

Monograph 01/2002

Bihar : Identity and Development

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Asian Development Research Institute

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Asian Development Research Institute (ADRI)

Publisher

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Printer

The Offsetters (India) Private Limited

Chhajjubagh, Patna-800001

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INTRODUCTION

It is a matter of elation that we are meeting to deliberate on Bihar, without any ideological or political frills. Not that ideology or politics is bad, but they sometime overshadow the main agenda. Today we meet to discuss Bihar and to deliberate on it without any political, social or ideological rancour. Never since the formation of the state of Bihar way back in 1912, there has been such a widespread provincial consensus over issues which affect the interest of the state. The three issues which have united the broadest spectrum of Bihar society are — first, the lopsided procurement policy of the central government; second, on the location of a Zonal office of Railways in Hajipur; and finally, on the calamity resulting from the recurrent floods. On all these three issues, there has been an unprecedented upsurge in the state. The most positive factor which surfaced during this period was near absence of political acrimony on the party line in the province. Even the most virulent political opponents joined hands over those questions in the interest of the state. These developments are extremely positive and every effort should be made to consolidate the near elusive provincial consensus of earlier years. Ironically, nearly two years ago, the state was allowed to be divided practically un-protested. Even earlier also, the state was subjected to four successive geographical divisions in the entire span of the last one century. Except during the time of separation of Bihar from the Bengal Presidency in the early part of the twentieth century, there has never been a state-centric movement, cutting across caste and class divide. Even the movement for a separate state of Bihar had a limited social base. This resulted into the lack of ownership of this provincial identity by a substantial section and thus the concomitant regional sub-nationalism was extremely weak, if not totally absent. The caste remained the main social anchor and the premier reference of individual identity. In the process, an intermediate identity of region or sub-nationalism could never surface. Thus, an average Bihari has two identities — the first one related to the caste and the second one to the nation. So it was no accident that many important public functionaries and civil servants from the state loathed to be identified with Bihar and be referred as ‘Bihari’. Instead, they displayed more pro-activism in Bihar bashing and often acted to ensure all possible fetters for any good thing to happen in the state, rather than facilitating it.

At the time of independence, Bihar’s position in relation to the other states was not very bad. After all, we had two major investments in this state at that time. Investment by the Tata’s in steel, an Indian indigenous entrepreneurial effort in Jamshedpur, in the plateau region of Bihar, was

possibly only of its kind in the entire colonial world in the early part of the twentieth century. Even in the plains of Bihar, Dalmins invested substantially in the industrial venture in Dalmianagar before independence. After independence, instead of consolidating this advantage, Bihar's development strategy resulted into its position becoming second last amongst other states by 1961. And by 1971, we were last in the ladder. Economic condition of Bihar has further deteriorated after the division of the state in 2000. Even while its per capita income (Rs.3859) at the lowest and poverty (42.60 percent) being the highest in the country, the state never displayed a state of social stagnation. Ironically, even while Bihar has registered a dramatic increase in food grain production in the last one decade or so, the state has registered a negative growth in the state income (-1.04). Bihar has displayed that either in the realm of empowerment or in social consciousness, it is not burdened by its low literacy rate (47.53 percent only). Unlike many other states of the Hindi Heartland, which are contemptuously referred as BIMARU states, the society and the polity in Bihar have always been vibrant and, in fact, in tremor. It can be said figuratively that a 'million mutinies' are taking place in Bihar. These 'mutinies' literally ranged from micro to mega struggles. And this phenomenon has historical antecedent. Apart from the stellar role of Bihar in the independence struggle, there have been several movements which had strong impact on the local politics and society. Unfortunately, some of the mega class movement like that of Kisan Sabha against the intermediaries (Zamindars) or social stirring by the Triveni Sangh (involving the Koeri, Kurmi and Yadavas) could not expand their social network or agenda beyond their immediate goal. However, they left a powerful imprint on the political and social firmament of the state. Their ideological progenies, the Communist and the Socialist movement, were most powerful in Bihar in comparison to any other Hindi Heartland states. Thus, politics and social agenda got intertwined, but it could not transcend into a multi-class/caste sub-national agenda of Bihar. In contrast, there have always been two levels of nationalism in many other parts of India. One is regional nationalism (also referred as sub-nationalism) and the other is all-India nationalism. Both these nationalisms are not in contradiction. In fact, during the freedom struggle, both these movements were complimentary. One could afford to be Tamil, Marathi, Gujarati, Bengali etc as well as a very nationalist Indian. It is no accident that the two songs of Rabindranath Tagore, one meant for Indian nationalism (Jana Gana Mana Adhinayaka Jayahe) and the other for Bengali sub-nationalism (Amar Sonar Bangla, Ami Tomay Bhalobasi), which eventually became the national anthem of the two countries, indicated the concurrent commitment to separate (but not incompatible) identities. In most of the southern and western states in India,

the ultimate home of any social movement was sub-nationalism. So it was not surprising that the anti-Brahmin movement in those states got converted into an agenda for sub-national identity. The sub-national identity was built only after the consolidation of the social movement. This helped in building bridges with those social sections, who felt marginalized (mainly the upper castes) earlier, due to the plebian character of the social movement. This strategic policy leap from 'anti-Brahminism' to 'sub-nationalism' triggered economic and industrial development in those states. So it was no accident that, in Tamil Nadu, entrepreneurs both from the social apex (like Brahmins) as well as from the margin (like Nadars, the toddy tappers) could build powerful industrial empires in the state. This phenomenon was repeated in several southern and western states. The reverberation of economic consolidation of these states could soon be felt at the national level. The political and economic centre of gravity shifted to the south and western India. The freight equalization policy was one of the consequences of their economic and political hegemony, which in fact wreaked havoc on the mineral-rich eastern states of the county, including the then undivided Bihar. On several issues, specially related to locating projects, therefore, we had to bow before their strong sub-nationalism in some other states.

Even then Bihar didn't complain. The regional culture of Bihar ordained that it should subsidise not only Indian nationalism but also the industrialisation. If mineral resources were not enough, provide them with a huge 'captive market'. After all, even during the times of united Bihar, there were hardly any intermediary industries which could cater to the consumer segment. Even during the national emergencies either resulting from war or internal insurgencies, Bihar provided the human phalanx (Bihar regimental Centre and various other para-military and police organisations) for canon fodder of sacrifice. The de-industrialisation of the Gangetic belt, particularly Bihar, not only facilitated industrial revolution in Great Britain, but its human resources employed in the 'war theatres' also ensured that the 'Sun should never set' in the vast and sprawling empire of its colonial masters.

Even in the realm of culture and confectionery, Bihar provided captive market. If any budding celebrity wanted to get launched in the national firmament, destination of Patna's musical soiree in the Dussehra festival was a must. It will not be an exaggeration to state that several national luminaries got themselves launched in the by-lanes of Patna before they attained all-India fame.

This way, Patna had a track record, almost parallel with Poona. In the realm of fast moving consumer goods (FMCG), Poona is considered to be the launching ground. In case of its acceptance there, the consumer goods will get a national currency. What was Poona for the FMCG, Patna was for the budding cultural entities. While Poona graduated from consumer market to mammoth industrial centres, Patna failed to take advantage of its cultural predominance. Patna had the potential to emerge as an entertainment production center. The fusion of Marathi renaissance and production vision brought about unique industrial revolution in Poona. But renaissance and production vision both eluded this ancient city of Patna. Even in the case of confectioneries, either *chocolate, cakes, chewing gum* of national and international brand, Bihar is a captive market. It is really ironic that food products like *Maggi*, with least nutritional content, are a raging success in Bihar. It is reported that its sale in Patna is the second highest after Delhi. In spite of our rich folk/classical culture and very palatable cuisine, our home-grown artists or food are not given pride of the place. In other cultural regions/states, dance or musical items like *Bharatnatyam* or *Kuchipudi* or *Rabindra Sangeet* or indigenous food items like *Idli, Dosa, Vada, Macher jhole* or *Rosogulla* have a pre-eminent position. On the contrary, in Bihar, the native songs like *purbi, chaita, holi, bidesia, ghato, birha, kajari, irni/birni, pachra, ropnigeet, katnigeet, sohar, jhumar, jatsari, aalah, nirgun, samdaun* or dance forms like *jat jatin, launda nach, bamar nach, jharni, jhijhia, natua nach, bidapad nach, sohrai nach, gond nach* songs or our cuisine/snacks like *litti/chokha, dhuska, pitha, thekua, khaja, belgrami, tilkut, khurma, anarasa, papri, lai* never got a place of pride in Bihar. Bihar is possibly one of the few states which have a rich subaltern culture. In the realm of dance there are several of them. One can be kept spellbound by their performance, like, *dhobi nach, jhumarnach, manjhi, gondnach, jitiyanach, more morni, dom-domin, bhuiababa, rah baba, kathghorwa nach*. Subaltern tradition with ethnic identity is not only alive in the action packed dances but can be found in the melodious songs as well with folk aesthetic grammar. No cultural or religious function is complete in certain social groups without the melody of *shivnarayani, harpauri, birha, lorikayan*. Even in the realm of theatre (*Reshma-Chuharmal, Bihula-Bisahari, Bahura-Gorin, Raja Salhesh, Sama Chakeva, Dom Kach*) and musical instruments (*More Baza, Dhol Tasha, Pach Bazna, Daphla Bansuri*) subaltern culture has rich tradition. If our folk tradition could have been packaged by adding certain cultural value for

