

# Introduction: Dr. Sachchidanand Sinha: Life and Mission and the Creation of Modern Bihar

By: Pratyush Kumar with Madan Mishra

## 1. *Historical-Cultural Background*

Dr. Sachchidanand Sinha was a constitutionalist in the league of Indian public leaders in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth. His moment in history and the defining act which ensured his place in modern Indian history was helping out carve Bihar as a separate province of the British Empire in 1912 after nearly two centuries of being clubbed along with Bengal. The aspirations of the small but significant, influential and articulate, English-educated intelligentsia of Bihar drawn primarily from upper class Bihari Muslims and Hindu Kayasthas could not have been met if Bihar remained in the periphery of Bengal province and anything but remote from the metropolitan location of Calcutta, the imperial capital and the second city of the empire, second only to London. The domination of the Bengali literate class not just in Bengal proper but also in Bihar was met with consternation by those Biharis who became beneficiaries of or those who adopted modern English education.<sup>1</sup> This was coupled with the lack of proper administration or the real problems in administering not just geographically but even demographically larger region of Bihar as compared to West Bengal (after the partition of Bengal in 1905 during Lord Curzon's viceroyalty). This is notwithstanding the fact that the Bengal Presidency including Bihar (including today's Jharkhand),

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<sup>1</sup> Some demands were of course just but in the zeal to point out the injustices it also smacked of petty provincialism, which in post-independent India, is a matter of serious concern for national cohesion and national identity formation. "In 1898 the disproportionate number of Bengali officials in the Education departments came in for severe criticism by the *Behar Times*. In 1899 the affairs of the Calcutta University and non-appointment of Biharis as officers in the different Estates of the region were discussed. The absence of any role for the Biharis in the administration of Calcutta University, the poor number of Bihari fellows in it and the non-inclusion of Hindi in its curriculum came in for censure. The paper in its different issues also detailed the process through which bengalis had come to monopolize all important posts in the Hathwa raj. This fact and the fact that an overwhelming share of ministerial posts was also held by them were (sic) heavily criticized and justice was demanded for the people of Bihar. Demands for a better representation of the Biharis in different branches of administration were made. In the case of judicial appointments, it was submitted that all the posts that existed in Bihar should go to the Biharis 'the children of the soil'. It went to the extent that even in matters like the conferment of titles people of Bihar were seen to be neglected." Cf. Narendra Jha, *The Making of Bihar and Biharis: Colonialism, Politics and Culture in Modern India c. 1870-1912*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2012, pp. 178-179.

Bengal, Orissa and Assam was too big a province to be administered under one under-staffed administrative unit. But the partition of Bengal on apparent communal lines was a colonial mischief which sowed the seeds of the future partition of India. On the other hand, Bihar as a region had seen its golden period a number of times in the past and it was made to mourn its own loss of not just regional but also cultural and linguistic identity according to Sinha.

Ancient learning in Sanskrit still remained in Bihari hinterland, more specifically so in North Bihar with special emphasis on grammar and Nyaya philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Learning in Persian and Arabic still persisted. The fact that Raja Ram Mohun Roy had his initial education in Persian and Arabic in Patna from the age of seven till the age of twenty-two is a pertinent historical fact. It surely must have left an imprint on his personality and must have shaped his ideas for social reform. It should also be noted that at this point of time the condition of women in general and widows in particular, was better in Bihar than that in Bengal.<sup>3</sup> An absence in any recorded instance of sati in the region which constitutes Bihar should not be lost on intellectual historians. All the social malpractices related with Kulinism which resulted in huge number of child widows who were either burnt or reduced to a life-long state of penury and destitution in widow-houses in Kashi and Mathura was virtually absent in Bihar. All this would have shaped the personality of Raja Ram Mohun Roy who spearheaded the modern awakening of India and Hindus starting from native Bengali speakers in the colonial capital of Calcutta.

Post Battle of Buxar in 1764, Bihar was slowly but surely losing out on the race with an emergent Bengal, which though suffered a lot due to colonialism, but also benefitted in creating a whole contingent of educated middle class Hindu Bhadrakol who staffed the lower rungs of administration in the British Empire and constituted almost the entire lot of modern trained teachers, lawyers, professors, magistrates and so on. Educationally, especially for these 'modern' colonial jobs with English education as a necessary condition precedent, which were created, Bihar remained backward.<sup>4</sup> Bihar being a large area

<sup>2</sup> Bihar had made immense contribution to Sanskrit scholarship from ancient times, but there was a decline by the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries due to a general decline of Bihar. Big feudal lords like Darbhanga, Bettiah, Hathwa, Tekari and Banaili kept promoting Sanskrit scholarship but as the prominence of Bihar had declined so had its scholarship. See: S.C. Banerji, Contribution of Bihar to Sanskrit Literature, Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1973.

<sup>3</sup> Ashis Nandy goes to the extent that Sati started happening only after the coming of the British and that too was confined to colonial Calcutta or at best in the adjoining regions of Bengal. See: Ashis Nandy, Sati: A Nineteenth Century Tale of Women, Violence and Protest cf. Ashis Nandy, At the Edge of Psychology: Essays in Politics and Culture in Exiled at Home, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. 1-31.

<sup>4</sup> "There was apathy towards the progress of English education in Bihar, and the office for promotion of English education at Patna was known as '*Shaitan ka daftar*' (office of the Devil). It was only after 1859 that zilla schools were established at Patna, Arrah and Chapra and the hill school was established at Bhagalpur. In 1863, the districts of Deoghar, Motihari, Hazaribagh and Chaibasa got one school each. The zilla schools opened by the government,

also providing huge revenue was an important outlying region of this new and resurgent Bengal providing employment and trade to a large number of native Bengali speakers. Patna which used to be a thriving inland port on river Ganges until eighteenth century lost its economic relevance. Such was not the case with Assam, whose separation from Bengal did not receive much attention at this point in time. However, the separation movement of Bihar from Bengal was vehemently opposed by native Bengali speakers, both in Bengal as well as in Bihar. These native Bengali speakers in Bihar also dominated its public sphere and their mouthpiece was the journal *Behar Herald* which had a huge circulation and was led by one of the tallest public person in the latter half of 19<sup>th</sup> century in Bihar Mr. Guru Prasad Sen who represented the views of Bengal and ran the *Behar Herald* and opposed tooth and nail the separation of Bihar from Bengal.

## 2. Sachchidanand Sinha's biography

It is in this backdrop Sachchidanand Sinha was born on November 10, 1871, at Arrah town in the old district of Shahabad, now Bhojpur, in a respectable family. His ancestral village was Murar, also in the old District of Shahabad, now falling in Buxar district. His grandfather, Bakshi Shiv Prasad Sinha (1790-1870) was the chief revenue officer of the Maharaja of Dumraon and his father Bakshi Ramyad Sinha (1831-1897) was the chief pleader of the Maharaja of Dumraon.<sup>5</sup> He inherited a large library from his father where he developed the habit of reading and a liberal environment from his parents which made him go a step further against his family's wishes by taking a 'voyage across the seven seas' to

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to begin with, were not popular, because the people were apathetic and social prejudices and misgivings stood in the way. No wonder that attempts to establish a college at Patna had failed twice during the first half of the nineteenth century. [] in the years following the revolt of 1857, some public interest in education began to develop and Patna college was founded with five students only in 1863. At the outset, it is significant to note, the college had an insignificant number of Bihari students, and it was only by 1899 that there were 216 Biharis as against 85 Bengalis among the students. The second college in Bihar, the T.N.J. College, Bhagalpur was affiliated as a second grade college in 1887 and as a first grade college in 1890. The third college, B.N. College was affiliated as a second grade college in 1889 and as a first grade college in 1892. The Bhumihar Brahman College at Muzaffarpur was opened in July 1899 and it was raised to the degree standard in 1900. But this time were also established St. Columba's College at Hazaribagh by the Dublin Mission, the D.J. College Monghyr (a second grade college) and Nalanda College, Bihar Sharif, a second grade college. Thus Bihar came to have some educational centres only by the end of the nineteenth century." Cf. Sitaram Singh, *The Separation of Bihar from Bengal*, in P.N. Ojha and U. Thakur (eds.), *A Peep into Seventyfive Years of Bihar (Souvenir)*, Patna: Bihar Research Society, 1987, pp. 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Yuvraj Dev Prasad, *Dr. Sachchidanand Sinha – The Dream Achiever of Bihar (1871-1950)* in *Abhilekh Bihar (Journal of the Bihar State Archives)*, Ank – 8 (Vol. 8), Patna: Bihar Rajya Abhilekhagar Nideshalaya (Bihar State Archives), Government of Bihar, pp. 132-154 (at p. 132).

study in England and marry Radhika Devi (1894) from Lahore who was outside his sub-caste.<sup>6</sup> In his village Murar near Buxar, the neighbourhood occupied by his ancestors was known as the “Lakhnaua tola” giving the impression that they might have shifted from Lucknow to Bihar.<sup>7</sup> This might have been one of the reasons for Sinha’s life-long cultural affinity more with United Provinces rather than with Calcutta and Bengal. He maintained two houses: one in Allahabad and one in Patna.

