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Prabhat Kumar
Research Scholar, Department
of Political Science, Ranchi
University, Ranchi,
Jharkhand, India

Role of Binod Bihari Mahto in unifying masses for separate Jharkhand movement

Prabhat Kumar

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Abstract

The early phase of separate Jharkhand movement, due to presence and activeness of only tribal leaders was considered just as a tribal movement, even after 50 years of movement the leaders failed to gain support from the non-tribal masses and even the tribal population was divided into different factions. Binod Bihari Mahto, commonly known as Binod Babu, a lawyer by profession, along with A. K. Roy and Sibhu Soren made the first serious attempt of unifying masses for a common goal. They formed a separate party naming Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) with core objective of taking the Jharkhand Movement to the masses of the concerned area, as it was difficult to attain such a difficult task without a combined effort of entire population of the area. Binod Bihari Mahto played a vital role in conversion of a tribal movement into a mass movement. In this research paper the researcher will highlight the role of Binod Bihari Mahto in the separate Jharkhand movement and his efforts for unifying different factions indulged in movement.

Keywords: Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), Jharkhand movement, tribal leaders

Introduction

Binod Bihari Mahto one of the most charming face of the Jharkhand movement, who always led the movement in the Gandhian way, was a much realist kind of leader. Once the editor of a weekly magazine Yugantar, Mukutdhari Singh said "Binod Bihari Mahto is such a person for whom the end is everything, he never gave importance to means". Regardless of all the goods and evils Binod Bihari Mahto is considered as a person of masses ^[1].

Binod Bihari Mahto was born on 23rd Sept' 1923 in the village Badadaha of Baliapur division of Dhanbad district. He was born in a farmer's family and completed his basic primary education from his own village. After completing his primary education, he completed his high school from Dhanbad. He began his career as a daily wage writer in a district court of Dhanbad, from there he shifted to a school and taught as a teacher, he again returned to court as a clerk and there a Lawyer humiliated him by saying that he will always remain a clerk, this moment turned out to be the turning movement of his life, he again continued his studies after completing intermediate from P. K. Roy Memorial College, he then did his graduations from Ranchi College, Ranchi and then studied law from Patna Law College. As a lawyer his career began in 1956 at Dhanbad Court, there he advocated for those people who were displaced due to establishment of factories and industries in Jharkhand. In this process he presented argument in favour of people displaced by Bokaro steel plant, Bharat coking coal limited, panchet dam, central coalfield, maithon dam etc. In all these cases his efforts for the social cause made him famous among people of bokaro and dhanbad district.

The political life of Binod Bihari Mahto began with Communist Party of India, he fought election in 1952 from jharia but failed to influence much. After division of Communist Party of India in 1967 he got ticket for Lok Sabha election from Communist Party of India (Marxist) from Dhanbad, there he stood second.

Jharkhand movement

Early Phase

In the series of state recognition movement the Jharkhand movement remains the longest, its timeline starts from the pre independence era and ended at the dawn of 21st century ^[2].

Corresponding Author:
Prabhat Kumar
Research Scholar, Department
of Political Science, Ranchi
University, Ranchi,
Jharkhand, India

The term Jharkhand for the tribal area of chota Nagpur was first used in the medieval times. At that time this area was regulated by independent tribal group with autonomy. Britishers were the first successful outsider political power who managed to gain the authority over this area, in their regime this area was initially merged with Bengal province and later with Bihar, from there only the demand of creation of Jharkhand as a separate political unit started.

The seeds of the separate Jharkhand movement were sown in Dhaka, which is now the capital city of an independent nation Bangladesh. In 1912 J. Barthelmann established a branch of Dhaka vidyarthi parishad in Ranchi, in future this turned in to chotanagpur unnati samaj and later on evolved itself as Jharkhand party, a political party which was the torchbearer of separate Jharkhand movement in the initial phase of the movement^[3].

In the initial phase as a student organization the main concern of all this organization was upliftment of Christian students and for integration of the entire tribal society. In 1915 chota Nagpur unnati samaj was established the prime motive of this organization was upliftment of all the tribal sects. with due course of time this organization started raising its voice for creation of separate Jharkhand province. Their demand got elevation when the Simon Commission in its report of 1928 recommended creation of a separate province of Jharkhand. Even after the recommendation of Simon Commission the demand of leaders was regularly neglected by the British administration. For continuing this struggle in organised way, the struggling leaders of the movement created adivasi mahasabha in 1938, next year in 1939 jaipal Singh munda took over the charge of president of the mahasabha and led the movement. Lately the leaders recognised that for elevating the demand to a new heights they have to enter the legislature. They decided to fight for the elections of the central legislature in 1946, but the flame of the moment got a blow when Japan Singh munda lost the election from khunti.

