

TARAPUR GOLIKAND OF 1932: A CASE STUDY OF SACRIFICE AND COLONIAL REPRESSION IN BIHAR'S FREEDOM STRUGGLE
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Abstract: -

The Tarapur firing of 1932, commonly known as the Tarapur Golikand, was one of the most significant yet under-recognised incidents in the history of India's Freedom Struggle. This case study exemplifies the gallantry of the grassroots revolutionaries who died for their motherland. In this incident, British troops opened indiscriminate fire on a large weaponless crowd of approximately 4000, attempting to hoist the Indian National flag on Thana Bhawan (local Police Station). Official account claims 34 deaths after 75 rounds of firing, though unofficial claims are much higher casualties. Only 13 heroes could be recognised out of 34. Tarapur Golikand is considered the second largest massacre after the Jallianwala Bagh Tragedy of 1919. It highlights the local heroism, colonial oppression, and the large participation of the common masses, including the marginalised community, during the freedom struggle. This paper examines the historical context, events, major participants, impacts, and the place of the movement in India's independence movement.

Keywords: Tarapur Golikand, Civil Disobedience Movement, Thana Bhawan, Indian National Congress, National Flag.

Introduction

In the words of R. Coupland, "*Indian Nationalism was the child of the British Raj, and British authorities blessed its cradle*". The Indian independence movement was a succession of dire events to end British rule in India. It was not confined only to iconic leaders and major cities; it was a vast mosaic of countless acts of courage, sacrifice, and defiance played in that area. The year 1885 marks the beginning of a new epoch in Indian History. In that year, an all-India political organisation was set up on foot under the name of the Indian National Congress. The Indian mind became increasingly conscious of its political position.¹ In the beginning, the INC adopted liberal methods to get its demands fulfilled. In the second phase, INC came out with all-round development and upliftment of people in every sphere, including social, cultural, economic and political. Swaraj or self-government became their goal on the political front. Progressive idea adopted from the Western Revolution to counter British Imperialism. The final stage (1919-1947) came up with full fledged programme, especially the objective of Purna Swaraj under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, using the Indian method of non-violence. Bihar played an important role in the Indian Independence Movement as Gandhi ji started his political journey through Champaran Satyagrah in 1917, encouraging the grassroots masses to participate in the National movement. Followed by the Non-Cooperation movement of 1920 in response to the Rowlatt Act, which caused the loss of thousands of lives in Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar on 13th April, 1919. Bihar vigorously participated in the Non-Cooperation movement in all respects.

Literature Review

Several works on Modern Indian History, including B.L. Grover's, K. K. Dutta's The Comprehensive History of Bihar, and Bipan Chandra's History of Modern India, extensively explain the events of the National movements. The work of Jairam Viplov, "The Tarapur Sangram", broadly explains the events, sequence, and all aspects of Tarapur and Tarapur

Golikand. The primary source available in the Bihar State Archives, Patna, provides the British administrative perspective on the incident and is critically examined.

Research Methodology

This research article adopts a qualitative historical case study approach to examine the Tarapur Golikand of 15 February 1932. This study aims to provide a comprehensive, contextualised, and analytical account of the event, its background, execution, and long-term significance within Bihar's and India's freedom struggle.

Historical Context

The year 1927 witnessed many portents of national recovery and the emergence of the new trend of socialism. Indian youths were becoming active. The peasants and the workers were also once again stirring. Another reflection of the new mood was the growing activity of the revolutionary movement, which too was beginning to take a socialist turn. The failure of the First Non-Cooperation Movement had led to the revival of the revolutionary movement. After an All India Conference, the Hindustan Republic Association was founded in October 1924 to organise an armed revolution.² In 1928, the Hindustan Socialist Republic Association was formed under the leadership of Chandra Shekhar Azad. They continued the revolutionary activities. Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutta threw a bomb in the Central Legislative Assembly not to harm anyone but to show their leaflet "to make the deaf hear"; they easily escaped but deliberately chose to be arrested to use court as a forum for revolutionary propaganda. The failure of the Simon Commission, Lord Irwin's ambiguous offer of Dominion Status for India at an unspecified future date, the oppressive Salt Laws, and the British rejection of M.K. Gandhi's Eleven Point demands.³ All these made INC carry the freedom movement to a new level. On February 15 1930, the Congress Working Committee passed a resolution at Allahabad to launch the Civil Disobedience Movement for the attainment of Independence. The Congress Working Committee authorised Gandhi and some others who upheld non-violence as a fundamental principle to initiate the movement at a time of their choosing.⁴