Sachchidanand was a member of the Imperial Legislative Council from 1910-12; the Finance member (perhaps the first Indian) of the Governor’s Executive Council from 1920-26; leader of the opposition from 1930-36; as an educationist he became the Vice-Chancellor of Patna University from 1936-44; a journalist of repute associated with newspapers like *The Indian People* and *The Leader* of Allahabad, *The Bihari*, *The Behar Times* and *The Searchlight* of Patna; he was founder-editor of *Kayastha Smachar* since 1900 which became *Hindustan Review* from 1903 which he continued editing and publishing till his death in 1950 (he was rigorous and fastidious in publishing articles of great merit by contributors from across the country). His commitment to human dignity is seen when he tried to institute jail reforms (like stopping flogging of prisoners) when he was member of the Government in charge of jails; he was the first to start the cooperative movement in Bihar; he was associated with the Indian Library Movement and set up the famous “Radhika Sinha Institute and Sachchidanand Sinha Library” in Patna, he was associated with Khuda Baksh Oriental Library in Patna (also acting secretary for sometime) and the Imperial Library at Calcutta besides enriching the Patna University Library during his Vice-Chancellorship. Thus he was an eminent journalist, lawyer, administrator, statesman and educationalist.

Sinha became the first Chairman of the Constituent Assembly of India, and on the very first day he was introduced by Acharya J.B. Kripalani to the august assembly which framed India’s Constitution in the following words: “Friends, at this auspicious occasion of historical importance I invite, on your behalf, Dr. Sachchidananda Sinha to be the temporary Chairman of this Assembly. Dr. Sinha needs no introduction. You all know him. He is not only the oldest among us but also the oldest parliamentarian in India, having served, as you know, as a member of the Imperial Legislative Council from 1910 to 1920. He entered the Central Legislative Assembly in 1921 not only as one of its members, but its Deputy President also. He was then entrusted with the portfolio of an Executive Councillor and Finance Member of the Government of Bihar and Orissa. So far as I remember Dr. Sinha was the first Indian who was ever appointed as a Finance Member of a Province. He has a particular taste for education having been Vice-Chancellor of the Patna University for eight years.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid* at pp. 132-133.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid* at p. 132.

Over and above all this, Dr. Sinha is the oldest Congressman among us. Up till 1920 he was a member of the Congress, being at one time its Secretary.”<sup>8</sup> Sinha’s own inaugural speech was most instructive and set the tone for the debates and writing the provisions of the future Constitution of India.

### 3. Movement for the Separation of Bihar

In the movement for separation of Bihar from Bengal, Dr. Sachchidanand Sinha was given unstinted support since the beginning of the movement by Mr. Mahesh Narayan<sup>9</sup> who also functioned as the editor of *The Behar Times* and then *The Biharee* till he died at a relatively young age of 43 on August 1, 1907. Apart from Mahesh Narayan, the movement in its inception also received support from Nand Kishore Lal, Rai Bahadur Krishna Sahay, Sir Ali Imam, Sir Hasan Imam and a few others. This is, of course, in its initial stages from 1894 till about 1903 when the movement for separation kept on growing from strength to strength.

By Sachchidanand Sinha’s own admission the whole story of separation began when he was asked to show his British and Indian friends while in London as to where the geographical location of Bihar was on the map of the world after he had replied belonging from the place of Bihar. Later, seeing a sturdy Bihari with a tag of Bengal Police on his uniform as soon as he returned from England to his native place of Bihar, further humiliated and insinuated him and became

<sup>8</sup> Constituent Assembly Debates (Official Report), Vol. I, New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat (Sixth reprint), 2014, Monday, the 9<sup>th</sup> December 1946, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> “Mahesh Narayan (1859-1907) occupies a pre-eminent position among the list of leaders who led the Biharis’ struggle for a distinct identity. This ‘Maker of Modern Bihar’ was born in the Babhangama village of the Santhal pargana district and was educated at Bhagalpur, Patna and Calcutta. While in Patna he studied at the Patna College and after doing entrance went to Calcutta where he gave up studies while still a student of B.A. [...] An ardent lover of Hindi he wrote with great ability in that language, most of his writings being published in the *Bihar Bandhu*. His journalistic career began as an apprentice to his elder brother whom he helped in editing the *Mushire Bihar*, a weekly. When the *Indian Chronicle* was established he began by writing in it and later became both its sub-editor and editor. The paper devoted its columns to the airing of the supposed grievances of educated Biharis in their claim for employment. This vantage point gave an unique opportunity to him to get fully conversant with the problems of Biharis. However, by 1888 the *Indian Chronicle* got merged with the *Behar Herald*, which had been a mouthpiece of the Bengali community in Bihar. Mahesh Narayan now launched the *Kayastha Gazette* (1888) and began rendering service to the cause of social reform of the community. However, after this paper ceased publication in 1891 he started editing the *Shahabad Gazette* and his reforming spirit was in full evidence when he defended Sachchidanand Sinha, the first upper caste Bihari to have gone to England, who was facing hostile reception when he returned home in 1893. Mahesh Narayan, too, like his elder brother participated in the Indian National Congress sessions. In 1890 he participated as a delegate of the Bihar People’s Association.” Cf. Narendra Jha, *The Making of Bihar and Biharis: Colonialism, Politics and Culture in Modern India c. 1870-1912*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2012, pp. 160-161.

a powerful symbolism and a trigger factor for his liberal, learned, enlightened, cultured and constitutional response of creating the province of Bihar.<sup>10</sup> His was a constructive response to the inferiority complex and humiliation which he had to suffer.

In 1896, when the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Sir Alexander Mackenzie visited Gaya, he was handed over a memorial prepared by the duo (Sinha and Mahesh Narayan) demanding for the separate province of Bihar. The proposal was not just shot down but also rejected in principle with a remark, "It must have been a silly reason for the Behar and other papers to have taken up this question. They have apparently nothing more useful to discuss. It is the last thing likely to happen within our time. Neither the Government of India nor the Secretary of India for State is likely to propose the creation of another lower government in upper India." Mr. Guru Prasad Sen hailed this decision of the Lieutenant Governor through his mouthpiece, the *Behar Herald*.

After this setback, from 1896 to 1903, i.e., for almost seven years Mahesh Narayan and Sachchidanand Sinha kept creating awareness through *The Behar Times* for the creation of the separate province of Behar (now called Bihar). They were relentless in their effort to create public opinion and reasoned through their impassioned appeals and editorials for the separation of Bihar from Bengal. They did not approach the government of the day with another proposal or memorandum during these seven years. Another dividing feature was how the movement for the separation of Bihar did not receive any media attention in the Calcutta papers, whether English or Bengali language papers. It is only the papers and journals run by Anglo-Indians and Britishers who gave media attention to the subject.

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<sup>10</sup> "This was forced on my attention during my stay in London, as a student, during the early nineties of the last century, when I made the painful and humiliating discovery that not only was Bihar a *terra incognita* to the average Britisher, and to even the retired Anglo-Indians, but also to the majority of the Indians there. Some of my Indian friends, in Britain, even challenged me to a literary combat, and dared me to point out any such province as 'Bihar' in any recognized textbook of geography. It would be difficult for me to convey to the Biharees of today the sense of shame and humiliation which I, and some other equally sensitive Biharee friends, felt while prosecuting our studies in Britain, on realizing that we were a people without any individuality, without any province to claim as ours; in fact, without any local habitation with a name. the sense of this painful conviction was, if anything, intensified when on my return to India, early the year, 1893, at the very first railway station in Bihar, I noticed a tall, robust and stalwart Biharee constable wearing the badge with the inscription "Bengal Police". It almost embittered my feelings of joy and gratification on my return home, after an absence of more than three years abroad. But as if it were by an impulse, I resolved then and there to do all that lay in my power to secure for Bihar distinct and honourable status as an administrative unit, with an individuality on the same footing as that of the more important provinces in the country. In one word, this was to be thereafter the mission of my life, and its realization the greatest source of inspiration permeating my public activities." Sachchidanand Sinha, *Some Eminent Bihar Contemporaries*, Patna, 1944, pp. ii-iii; *The Hindustan Review*, December, 1912, pp. 527-28.