national-international audience, then Bihar's sub-national identity at the grass-root could have got a different meaning. It will not be out of place to state that in the last three decades, 'Chatth' festival in Bihar has emerged as a sub-national festival of the state. If 'Chatth' could be the cultural convergence point for the broadest possible caste and class coalition, there is no reason why it cannot transcend into other areas also. In Bengal, Rabindranath Tagore, Madhusudan Dutta, Jamini Roy, Girish Chandra Ghosh etc resurrected the folk culture in the realm of songs, music, poetry, art and theatre and gave a new identity to Bengali sub-nationalism. Dravidian anti-Brahmin movement appropriated the folk tradition and thrust modern identity to the regional movement in the entire South and similar phenomenon is also visible in Western India.

Now it is for India to ponder, whether even after the onset of a new century, can it still turn deaf ear to Bihar? Can India flourish without consolidating the economic foundation of Bihar? Bihar has given enough to the world and the country, now it is their turn to turn towards this benighted state. Sometime we see a bizarre scene of the so called successful states, when, even on the question of providing a modicum of support to Bihar, they create a raucous. Sometime back, utterances of Chandra Babu Naidu about increased resource devolution to Bihar on the basis of the Eleventh Finance Commission award was not in good taste. Bihar would never like to grow by weakening India but it would nevertheless like to have a *'place under the Sun'*.

Recently when Jayalalitha, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, insinuated to the Prime Minister for not being invited in the swearing-in ceremony of the President of India, which tantamount to insult to Tamil sub-nationalism, the view was fully supported by her most diehard opponent, the former Chief Minister M Karunanidhi. Such unanimity of opinion on the questions that affect their sub-national pride, among political parties working at political cross-purpose, consolidated the regional identity and national hegemony. The prolonged dispute over Cauvery water, between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, again indicates the strength of the sub-national foundation in both the states.

It is hoped that now the political insularity of Bihar's identity will be banished. Bihar, by virtue of its continued preoccupation with the national politics, has aborted its agenda for the state. Bihar has always been used as an experimental laboratory for testing various political strategies, which is to be replicated later at the national level. Mahatma Gandhi, before launching his political agenda into the national firmament, fine-tuned his political strategies in the fields of *Champaran*. The main bastion of JP, the modern incarnate of Gandhi, for the 'Total Revolution' was Bihar. Incidentally, both these Bihar-based movements (Gandhiji's Champaran Satyagraha and JP's 'Total Revolution') brought about a paradigm shift in politics in India. After the *Champaran Satyagrah*, Gandhi had converted the then Congress Party into a mass organization, just as after the 'Total Revolution', JP brought out BJP (then Jan Sangh) in the political mainstream of the nation. Both these events were scripted on the political soils of Bihar, which in turn changed the course of history of India. These brief historical moments were essentially recounted to indicate the intensity and receptivity of Bihar society to different ideas, ideals and ideologies. Bihar always felt that the burden of carrying Indian nationalism rested on its shoulder. In the process, the regional agenda of Bihar got relegated to the background.

Bihar has witnessed historic changes in the recent period. The emergence of new social forces in Bihar because of electoral empowerment is practically unprecedented. Nowhere in the country could this segment be imagined to be at the political helm of power. Earlier, *Mungerilal Commission* and later *Mandal Commission* democratized society and gave social identity to those marginalized sections. Now the need of the hour is that Bihar should transcend from consolidating 'social identity' to 'regional identity'. One could build social coalition with all categories on regional questions. For an effective regional coalition, multi-caste and multi-class cohesion is a necessary precondition. South and Western India have shown the way of social and regional engineering. The critical question is — are we going to subsume the social and regional identity aspirations with the developmental agenda? We are sure that the regional political consensus, being currently witnessed in the state, can be used as a catalytic agent for triggering its development. New era should be ushered in the state where, instead of engaging in politics of development, every political effort should be geared for development alone. In an underdeveloped

country, 'state' still plays a pivotal role, instead of 'market', in deciding the developmental contour. This will be true at least for some time in India. For galvanizing the state, politics is the best conduit. In that case, the regional consensus will give muscle to the politics in bringing about substantive development. In what follows, to understand things in a historical perspective, we will briefly examine the factors for non-development of sub-nationalism in Bihar. This has been discussed in the light of developments that have taken place in the gradual evolution of nationalism and sub-nationalism in global as well as national context.

SOME THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTS OF NATIONALISM AND SUB-NATIONALISM

Nationalism, as a political phenomenon, is a product of modern Europe. It is believed that the earliest nation-states of England, Spain, Portugal and Holland emerged during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries ¹. The nation originated in the process of the elimination of feudalism and the development of capitalism. Subsequently, other nations emerged in central and eastern Europe. France developed as a full-fledged nation only after the revolution of the entrepreneur class of 1789, which swept away the multiple local loyalties ². The emergence of nations all over Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth century was brought about with the initiative of the entrepreneurs with an eye to secure the domestic market within the limits of national boundaries. The entrepreneur class unfurled the flag of nationalism because 'The market is the first school in which (it) learns its nationalism' ³. The above explanation for the development of nationalism in Europe finds a similar echo in India as well. Niharanjan Roy ⁴, Partha Chatterjee ⁵ and Irfan Habib ⁶, fundamentally subscribed to the above theoretical format that the nation was built in Western Europe in the era of capitalism. But Barun De⁷, disagrees with this formulation, and argues that national consciousness or national movements existed even prior to the era of capitalism. To be a nation it is not enough to have a common cultural heritage. It is necessary, according to John Stuart Mill writing in 1861, for people to have the desire to be under some government which should be a government by themselves, or a portion of themselves, exclusively. So the concept of nation is intrinsically linked with the popular consciousness for a separate sovereign entity. The emerging entrepreneur class often leads this movement. The ideological manifestation of the movement is 'nationalism'. 'These are the characteristics that distinguish a nation of the modern era from its earlier counterparts' ⁸.

Nationalism, as an ideological superstructure, helps in facilitating capitalist development. Hence, the specific identification of a nation by its proponent is dependent entirely upon the nature and the strength of the class which leads the national movement. This movement, however, is further dependent on its expected source of support, its opponents and the specific historical context within which the struggle has to be carried out. There is hardly any doubt that in the pre-imperialist phase, nationalities were cultural groups, while the nation constituted a political economic unity that evolved under the hegemony of the entrepreneur class.

The European experience of development of nationalism should, however, not be mechanically applied to the colonial or Third World countries, where nationalism was the outcome of a different historical process. In these countries, this modern variant of nationalism emerged as a result of its interaction with imperialism. Unlike the European experience, nationalism here was a reaction to the colonial presence. That is why the concept took shape within the inevitable framework of an alien rule. Secondly, the issue of sub-nationalism in the European context would be generally irrelevant now since, although at one time the countries of Europe were almost like the various regions in India, they later got much more sharply defined and could eventually shape themselves into individual nations with nationalistic characteristics.

To understand the process as it developed in India, it is necessary to first determine the relationship between nationalism and sub-nationalism. Once we accept the paradoxical truth of India being a symbol of 'unity in diversity', we are bound to acknowledge the fact that India is a polyethnic and multilingual country. Nevertheless, in the course of many centuries, India was able to evolve a fundamental unity within its geographical ambit. The Mauryans were the first to impose it. So did the Guptas after an interlude of six hundred years. Subsequently, the Mughal Empire succeeded in creating a unified sub-continental complexion over the fragmented personality of India. All these impositions from above were essentially political in nature. Despite this, our history is replete with examples of centrifugal forces, expressed in the efforts to assert regional identities, which present a challenge to the central authority. In an illuminating article, Sudhir Chandra wrote 'that development in Assamese, Oriya and Gujarati literature during the 19th century would suggest that regional consciousness was beginning to emerge contemporaneously with national consciousness'.⁹ Thus, sub-nationalism is a historical reality and cannot be sacrificed at the altar of omnivorous nationalism for the sake of political expediency.

Such caution is necessary to forestall the development of nationalism and sub-nationalism along an antagonistic path. With the advent of British rule in India, the relation between the periphery and the center radically changed. For the first time, the entire subcontinent came under single administrative machinery, an experience previously unknown to Indian people. But, in the process, the British themselves became the unconscious progenitors of Indian nationalism. This, in turn, proved to be the nemesis of British Imperialism in India.

