

## **The Role Of Gopalganj in Bihar And The Civil Disobedience movement (1930 - 1934)**

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The Indian National Congress organized the Civil Disobedience Movement in pursuance of the resolution passed at its Lahore Session in December 1929. By another resolution the attainment of Purna Swaraj was declared to be the Chief objective of the Congress. It was also laid down that this resolution was to be adopted in public meetings throughout the country on the 26th January 1930 and that day was declared as 'Independence Day'.

The British authorities in India were not sitting idle. They were closely watching the tenor of political development after the Lahore Session of the Indian National Congress. When the Provincial Congress Committee issued directives to the different District Congress Committee, the authorities in Bihar also took appropriate steps in order to counteract the move of the Congress Workers regarding the celebration of Independence Day on 26th January 1930.

Independence Day was celebrated with éclat in village Jagarnatha, Bathua Bazar, Asandaur, Sankhey, Pokharvinda and Surwania in the Mirganj Police station of Gopalganj District.

Though Independence Day was celebrated on the 26th January 1930, without any apparent obstruction from the police, still the village of Sisai in Siwan had to undergo the rancor of the Police Administration.

Thus the Independence Day was enthusiastically celebrated in the whole of Gopalganj District. There was spontaneous demonstration

everywhere in the district and large number of people took the pledge with great solemnity.

After the Lahore Congress of 1929, the problem of Mass Civil Disobedience was drawing the attention of the well wishers of the Congress programme. As Bihar is an inland area having no sea coast and here people manufactured salt only on a small as a by product while preparing saltpeter out of earth at some localities, Rajendra Prasad Sought Gandhiji's permission to start Satyagraha in Bihar by non-payment of Chaukidari Tax but Gandhiji replied not to attempt it. Gandhiji decided to launch the Satyagraha Campaign by manufacturing Salt at Dandi.

The Bihar Provincial Congress Committee also met at Sadaqat Ashram, Patna under the presidentship of Rajendra Prasad on the 30th March 1930 to devise ways and means for the implementation of the resolution passed in the meeting of the Congress Committee at Ahmedabad on March 21, 1930.

It was decided that as soon as Gandhiji was arrested or if he issued any signal to start Civil Disobedience Movement, the Provincial Congress would at once respond to it and two districts Saran and Champaran were given priority to start the movement.

The people were informed about the decision of the provincial Congress Committee which would be started by disobeying the Salt Law and non payment of Chaukidari Tax.

On the next day of the momentous meeting Saran was the first district in Bihar which was visited by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and his wife but their visit did not produce enthusiasm amongst Gopalganj people rather the feelings of nationalism were greatly strengthened amongst the people of Saran district.

The Congress leaders of Gopalganj started to educate and prepare the people for the coming Civil Disobedience Movement. Rajendra Prasad announced that the movement would be launched at three centres in Saran District.

The British Government was watching these developments with great concern and decided to deal the situation with firmness. They decided to arrest people who are engaged in the movement, for this purpose General will be sending 50 Armed Police Reserve.

In pursuance to the directives of the Provincial Congress Committee the District leaders of Saran now started the Salt Satyagraha.

On the other hand Rajendra Prasad addressed a meeting at Chapra where he said that everyone should make salt in his own house.

In the meantime Jawaharlal Nehru was arrested. His arrest aroused deep indignation amongst the people of Saran District. On 16th

April there was hartal in Chapra Town because of his arrest. Satyagraha against Salt Law was coming to power.

Finally Gandhiji was arrested on May 4, 1930. It was noted in a contemporary government report that Chapra was thrown into a state of mild excitement and almost complete hartal was observed. Several processions were taken out but as they were orderly, the authorities decided to ignore them. Very few lawyers attended the Courts and members of the bar led some of the processions and all students of Chapra except few struck.

Rajendra Prasad issued a circular on the 9th May 1930 directing all subordinate committees to start picketing cloth and liquor shops from the 16th May.

The Satyagrahis were not subjected to any very harsh treatment by the government officials save and except in extreme cases. But a Satyagrahi named Ram Sundar Lal was mercilessly assaulted by some miscreants and this created a furor throughout the Province of Bihar.

There was information that it had been caused by certain Pasis but Deputy Superintendent of Police In-charge Siwan Gopalganj stated that it was due to riot between Congress Volunteers and Daulat Pasi.

At Gopalganj picketing of excise shops was started on 2nd June 1930 by a large number of volunteers. In the meantime Rajendra Prasad made tours to Siwan and Gopalganj. The main theme was the use of Khaddar and the boycott of all foreign goods.

The authorities decided to arrest Rajendra Prasad as his speeches were becoming a threat and causing great anxieties to the authorities concerned. He was arrested and as a result hartal was declared in the towns and women were encouraged to come forward and join Freedom Movement.

The total figures of the arrested person in the whole of Bihar Province since the very beginning of the Civil Disobedience Movement rose to 12104 upto the end of 1930 out of this Saran alone contributed 1286.

To support Gandhiji many people resigned from the positions and many were put behind the bars.

The 45th Session of the Indian National Congress met at Karachi in the last week of March 1931. Chapra celebrated the National week from 6th April, 1931.

On the 26th January 1932 the Independence Day was celebrated in the district of Saran with great enthusiasm. While the Congress Volunteers were going to celebrate the Independence Day at Pojli Bazar, they were stopped by the Sub-Inspector of Police, Sarsa in the way. The Government of Bihar and Orissa seized some Congress Ashrams of Saran District in 1932.

The year 1934 started with an unprecedented calamity for Bihar. An earthquake occurred on 15th January 1934. It destroyed many area and lives. Rajendra Prasad was released and he formed a Relief Committee to help the distressed.

Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Bihar in 1934 was significant not only from the humanitarian point of view and social reforms but also from the political point of view. The month of May 1934 also saw the birth of the Socialist Party in India. It held its first all India Conference at Patna on the 17th May 1934, under the Presidentship of Acharya Narendra Deva and branched off as a separate party known as the Congress Socialist Party within the fold of Congress.

Thus Gopalganj district played an important role in the Salt Satyagraha and in the Civil Disobedience Movement which was started by Gandhiji early in 1930 and continued upto 1934. Virtually everyday there were public meetings, boycott of foreign cloths and picketing at the liquor shops by volunteers in towns, thanas and villages of Gopalganj. The women also participated in the strikes and the boycott organized by the local and districts leaders of Gopalganj.

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