The thrust of the movement for separation was of course led by Sachchidanand Sinha, but the biggest watershed was the partition of Bengal in 1905 orchestrated by Lord Curzon. It created the biggest schism in Bengali public opinion and public sphere. There was increasing radicalism and a lot of revolutionary organizations were erupting in Bengal proper which was perpetrating acts of violence against the British government as well as British citizens and officials in the province. Bengal had completely come in the grips of the Swadeshi movement which was propelled by its opposition to its partition into West and East Bengal. It diverted the attention of Bengalis from the demands of separation of Bihar from it. The region of Bihar and its public-men remained aloof from the historic movement taking place in Bengal against its partition. The rough treatment meted out to Bihari leaders and public-men propelled this response to the Bengali situation.

The earlier plan of shifting some eastern districts of Bengal to Assam was changed to the partition of Bengal into two halves. Those six years of partition of Bengal, from 1905 to 1911 when it was revoked, is intrinsically connected to the success of the separation of Bihar from Bengal. The public sphere and public mood in Bengal was reeling under the weight of partition and anything but reunification of West and East Bengal would have assuaged its feelings. The master-stroke was done along with the shifting of capital of British India from Calcutta to Delhi, the older Mughal capital of India which was more centrally located and a move which was supported by all the other provinces of the British along with the princely states which used to proffer huge revenues to the British Government.

Not to say the least about how it was a master stroke of Dr Sachchidanand Sinha to have recommended the name of Mr. Syed Ali Imam (later 'Sir')<sup>11</sup>, a highly successful and illustrious Bihari lawyer at the Calcutta High Court, and a childhood friend, as a Law Member in the Viceroy's Executive Council succeeding Barrister S.P. Sinha (later Lord Sinha when he got peerage) in 1910. This is also the year when Dr. Sinha was himself a member of the Imperial Legislative Council and came in direct contact with the Viceroy, Lord Minto. It is in this capacity, when Lord Minto evinced an interest in having a Muslim succeeding Lord Sinha as the Indian Law Member in the Government of India,

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<sup>11</sup> Imam, Syed Ali (1869-1931); belonged to a famous Shia family Neora, Patna; who was among the first Indians and perhaps the first 'Bihari' to receive English education; educated at Arrah and Patna; went to England, 1887; called to the Bar, 1890; started practice at Calcutta High Court, 1890; Trustee M.A.O. College, Aligarh, 1908; President, All-India Muslim League Session, Amritsar, 1908; fellow, Calcutta University 1909-12; member, Bengal Legislative Council 1910-15; Vice-President, All India Muslim League Session, Delhi 1910 and Lucknow, 1916; resumed practice at Patna High Court, 1916; Judge, Patna High Court, 1917; member, Governor's executive Council, Bihar and Orissa, 1918-19; First President of Executive Council, Hyderabad State, 1919, resigned 1923; member, All Parties Conference Committee, 1928; took part in the Civil Disobedience Movement, 1930-31; President, Swadeshi league of Patna, 1930 and Nationalist Muslim Conference, Lucknow, 1931.

Dr. Sachchidanand Sinha immediately mentioned the name of Mr. Ali Imam. This is also the time when the name of Justice Davar of the Bombay High Court was being pressed upon by the Home Member, Sir John Jenkins. Dr. Sinha reasoned against Justice Davar on two grounds: (a) A High Court judge should not have any further expectation of a higher office; (b) Justice Davar was the judge who had sentenced and convicted Mr. Bal Gangadhar Tilak<sup>12</sup> and his appointment would be unpopular in the “politically minded classes”. This is also the time when nationalists and popular leaders were opposed to the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909 and the government wanted to tread cautiously. One major reason for opposition to it by all the major nationalist and Congress leaders was the introduction of separate electorates for Muslims whereas some important Muslim leaders through the platform of the Muslim League had pressed for it and the government “relented”, or at least that was the reason offered by the government. The Viceroy, Lord Minto must have thought of having a Muslim law member because a Hindu of the stature of Mr. S.P.Sinha had already been appointed as a law member and he thought it only fair that an able Muslim should be appointed as a law member. Dr. Sachchidanand Sinha, being an astute politician knew that for the best interests of Bihar as well as fulfilling this requirement of a Muslim Law member, Mr. Ali Imam would be the most suitable candidate. In his Presidential Address to the Bihar Provincial Association at Bhagalpur in 1909, Dr. Sinha while discussing the issue of separate electorates had opposed it on ideal grounds but yet accepted it as part of the functioning of politics and as a matter of contingent “compromise” to reach a higher goal.

Being a constitutionalist and a moderate, his speech at Bihar Provincial Conference 1909, Bhagalpur all through evinced a lot of hope and trust in the British Government of the day.<sup>13</sup> Of course, there are two ways of reading it. One, in a literal sense of him placing his trust on the government and practicing something called “constitutional mendicancy” to bring about administrative reforms to ameliorate the lives and conditions of the teeming millions of his yet-to-be province of Bihar as part of overall and collective national progress and also considering the British rule as something given and trying to wheedle and work through it.

The other reason was perhaps even deeper, as he knew the kind of opposition he had to face from the formidable Bengali leadership, press and populace which was mostly unkind and ignored such a demand at best and opposed it bitterly at its worst. In such circumstance, if Bihar in its modern provincial

<sup>12</sup> The hugely popular Nationalist leader, also the leader of the extremist wing and commonly referred to as *Lokmanya*.

<sup>13</sup> *The Beharee*, April 16, 1909, cf. Ashok Aounshuman *et al* (ed.), *The Making of a Province: Select Documents on the Creation of Modern Bihar 1874-1917 Part I*, Patna: Directorate of Archives (Government of Bihar), 2013, pp. 513-534.



avatar had to be created at all, it could never have been done by opposing an even more formidable British Government. With rise in education and rise in public awareness Bengalis were increasingly getting restive with the British rule with instances of revolutionary violence no longer remaining just isolated incidents by fringe groups. With the partition of Bengal, this spark was fanned into a smouldering fire. It is also to the credit, or discredit as one would like to read it, to leaders like Dr. Sinha that Bihar which had seen series of oppositions to the British from 1757 to 1857-58 (and some even later) remained largely aloof from the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal.<sup>14</sup> Some Bengalis in Bihar tried to create awareness or themselves took part in it but Biharis stood mostly unaffected and largely aloof and indifferent to the Swadeshi movement as Bengali leaders were indifferent to the purportedly legitimate demands for the separate provincehood of Bihar.

Sachchidanand Sinha was elected to the Imperial Legislative Council in 1910 and it coincided with the resignation of Sir S.P. Sinha as law member of the executive council.<sup>15</sup> Lord Minto, the Viceroy was now keen to have a Muslim as a law member and Sinha immediately suggested the name of Ali Imam, who was initially reluctant but due to Sinha's entreaties that this office might help facilitate in creating the separate province of Bihar, finally got persuaded to become a Law Member in the Viceroy's Executive Council.<sup>16</sup> George V intended to hold a Darbar at Delhi in the style of Mughal Emperors and wanted to 'grant boons' on the occasion. Leaders of Bengal submitted a memorial for rescinding the partition of Bengal proper and Bihari leaders made an appeal for the separation of Bihar from Bengal.<sup>17</sup> The British government had now become conducive to the idea of separation of Bihar from Bengal.

Sinha himself records, "In the autumn of 1911, I was at Shimla for the Imperial Legislative Council session, and was staying with Mr. Ali Imam at the "Inver-arm". His Majesty the King had already announced his intention of coming to India during the cold weather to hold a Durbar, at Delhi, at which to proclaim his accession as the Emperor of India. The whole of India was astir at the time,

<sup>14</sup> Kali Kinkar Datta, Biography of Kunwar Singh and Amar Singh, Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1984; Vijoy Kumar, On the Threshold of Provincehood (1900-1911), Patna: Rahul Smarak Lekhak Sahyog Samiti, 1985; JHA, Jagdish Chandra Jha, The Tribal Revolt of Chotanagpur (1831-1832), Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1987; Ashok Aounshuman, Resistance Against the Company Raj: With Special Reference to Bihar and Jharkhand (1757-1856), *Indian Historical Review*, 49(1\_suppl), 2022, pp. S32-S55; J.N. Sinha, The Raja, The Rebel and the Monk: Fateh Sahi's War Against the East India Company, Gurugram: Penguin, 2025.

<sup>15</sup> Sachchidanand Sinha, Some Eminent Behar Contemporaries, Patna: Himalaya Publications, 1944, pp. XXVI-XXVII (Introduction).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid* at pp. XXVI-XXIX (Introduction).