In Third World countries, and specially in India, the specific feature of our nationalism has been, in the words of Amalendu Guha: “ever since its beginning in the 19th century... nationalism has been developing at two levels – one at all-India, on the basis of pan-Indian cultural homogeneities and an anti-imperialism shared in common; and another regional (Bengali, Marathi, Assamese etc) on the basis of regional cultural homogeneity. From the very outset, the two nationalisms are found intertwined and dovetailed. Traditionally, an average Indian identified himself with both nationalisms, except in some peripheral areas (e.g. Nagaland and Mizoram), left untouched by railways and both the national movements”¹⁰.

On the question of the transmitters of national consciousness, Paul R Brass writes: “certain classes and elites have historically been considered the special carriers of national consciousness — the urban entrepreneur class in Europe, westernized elites in the early stages of nationalism in the colonial countries.”¹¹ Brass further notes: “whether or not a nationalist movement originates within a group, its success or failure and the form it takes depend(s) up on the character of the elites who have economic and political influence in society, or whether they are willing to take lead, or how capable they are of mobilising broader segments(s) of the community”¹². In India also, the emergence of nationalism at the all-India and regional level was a middle class phenomenon. At the top of society were the foreign capitalists and their allies, the big landlords; and at the bottom the primary producers — the toiling peasants, artisans and workers. Indian industrialists, traders, petty landlords, the petty entrepreneur class and the educated class held the middle positions. The middle class wants to project its own interests as the interests of a large group so that (the) latter could be politically mobilised in the struggle for power. This is how Indian nationalism as well as... regional nationalism originated. The former aimed at consolidating the all-India market and reserving it for Indian middle classes to the exclusion of the

foreign domination. The latter was and is interested in developing the regional market as an exclusive preserve of the regional middle class or classes ¹³.

The intensity of nationalism and sub-nationalism would, however, depend on the arrangement of forces on either side, their co-operation and conflict and their abilities to mobilise the latent forces in society. This would of course operate within the constraints of the cultural and socio-economic set-up under the colonial framework.

In Europe, during the initial phase of nationalism, the middle class became the main representative of the new ideas of nationality and capitalism that led to the demise of feudalism. But here in India 'colonialism did not destroy but relied upon the different pre-capitalist relations of production to facilitate its process of exploitation ¹⁴. That is why, in the realm of politics, the middle classes were not able to intervene in the course of history as polarised entities; much of their articulations were mediated through communitarian structures of caste, religion or language... nation formation in India thus implied the forging of institutionalized links between segmental groups and the Congress Party. This was achieved by the efforts of Gandhi as a great manipulator of symbols. He effectively used them to evoke the idea of nationhood among desperate sections of the people overstepping their actual class of interest ¹⁵.

Tracing the course of the evolution of the 'middle class', Brass writes: "in various regions of the country, however, certain segments of the old elites and new elites arose to develop an all-India sense of nationality to challenge the British rule – the 'Bhadraloks' in Bengal, Chitpavons in Maharashtra, Tamil Brahmins in Madras, Urban Hindu caste(s) in Punjab, Local rural land controllers in North India." ¹⁶

The British rule created a new class of westernised elites, first in the three presidency cities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Particularly, because of the early 'economic and administrative penetration of imperialism', Bengal 'witnessed the efflorescence of cultural nationalism, known as the Bengal Renaissance.¹⁷ Unlike Bombay ¹⁸, here the cleavage between 'imperial interest' and nationalist aspiration stood out more sharply due to bitter social relations between the exceptionally large and powerful European Community and the highly politicised and economically frustrated, educated Bengalis'¹⁹. In Bengal, particularly in Calcutta, this new class

came to be known as the 'Bhadraloks'. But as a result of the colonial rule, administrative and economic changes transformed the old Bengal from the status of a relatively closed society, where social and political relationships were determined by caste and customs, to a relatively open and competitive society, where social relationships were shaped by class ²⁰. This newly rich Bengali stratum rose from the various castes — Brahmin, Kayastha, Suvarnabanik, Tili Basak and Kaivarta — who prospered in commercial association with the East India Company. There was then an 'aristocracy of wealth' but not of caste. In fact, education also created a new breed of elites. 'English education was indeed the great 'Enterprise' of Calcutta, *in which Bengalis of all sorts could participate without those racial barriers, which debarred their entry in business and industry*' ²¹ [emphasis added]. But still caste did not vanish; it tenaciously persisted mainly in the spheres of marriage, social prestige and inheritance. ²²

In Bombay, the phenomenon developed in a different way. Two new classes emerged, namely the Sethias and the westernised elites. The Sethias were merchants of western India, who belonged to two linguistic groups — Gujaratis and Marathis— and were composed of heterogeneous sections like Parsis, Kapols, Baniyas, Bhatias, Bhausalies, Bohras, Khojas and Memons. They collaborated with the British in their commercial and administrative pursuits but persistently refused to forge an 'intellectual partnership' with the foreigners and thereby resisted all attempts to turn themselves into 'cultivated Indian gentlemen' ²³. Regarding the Bombay elites, Dobbin noted: "Part of the reason for this was that British educational policy in western India was bedeviled by internal contradictions. Successive educators oscillated between the desire to create a class of 'Indian gentlemen' who would be the regenerators of their country and the need to provide [the] Raj with competent clerks and lower civil servants. Among the Marathi speaking population of the city were Chitpavan Brahmin[s], Saraswat Brahmin[s] and Pathare Prabhus, members of those castes which had administered the Peshwas' empire in the eighteenth century. These caste[s], with their tradition of learning and Government service were ready to enter Government schools and colleges as soon as they were established, in the hope of gaining knowledge and employment in Government administrative or educational departments. The Government despite its hope, that education would be the preserve of the 'wealthier classes', was forced to admit that in traditional society the 'upper class' and the 'educated classes' were different entities. The intelligentsia of Bombay city in the early part of the nineteenth century comprised those who of necessity earned

their living in Government service, and who were dependent on the Government for education and livelihood”²⁴.

By 1870, lawyers emerged as the leaders of the intelligentsia. In order to organise political activities, the intelligentsia induced the Sethias to form the Bombay Association in 1852. But differences soon developed between the Sethias and the intelligentsia on the issue of ‘investigating the inadequacies’ of the British rule. The Sethias offered resistance to such attempts since the Bombay Association was principally concerned with mercantile interests. Consequently, the intelligentsia in 1869 organized an alternative platform to ‘voice its own interests’. This was the Bombay branch of the London-based East India Association of Dadabhai Naroji. It indicated the beginning of much deeper implications for the growth of nationalism in India. Dobbin further notes: “Dadabhai gave [the] intelligentsia a promise of political salvation. As an all-India class, he urged them not to be confined by limits of [the] Bombay problem, but to regard the entire country as their political platform.”²⁵

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF SUB-NATIONALISM IN INDIAN CONTEXT

It is almost a truism to assert that industrial revolution in various countries has a direct correspondence with the growth of nationalism and capitalism. A similar concept of sub-nationalism possibly can go quite far in explaining the sluggish industrial growth in a state like Bihar. Bihar came into existence in 1912 and nine decades are sufficient to gestate one’s sub-national identity and its very important component, economic nationalism. Bihar’s failure to do so is all the more glaring against the background of the success achieved by Assam²⁶ and Orissa²⁷ during this period in forging their sub-national identity. Both these states were part of Bengal Presidency along with Bihar. Admittedly, these two states have not made any significant breakthrough in converting their backward economies to advanced one. Nevertheless, the sub-national awareness is a necessary precondition for even rudimentary economic development. The Indian sub continental syndrome is testimony to the fact that the states that have progressed had sufficient sub-national consciousness. The question, therefore, arises — does Bihar possess some inherent ethnic deficiency by which reckoning one can explain this failure? This entire problem which is a complex historical phenomenon needs much deeper scientific probing. In the present study, we start this probe by first describing the emergence of sub-nationalism in the Indian context.

Without hazarding a precise formulation of the yet largely unexplained concept of sub-nationalism, as already been discussed earlier, it is proposed to use the term essentially for any movement which seeks to make the regional market as an exclusive preserve of the local entrepreneur. Such movements may imply notable cultural dimensions, but it would be mainly for the capitalist and industrial transformation of the economy. Indeed sub-nationalism would be very necessary condition for such a transformation.