Till now the moment under the adivasi mahasabha only had involvement of adivasi or the tribal people. In 1950 jaipal Singh munda transformed the name of the organization from adivasi mahasabha to Jharkhand party, this change in name opened the way for non tribal population in the struggle for the separate Jharkhand movement. This party ignited socio political consciousness among the people of Jharkhand. In the first legislature election of Bihar legislative assembly of 1952 the Jharkhand party secured 32 seats in the elections, it was the highest gainer in the area of chotanagpur. the party gained the status of prominent opposition party in the legislative assembly but in the elections of 1957 and 1962 the seats of Jharkhand party kept gradually decreasing.

In the meanwhile, the kisan Sabha was formulated under the leadership of sukhdev mahato in 1954, this was the organization which had a non tribal leader.

The Commission which was formulated under the chairmanship of justice fazal Ali for the reorganisation of state on linguistic basis visited Jharkhand in 1955. When the Commission was in Ranchi jaipal Singh munda organised mass protest in front of the Commission demanding status of a separate Jharkhand, but the Commission in the report did not recommend Creation of Jharkhand as a separate state. Demand which was presented by the leaders of Jharkhand movement demanded formation of Jharkhand by integrating several districts of 4 different states, it includes 7

districts of Bihar, 3 of Bengal, 4 from Odisha when 2 districts of Madhya Pradesh.

The biggest blow to the Jharkhand movement was when the Jharkhand party led by jaipal Singh munda got merged in the Congress party. This merger took place on the initiative of the then chief minister Binodanand Jha. Jaipal Singh munda was settled with the portfolio of community development and village panchayat ministry in binodanand cabinet.

Many tribal leaders after the merger shifted their way from jaipal Singh and formed birsa seva Dal in 1965. Several other organisations were created to intensify their demand, Like in 1967 akhil bhartiya Jharkhand party and Hul Jharkhand party in 1968.

Although, now Jaipal Singh munda was in Congress but he kept on raising his demand for the separate Jharkhand state. All his effort came to end in 1970 when he died^[4].

Binod Bihari Mahto and the Jharkhand Movement

Binod Bihari Mahto was the face who had played the most important role in the integration of different groups and parties for the Jharkhand movement. After completing his law he had started advocating for the social causes, several times he fought for the displaced people. His political career began with left ideology, very soon Binod Bihari Mahto recognized that it is not a very smooth process for the population of Jharkhand to get into the complexity of Marxism and leninism hence he formed shivaji samaj with objective of empowering and bringing reforms in his own community. This organization which was formed in 1967 soon penetrated into the society and Binod Bihari Mahto began educating people about the evils of the society, soon the organization grew bigger and in early 1970s Binod Bihari Mahto became the most prominent phase in the politics of Jharkhand^[5].

Binod Bihari Mahto actively involved in politics under the banner of Communist Party of India (Marxist). After the death of jaipal Singh munda in 1970 there was a vacuum in Jharkhand movement and the people of Jharkhand were unable to understand the complexity of left ideology. The movement this hurdle was felt by the leaders like A. K. Roy, Binod Bihari Mahto and emerging tribal leader Shibu Soren, they Decided to form a political party with objective of integrating and intensifying the separate Jharkhand movement^[6]. Under the shivaji samaj Binod Bihari Mahto had already influenced great mass in his court. They all together formed a new party named Jharkhand Mukti Morcha popularly known as the JMM. The early objectives of the party were:

- Struggle for the formation of separate Jharkhand movement.
- Struggle against the mahajani practice.
- Struggle for the resettlement of displaced people and engagement of local people in the factories and industries.
- Jungle katai movement against the forest act.

Along with igniting the population for the movement Binod Bihari Mahto also contributed in education, he was of the view that they have to run a long marathon for fulfilling their demand of separate Jharkhand, he was sure that an uneducated population will not be able to fight for so long, hence he gave the slogan of 'Padho or Lado' to the masses.

For fulfilling that goal he established several schools and colleges across Jharkhand [7].

He was clear that caste is the reality of the Indian society, hence he motivated Shibu Soren to form sonoth santhal samaj and along with this he also motivated other caste leaders to form organisations on caste basis which resulted in formation of mandal samaj and teli samaj. Later on Binod Bihari Mahto started binding up these different caste fragments of society to a single bouquet. he organised them to struggle for the separate Jharkhand movement which gave a boost to the movement [8].

Although the aged people were engaged in the movement he felt that it is also important to include the students in the movement. Being inspired by the 'All Assam student union', he motivated Surya Singh Besra To form 'All Jharkhand student union' to organise students in support of the Jharkhand movement. From 1987 since its formation this organization revolutionised the demand of separate Jharkhand.

From the above references it is evident that the entry of Binod Bihari Mahto transformed the tribal movement into a mass movement. it will not be a exaggeration if we call Binod Bihari Mahto as Gandhi of Jharkhand movement as Gandhi had converted the movement of intellectuals into the mass movement in the same manner Binod Bihari Mahto transformed the tribal movement into a mass movement. although Binod Bihari Mahto died in 1992 around 8 years before the Jharkhand movement reached its goal the most important job of igniting the people for the moment had been completed by him.

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