<sup>17</sup> Y.D. Prasad, Dr. Sachchidanand Sinha – The Dream Achiever of Bihar (1871-1950). In: Abhilekh Bihar (Journal of the Bihar State Archives), Ank-8 (Vol. 8), Patna: Bihar State Archives (Government of Bihar), pp. 132-154 (at p. 137).

and all classes and communities were looking forward to boons on the occasion of the Durbar. One day, the late Mr. Mohammad Ali came to see us, and had a long talk on various subjects. Amongst other things he said that it would be a good thing if the king would declare Delhi to be the permanent capital of the Indian Empire. At this Mr. Ali Imam grew suddenly excited, and said that it was a mad and foolish proposal which no British Government would even consider seriously, as Delhi was a dilapidated and decayed place, past all restoration and redemption. [] After Mr. Mohammad Ali had gone, I said that there was no occasion for the excitement Mr. Imam had betrayed, unless the question was one likely to be considered in connection with the territorial changes in Eastern India, consequent on the popularly-expected smoothing down of the great unrest caused by the partition of Bengal. He looked hard at me, smiled and said; "You think you are very clever. Are you?" I said: "I think, I am". He continued:- "You will live to laugh at the wrong side of the mouth, but" – he added quickly – "get a couple of copies of your pamphlet on the separation of Bihar. I would like to go through it once again." Some days later, when giving him the pamphlets, I said, "I earnestly hope that while you are the Law Member, the Biharees will receive at the hands of the king the greatest boon they desire and deserve, a province of their own." He laughed and said: "You are an inveterate dreamer, well, you may go on dreaming." After the Council session was over, and I was thinking of returning to Patna, Mr. Ali Imam said:- "Assuming that there are to be any territorial changes, you do not and cannot expect that Bihar will be endowed with an Executive Council – which she now shares with West Bengal, when neither Agra and Oudh, nor the Punjab, has got any such institution. If I ever brought up a proposal like that, I would be laughed at for my foolhardiness by my colleagues." [] I said: "You should urge it on the ground that in the reconstituted Bengal, in which Bihar is the predominant partner, there is already an Executive Council, and the Biharees, therefore, are entitled to an Executive Council even when their province is a separate administration." He said: "Well, that is easier said than done." I said: "I would think over the matter, and see if I can assist you." Accordingly, I looked into the various books on Constitutional Law, and felt satisfied that the expression "in council" added to the word "Governor" or "Lieutenant-Governor" could only mean an Executive Council, and not a Legislative Council. I also felt that this distinction was subtle and technical, and would not probably be discovered easily – if at all – by the Civilian and the Military members of Governor General's Council, who very probably would construe the expression "Governorship in Council" or "Lieutenant Governorship in Council" as implying a Governor or Lieutenant Governor with a Legislative Council, and not an Executive Council. So I felt I had succeeded in possibly solving this difficult matter, provided it could safely run the gauntlet. I communicated this view of the question to Mr. Ali Imam, and suggested that instead of making a formal

proposal for an Executive Council for Bihar – if the matter at all came up for consideration – he should make it a point to use in all his notes on the subject the expression “Lieutenant-Governor in Council”, which would then very probably pass muster with his colleagues, without eliciting any controversy. [ ] Mr. Imam doubted whether his colleagues were so dull-witted, but concurred with me that the experiment was worth trying, if ever the question came up for consideration. He strictly stuck to his oath of secrecy by not at all disclosing to me that the question was at that very time being actually considered, almost daily, by the Governor-General and his Executive Councillors, - and that too most seriously. And though I too suspected it, I did not for obvious reasons press the matter any further. At last on that memorable day in the history of modern Bihar (the 12<sup>th</sup> of December, 1911) His Majesty the King-Emperor announced at the Delhi Durbar the formation of Bihar and Orissa under a Lieutenant-Governor in Council!”<sup>18</sup>

It was a master stroke of Sachchidanand Sinha for suggesting a “Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council” of Bihar, which in its technical meaning would mean both to have an Executive Council as well as a Legislative Council something which was absent both in United Provinces and the Punjab but was present in Bengal (and through Bengal, Bihar was also enjoying the benefits of such an institution both as part of Bengal until 1912 and later after its separation due to the specific suggestion by Sinha to Sir Ali Imam).<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, we see a host of historical factors which coalesced together leading to the constitutional creation of Bihar.

#### 4. *The Autobiography*

After Sachchidanand Sinha’s return to Patna from Delhi where he had become the interim chairman of the Constituent Assembly of India, he started writing his autobiography titled “Recollections and Reminiscences of a Long Life” serialized in the monthly issue of the journal *The Hindustan Review* which he had founded and edited for close to half a century. He published it from July, 1946 until December, 1949 after which he became too sick to continue. He died on March 6, 1950. The April, 1950 issue was the last issue of *The Hindustan Review* which contained obituaries and reminiscences for him. Thus, his autobiography remained incomplete. And, as such, it is this incomplete autobiography which we brought before the readers for the first time. This work should be read alongwith his other works, more particularly with his “Some Eminent Behar

<sup>18</sup> Sachchidanand Sinha, *Some Eminent Behar Contemporaries*, Patna: Himalaya Publications, 1944, pp. XXIX-XXXII (Introduction).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid* at pp. XXX-XXXII (Introduction).

Contemporaries” to piece the history of the separation of Bihar from Bengal, among other aspects of modern Indian history.<sup>20</sup>

The autobiography gives a peek into the history and culture of what constitutes Gangetic North India. It is also a kind of social history of one of the most urbanized and “modern” communities of Hindu Kayasthas. We have chapterized it into twenty-one chapters starting from his birth till he recorded the events during his tenure as the Leader of the Opposition, from 1930 to 1936. Although, in between he also recorded the main highlights of the period of his Vice Chancellorship of the Patna University (1936-1944) which is chapter fifteen of the current volume. His work also shows the cordial relations which Hindus and Muslims, more particularly Hindu Kayasthas and Bihari Muslims, enjoyed with each other. Therefore, it is not surprising how the two combined their forces for the separation of Bihar from Bengal. One also notices an incorrect homogenized understanding of the culture of Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh in his understanding. It also shows the Bhojpuri-Magadhi cultural slant in his understanding. His thinly concealed dislike for Bengalis and the social tension of Kayasthas and Brahmins is betrayed in the autobiography. His unstinted allegiance with the British Empire and his positive estimation of the changes brought about by “colonial modernity” remains unfazed till the end. It is interesting that his understanding of Vedantism is linked with liberal western rationality with genealogical roots in David Hume and Edmund Burke and not in Indian social reform movements of Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj or that of Swami Vivekanand whom he does not mention even once in his autobiography. Quite understandably, in a colonial vein he writes with disdain about some Indian cultural practices, including deity worship, with superstition and social malpractices. In sum, he is indeed a man of his times and provides the mental makeup of individuals of his socio-cultural circumstances.

## 5. *In Retrospect*

One of allegations leveled against Dr. Sinha is how he carved out a whole province of Bihar, in opposition to Bengal and Bengalees dominating the public life and the colonial jobs created in the province, to accommodate his community of upper caste Hindu and English educated Kayasthas. Of course, among the Hindu communities of Bihar, Kayasthas were the first to adopt English education in a big way and had the highest percentage of English literates in Bihar at the turn of the nineteenth century along with upper caste Muslims who had an even higher percentage of literacy and would in ordinary

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<sup>20</sup> Sachchidanand Sinha, *Some Eminent Behar Contemporaries*, Patna: Himalaya Publications, 1944.

circumstances be an even bigger beneficiary.<sup>21</sup> Upper caste Bihari Muslims and Hindu Kayasthas were undoubtedly the supporters and beneficiaries of Bihar movement in its early years.<sup>22</sup> Besides, the Anglo-Indian Press and the even the British government in Bihar pandered and promoted the idea of a separate state of Bihar to avoid any kind of revolutionary influence from Bengal – during