Thus the all India consciousness of nationalism initially emerged as a sub-national phenomenon in some parts of the country, which subsequently merged into a single stream and spread throughout the sub-continent. Sub-nationalism, therefore, remained complementary to nationalism particularly in the initial phase. That is why, the existence of sub-national phenomena in the Bombay and Bengal Presidencies helped in their economic and industrial development. These two states were the most industrialised and, in many respects, the most advanced though there were qualitative differences in the nature of their economic and industrial contours. In Bombay, the non-entrepreneur class first ignited the spark of sub-national consciousness but later on the entrepreneur class flourished in it and did not confine themselves only to Bombay but stoked the fire of nationalism on an all India scale and became the main propellant of the national movement. Bengal, however, lagged behind up to the 1920s in spite of developed sub-nationalism. This happened because of other historical factors, such as deeper penetration of British capital in the eastern region of India and the rise of western Indian capital on the national scene.

Along with this liberal brand of nationalism deriving sustenance from the modern ideas of the West, another brand of nationalism, essentially a revivalist trend based on Hinduism, also emerged. 'The first of these leaders', wrote Dr. B.B. Mishra, 'was Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-83), whose aim was to restore Indian culture to its pristine dignity by seeking '*India for Indians*'²⁸. Though he belonged to the Bombay Presidency, it was Punjab that became the rallying point of his revivalist movement under the banner of Arya Samaj. With complete disregard for other components like Islam and Christianity, this brand of nationalism denied the composite character of Indian culture²⁹. In most of the Hindi speaking areas, the impact of the Arya Samaj was noticeable, but the phenomenon of sub-nationalism did not emerge as a formidable factor³⁰.

The Britishers bequeathed the uneven nature of regional development to us. In the post-independence period of economic reconstruction, the interregional disparities, instead of being reversed, have been further accentuated ³¹. The capitalist growth in India has throughout shown a strong tendency towards self-perpetuating unevenness both region-wise and community wise. The overall tendency of a divisive capitalism is more towards differentiation and separate crystallisation than towards assimilation, as was the case with growing capitalism in western Europe³².

The centralisation of capital has resulted in centralised political authoritarianism. 'The state intervention in the deployment of financial resources, through the instrument of the state sector, reveals that the dominant feature of this intervention is the support given to the growth of private industrial capital' ³³. The reports of various committees, (Chowdhary and Nigam 1961, Mahalanobis Committee Report 1964, Hazari 1966, Monopolies Commission Report ³⁴, Dutt Committee Report ³⁵) on the different aspects of industrial concentration reveal that the state policy has been pursued in 'the interest of the indigenous industrial entrepreneur class. Within the entrepreneur class, furthermore, it has especially pursued the interest [s] of the big entrepreneur class rather than the rest of the entrepreneur class' ³⁶. This has resulted in serious imbalances in regional growth. A study of the Industrial Licensing Policy of 1970 revealed that 'it has failed to achieve... better regional balance of industrial development... More precisely, it failed to intervene in the market process of decision making on location. The basic defect was the total absence of an operational strategy regarding regional development'³⁷. Whereas the Licensing Policy has led to industrial concentration and monopoly, it has also left the 'regional balance of medium industries... to the mercy of market forces' ³⁸. This will act as a stumbling block for the development of a regional entrepreneur class. It was rightly predicted that if the tendencies of agglomeration are not severely dealt with, it would lead to the accentuation of further regional disparities in industrial development, the result of which might be quite damaging both from the political as well as the economic points of view'³⁹.

The conflicts due to these regional imbalances are increasing, though such conflicts were also experienced occasionally before 1947 — e.g., separation of Bihar from Bengal ⁴⁰. Prior to 1947, the contradiction due to local disparities was more or less subdued by the omnivorous nationalism. With the departure of the Britishers, the situation changed considerably. Post-independent India

saw many struggles against regional disparities under the slogan of reorganisation of states. The state reorganisation based on linguistic and cultural variations, that affected a large portion of India, came about as a result of the bitter struggle launched by the regional entrepreneur class and the richer kulak strata and backed by a popular mass movement in these areas ⁴¹. The reaction of the dominant entrepreneur class towards regional imbalances and reorganisation was pragmatic but hesitant and based upon the intensity of upsurge in support of the cause. For, the numerous linguistic, ethnic, and territorially-culturally unified groups are lumped together, were subordinated to other units, or manipulated into state formation which would result in intensified tension among groups and also recurrent demand for state formation by these discontented units ⁴².

Despite their mutual differences, both the regional and the dominant all-India entrepreneur class generally tried to resolve their conflicts earlier within the ambit of the Congress party. Though the regional entrepreneur class used all the opposition parties, like the communists or socialists or sometimes formed short lived organisations like the KMPP to press for their interests, they did not snap their connections with the Congress. 'The ruling party has for a long time been a coalition of regional forces' ⁴³. In fact even after these bitter struggles for regional or sub-regional identities which led to the formation of states based on linguistic criteria and various constitutional and political crises (T. Prakashan / Andhra Pradesh; Pattom Thanu Pillai/Kerala, etc.) the regional entrepreneur class did not go the whole hog against the Congress. In fact, the Congress was voted to power, even where the regional movements had taken a militant form. Meghnad Desai commented in 1975 that the 'vigorous temporary clashes of interests between regional and national capital do not exclude an underlying harmony between [the] two' ⁴⁴.

But a decade later, we notice a significant aggravation of the conflict — harmony giving way to disharmony. Some regional parties like the DMK, AIDMK, Telgu Desam came into power after dislodging the Congress. Even some national parties like the CPI (M), Janata Party etc. came to power with more regional than national overtones. This phenomenon cannot be understood unless we study the genesis and consolidation of the regional entrepreneur class, particularly after independence. Besides, it is necessary to study the whole gamut of the complicated relationship between the regional and the dominant entrepreneur class to understand the emerging configuration of the Indian state and the class contradictions within it.

The regional economic differentiation that emerged in India was largely due to the extent and penetration of British capital and political authority ⁴⁵. Over and above, the land tenure system introduced in different parts of the country, permanent settlement in eastern India, *Rywatwari* in south and west India and *Mahalwari* in north west India also affected the economic structure. 'The variations in land tenure led to different systems of surplus creation and absorption and the size of the surplus differed' ⁴⁶. Social movements also played an important role in the economic transformation. Thus the triad of land tenurial system, extent of penetration of British capital and the nature of the social movements, essentially determined the evolution and pattern of the economic profile of a region. The favourable combination of the above trinity could be witnessed mainly in the *Rywatwari* area.

The growth of capitalist farmers was more rapid in *Rywatwari* and *Mahalwari* areas, because a portion of the surplus produced by the rich peasants could be retained by them due to the absence of intermediaries like Zamindars ⁴⁷. The capital generated by agriculture was to some extent also invested in industry, facilitating the emergence of the regional entrepreneur class.

In the *Rywatwari* area of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madras and Andhra Pradesh, some entrepreneurs from a peasant background entered industry. Unlike eastern India, here the level of penetration of British capital was lower making investment in industry much easier. Amelioration of the plight of the peasantry was an integral part of the anti-Brahmin movement that swept the *Rywatwari* areas. The social origin of the rich peasantry in western Maharashtra, the pioneers of the sugar co-operative industry, can be traced to the social reform movement led by the *Satyashodhak Samaj* under the leadership of *Jyotirao Phule*, a *Mali* by caste, in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. This movement, which enjoyed considerable popular support during its period, was led by an alliance of economically better off non-Brahmin caste [s], educated non-Brahmans and elements from the trading community. The *Satyashodhak Samaj* focussed its attack on Brahmin domination over and above the economic, social and political life of rural and urban Maharashtra ⁴⁸. This non-Brahman rich peasantry could secure for itself 'social and political recognition in keeping with their rising economic status, as an outcome of a mass based social reform movement and also following the introduction of electoral power politics' ⁴⁹.

After taking the Congress under its wing by the 1920s and with the advent of Gandhi, the big entrepreneur class (often referred to as the west Indian entrepreneur class) started exercising their hegemony through the medium of regional elites who subsequently became the spokesmen of the entire nation. At the same time, these spokesmen were meticulously careful to buttress the interests of the dominant entrepreneur class who reciprocated by patronising the regional elite.

Tamil Sub-nationalism

The challenge to this domination manifested itself in different ways in some regions of India. The social movement heralded in the Madras Presidency, was one such manifestation. Its orientation and direction was considerably dependent on the economic structure of the given area. The challenge to the domination of west Indian capital was not necessarily frontal. It was subsumed in the anti-Brahmin movement. In the Madras Presidency, the Justice party was the spearhead of the anti-Brahmin movement. Here 'large sections of the local capitalist class had been integrated with the power structure of the Justice Party' ⁵⁰. The anti -Brahmin connotation of the movement was not only 'iconoclastic', but was also an attempt to dislodge the primacy of the Brahmins and to protect the growing economic and financial aspirations of the regional entrepreneur class. In Madras, where industry was still dominated by British capital (with the exception of Coimbatore, which was the largest center of the textile industry in the province), the opposition to the Congress from large Indian trading and money lending interest[s] was demonstrated by the failure of the Congress Party to secure any of the reserved seats. In the *Nattukottai Nagarathar Association* constituency, the Congress candidate was defeated by Muttiah Chettiar, a merchant prince and a banker, the head of the *Nattukottai Chettiar Community*, which dominated the financial scene in South India and had huge interests abroad ⁵¹.