Civil Disobedience Movement

Gandhi ji, who had re-entered active politics in 1928, gave the call for a Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930. The Civil Disobedience Movement differed from the earlier Non-Cooperation Movement (1921-22) in that while N.C.M. sought to bring the working of the Government to a standstill by not cooperating with the administration, the C.D.M. aimed at paralysing the administration by performance of specific illegal acts. The Mahatma Gandhi himself started the C.D.M. by breaking obnoxious Salt laws. On March 12, 1930, Gandhi led 78 followers from Sabarmati Ashram on the famous Salt March to Dandi Beach to manufacture illegal salt.⁵ In pursuance of the Lahore Resolutions, the Indian National Congress launched the Civil Disobedience Movement. Gandhi described civil disobedience as 'a state of peaceful rebellion- a refusal to obey every single State-made law'.⁶ Everywhere in the country, people joined hartals, demonstrations and the campaign to boycott foreign goods and refuse to pay taxes. Lakhs of Indians offered satyagraha. In many parts of the country, the peasants refused to pay land revenue and rent and had their lands confiscated. A notable feature of the movement was the wide participation of women. They took an active participation of women. Thousands of them left the seclusion of their homes and offered satyagraha. They took an active part in picketing shops selling foreign cloth or liquor. They marched shoulder to shoulder with men in processions.⁷

Bihar's role in the Civil Disobedience Movement(1930-1934) was prominent and illustrious. The Sixth April of 1930 was fixed as the date for embarking on Salt Satyagraha. So far as Bihar is considered enthusiastic, it has already gathered momentum in different parts of it.⁸ The thrill of a new hope, the surge of a new aspiration, the pursuit of a noble ideal and the

romance of a new sacrifice surcharge the atmosphere.⁹ Nehru's tour of Champaran, Saran, and Muzaffarpur filled people with enthusiasm. Records suggest that Bihar seemed poised for action: the residents of Champaran, Saran, and Muzaffarpur commenced the Salt Satyagraha on 6 April 1930, demonstrating their eagerness for the struggle.¹⁰ There were more stirring incidents connected with this movement, at Patna, at Bihpur in the Bhagalpur district and at a few places in the Monghyr district.¹¹

Monghyr was the centre of all political activity of the National movement of Bihar; naturally, Monghyr participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement with the same zeal. On 21 April 1930, in Garhpura, Monghyr district(currently in Begusarai district), the northern part of Monghyr district, Shri Krishna Singh openly challenged the British army by making salt from Noniya Soil. While making salt, Shri Babu was injured and burned by British soldiers.¹² In South Monghyr, Nand Kumar Sinha started from Monghyr town on foot on the plan of breaking the salt law at the historic site of Rajauna near Lakhisarai. Kumar Kalika Singh, who was in charge of looking after the camp, also reached there with volunteers. Anti-salt law activities began here on 20th April, and soon Nand Kumar was arrested.¹³ Shri Krishna Singh was also arrested on 23rd April and was sent to Hazaribagh Jail. The government adopted suppressive policies to stop the movement. They made a furious lathi charge, fired gunshots at the volunteers, but it made no impact on them. On 5th May, 1930, Gandhi ji was arrested and sent to the Yerwada Jail. This caused huge resentment among the civilians. On 16th November, a large procession was taken out without permission, and a large number of leaders were arrested. The Viceroy Lord Irwin made several efforts to suppress the movement, but he failed to do so and realised that ignoring Indian Nationalism was a grave mistake.