<sup>21</sup> “In the name of increasing employment for Biharis, the Bihari-Bengali feeling was whipped up in which the Anglo-Indian press played an important role because of its animosity towards the Bengali middle class. Naturally some of the Bihari newspapers also adopted an anti-Bengali tone. The *Murg-i-Saleman* of Monghyr (7 February, 1876), for example gave the call ‘Bihar for the Biharis’, in the context of large employment of educated Biharis. Similarly, the *Qasid*, another Urdu paper of Bihar, condemned the union of Bengal and Bihar as detrimental to the interest of Bihar (22 January, 1877).” Cf. Sitaram Singh, *The Separation of Bihar from Bengal*, in P.N. Ojha and U. Thakur (eds.), *A Peep into Seventyfive Years of Bihar (Souvenir)*, Patna: Bihar Research Society, 1987, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> “There was also a new factor by this time in the social life of Bihar. At this time we have the rise of caste organizations in India with their branches in this province (sic, region) also. In 1887, the All India Chitraguptavamshiya Kayastha Mahasabha came into existence with which the Kayasthas of the Hindi-speaking areas came to be associated. Thus Bihar, still a part of Bengal Presidency, administratively and politically, came to be associated socially and culturally with other Hindi speaking areas. It was not an accident that Sachchidanand Sinha, the editor of the *Kayastha Samachar* at Allahabad, came to be associated with the movement for the separation of Bihar from Bengal. [...] In 1901, Sachchidanand Sinha shifted the *Kayastha Samachar* from Allahabad to Patna and rechristened it as the *Kayastha Samachar* and *Hindustan Review*. The movement for the separation of Bihar from Bengal gathered momentum and it was advanced as the only alternative to the partition of Bengal, the plea being that it was only thus that the entire Bengali speaking population could be kept together and the administration could also be relieved of some of its burdens and tightened up. [...] As has been pointed out earlier, the Kayasthas together with the Muslims were spearheading this movement for the separation of Bihar from Bengal. The Government itself helped the holding of the third session of the All India Kayastha Conference at Bankipore on 5 and 6 November, 1889. Boswell, the Commissioner, Patna; Finder, District Magistrate; Cowley, Superintendent of Police and the Municipal Commissioners of Patna as well as the Inspector-General of Police, Bengal, all helped to make it a success. Ewbank, the Principal of Patna College, closed the college and collegiate school to enable Kayastha students to attend the Conference. [] Within a decade local sabhas were set up in most of the towns. The Bihar Provincial Sabha was established at Bankipore. A Kayastha Pathshala was established there and steps were taken to set up a boarding house at a considerable cost. The Bihar Provincial Kayastha Sabha had a substantial means of income. A Kayastha Trading Company was established at Arrah with a view to encouraging the community to take to commercial and other professions. It was primarily a social movement, but gradually the social aspect of the movement receded into the background. [] Since the movement had helped them to act as an organised community, they began to make their influence felt on local politics. The anti-Bengal attitude of the government in Bihar was taken advantage of Till 1893 the movement was for all practical purposes confined to four persons – Mahesh Narayan, Nand Kishore Lal, Krishna Sahai, Sachchidanand Sinha (all Kayasthas).” Cf. Sitaram Singh, *The Separation of Bihar from Bengal*, in P.N. Ojha and U. Thakur (eds.), *A Peep into Seventyfive Years of Bihar (Souvenir)*, Patna: Bihar Research Society, 1987, pp. 4-6. Also, See: V.C.P. Chaudhary, *The Creation of Modern Bihar*, Patna: Yugeshwar Prakashan, 1964. The whole set of primary documents on the ‘creation’ of Modern Bihar have been published by the Bihar State Archives. For more, See: Ashok, Aounshuman, et al (eds.), *The Making of a Province: Select Documents of the Creation of Modern Bihar, 1874-1917*, Vols. I, II and III, Patna: Bihar State Archives, Government of Bihar, 2013.

the Swadeshi Movement when Bengal proper was burning Bihar was in relative peace.<sup>23</sup> In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, the leadership of Bihar was pro-British and the colonial administration responded in kind which was in sharp contrast due to the numerous revolts and insurrections in which Bihar and Biharis had taken part earlier (like the “great revolt” or the “first war of Indian independence” in 1857), another reason for the step-motherly treatment of the region of Bihar (apart from it being in the periphery and far away from the colonial capital Calcutta).<sup>24</sup>

The Bihar movement was gradually receiving an ever widening approval by not just the literate community but even among some segments of the rural landed aristocracy of Bhumihar Brahmins, Maithil Brahmins and Rajputs. There was an increasing realization that not just their future but the future of the entire populace of Bihar lay in having a separate province for themselves. Like there was a “drain of wealth” from India to England, there definitely was a “drain of wealth from Bihar to Bengal” as highlighted by Sinha. Such a separation was also good for administrative reasons as the Bengal Presidency was indeed huge both in area as well as population and it was difficult to administer remote and diverse areas from Calcutta. Therefore, caricaturing a statesman like Dr. Sinha for creating a state of Bihar only for Kayastha community of lawyers and job seekers in the empire is nothing but obscurantism and narrow

<sup>23</sup> “At a time when the Bengali educated middle class was agitating for constitutional reforms and the extremist wing was resorting to direct action, and even appealing to the cult of the bomb, the nascent educated Bihari middle class was significantly reticent, loyal and trying to win the favours of the British masters. It was not unexpected that when the partition of Bengal drove its patriots to the pitch of passionate protest and indignation, and did not leave nationalists untouched and unaffected in other parts of the country, the adjoining province (sic, it was still a region) of Bihar, being *tertius gaudens*, showed little excitement at the event in terms of any protest.” Cf. Sitaram Singh, *The Separation of Bihar from Bengal*, in P.N. Ojha and U. Thakur (eds.), *A Peep into Seventyfive Years of Bihar (Souvenir)*, Patna: Bihar Research Society, 1987, pp. 4-5.

<sup>24</sup> The efficient former Director of Bihar State Archives, Vijoy Kumar writes, “Coming to the specific problems of Bihar, the selections of the book make it amply clear that she badly needed technical education, more modern schools and colleges and the vernacular medium of instruction to make the minimum necessary social and material progress but due share and opportunities were denied. She received step-motherly treatment even in matters of the allotment of funds for education. The reason appears to be obvious. Imperialists patronised such sections and regions which served colonial interests but modern Bihar had a turbulent past on nationalistic lines in the nineteenth century which challenged the imperial authority and colonial exploitative socio-economic order. The Sontal (Santhal) Insurrection, the Kol revolt, the 1857 uprising, the Wahabi movement and the Birsa movement are some of the important national movements of Bihar in the century which challenged the imperial authority and the exploitative socio-political and economic structure. As a consequence, the imperial wrath found its expression in the step-motherly treatment. [...] Imperial rulers did not propose to educate the people of Bihar to a standard which helped them unfurl the flag of national revolt as they had done in the past. They appeared to be bent upon teaching them a lesson for their past rebellious character lest germs of patriotic fire flared up again.” Cf. Vijoy Kumar, *On the Threshold of Provincehood (1900-1911)*, Patna: Rahul Smarak Lekhak Sahyog Samiti, 1985, pp. xi,xiii.



–mindedness of such writers. If we take such preposterous arguments of the creation of the state of Bihar was only for Kayasthas, then on the same analogy the freedom of India was meant only for Brahmins, Kayasthas and Banias and the new breed of lawyers. In the historical progression of any society, the ones who adopt education in a big, positive and constructive way are the natural beneficiaries. But as time progresses, they do not alone remain the beneficiaries as time alone testifies to it. We see how immediately after the Champaran Satyagraha where Kayastha leadership of Bihar had played a prominent role, but by the time of Non-Cooperation Movement and thereafter Bhumihaar Brahmins<sup>25</sup> and Rajputs emerged in a huge way in the rank and file of leadership in Bihar. Therefore, the allegation of Sachchidanand Sinha not opposing the separation of Orissa from Bihar again for the interests of Kayasthas is absolutely not well-founded. By 1936, in the provincial leadership of Bihar, Bhumihaar Brahmins and Rajputs had completely eclipsed the Kayasthas and the relevance of Dr. Sinha remained only as an elder statesman of the province who enjoyed immense respect from the people of Bihar. And even otherwise, a person who wanted dignity and respect for the people of his province of Bihar because of which he helped create it could not have opposed the creation of another province of Orissa with its own set of aspirations which corresponded to the aspirations of Bihari leaders from 1894-1912. Dr. Sinha knew Orissa to have its own glorious past and distinct cultural and linguistic history for him to oppose the creation of the separate state of Orissa. There was not the slightest amount of bitterness in the separation of Orissa from Bihar when compared to the slight bitterness when Bihar and Orissa separated from Bengal to say the least. Even

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<sup>25</sup> Much to the chagrin of landed aristocracy like Sir Ganesh Dutt Singh and others, who were loyalists to the British Empire and through the All India Bhumihaar Brahman Mahasabha wanted to keep both their loyalty to the empire and their vast landed interests intact, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati records in his autobiography *Mera Jivan Sangharsh*, “It is in fact the case that at the time of the Non-Cooperation movement, nearly 75 percent of political prisoners were Bhumihaar Brahmins, and more or less the same percentage of the boys who had given up their studies in the schools and colleges to enter the movement were also Bhumihaars. [...] And it is noteworthy that Bhumihaar Brahmins, as a community had been very much in the forefront of the movement to raise the country’s self-respect and prestige to new and higher levels. Men like Sir Ganesh and others felt aggrieved at these developments, but there was little they could do.” Cf. Walter Hauser with Kailash Chandra Jha (ed. and trans. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati’s *Mera Jivan Sangharsh* (My Life Struggle), Culture, Vernacular Politics and the Peasants, New Delhi: Manohar, 2015, p. 265. For more, See: Pratyush Kumar, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati: Social Reforms and Democratic Praxis, In: Himanshu Roy, Mahendra Prasad Singh (eds.), *Indian Political Thought: Themes and Thinkers*, Noida: Pearson, 2020, pp. 354-371; Pratyush Kumar, *A Kisan at the Crossroads of History, Politics and Law: Political Thought and Action of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati*, *Südasien-Chronik - South Asia Chronicle* 11/2021, *SüdasienSeminar der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin* (South Asia Chronicle, 2021, Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany), pp. 179-215, also available at: <https://www.iaaw.hu-berlin.de/de/region/suedasien/publikationen/sachronik/11-focus-kumar-pratyush-a-kisan-at-the-crossroads-of-history-politics-and-law-political-thought-and-action-of-swami-sahajanand-saraswati.pdf> (last accessed: April 21, 2023).

on this ground, it should be considered an act of statesmanship and political astuteness which laid foundations for national unity in the long run. Unlike the bitter separation of Andhra Pradesh from the erstwhile Madras province or the recent separation of Telangana from Andhra Pradesh the separation of Bihar and Orissa from Bengal and then separation of Orissa from Bihar has been a legal and constitutional success story of Modern India.