But to fight the more popular appeal of the Congress, the non-Brahmin movement had to extend its base from upper 'non-Brahmin castes such as Vellalas, Naidus, Nayars, Mudaliars' ⁵², to the lower section of the backward classes. This gave way to the formation of the DK under Ramaswamy Naicker and subsequently the DMK in 1949 under C.N. Annadurai ⁵³.

In a parallel development, 'the non-Brahman[s] also took part in a greater measure in the Indian National Congress movement and [the] new structure[s] of power that were created by the introduction of [the] democratic process' ⁵⁴. Kamraj Nadar was one of its outstanding leaders, who

were soon to eclipse Rajaji from the state politics. The *Nadars*, toddy tappers by caste, developed into a strong 'commercial elite'. Even within the Congress, Kamraj became the rallying point for articulating the interests of the regional entrepreneur class, as opposed to Rajaji — a close ally of Gandhi and Vallabhabhai Patel — who not only symbolised *Brahminism* but also the dominant entrepreneur class at the all India plane. His close connection with west regional capital was revealed, when in a crucial cabinet meeting of the Madras Congress Ministry in 1938, on the issue of giving a cement company lease to a local businessman, he along with Dr. Subborayan preferred C.P. Company (a part of the Associated Cement Companies Combine). To enlist the majority support in his cabinet he 'read a letter from Vallabhabhai mentioning amongst other things that the lease may be given to C.P Cement Co. as the company has the necessary capital' ⁵⁵. This was not an isolated case. The High Command of the Congress 'increasingly tended to intervene on behalf of capitalist interests with various provincial governments. Thus in July 1938, Patel, in a circular addressed to all the Congress Chief Ministers, urged them to ensure all government business with genuine '*Swadeshi Companies*' ⁵⁶. This 'Swadeshi' often in practice meant west regional private capital. So this cleavage between regional and national entrepreneur class has historical roots. The final climax of this political break came in 1967, when first the DMK came to power and subsequently its offshoot the AIDMK.

Marathi Subnationalism

Even within the former Bombay State the cleavage was witnessed before independence between dominant financial and business/industrial interests of Gujarat and Bombay and the emerging agro-industrial entrepreneur class of the Marathi-speaking region. Gandhi and Vallabhabhai Patel who were Gujaratis 'represented certain economic and regional interests in the politics of western India. Within Bombay State in particular, Patel's political following was strongest in Gujarat and Bombay city among the business classes. It was less secured in Marathi speaking area[s] ⁵⁷. Opposition to the 'nationalist Gujarati wing of the Congress' was mediated in Maharashtra through the anti-Brahmin Movement. This led to demands by the non-Brahmans for a 'more effective voice in the Congress.'

In the post independence period, the Marathi and the non-Marathi divide assumed menacing proportions over the question of the formation of a separate state of Maharashtra. 'The industrial, trading and financial interests in Bombay which were overwhelmingly non-Marathi were totally

opposed to the formation of a separate state of Maharashtra, with Bombay as its capital. The Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee led by S. K. Patil⁵⁸, representing the big business, 'was absolutely opposed to any such move'.

The formation of Maharashtra, and the advent of Y. B. Chavan represented, the 'shift of power from the urban, upper caste[s] (mostly Brahman)... to the rising rural middle castes. This process was considerably helped by the dominant position of the Maratha caste cluster (almost 40%) in Maharashtra society'⁵⁹. The economic reasons for the shift in the power structure are due to enactment of tenancy and land reform laws. The creation of centres of economic power in the form of credit and other co-operatives and co-operative sugar factories, and the spread of education in rural areas accelerated this change over, some of the latter factors being themselves the product of the shift of power structure⁶⁰. The big entrepreneur class could solve the sub-national question and the growing assertion of the agro-industrial entrepreneur class in Maharashtra, however belated it may be. Political offspring of Y.B. Chavan is Sharad Pawar. He is a mediator of regional and national aspirations. Coalition of his party with Congress in Maharashtra is testimony to this reality.

Kanarees Sub-nationalism

The non-Brahman movement in Mysore differs from its counterpart in Madras. It did not 'assume the form of a pro-Dravidian and anti-Aryan image'⁶¹. In fact, regional consciousness in Mysore was marked by strong economic nationalism. 'Mostly economically informed persons felt that Mysore was being plundered by "aliens" and that it had become indispensable to develop the entrepreneurial talent of Mysoreans'⁶². It was strongly felt that 'capital goods left the country, but the English took the profits, the Madrasis took the jobs and the Marwaris took charge over the increasing trade'. And to reverse this, Dewan Visvesvaraya the Prime-Minister of the Mysore Princely State, launched a programme for the 'total transformation of economic structure'. The regional entrepreneur class started developing significantly in Mysore long before independence, because it was the only state which was characterised by 'far reaching industrialisation programmes and efforts at achieving economic self reliance, which are quite unique in India at the time'. Even today the strength of the regional entrepreneur class in Karnataka is very well reflected by the fact that there are about forty-five units of chamber of commerce directly affiliated to the FICCI (Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry). Several

parliamentary and assembly elections demonstrated the strength and adherence of the regional entrepreneur class of Karnataka, to identify with the two levels of nationalism. Hegde inherited the mantle of Deoraj Urs, who was the first to evoke regional identities. Urs advocated regional economic development. He was instrumental in 'decentralised planning and allocated a proportion of plan funds for district level projects' ⁶³. Advocacy for 'Karnataka for Kannadigas'... and by adopting the cause of Kannada, Hegde had strengthened his image as a regional leader... main linkman with the wider political world and as a champion of Karnataka's interest' ⁶⁴. The sub-nationalism is still very pronounced and its intensity is revealed over the Cauvery water issues.

Telgu Sub-nationalism

Andhra Pradesh was carved out of the former Hyderabad state of Nizam and the Madras Presidency. Here, under the liberal patronage of the Nizam a number of factories like textile, paper and engineering, were started. A number of petty industries such as 'tobacco, mica, mines, foundry, rice and oil mills were also located in the Andhra region'⁶⁵. In the pre-independence period 'the growing middle class intellectuals, the growing Hindu business and industrial interests took up cudgel' against the oppressive rule of the Nizam. Subsequently they formed the backbone of the movement for linguistic reorganisation. But the success of the green revolution in the late sixties and profits from tobacco cultivation strengthened the agri-capitalist of Andhra Pradesh. The surplus generated in agriculture flows in two directions 'agro-based industry and trade and film production, distribution and exhibition' ⁶⁶. The most important though not exclusive class/caste group to take advantage of this situation was the *Kammas*, who had earlier been the important support base for the communist movement in the state. Over time they have also grown substantially rich, and have multiplied their riches since the Green Revolution. They are now flourishing in different types of industry, like tobacco, film and other small scale sectors. Their political aspirations and Telegu pride were highlighted by a newspaper called 'Eenadu', owned by Ramaji Rao, a 'typical successful new rich youngish man who got some of his organisational skills from the AISF twenty or more years ago. A modern entrepreneur who made his capital accumulation through money lending, euphemistically called Margardasi Chit fund' ⁶⁷. It subsequently became the rallying point of the regional entrepreneur class of Andhra Pradesh. The rise of NTR and the Telugu Desam was a long overdue political manifestation of this class. There are about sixty five units of chamber of commerce affiliated to FICCI, reflecting the strength of

the regional entrepreneur class. Chandra Babu Naidu, the present Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh is an aggressive version of sub-nationalism. He has been able to corner substantial dividend for the state from the central government.

Punjabi Sub-nationalism

Among all the regional problems of the non-Zamindari areas, the Punjab problem is the most complicated. The introduction of advanced technology accompanying the 'Green Revolution' had generated large surpluses in the agrarian economy. Those who have benefited the most from this capitalist transformation in agriculture are the Jat Sikhs.

