



Unsung Rebel Heroes of 1942, Bihar: A Review

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Abstract: Quit India movement of 1942 was one of the greatest upsurges in modern history. The failure of Cripps Mission in removing the constitutional deadlock coupled with the rapid approach of the Japanese menace on the eastern front during Cripps stay in Delhi produced a feeling of frustration and excitement in the hearts of people. The unusual situation prevailed in the country led the congress working committee to pass a resolution on August 5, 1942 in Bombay which demanded the withdrawal of British power from India. This resolution was fully endorsed by All India congress committee held at Bombay on August 7 and 8, 1942. It was here that Mahatma Gandhi gave the famous slogan "Do or Die" and it was spread almost all parts of India including Bihar. Infact Bihar played a decisive role in the movement in the face of ruthless repression.

Key words: Cripps, Bihar, Congress, Committee, August.

INTRODUCTION

The unusual intensity of the movement surprised everyone. Viceroy Linlithgow described it as "By far the most serious rebellion since 1857". To prevent the outbreak of mass civil disobedience, the government, in early hour of 9th August arrested Mahatma Gandhi and all members of the working committee. In Bihar too many nationalist were arrested. The district magistrate of Patna W. G. Archer arrested Rajendra Prasad. The advocate general Baldev Sahay resigned from his office to government repression. Phulan Prasad, Shri Krishna Sinha, Anugraha Narayan Sinha, Mathura Prasad and some other leaders were also arrested. The repression inflicted by the government failed to check mass upheaval. On August 11, a band of students, inspite of severe lathicharges was able to host the national flag on the eastern gate of Patna secretariate, the citadel of bureaucracy in Bihar. At about 4.57 P.M, under order of District Magistrate Patna, thirteen or fourteen rounds were fired. As a result of gun shots seven students died and 25 were seriously injured. The seven students martyrs were:

Name	District	School/Colleges
1. Umakant Sinha	Narendrapur Saran	Ram Mohan Roy, Patna Class IX
2. Ramanand Singh	Patna Sahadat Nagar	Ram Mohan Roy Class IX
3. Jagatpati Kumar	Gaya Kharati(Aurangabad)	B.N. College Patna
4. Satish Prasad Jha	Bhagalpur Khadehara	Patna Collegiate Patna, Class X
5. Devipada Choudhary	Silhat, Jamalpur Bhagalpur	Miller High School, Patna, Class IX
6. Rajendra Singh	Saran Banwari chowk	Patna High School Class X
7. Ram Govind Singh	Dasharatha Patna	Punpun High School Class IX

While oldest among them was a college student, the rest were the young boys not older than seventeen. But even as young, they became symbols of new India. The story of these seven martyrs were immortalised but the eighth hero who hoisted the flag after the death of the seventh students has been lost to the pages of History recognised as Ramkrishna Sinha, a third year student of Patna college disguised himself as a gardener. The only thing on his mind was to enter the secretariate and hoist the tricolour. According to the report in the Telegraph he was arrested and sent to jail where he spent more than a year as an under trial convict.



The situation in Patna remained hostile even on 12th of August. The rebels paralysed the government machineries. Post and telegraph, telephone wires were cut at many places. Roads were blocked and bridges damaged. Railway lines between Gulzarbagh and Patna city were tempered with. The government admitted in central assembly that Patna was completely cut off from rest of India for sometime. Attempts were made even in remote areas to paralyse the government machinery and getting control of government buildings. Parallel government was formed at Barh by the Gopes and Dusadhs who formed their own Raj.

Hajipur according to the commissioner of Tirhut was the worst affected area. Madan Jha one of the hero of Hajipur set up their own government and court. The police station was set up in a temple at Rampur village. In Mahnarthana the peoples govt. functioned under the rebel hero Madan Jha from 18th August to 3rd September 1942. The Pupri thana in Sitamarhi subdivision and Karak remain under peoples control for several days.

At Karavara five British and one Anglo Indian soldiers who had fired on a meeting were disarmed and killed. The leader of the movement in this area was Jaglal Choudhary, a former congress minister who later was sentenced to ten years of imprisonment. Shanti Devi led the movement at Chapra In Manjhi, Ekma, Dighwara, Raghunathpur, Siwan and Parsa the British administrative Machinery was completely paralysed. An efficient administration was setup in these areas. Swatantra Mandal was the highest body which work through village panchayat above which were thana panchayats. There were four main departments under Swatantra Mantra – (a) Dept. of Dislocators (b) Publicity Dept. (c) Village Defence Dept. Volunteers Dept. or Sevak Dal. The head of each of the Departments was known as Adhyaksha whose orders were carried out by Sevak Dals. The attack on the Bahero Police Station was led by the wife of Chariter Singh of Kharki who broke open the thana gate. Railway line and bridges and west of Tarsarai station were wrecked by workers and traffic on several lines of the B.N.W. Railway was suspended for several days.