In fact, it is one moment in history when both Hindus and Muslims aligned together completely to create the state of Bihar which was in the best interest of Biharis without adversely affecting the interests of Bengal which had already been enthroned as the state leading the renaissance in India right from the days of Ram Mohun Roy. Had it not been for Dr. Sinha's recommendation of appointing Sir Ali Imam as the Law Member in the Viceroy's Executive Council and then the intervention of Ali Imam himself accepting Dr. Sinha's contention verbatim for creation of the separate province of Bihar with a lieutenant Governor in Council (which Dr. Sinha read legally to include not just the Legislative Council but even the Executive Council, something which not even the United Provinces enjoyed) is a sufficient proof of Hindu-Muslim unity for a larger public cause. And it was not just Ali Imam but even Sir Hasan Imam, his younger brother and the saintly, "Gandhi of Bihar" Maulana Mazharul Haque without whose contributions it would have been impossible to create the province of Bihar in 1912. It is not a mere coincidence that in 1910, there were two Bihari members of the Legislative Council of the Government of India headed by the Viceroy: Maulana Haque and Dr. Sinha. Maulana Haque had defeated strong Muslim candidates from across the country to emerge victorious in the Muslim representation brought about by the Morley-Minto reforms and Dr. Sinha also got elected getting 16 votes which was equal to the major Bengali candidate,....., and after defeating four Maharajas who had immense clout across the country apart from being close to the British Indian Administration, they being: Maharaja Rameshwar Singh of Darbhanga, Maharaja Ravaneshwar Singh of Gidhour, Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nandi of Kassimbazar and Maharaja Padyot Kumar Tagore. Therefore, two Biharis got elected out of four seats in the Legislative Council assigned to Bengal.

Dr. Sinha emphasized in articles after articles as well in his different speeches and addresses on: (i) expansion of elementary education; (ii) having a full-fledged university in Bihar; (iii) having its own High Court; (iv) allocation of more government funds to private institutions and colleges; (v) opening up of a medical college and engineering institutions; (vi) improvement in sanitary conditions in the state, and so on. All these beneficial measures in administration of any state and society cannot just cater to one particular community. Therefore, the insinuation against him of serving the vested interests of his own community of Kayasthas is preposterous. A community which barely constitutes one percent of the population of the state of Bihar would always know that

with an expanding social base of education its own preeminence would keep shrinking and it did start shrinking within Dr. Sinha's own time. The state leadership was completely wrested by the landed and more numerous Bhumihaar Brahmins and Rajputs. Yet, in terms of leaders who had a national presence were Dr. Sinha, then Dr. Rajendra Prasad and finally Jayaprakash Narayan and not the provincial stalwart duo in Dr. Sri Krishna Sinha or Dr. Anugraha Narayan Sinha. Dr. Sri Krishna Sinha and Dr. Anugraha Narayan Sinha gave excellent administration to the province of Bihar but in terms of their reach and influence they remained provincial leaders. It was a rather more radical Swami Sahajanand Saraswati in the organized peasant movement in the country who was undoubtedly a national leader<sup>26</sup>; or a Yogendra Shukla was a national leader in the revolutionary movement<sup>27</sup>; or a Basawon Singh (Sinha) a revolutionary

<sup>26</sup> Swami Sahajanand Saraswati (1889-1950) was a leading figure of India's struggle for independence since 1920 and the most important leader of the first organized peasant movement in the country since the establishment of West Patna Kisan Sabha/West Patna Peasant Union in 1927, then Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha in 1929 and then the All India Kisan Sabha in 1936 leading to the abolition of zamindari/landlordism without compensation in the country soon after independence. Along with Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose, he transformed India's struggle for independence into a mass movement with the involvement of peasants who constituted (and still constitute) the majority of the Indian population. Pratyush Kumar, *A Kisan at the Crossroads of History, Politics and Law: Political Thought and Action of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati*, Südasiens-Chronik - South Asia Chronicle 11/2021, SüdasiensSeminar der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (South Asia Chronicle, 2021, Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany), pp. 179-215. (Also available at: <https://edoc.hu-berlin.de/bitstream/handle/18452/24857/11%20-%20Forum%20-%20Kumar%2c%20Pratyush%20-%20A%20Kisan%20at%20the%20Crossroads%20of%20History%2c%20Politics%20and%20Law.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (last accessed: Nov. 2, 2022); Walter Hauser, *The Bihar provincial Kisan Sabha, 1929-1942: a study of an Indian peasant movement*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2019; Walter Hauser with Kailash Chandra Jha, *Culture, Vernacular politics and the Peasants: India 1889-1950*, New Delhi: Manohar [edited translation of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati: *Mera Jivan Sangharsh (My life struggle)*], 2015; Walter Hauser, *Swami Sahajanand and the peasants of Jharkhand: a view from 1941*, New Delhi: Manohar [edited translation of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati: *Jharkhand ke Kisan*, with the original Hindi text, and an introduction, endnotes and glossary], 2005; Walter Hauser, *Sahajanand on Agricultural Labour and the Rural Poor*, New Delhi: Manohar, 1994; Ramchandra Pradhan, *The struggle of my life: autobiography of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018; Ramchandra Pradhan, *Reminiscences and Struggles of the Kisan Sabha (Swami Sahajanand Saraswati)*, New Delhi: Primus, 2025; Ramchandra Pradhan, *What Should Peasants Do? (Swami Sahajanand Saraswati)*, New Delhi: Primus, 2025; Ramchandra Pradhan, *Major Addresses (Swami Sahajanand Saraswati)*, New Delhi: Primus, 2025; Ramchandra Pradhan, *Major Essays and Other Writings (Swami Sahajanand Saraswati)*, New Delhi: Primus, 2025.

<sup>27</sup> Yogendra/Jogendra Shukla/Shukul alias Sohan Singh or Bhai or Rahorji (1896-1960) – born in village Jalalpur, Lalganj police station of Muzaffarpur district, now Vaishali; read upto matric in village primary school, Lalganj middle school, and Greer Bhumihaar Brahman College, Muzaffarpur; came under the influence of Acharya J.B. Kripalani with whom he spent many years in the Punjab and United Province (now Uttar Pradesh) and smuggled arms; tried to escape to America by getting a porter's job in Calcutta in a ship but failed in his efforts; came in contact with Chandrashekhar Azad and other revolutionaries in Benares; arrested in Faizabad in the middle of 1923, lodged in Benares Jail where one day he caused consternation by entering into the water tank of the jail, released after a fortnight; became a member of the

and a national trade union leader<sup>28</sup>. But these three of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, Yogendra Shukla or Basawon Singh essentially worked outside the system and with the years rolling after Indian independence their names and contributions have not even been mentioned leave alone being written about in great detail. The peasant movement slipped into caste disintegration and the larger interests of peasants remain ignored; the revolutionary movement for independence had fizzled out in colonial India itself and Yogendra Shukla got erased from larger public memory; and with systematic deindustrialization in eastern India including Bihar along with the opening up of Indian economy in 1991 and the systematic elimination of leadership, scope, and relevance of trade unions the name of Basawon Singh has been thrown into the dustbin of history.

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Central Committee of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (HSRA) after its formation, 1928; convicted in Tirhut Conspiracy Case and transferred to Cellular Jail, Andamans in December, 1932; joined the Congress after his release in 1938 and elected Vice Chairman, Muzaffarpur District Congress Committee, 1938; later joined the Congress Socialist Party; arrested in 1940; became a member of the Central Committee of the All India Kisan Sabha; scaled the walls of Hazaribagh Central Jail in 1942 and along with Suraj Narayan Singh helped four others including Pandit Ramnandan Mishra and Jayaprakash Narayan escape; arrested in Muzaffarpur, December 7, 1942; lodged in Buxar jail, released April, 1948; nominated as a member of the Bihar Legislative Council, 1958 on behalf of the Praja Socialist Party and continued there till 1960 when he died as a blind and sickman in a government hospital after suffering years of torture during British Rule. N.M.P. Srivastava, *Struggle for Freedom: Some Great Indian Revolutionaries*, Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1988, pp. 176-192.