The agrarian boom of the earlier years, has now reached a 'plateau' ⁶⁸. Many of the capitalist farmers have invested their surplus in 'transport, trade and industry' ⁶⁹. In their effort to open new areas of investment, they came in direct conflict with the already entrenched urban based financial, business and industrial interests, which are largely in the hands of the Hindu community. Their interests are increasingly coming into conflict with traders and the big entrepreneur class because of increased costs of agricultural inputs. The political aspect of this conflict between the capitalist farmer and the big entrepreneur class is provided by the Akali party ⁷⁰. In the absence of any effort to pre-empt the social frustration of the articulate section of the rural rich, due to the various factors mentioned above, they have taken recourse to 'a regressive ideology that seek[s] to give voice to the sense of injustice by a militant assertion of the Sikh religion' ⁷¹. Thus regional assertion in Punjab, instead of unfolding as a secular sub-nationalism has instead transformed into religious bigotry, in the name of Sikh nationalism. When most of the states were reorganised on a linguistic basis the Akali demand for a Punjabi Suba was brushed aside, and Punjab was made a bilingual state. 'This was done under the pressure of Punjabi Hindus who opposed Punjabi Suba and disowned their mother tongue in the Census of 1951' ⁷². The leading light of this movement Lala Jagat Narain, editor of the Punjab Kesari, was murdered by a Sikh fanatic. The Hindus by disowning the Punjabi language 'made it the language of the Sikhs and communalised the issue of the language. This was later used by the Sikh communalists to equate Punjabi culture to Sikh culture' ⁷³. It appears that extreme subnationalism has diminished in recent periods. The smooth transition of government in the recently held assembly election from Akali Dal to Congress indicated that direction.

Regional Entrepreneurship in Post-Independence Era

By 1970, as the economic situation in India deteriorated, there was greater demand at the regional level for economic concessions from the centre. Nehru's vision of a centralised master plan for the economic development of India was questioned as it was felt that such a plan was not feasible in view of regional awareness and aspirations⁷⁴. The 'Linguistic chauvinism was not peculiar to Tamilnadu', Kerala was also fighting for the 'share of industrialisation. Andhra demonstrated with great passion for the location of [a] steel plant. Mysore has been keen to expand [its] industrial base. In fact this pattern is repeated all over India'. As early as January, 1970, M.V. Arunachalam had prognosticated the 'emergence of regional parties and regional consciousness not only within the present linguistic conformations but class within the sub-regions thereof'. Apart from the aspirations of the regional entrepreneur class, the urge for industrialisation also stems from a desire to provide greater employment opportunities. But industrialisation is likely to succeed only when the local entrepreneur class is given concessions and encouragement is given to 'local initiative through decentralisation, in the present circumstances, it is more likely to succeed than the centralised licensing policy administered from Udyog Bhawan' earlier⁷⁵.

The mechanism of licensing has only been used by the chosen few to corner the licenses and divert them to the chosen region. They are also operating in the small scale sector, normally the domain of the regional entrepreneur class. In a study conducted by the Corporate Studies Group at the IIPA, New Delhi, it has been found that a number of companies, though registered under the MRTP Act, continue to lay claim to their being part of the small scale sector'⁷⁶. And in the absence of any legislation to protect the small scale sector a situation may arise when 'large scale companies could resort to taking over existing small scale units'. This will further accentuate the cleavages between the big and the regional entrepreneur class.

Interestingly, the regional entrepreneur class was no longer content with expressing their rift with the big entrepreneur class at the political plane alone. They were fighting for their interests within the premier forum of the big entrepreneur class, the FICCI⁷⁷. The simmering discontent within their rank once flared up over the innocuous question of the choice of a Vice- President from the South. The Times of India of 28 April 1985, in a prominent headline in the front page — 'Southern Businessmen ask FICCI to clarify' — reported that the 'consultative committee comprising secretaries of the Hindustan Chamber of Commerce, Andhra Chamber of Commerce,

Southern Chamber of Commerce, met here informally to ... ask the parent body to,' clarify the choice of a Vice-President from the South. This was prompted by reports in a section of the press that the selection of the Vice-President of FICCI for the next year had been aborted as no suitable person of 'stature and financial clout was available' from the south. Since then the Times of India often reported the impending break up of the FICCI and the 'captain of industry and trade' trying to avert it.

At the same time, the regional entrepreneur class by its very nature could not afford to continue an antagonistic contradiction with the dominant entrepreneur class for too long. Likewise, the dominant entrepreneur class in the initial phase had played a subsidiary role to colonial industrial capital, and for this reason they showed an unwillingness to cross swords with imperialism in our struggle for independence. But with the development and consolidation of their position, even under alien domination, the Indian entrepreneur class started asserting themselves vis-à-vis imperialism and utilised the Congress and the national movement to wrest state power. The post – independence period witnessed the growth of capitalism under the aegis of both the regional and the dominant entrepreneur class, though the lions share went to the later.

But the regional entrepreneur class who originally played second fiddle to the dominant entrepreneur class, mustered economic viability and political strength, and were able to mobilise the masses of their region against the centre to further their own interests. This led to the emergence of a few regional centres of power against the dominant group. The regional entrepreneur class is utilising the centre-state contradiction, as the national entrepreneur class had once done against imperialism. But in the case of imperialism, the national entrepreneur class, despite their vacillations and compromises followed an antagonistic path leading to the retreat of alien power. Hence the contradiction was antagonistic in character. But in the case of the regional and national entrepreneur class, the contradiction is non-antagonistic.

Since the dominant national entrepreneur class wields state power and since the working class is not politically and organisationally strong enough to intervene decisively, the result of this conflict will depend, for the time being, on the path to be followed by the dominant entrepreneur class, by taking the entire nation into confidence and keeping the whole issue at the level of reconciliation. In case of failure, fissiparous forces backed by imperialism will successfully further the

fragmentation of the nation. Today, nationalism in India cannot sustain itself without the simultaneous flowering of sub-national interests.

PROBLEMS OF SUB-NATIONALISM IN BIHAR

Economic Constraints

To understand the economic backwardness and non-development of sub-nationalism in Bihar, history obviously steps into the area of investigation because the probe is conducted in terms of time. But space too is relevant here, because the former is not only a chronological phenomenon (a dialogue between the past and present) but also, if spatially, denoted a dialogue between part and whole. Thus our quest runs correspondingly through several digits of part and whole of India and Bihar and other Indian union.

During the national movement, specially during the Gandhian era, Bihar was in the forefront. But the spell of nationalistic spirit did not give rise to industrial entrepreneurship. At the same time, anti-feudal movement of the period led by Kisan Sabhas intensified agro-entrepreneurship. This phenomenon has peculiar interrelationship with the caste factor of Bihar with corresponding political implications as pointed above. The question arises why Bihar could not evolve regional industrial entrepreneurship despite great nationalistic spirit. In relation to the concept of Protestant ethics, it is often posed: is it not a little artificial to suggest that the capitalist enterprise has to wait till some religious or other spirit has produced capitalist spirit. On the other hand, question can also be put: can the whole edifice of industrial entrepreneurship develop without the corresponding growth of material forces. Hence the problems in relation to Bihar are (1) why nationalism couldn't give rise to entrepreneurship, and (2) why material forces for capitalistic enterprise could not develop here.

Post-independence India has witnessed systematic attempt at planned economic development in the country as a whole. In spite of high potentialities for industrial development and large scale public sector investment in industries, Bihar was at the bottom of industrial development in the country. United Bihar possessed 30 per cent of the value of minerals produced in India and yet Bihar remained one of the most ruralised regions of the country. It was believed that whatever industrial development occurred in India before independence occurred as a result of the integration of the Indian economy with the world capitalist system through trade and capital

investment. But on the contrary the major spurt in Indian industrial development took place precisely during those periods when India's colonial economic link with the world capitalist economy were temporarily weakened or disrupted.⁷⁸ Even this limited industrial growth failed to take place in Bihar; on the other hand strengthening of these links led to backwardness and stagnation.

The regional matrix of growth in India calls for a separate analysis. The Eastern region had to face the main brunt of British capital and exploitation.⁷⁹ Much as Bihar shares the fate of Eastern India generally, there are notable differences in the levels of industrialization in the Eastern sector itself. The economic backwardness of Bihar is not an isolated phenomenon. The underdevelopment of Bihar is the manifestation of a common, historically conditioned and structurally determined development process that can be understood only with reference to the nature, structure and evaluation of the present national and international order. As we know, of all places Bengal Presidency (constituting Bengal, Bihar and Orissa) before independence was the original pasture of British colonialism in India. The resources of the eastern India not only provided the fodder for the imperial war machine to conquer the rest of India but it also bridged the deficits of the presidencies of Bombay and Madras in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.⁸⁰ This area witnessed systematic extermination of artisan and traders.

Against this background, we now discuss what had indeed prevented the emergence of regional entrepreneurial class in Bihar, which was earlier part of the Bengal Presidency. The answer to this query in terms of a poor material base of the local economy is undoubtedly appealing. But we must also remember that there are parts of India, where material base has been equally poor and yet have seen the emergence of fairly buoyant regional entrepreneurs. This leads us to an enquiry into the possible link between regional identity and regional entrepreneurship which have been seen to emerge almost simultaneously in many parts of India. This phenomenon has been witnessed in the colonial period, as well as after independence.