Announcement of the First Round Table Conference by the Viceroy, but it was discarded by the Congress, which led to the Gandhi-Irwin talk on 17th February, 1931, and an agreement was made on 5th March, 1931. Rapprochement was effected by the famous Gandhi-Irwin Pact, and the Viceroy declared that Dominion Status was the goal of India's Constitutional development. The Civil Disobedience Movement was provisionally suspended, and Gandhi attended the Second Round Table Conference to discuss the scheme of constitutional reform for India.¹⁴ In this turbulent atmosphere, the country suffered another blow when the tragic news of the execution of Bhagat Singh and his comrades arrived. On March 23, 1931, the three revolutionaries- Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev were hanged while singing Bharat Mata ki Jai and Vande Mataram. This sparked a strong reaction across the country.¹⁵

After Gandhi's return from the Second Round Table Conference in London, the Congress Working Committee met in Bombay. It deemed the proposals of the British Prime Minister at the Conference ' wholly unsatisfactory and inadequate in terms of Congress demands'. The Congress Working Committee resolved that, in the absence of a satisfactory response from the government, the nation should resume civil disobedience, including non-payment of taxes, in a strictly non-violent manner.¹⁶ In January 1932, the government struck again, arrested Gandhi ji and other Congress leaders and declared the Congress and other political organisations illegal and hoisted the Union Jack on all INC offices. News of the arrest of prominent figures, the seizure of buildings, and the hoisting of the Union Jack became common across the country. In this context, the resolution issued by Sardar Shardul Singh Kavishankar, the acting president of the Congress and the acting dictator of the war committee, to hoist the national flag, the tricolour, on all government buildings on 15th February.¹⁷ Despite the activeness of the police, the enthusiastic volunteers hoisted the flag at the Monghyr collectorate on 14th February night, and on 15th February, the flag was hoisted at the court of the Monghyr judge and munsif.

On the call of Sardar Shardul Singh, patriots from all the regions near Tarapur gathered at Shri Bhawan in Supaur-Jamua village, Sangrampur block, located in Tarapur police station, Monghyr district. On Saturday, 13 February, 1932, in the presence of Babu Nand Kumar Singh and Shri Sureshvar Pathak Vidyanlankar Vasav and many more, a meeting was held about the planning of the Flag Hoisting at Thana Bhawan in Tarapur. The volunteers had learned that the police inspector of Tarapur had informed the District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police of Monghyr about the programme, making it likely that additional police personnel would be deployed to the Tarapur police station.¹⁸ After a night-long meeting, Madan Gopal Singh, a disabled person from Jamua village, volunteered to lead the team of flag bearers along with four other members: Mahavir Prasad Singh (Maheshpur village), Kartik Mandal (Chanduki village), Tripurari Singh (Supur-Jamua village), and Parmanand Jha (Chanduki village).¹⁹ On the 14th night, all the volunteers left their homes with fear that their family members might change their mind, but their excitement to hoist the flag, they set off on horseback in the dead of night for Tarapur, two kilometres away.²⁰ As anticipated, on the morning of 15th February, approximately three dozen police personnel arrived at the police station. District Magistrate E.O. Lee and Superintendent of Police W.C.M. Magrath reached Tarapur at 1:30 pm, rested at the Dak-bungalow nearby.²¹ It was hat day and a large number of people were collecting at the hat for routine marketing. Around 2 to 3 pm, the five revolutionary Satyagrahis from the raiding party arrived. Madan Gopal Singh blew the whistle to alert his comrades. The volunteers rushed towards the thana building with flags in hands and stormed the police station, chanting "Vande Mataram" and "Bharat Mata ki Jai". The Superintendent of Police warned the mob to disperse, but it would not.²² The police responded with lathi charge and chased them back 50 yards in hat ground.²³ During the clash, the police seized the flag from Madan Gopal Singh's hands, but he had another flag hidden in his clothes. He tied it with a bamboo stick and hoisted the National flag over the British police station. Noticing the flurrying of the flag, the crowd started chanting 'Jhanda Uncha Rahe Hmara'. As soon as the police noticed the flag hoisting returned to the thana and caught Madan Gopal Singh, Kartik Mandal, and Mahavir Singh. Tripurari, taking advantage of his physique, did not get caught.²⁴ Despite several warnings, the crowd did not disperse, and police prompted another lathi charge. In retaliation, they began pelting with stones, causing injury to the Collector E.O. Lee, the District Magistrate, then drew his pistol and fired two rounds, signalling other police to open fire. Firing, which was personally controlled by the two officers, went on for about 10 minutes and 78 rounds, resulting in the deaths of 34 and a large number of injuries.²⁵ Of the 34 brave martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the honour of the tricolour, only 13 were identified. These martyrs were Shri Vishwanath Singh (Chhatrahar), Mahipal Singh (Ramchua), Sheetal Chamar (Asarganj), Sukul Sonar (Tarapur), Santa Pasi (Tarapur), Jhonti Jha (Satkhariya), Singheshwar Rajhans (Bihma), Badri Mandal (Dhanpura), Basant Dhanuk (Laudhia), Rameshwar Mandal (Padbhada), Gaibi Singh (Maheshpur), Asrfi Mandal (Kastikri), and Chandi Mahto (Chorgaon). Besides, 21 bodies could not be identified.²⁶