- <sup>28</sup> Basawon/Basawan/Basavan Singh/Sinha (1909-1989) – alias Ram Basawan Singh alias Lam bad, a name among revolutionary circles given by Yogendra Shukla for being very tall; one of the prominent socialist leaders in the country; took part in the Non-Cooperation Movement 1920-22; joined Dacca Anushilan Samiti, 1922; joined Hindustan Republican Army, 1925 and then was the founding member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (HSRA), 1928; participated in revolutionary activities and imprisoned several times; was a prominent member of Jogendra Shukul's revolutionary organization and worked closely with Barindra Ghosh and Bhupendranath Datta; absconded in the Tirhut Conspiracy Case, arrested in Patna, August 6, 1930, along with Keshab Chandra Chakravarty, a close friend and notorious Bengal revolutionary; escaped from Bankipore Jail, August 9, 1930; rearrested in Calcutta on September 25, 1930; accused in Tirhut Conspiracy Case and sentenced for six-and-a-half years in prison only to be released in 1936; had started a fast-unto-death against cross-bar fetters which continued for a record 57-days and the British Indian government was forced to accept his demand; joined Congress Socialist Party, 1936; organised labour and peasant movements; formed the Rohtas Industries Mazdoor Sangh at Dehri-on-Sone in 1938 and nearly 500 trade unions over the course of his life and spreading across Assam, Bengal, Bihar (including today's Jharkhand), Madhya Pradesh (including today's Chattisgarh), Odisha and Uttar Pradesh; set up the Tata Collieries Labour Union along with Subhas Chandra Bose, became its President after Bose left the country in 1941; participated in the Quit India Movement, 1942; arrested 1943, released 1946; associated with the All India Railway Men's Federation, its Vice President, 1946; in independent India was member, Bihar Legislative Assembly, 1952-57, 1957-62 and 1977-79, and Bihar Legislative Council, 1962-68 from the Congress Socialist Party (never changed his party but the party changed names over the years); Cabinet Minister, Government of Bihar, 1967 and 1979; absconded and headed the Jan Sangharsh Samiti (People's Resistance Council) against internal emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi's government during 1975-77; died on April 7, 1989. Gayatree Sharma, *Basawon Singh: A Revolutionary Patriot*, New Delhi: Anamika, 2022.

But the names of Dr. Sinha for having created Bihar; of Dr. Rajendra Prasad for helping and assisting Gandhiji in Champaran Satyagraha in 1917-18 till the framing of Indian constitution and then emerging as the first President of India and Jayaprakash Narayan working 'in the pale image of Mahatma Gandhi and Acharya Vinoba Bhave' apart from helping restore democracy and constitutional rights by challenging Indira Gandhi's emergency have all been acts of national leadership. The coincidence of all three belonging to the community of upper caste Hindu, educated, city-bred community of Kayasthas reflects their preeminence in providing leadership and anchorage to Biharis. This is not say they did not have their own limitations which is a matter of another enquiry, all three were national leaders and their contributions is immense in shaping the destiny and discourse of modern India. Therefore, getting back to Dr. Sinha, this insinuation against him is just a canard and should be overlooked.

Dr. Sinha kept on insisting through his writings and along with his compatriots kept on voicing through the *Bihar Times* and the *Biharee* on the cultural and linguistic differences between Bihar and Bengal as one of the reasons necessitating their separation, and if at all, Bihar was closer to the United Provinces than to Bengal. Of course, Bihar as a Mughal Subah or Province had a separate existence apart from reaching pre-eminence for a shorter duration during Sher Shah Suri without going into the ancient hoary past. This was the living memory of Bihar and Biharees. But in terms of culture and language, even though Bihar is not that large in area; it has at least five major linguistic-cultural groups being: Magadhi, Bhojpuri, Angika, Vajjika and Maithili. And whether it was the educated city-bred professionals or Muslim aristocrats who supported the separation, they came essentially from the Magadhi-Bhojpuri cultural region. There were very few, if any, from north of Ganges, especially from the Vajjika-Maithili cultural group who supported this separation in its initial years. Therefore, in a classic Benedictian sense, a Bihari identity was being created, even though the region to create this modern Bihar had more in common *inter se*, than say with Bengal and it definitely made more administrative sense to be separated from Bengal. But with Avadhi dominated Hindi interspersed with some Bhojpuri, the Bihari cultural future was equally bleak if merged with another huge province of United Provinces. There was already consternation among Maithili speaking scholars who had a rich and continuous tradition in Maithili at least since the late medieval age, since the age of the cuckoo of Mithila, Vidyapati; to be merely considered another dialect of Hindi. Bengali scholars considered Vidyapati to be their poet and Maithili to be another dialect of Bengali. Maithili speakers would not have liked to be thrown from Bengali linguistic domination to Avadhi domination.

For Dr. Sinha, it was easy because he belonged to Arrah, the then district headquarters of Shahabad to identify more with United Provinces than with Bengal. He used to maintain houses both in Patna and Allahabad which had

the High Court for the United Provinces with which he identified more than with Bengal. Even the Imam brothers were from Neora in Patna District and he drew huge support from Gaya whose linguistic culture is Magadhi. This also might have been one of the reasons for the Maharaja of Darbhanga not supporting the separation of Bihar as a movement in its initial phases from 1893 onwards and when it was debunked by Sir Alexander Mackenzie in 1897, it was not lamented upon by the influential Maharaja in addition to the fact that Mr. Guru Prasad Sen being the secretary of the Bihar Landholder's Association of which the Maharaja was the President. It was only in 1906 and then in 1908 that the Bihar Landholder's Association threw its weight behind the separation of Bihar from Bengal thus giving fillip to the movement. It was, of course, again precipitated by the "disturbing" Swadeshi movement in Bengal and the landed elites and aristocrats of Bihar thought it fit and the time opportune to dissociate themselves from not just the movement but from Bengal itself to show their loyalty to the British Government. Also, a lot of the landlords of North Bihar, had land and property in Bengal and Calcutta, including Darbhanga Maharaja and a lot of Bengali zamindars had land and property in North and East Bihar for centuries showing them to be not just courteous neighbours but as agents and precipitators of a common cultural heritage. Maithili has its own script unlike Bhojpuri or Magadhi and it has striking resemblance to Bengali and not the Nagari script of Hindi. The rituals, social practices and eating habits of Maithili-Angika-Vajjika region of Bihar has closer resemblance to Bengal and as attested to by Prof. Radhakrishna Chaudhary that Kulins or Kulinism actually grew in North Bihar and then migrated to Bengal where it reached its zenith.<sup>29</sup> In the history of Bengal, the Kulin Brahmins had migrated from the region of Kanauj to Bengal during the Pala dynasty.<sup>30</sup> They could not have "flown across Bihar", and they could not have suddenly migrated at the spur of the moment. Their migration would certainly have been slow and gradual and through the region of North Bihar and in the process they would have settled in Bihar as well apart from migrating into Bengal and forming the upper strata of Kulin Brahmins. The name of Darbhanga draws from the name *Dvar Banga*, or Gateway to Bengal. We also do not hear of any prominent locality of Bengalis/Bengali-speaking people in southern and western Bihar constituting the Magadhi-Bhojpuri linguistic-cultural group but such localities in North and East Bihar in the Maithili-Angika-Vajjika region have existed for centuries.

In spite of these subtle similarities in some linguistic-cultural sub-groups of Bihar and Bengal, the Bengali intelligentsia, public men and the colonial

<sup>29</sup> Radhakrishna Choudhary, Social Structure in Medieval Mithila (c. A.D. 1200-1600). In: Ram Sharan Sharma, (ed.) Indian Society: Historical Probings (In Memory of D.D. Kosambi), New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1974, pp. 217-234.

<sup>30</sup> For more, See: Niharranjan Ray, History of the Bengali People: From the Earliest Times to the Fall of the Sena Dynasty, New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2013.



government where they naturally had access and clout, overlooked and ran roughshod over the aspirations of Biharis, which became another motif of forging a common cause among all the five linguistic-cultural sub-groups within what was to form the new province of Bihar. On a more practical footing, showing the unity of Bihar and Biharis, marital relations in all these five linguistic-cultural sub-groups within the same caste and community was a common practice, whereas marriages did not exist between Biharis and Bengalis even though the upper strata of Bengal had at one point of time migrated from Bihar. Language, culture and then the colonial administrative headquarters in Calcutta had created a divide which called for a separation between the two as a more amicable solution to fulfill the aspirations of Biharis as well as to create a new form of nationalism on American federal lines as envisioned by Dr. Sinha.