As discussed above, the artisans and traders who could have been the main social base for provincial entrepreneurs faced widespread extermination during the early stages of colonial rule in the eastern region of India. The South and Western India felt the brunt of colonial rule at a very late stage, so the artisans and traders of this region survived the colonial depredations. Secondly,

Bihar being in the 'Permanent Settlement' area, the land tenurial system here was more iniquitous than in Ryotwari and Mahalwari areas. Surplus generation and retention in the hands of the tenants of that surplus was least, as compared to the other tenurial systems. Thirdly, public investment during the British period created condition for strengthening the material base of the respective economy. Investment in canal and roads brought about dramatic changes in agricultural production and industrial development. Punjab, Western U.P., Coastal Region are testimony to the fact. In Bihar, Sone Canal area which is the most developed agricultural track held this preeminent position even during the British period. In fact, Green Revolution was introduced in 1960's where there were captive water resources. It can be said with some amount of authority that no new area has developed in India, which was not developed in the pre-independence period. Since 1947, regional accumulation was dependent on devolution of resources by the Central government to the states. On that count Bihar's record was very dismal. On the question of devolution of resources, either planned or non-planned, Bihar was always disadvantaged. The recent division of the State was the final blow, which has financially crippled the State. To top this, there has not been any compensation from the Central government. In the realm of debt, Bihar is on the verge of financial trap. Out of our Rs. 18,000 crore annual budget, we are not in a position to raise tax revenue of more than Rs. 3,000 crore. On the other hand, we have to pay Rs. 5,000 crore in the form of interest for our debt.

Non-Economic Constraints

As noted earlier, nationalism first emerged as regional or sub-national phenomenon particularly in non-Hindi linguistic areas like Bengal, Gujarat, Maharashtra etc. But in the Hindi Heartland, the regional phenomenon unfolded differently. Let us very briefly discuss about the problems of language and nationalities of this region.

Language

The term 'Hindi' is applied to two groups of dialects, viz. Western and Eastern. Western *Hindi* has four main dialects – *Bundeli* of *Bundelkhand*, *Braj Bhasha* of *Mathura*, *Kannauji* of *Central Doab* and *Vernacular Hindustani* of *Delhi* and *Upper Doab*. *Eastern Hindi* has three dialects namely, *Awadhi* of *Oudh*, *Begheli* of *Baghelkhand* and *Chhattisgarhi* of *Chhattisgarh*. *Eastern Hindi* has *Bihari* to its east and *Marathi* to the south, both being outer languages. Along with the above dialects, *Hindi literature* also includes the literatures of the parts of *Rajasthan* in the west and

Bihari in the east which, strictly, are not Hindi at all.⁸¹ Thus the question arises, like other linguistic people of India, do the Hindi speaking people constitute a sub-nationality?

The question of Hindustani sub-nationality was raised as far back as 1922. Hindustani denotes the language of Hindustan and during the Muslim period, Hindustan was considered to be the north Indian geographical tract lying between the Punjab and Bengal, obviously this includes Bihar also. The failure to develop Hindustani sub-nationalism in contrast to Bengali and Punjabi, Maharashtrian etc. was adduced to the lack of political consciousness.⁸² This is because while the regional elites were emerging in other areas, 'Hindustan' being the last citadel of moribund medieval feudalism, was cordoned off from the influence of modern ideas. Being the main area of the upsurge of 1857, it invited the bloodiest reprisal and retribution and subsequently the deliberate negligence and indifference from the side of colonial rulers. As a result, strong feudal features survived here and in the entire Hindustani speaking area and thus leading to certain amount of isolation from as well as resistance to modernism.

Politically, Bihar was tagged to Bengal even during the pre-British days leading to her economic backwardness. On the other hand, culturally and linguistically being a part of the Hindi Heartland, she too smarted under relative conservatism. While the social reform of various streams swept the three presidencies in spite of solid phalanx of orthodox opposition, the movement of *Arya Samaj* that found some following among the backward castes acted more as a vehicle of conservatism than regeneration. In Bihar, the unit of social movement was caste, not village or region.⁸³ Evidences of multi-castes reform movement are practically absent.

Against the background of the Bihar's economic backwardness, she developed a fragmented personality having a number of territorial entities with definite dialects like *Bhojpuri*, *Magahi* and *Maithili*, superimposed over a formidable hierarchy of caste system. Linguistically those dialects could be put into a common group known as '*Bihari languages*'. One can contest this classification but they are definitely distinct from *Hindi* and more related to *Bengali*, *Assamese* and *Oriya*, as all these dialects were derived from common root known as *Ardha Magadhi Apabhramsha*. 'Like *Bengali* or *Oriya*, no common '*Bihari language* has ever emerged.'⁸⁴

Movement for Separation of Bihar

The movement for separation of Bihar from Bengal was the first effort to assert her own regional identity in terms of sub-nationalism. At the regional level, participation for separate Bihar 'facilitated through the aggregation of primordial loyalties like religious group, caste association and the regional identities' ⁸⁵. The westernised Bihari elites were carriers of this movement. Three major factors, namely Bihari intelligentsia, Bengali settlers and British imperialism interacted and determined the character of the regional and economic consciousness of Bihar.

Let us first discuss the factor of indigenous elites 'The historians have tried to characterize this class as an elite group and have sought to emphasise the determining role of the attitude and social behaviour of this group to the exclusion of more basic structural feature of the economy'.⁸⁶ The movement for separate Bihar was spearheaded by the professional and the educated elites and not by the Bihari entrepreneurs. This is because of preponderance of feudalism in Bihar. The social bases of these elites were limited. The movement in Bihar mainly revolved round the discrimination against Biharis in the matter of education and jobs. The movement had no wider ramification. Being essentially movement for separation of Bihar, it could not build bridges with the boycott movement of Bengal (1905). Non-participation in 'Swadeshi' movement seriously affected the intellectual outlook of the movement in the sphere of developing independent economic agenda. Ironically, during the 'Swadeshi' movement, when more than three hundred units were functioning in Orissa, in contrast only three committees were functioning in Bihar. Even these committees were mainly functional in Bhagalpur. As they were mainly manned by Bengali settlers, they were contemptuously referred as '*Babu Tamasha*'.

The class limitation of the movement for separation of Bihar is reflected by the absence of any political thought based on economic nationalism. Without contesting the justification of the demand for reservation of jobs for the local people, they could not transcend the movement beyond it. The British imperialism further distorted economic and social development of Bihar. While Industrial Revolution was sweeping in England, Gangetic belt in India, specially in Bihar was experiencing systematic process of deindustrialization which was staggering.⁸⁷

Now let us take up the second factor, namely, the Bengali settlers. Despite the political linkage of Bihar with Bengal, linguistically and culturally she was more connected with Hindi Heartland.

This lack of cultural affinity restrained the Bengali settlers to identify with local population. In addition, the former developed supercilious attitude of cultural superiority as a result of their dominance as subordinate partner in the administrative professional set-up in the colonial rule. Except some noteworthy but limited contributions, they could not emerge as the main conveyor belt for the dispersal of the radical ideas that emerged in Bengal earlier along with the social and political awakening. This is rather natural because these people were part of the colonial administration; 'a middle class' of Bengal could not play the historical role in initiating cultural renaissance in backward area.⁸⁸

One of the weaknesses of Bengali renaissance was its geographical limitations, with no significant spill over to Bihar. Some reformist movement like *Brahma Samaj*, though implanted in Bihar, could not develop root in the soil. It is a dismal failure of the so called Bengali renaissance to establish powerful link with Bihar and thereby breaking its conservative insularity. This lack of activities on the part of Bengal with trans-regional perspective particularly in the backward peripheries, also determined the character of the superstructural complexion of Bihar. Secondly, because of its elitist character, Bengal remained more or less indifferent to the general problems of Bihar. For example, Bengal successfully fought against the monstrous oppression of indigo planters in the 19th century; but she did not extend this movement to Bihar. In fact, Bihar had to wait nearly half a century for Gandhi to organise crusade against the indigo planters. In this movement, Bihar was caught in the whirlwind of nationalism of Gandhian era without sufficiently developing sub-nationalism. So, Bihar developed nationalism in which regional identity was stuck up in the quagmire of caste and to a certain extent in the sub-regional entities like Maithili, Jharkhandi, Bhojpuri etc.

The third factor, as mentioned earlier, is the colonial rule. The boycott movement of Bengal induced the imperialist rulers to take steps so that no militant movement similar to Bengal might develop in Bihar. The British Government was facing organized resistance in Bengal. With the partition of Bengal, 'Swadeshi' movement was organised successfully there. The middle class Bengali youth were organizing 'revolutionary activities'. The situation compelled the British Government to show their support to the voices of protest raised in Bihar against the employment of Bengalis.