In Santhal Parganas the movement was quite intense in Deoghar, Sarwan and Pahapur. Prafulla Chandra Patnayak of Daman-i-koh organised the Paharias for the movement. A parallel government also worked at Siwan for sometime. Ranchi, Dalbhum and Singhbhum were other storm centres of the movement. About 20,000 people of Tata Iron and steel mill in Jamsedpur went on strike. In Dalmianagar too there was a labour strike. The most significant incident was the strike of policemen which alarmed the British authority and the British soldiers went to control the situation. Infact sweepers also went on strike. The rebels including Jaiprakash Narayan, Karthik Prasad, Brajkishore Prasad Singh. Dr. Baidnath Jha and Shyam Sundar Prasad took shelter in Tarai, Nepal and set up a centre for training of “Azad Dastas”,

(Geurilla Bands) Sardar Nityanad Singh was a chief instructor. But under pressure from British government these leaders were arrested by Nepal government and confined in Hanuman Nagar Jail. With a band of Azad Dastas, Nityanand and Suraj Narayan Singh led an attack on the jail, overcame the guards and release the leaders. In Bihar independent council was setup under Suraj Narayan Singh. The two revolutionary groups, Siyaram Dal and Parsuram Dal, was very active in Bihar. With a band of 150 young followers, Siyaram Singh, the founder of the former Dal, carried on guerrilla activities in Bhagalpur and adjoining districts and helped to paralyze the government in these parts. Horrors of police and military raj were let loose in many areas. Loot, arson and assaults went on unrestrained for a number of days. Even women were stripped on their ornaments at some places. Houses at Phulparas, Laukahi and Lakaha were burnt. In Darbhanga communication was paralysed by Kulanand Vaidik and in Singhwara by Karpoori Thakur. Trains were captured and according to convenience were named as “Swaraj Train”. Monghyr suffered no less at the hands of the military. In the area where the air crash crew had been killed, military atrocities were terrible. There was machine gunning of the mobs from air, as a result of which 40 to 50 persons died and many were injured. Soldiers penetrated into villages, burnt many houses, and whipped and flogged the inhabitants. Terrorstricken men, women and children fled away to escape dishonour and molestation at the hands of the troops. On 2 September, 1942, there were reckless military firing at Rohiyar resulting in the death of 10 persons. Many houses in this village were burnt.

In human physical tortures were inflicted on the people of Saharsha, Sonbarsa and Supaul in Bhagalpur. At Sonbarsa, the troops caught hold a person and killed him by stabbing at several places. One Lahtar Choudhary was force by the military to stretch himself on a table, “stripped of his garments and was given twenty- six furious strokes of caning”. Military firing at Kishanganj resulted in the death of four persons. To crush the movement in Bhagalpur, mobile columns of the military were organised to act as a “striking force”. The severe military firing at Sultanganj resulted in the death of about 65 persons according to unofficial estimates, but the government put the figure of the death and injured at 10 and 4 respectively. The indiscriminate police firing on the prisoners at Bhagalpur jail who had broken out into open rebellion and set fire to factory and godowns killing three jail officers, resulted in the death of 29 peoples and injuries to 87. Tilakpur was ravaged and many of its inhabitants were flogged. The movement at village Pain was led by young Sukhdeo Gope who later on was crushed to death under a motor lorry of



the soldiers. British officers ravaged Sarwan in Santhal paraganas. A team of military raided Lasari village in Sahabad district on September 15 but met with determined resistance from its people. The total collective fines imposed in the province of Bihar was a little over 24 lakhs of rupees, out of which more than 20 lakhs had been recovered by the end of November 1942.

Thus we see that the young rebels of Bihar though some of them remained unsung heroes played an instrumental role in Quit India movement and placed the demand for independence on the immediate agenda of the national movement. Any future negotiation with the British government could only be on the manner of the transfer of power. Independence was no longer a subject of bargain. A critical and creative appraisal on history writing of these unsung rebel youth would amply throw light on their contribution to 1942 movement. Despite their limitations their effort to emancipate the country from foreign rule was a patriotic act and a Progressive step.

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