The shortcomings of Sinha were his ultimate allegiance with the British Empire and the Crown<sup>31</sup> (the immense respect and pride with which he referenced to it even during the eve of independence when he wrote his autobiography and even when he became the Chairman of the Constituent Assembly of India which was to frame India's Constitution) and his gradual disassociation with Congress since 1920 when it became a mass movement under the leadership of Gandhi, Bose and Sahajanand. In addition, he remained an elite, liberal-constitutionalist being friends and supporter of both the city professionals and the landed gentry of Bihar (in effect supporting zamindari).<sup>32</sup> While Congress was

<sup>31</sup> In this, Sachchidanand Sinha is a late and a Bihari version of Bengali intelligentsia of a century before, starting from late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, who were pro-British. Some remained so till independence or even thereafter like Sir Jadunath Sarkar and Nirad C. Chaudhuri, to name a few.

While speaking to Bihari students, Sachchidanand Sinha claimed the "British rule as the best for the country" and refuted "the view held by a certain section of educated Indians that because the ruling class belonged to a different race, the Government therefore, was not of the people...He advised the students to accept British rule as the best for the country and to refrain from doing anything which is likely to disturb its foundation...and earnestly hoped that all Indian leaders will make it a point of impressing the great truth upon the rising generation that the progress of India, now or in the future, is bound up with British rule." (*Hindustan Review* Vol. XXI Jan. to June 1910, pp. 248-53) cf. Vijoy Kumar, *On the Threshold of Provincehood (1900-1911)*, Patna: Rahul Smarak Lekhak Sahyog Samiti, 1985, pp. xxi.

<sup>32</sup> Swami Sahajanand Saraswati writes in his autobiography in the section titled 'Exposing the Fake Kisan Sabha and Re-establishing the Real Sabha' on the fake Kisan Sabha meeting at Gulab Bagh on 29<sup>th</sup> February, 1933, "None of us knew at the time that the Kisan Sabha meeting at Gulab Bagh was held with funds provided by the leaders of the Bihar Landholders Association. And of course, it was this body that was to decide the fate of the kisans by amendment of the complex provisions of the Tenancy Act in the Council. But in the end this collusion was also exposed. As a matter of courtesy, it was proposed that there be a formal vote of thanks to some of the participants in the meeting, and this was done. But then Deoki Babu proposed that a specific vote of thanks be extended to Sinha Sahab (Shri Sachchidanand Sinha). I then asked about his relationship to the Kisan Sabha? When he insisted, I made clear that this would be highly improper. Feeling somewhat desperate in the circumstances, Deoki Babu said quietly that Sinha Sahab had in fact provided the funds for holding this sabha meeting. At this I observed, also in a subdued voice, that it would not be wise to propose his

boycotting the visit of the Prince of Wales, Sachchidanand Sinha as Finance Member of Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council read the welcome address for the prince as representative of the people.<sup>33</sup> When Simon Commission was opposed by all Indian nationalists led by Congress, which also led to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre by General Dyer, Sinha attended the dinner given by the Chief Justice of Patna High Court, Sir Courtney Terrel, to members of the English Bar in honour of Sir John Simon.<sup>34</sup>

Bihar's separation from Bengal (1912) and later the separation of Orissa from Bihar (1936, involving the provinces of Bengal, Madras and Central Provinces as well), in both of which Sinha played the most prominent role, are among the oldest acts of constitutional federalism in India and is yet to receive such recognition not just by historians but also by legal scholars or scholars writing on Indian federalism.<sup>35</sup> This autobiography along with this introduction will

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name for a vote of thanks. People would immediately see that this sabha had been staged with money provided by the zamindars. This silenced Deoki Babu and the meeting came to an end." Walter Hauser with Kailash Chandra Jha (ed. and trans. Swami Sahajanand Saraswati's Mera Jivan Sangharsh (My Life Struggle), Culture, Vernacular Politics and the Peasants, New Delhi: Manohar, 2015, pp. 390-399 (at pp. 393-394).

<sup>33</sup> Yuvraj Dev Prasad, Dr. Sachchidanand Sinha – The Dream Achiever of Bihar (1871-1950) in Abhilekh Bihar (Journal of the Bihar State Archives), Ank – 8 (Vol. 8), Patna: Bihar Rajya Abhilekhagar Nideshalaya (Bihar State Archives), Government of Bihar, pp. 132-154 (at p. 152).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid* at p. 152.

<sup>35</sup> "Sachchidanand Sinha and Mahesh Narayan were the principal spokesmen of the idea of 'subordinate patriotism'. They felt that it was the bounden duty of the people of Bihar to advance first and foremost the cause of Bihar and Biharis, by all legitimate means, while sharing jointly with the people of other Indian provinces those (duties) that devolved upon educated Indians in general. The idea was to develop among the people of Bihar, Sinha maintained, what was termed by Mr. Balfour as 'subordinate patriotism' akin to what Scotchmen felt for Scotland or Irishmen for Ireland, while sharing in a common patriotism (with the English and the Welsh) as Britons. The idea was thus based on the lines of American or German patriotism – first the state, and secondly the Republic or the Empire." Cf. Narendra Jha, The Making of Bihar and Biharis: Colonialism, Politics and Culture in Modern India c. 1870-1912, New Delhi: Manohar, 2012, pp. 227-228. Post-independence, this became an anathema as India got scarred by partition led by elite Muslim obscurantists and their 'medieval backward' organization called the Muslim League. It found its imprint on the text and structure of the Constitution where the centre or the union is all powerful.

Article 1(1), Constitution of India states, "India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States", and Article 3 gives the Union parliament preeminent right with regard to the creation, alteration and extinguishment of states, "Article 3 of the Constitution makes serious inroads into the position of States insofar as it authorises Parliament to form a new State by separating any territory from a State or by uniting two or more States or any part of them, or by uniting any territory to a part of any State. It may also increase or diminish the area of any State or alter the name of any State, subject to the condition that the diminished territory should remain part of the territory of India and not be transferred to any other country. The power to transfer any territory to any other country is not included in Article 3 because such transfer requires an amendment of the Constitution through Article 368. The only safeguard available to the concerned State in Article 3 is that its views are sought by the President on the proposed law within the specified time. But Parliament is not obliged either to consider these views or to modify the law. By this law Parliament may make all the consequential changes in any of

shed some light on the rigmaroles of the creation of these provinces during colonial times.

At the evening of his life Sinha started to write his autobiography titled, “*Recollections and Reminiscences of a Long Life*”, which he published regularly in the monthly installment of his journal “The Hindustan Review” (which he had both founded and helped edit since 1900). He started publishing an installment of his autobiography almost every month from July, 1946<sup>36</sup> and continued up until December, 1949 issue of *The Hindustan Review*. More could have been written but he was unwell and could not give a formal conclusion to the autobiography when he died on March 6, 1950.<sup>37</sup> The April, 1950 issue of the journal contained a collection of memorial articles on him, his last public speech, press tributes and condolence messages. After his sad demise, the sun also set on the remarkable “*The Hindustan Review*” which he had founded and continued publishing single-handedly for half a century. The editors of the present volume have compiled and edited this autobiography (also retaining Sinha’s own chapterisation) of a great constitutionalist, public man, the first modern *Beharee* and the first modern *Beharee* public intellectual at the national and international level and present it for the very first time before the readers.

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the provisions of the constitution without the need to observe the procedure for amending the Constitution.” Mahendra Pal Singh, The Federal Scheme (Chap. 25), In: S.Choudhry, M. Khosla, P.B. Mehta (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Constitution*, Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 458.

<sup>36</sup> In the first installment of Sinha’s autobiography published by the *Hindustan Review*, the associate editor introduced it as “Life Story of an Old Public man: Dr. Sachchidanand Sinha, the first installment of whose autobiography we have the privilege to present to our readers, is one of the few surviving political elders of our country who constituted the vanguard in the movement of our country’s political emancipation. Considering his close association with the public life of the country, for now more than fifty years, and his intimate relations with almost all the public men of all schools of political thought in the various provinces, his personal recollections and reminiscences, penned by himself, is likely to prove not only an interesting but an instructive record of Indian life, thought and progress, in the twentieth century. These autobiographical articles will appear in this Journal in a serial form, from month to month.” Cf. *The Hindustan Review*, Vol. LXXX, July 1946, No. 497.

<sup>37</sup> Sachchidanand Sinha wrote other works like ‘*Some Eminent Behar Contemporaries*’ and ‘*Some Eminent Indian Contemporaries*’ which had smattering of autobiographical content in them. For more, See: SINHA, S., *Some Eminent Behar Contemporaries*, Patna: Himalaya Publications, 1944; SINHA, S., *Some Eminent Indian Contemporaries*, Patna: Janaki Prakashan, 1976.

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