Subsequently, Bihar became the most important bastion of national movement during the Gandhian era. This shift towards all India political linkage of Bihar is extremely significant. First, it denotes the most significant reality of Indian politics in the emergence of the western India on the national movement. The geographical connotation actually indicates the increasing domination of industrial capitalist from western India over other parts of India including Bihar and also in the Indian National Congress along with the group of different regional elites, who earlier assumed its leadership. The Congress party became 'loose confederation of interests' which 'could integrate in the colonial period the multiple levels of nationalism in India'⁸⁹. The earlier reluctance of the *Sethias* in Bombay to be drawn to even in the initial stage of anti-British political trend, faded away to a certain extent. Their contradictions with imperialism made them realize the importance of the platform of Indian National Congress which could be transformed into a powerful instrument to foster their class interest. On the other hand, the middle class elites needed the support of a powerful financial class to sustain the tempo of the national movement.

Role of West Indian Industrial Capital

In a nutshell, it indicates a qualitative change in the political complexion of India. The capitalist started exercising hegemony through a faithful coterie of elites of all India dimension. Besides the two pronged attacks of this alliance (against imperialism and socialism) this hegemony has wider implications at the level of sub-nationalism too. The sub-national aspirations were brushed aside by the high pressure sweep of omnivorous nationalism. Bihar was no exception to it. By keeping sub-nationalism at the low key, the capitalists of western Indian origins spread to the eastern region under the banner of nationalism, "Since the capacity of the indigenous capitalist group ... to compete internationally with more advanced industrial interests is negligible, they tend to maximize their exploitation of local people in an effort to accumulate large profits. They also use political influence on a national level more intensely to hoodwink the local people. They are permanently under the necessity to keep up nationalistic hysteria to induce people to make necessary sacrifice to fill the former's coffer".⁹⁰

The financially and ritualistically weak trading community of Bihar could not checkmate the onslaught of west regional capital on the economic spectrum of Bihar. As early as 1965, Industrial Planning and Licensing Policy Committee headed by R. H. Hazari reported that the bulk of the Marwari, Parsee and Punjabi investment have been in Bihar apart from few other states like

Maharashtra, W. Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The different trading castes in Bihar, although quantitatively quite substantial, could not articulate beyond the caste matrix. At no stage in the regional level movement of Bihar, the elites sought partnership of the local commercial community, like the elites of Bombay who forged relationship with the *Shethias*, in the national movement.

This is the reflection of the weak position of the indigenous entrepreneur, which is yet to be born in the real sense. The present Bihari entrepreneur is in the nascent stage and has not yet reached a stage where they can give effective leadership to the business community.

With the handicap of lack of sub-nationalism and its concomitant economic entrepreneurship, the class, which took over the reins of Bihar after independence, did not have a synthetic vision for the agricultural or industrial growth of the state. The narrow vision of economic development within which they operated could not transcend beyond Zamindari abolition (giving up the system of intermediaries) and some prestigious large projects in public sector. Land reform measures were not taken up seriously. Domination of western Indian capital in India to the detriment of eastern India was institutionalized through the freight equalization policy of the national government. Natural advantage that Bihar enjoyed in the realm of mineral resources was forestalled; the large private investment which started with the Tata's in the early part of the 20th century did not substantially increase, after independence. Economic development involves structural transformation and requires composite long-term vision. In the context of India and specially in relation to Bihar, it means transition from feudalism to capitalism. But unfortunately the class, which was guiding the destiny of Bihar in the first four decade since independence, was hostile to the above strategy because of their entrenched feudal legacy.

After the division of the state in 2000, whatever accumulation had taken place in plateau region of Bihar is now a part of a new state. Bihar has to start afresh. The social vision of the ruling leadership and the developmental strategy should find some common ground. We cannot make our sub-nationalism substantive, until and unless we give economic muscle to it. Can Bihar still be resurrected after its crippling division?

Bihar was disadvantaged earlier, when state-centric growth model predominated. Central Government could not alter the spatial underdevelopment in the country. Now in the wake of market-centric growth model, we will be on the verge of disaster if we don't alter our strategy. In this model also, state which had initial advantage of accumulation will again rule the roost. An Economic Times Survey of October 14, 2002 indicates that the investment destination, whether domestic or international, is still Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu or Gujarat. This is not due to better infrastructure only. These states have outperformed their counterparts comprehensively in the post-reform years — the productivity, both of capital and labour, was higher in these states than elsewhere in India. Surprisingly, on those counts, Bihar's position is not very dismal with respect to either capital or labour productivity. In fact, the labour productivity is higher than in West Bengal and Orissa. Even then Bihar is not the destination of investment in the Eastern Region. In this regard, we feel that we lack sub-national killer instinct. These facts of low capital-output ratio and higher labour productivity of Bihar should be made known to the world of not only scholars but of business and media as well.

Full commitment of Bihari sub-nationalism will be needed for the economic revival of Bihar. In the market economy, the even playing field is absent. And this is specially true for the underdeveloped states. Further, with globalisation the sub-national concern cannot be limited to regional market only. The entrepreneurs elsewhere could accumulate and develop with protected market. That gave teeth to their sub-national concerns. Half a century of post-independence India saw their consolidation and growth. Tamil, Telegu, Marathi, Kanaree, Punjabi etc. are powerful sub-national entity. Left to themselves, they are economically much better off than many of the developing countries in the third world. With market economy and globalisation, regional economy cannot hope to survive on the basis of regional market alone. In fact, there is need for counter movement. Regional and sub-national formation will have to think in terms of reverse globalisation. Not only packaging but the quality of our product should be such that it succeeds in conquering national and global market. This agenda will be difficult, nevertheless, it is achievable. For this, we need to harness not only the regional capital but also 'knowledge'. We can leapfrog into development on 'knowledge' based strategy. Creation of a 'literate' society would be the precondition towards this end. In this context, one should immediately note that acquiring of literacy is the first precondition for entrance to the world of knowledge. It is only through knowledge that an individual or a society can acquire rationality and move towards development,

social and economic. So the struggle for development of Bihar should be fought on two fronts — at one hand, there should be social mobilisation cutting across caste, class and political lines to forge a sense of sub-nationality; and on the other, a movement towards mass literacy and creation of a knowledge society.

Bihar has already created a niche in the ‘knowledge’ world. Not only we are supplying maximum agricultural labourers, we are also supplying maximum numbers in the pool of IAS officials. Our success in IIT and IIM are also phenomenal. It is a pleasant irony that the subaltern section of Bihar’s society is also not lacking on this score. The artisan community, from the remote area of Patepur Toli of Manpur Block in Gaya district, is contributing in substantial number in the IIT’s. Apart from ‘knowledge’ based strategy, we need to strengthen the foundation of our economy by land reform, consolidation of holding, internal institutional reform etc. In this backdrop we have to perform several times better, to even come to the national level. For this mandate, there should be complete provincial consensus, cohesion and commitment. In the 21st century, we cannot afford to be less alert. We have to convert our disadvantage into advantage. Not only *Bihar* but *Bihar made goods* should attain a *brand image*, so that it gets national or international currency. And this agenda cannot be attained in the absence of concerted sub-national cohesion. Let political acrimony take a back seat. In the interest of Bihar, Let the Biharis rally back without hesitation. The social justice movement is already substantially consolidated; it is time now that it transcends in the realm of sub-nationalism. This no doubt will mean broadest possible caste-class alliance.

Let the *Bihari sub-nationalism* write a new script. It will be mediated with an eye for national and global market. This is only possible by forging a new identity in an atmosphere of a resurgent Bihar wherein we can give befitting reply to all the existing cliches about Bihar’s identity, which generally conceptualizes corruption and misrule as being synonymous to the state. The consistent denigration has resulted in the formation of a paradigm which provides fodder to the intelligentsia at the national level to relish in not only Bihar bashing but also try to understand misrule and corruption in other states of the country through concepts and categories which are embedded in this Bihar-centric view. The most recent example of this trend was disturbingly brought forth on one of the most premier news channel of the country while showing the interview of the Chief Minister of a neighbouring state. The interviewer, himself one of the leading journalist of the country, was persistent, while haranguing this Chief Minister, to accept that developments in

governance and polity of the concerned state has become '*Biharised*' which he seemed to sanguinely believe was a substitute word for growing corruption and misrule.

But we need not get agitated over this and try to carry out a dialogue with these intellectuals to contest such portrayals. Such conflicts might in the end prove to be carrying out our dialogue with the deaf. Here we need to take some leafs from the way the Sikhs, who were the butt of all jokes till recently, backed by the strong element of economic development in Punjab, have forsaken several of their past images to reconstitute their identity as an enterprising community. While the jokes still go round but the conviction about the foolish traits of a Sikh personality which are so intrinsic to these jokes is missing or is at least on the wane. Perhaps, the creation of a new Bihar for which we have assembled here today would provide us with the required ammunition to silence our critiques without using words and by merely flaunting the performance of our state and a reconstituted identity of *Bihari* based on such performances.

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