Aftermath

Reinforcement of the police arrived from Bhagalpur, and the Superintendent of Police made arrangements for guarding the police station from further attack, the cost being met under the provisions of the Police Act from the inhabitants of this area.²⁷

A case was registered under the supervision of Mr Mullik. A.S.P., who was specially deputed to Tarapur, investigated the investigation and revealed that altogether 54 villages of Tarapur P.S. and 21 villages of Amarpur P.S. were implicated. A charge sheet was submitted against

the 37 persons, among them some accused were still absconding. On 1.3.32, Mr F. E. A. Taylor, I.C.S., Joint Magistrate, convicted all the accused and sentenced them.²⁸

Britishers considered the great work of the District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police of Monghyr district; if both S.P. and D.M. were not present, it would be the second Chauri Chaura.²⁹

Congress, in its annual session at Delhi on 24th April 1932, declared “ its high appreciation of the supreme sacrifice of those who were privileged to lay down their lives in the service of their motherland as the victims of indiscriminate firing and lathi charges by the police and military, notably in the Frontier Province and Tarapur in Bihar”.³⁰

The incident of Tarapur Golikand is considered the second largest massacre of the Indian National movement, who stuck to the principles of the Indian National Congress. It directly challenged the colonial authority by hoisting the National Flag on Thana Bhawan, which was the administrative building of the Britishers. It shook the British authority. For decades, it received limited attention. But in 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke about this incident in “Mann ki Baat” on 31st January, 2021, commemorating the sacrifices of 34 martyrs who died for their motherland.

Conclusion

The Tarapur Golikand of 15 February 1932 was far more than a tragic incident of colonial repression. It was an objectification of selfless sacrifice, collective courage, and unwavering commitment to the ideal of Swaraj. This incident offers valuable insights into the freedom struggle. It demonstrates the remarkably inclusive nature of the movement in Bihar, which drew participants not only from the educated class but also from different rural and marginalised sections. It reminds us that Independence was attained from above but earned through the numerous sacrifices of the grassroots participants. Tarapur stands as enduring proof that modern India was shaped not only by its prominent leaders but by the collective heroism of thousands of ordinary citizens. Their story inspires the current generations to value liberty, uphold national unity, and preserve the hard-earned democratic traditions born from such sacrifices.

“Their flag still flies. Their sacrifice still echoes”

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