), a largely attended meeting was held under the presidentship of Chandrika Prasad Singh in which a local leader, Pandit Chandrika Sharma, described the condition of India in olden times and the changes that were brought during the time of the British. A passionate appeal was made by another local leader, Kamleshwari Sinha for the organization of Panchayat system, for the amelioration of the pitiable condition of the villagers caused by their habits of incessant litigations. Narayan Prasad Sinha appealed for the use of Swadeshi articles. Voters were also asked to boycott the council election. In this meetings no of women freedom leaders were participated.<sup>20</sup>

On the 17<sup>th</sup> November'1920, a meeting was held in Siwan, in the compound of Purana Kila Maidan under the presidentship of Vaidyaji, the leader of the local Aryasamaj. On this occasion Mazhrul Haque spoke for an hour in which he dealt mainly with the different aspects of the Non-co-operation. He exhorted the students to abstain from schools and asked the members of the council to boycott attending the councils and the servicemen to abstain doing any government job.<sup>21</sup>

On the 18<sup>th</sup> November'1920, a great sensation was created in Siwan Town, when a letter was received from Jagarnath Prasad, the son of Bacho Lal, Mokhtar, intimating that the former had become a Non-co-operator and he had taken the vow of using Swadeshi articles throughout his life. Shri Prasad was a student of Banaras Hindu University.<sup>22</sup>

The students of Chapra town went on strike and refused to attend their schools. Mass meeting were held every day since 20<sup>th</sup> November, 1920 in which local leaders exhorted the audience to make Non-co-operation a success.<sup>23</sup>

On the 20<sup>th</sup> November'1920, a public meeting was held at Maharajganj (Siwan) under the presidentship of Jaleshwar Prasad, in which a local leader, Narayan Prasad, fully explained the importance of Swarajya and Non-co-operation Movement. Pandit

Chandrika Sharma spoke elaborately on the significance of the use of Swadeshi for two hours.<sup>24</sup>

On the 25<sup>th</sup> November'1920, a meeting of the students of Siwan, high schools was held at the local Dharmshala in which many students supported the Non-co-operation policy of Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>25</sup>

On the 30<sup>th</sup> November'1920, a meeting of the students of V.M.H.E. School, Siwan, was held under the presidentship of a student of class IX in the New Dharmshala (Siwan) which lasted from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. In this meeting a Non-co-operation committee was formed to make the movement a success.<sup>26</sup>

On the occasion of 'Kartik Purnima Mela' in 1920, a meeting was addressed by Rajendra Prasad at Darauli in which he explained the significance of the Non-co-operation.<sup>27</sup>

Council elections were held in the month of November'1920. In Saran, from the urban Non-Mohammedan constituency only 8 exercised their franchise out of an electorate of more than 400. In the Mohammedan urban constituency 9 votes out of about 200. In the election for council of state only 5 persons exercised their franchise out of 29. Maharajganj, Ekma and Masarakh no voter turned for voting while in Barharia and Mairwa voting was less than 20% and that of Darauli and Guthani it was less than 10%.<sup>28</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi visited Chapra town on 6<sup>th</sup> December'1920. A large meeting was held at Collegiate School. Eminent persons of Saran district and some women leders were present. Gandhiji was highly pleased to note that Zakaria Hashmi and Bindeshwari Prasad had given up their practice at the bar, and he congratulated them for it: "I want Ramraj. But side by side I do not like that the Zamindars should tyrannize the peasants. If the Zamindars tyrannize them, they had a right to resort to non-co-operation against them. At the present we have to Non-co-operate with the government and hence we should not think over Non-co-operation against each other."<sup>29</sup>

Rajendra Prasad addressed a letter to the Vice-Chancellor of Patna University resigning his membership of the Patna University senate and syndicate and various other University bodies and committees. In the resignation letter he wrote: "In view of the serious situation existing in the country on account of unjust action taken by the government in matters of Khilafat and the inhuman atrocities committed by its officers and agents in the Punjab, the great National Assembly of India have decided to withdraw co-operation from it. Accepting that decision as binding upon me and being fully

convinced of the essentially unjust and immoral basis of the government which can condone such wrongs. I have no option left to me but to give up all concern with government and its institutions in so far as it has been enjoined upon us by the National Assembly.<sup>30</sup>

Rajendra Prasad also resigned his membership from the governing body of the Bihar National College (B.N. College, Patna). He sent his resignation to Principal D.N. Sen in which he wrote:

“Please accept my resignation of my membership of the council of the B.N. College. You may not be unaware of the reason which compels me to take this step. So long as your council is not in a position to ask for withdrawal of government grant and affiliation with a government University. I fear I cannot associate myself with the management of the institution. I confess I cannot hope that the council could be willing, constituted as it is at present, to transfer the institution to the Swaraj Sabha and thus save the province from the disgrace of having hand over a partially National Institution to the government.<sup>31</sup>

Jagat Narayan<sup>32</sup> a laboratory assistant of the Patna College resigned from his post on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December'1920.

At Gopalganj, on the 20<sup>th</sup> December'1920, a public meeting was organized under the presidentship of Chandra Gokul Prasad, pleader, which was attended by several important persons including Rajendra Prasad, Bindeshwar Prasad, Mahendra Prasad and Ramanand Sinha.

In this meeting a National song composed by Hafiz of Madhopur Badharia was recited by two of his disciples.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, Tirhut remained in the vanguard of the Non-co-operation Movement that was launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920. Most of the students of Tirhut Division struck form schools, some of the lawyers of the district gave up their practices, some of the service-holders resigned from the services. People also boycotted the council election. It definitely shows that National feeling was gradually growing amongst the people of Tirhut. Besides, two ardent patriots of Tirhut, Mazharul Haque and Rajendra Prasad had emerged as great National leaders of the country. Moreover, this period is also characterized by Hindu-Muslim unity on political plain.

In Chapra, even a festival like chhath were a large number of women gathered at the pond to offer prayers to the sun god, was used by local leders like rahul sankrityayan and



nagnarayan to spread the message of non cooperation. In the night meeting of women were held.

In chapra smt sarla devi and smt savitri devi played a important role in non cooperation movement. Smt sarla devi jee visited in different district of chhotanagpur division to spread the charkha or message of non cooperation.<sup>34</sup> smt savitri devi also spread the message of charkha.

Due to this all women or girls of saran district left out the government school and college, and start the study after the open of nation school in bihar.

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