

**Mazhar ul Haque-His role in the Non-Cooperation
Movement in Bihar**

Prof. Anuradha Jaiswal

R.N.College,

Hajipur.

Abstract

The Khilafat and the Non-cooperation movement represent the best phase of Mazharul Haque's life. He had already been working for Turkey for some time. To it was added the novel but stirring call of Mahatma Gandhi for Non-cooperation and it struck the deep chords of Haque's soul. It was not just another political agitation, it had strong moral, ascetic, undertones which appealed strongly to Haque's mind. Haque contributed much, in practical terms to the success of the Non-cooperation movement. He tried to concentrate on three main objectives- organisation of national school and colleges, promotion of communal harmony and boycott of government institutions and foreign goods. His activities in connection with the first objective was the establishment of Sadaqat Ashram and the working of the Bihar Vidyapith, although short lived, deserved notice. They also give an idea of his organisational ability. Promotion of communal harmony was another major contribution of Haque. Conscious of the imperative need of an independent nationalist press, Haque contributed his mite by establishing and running Motherland which soon became a mouthpiece of the Non-Cooperation Movement.

Keywords :- Satyagrahi, Agitation, Non-cooperation, Withdrawal, Organisation, Harmony

Mazharul Haque's career presents a fascinating example of transformation of a wealthy, westernised, government officer and barrister into a dedicated fighter for freedom and a great satyagrahi. It shows a gradual development not only in terms of the extension of the area of his activities but also is the change from the usual manner of political functioning to a higher moral style and attitude. Mazharul Haque's public activities took place at three different but inter connected levels-local, provincial and national. In all these spheres he contributed much in practical terms. Particularly notable was his work in organising the national schools and colleges in Bihar, leading to the establishment of the famous Sadaqat Ashram and the Bihar Vidyapith¹. Another important achievement was the starting and editing of the weekly 'The motherland' which came to be recognised as a mouthpiece of the Non-cooperation movement. By far the most important feature of Mazharul Haque's political activities was the moral ascetic tone that he imparted to them. In this respect he was strongly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and is rightly earned for him the popular title of faqir and Desh Bhushan.

Mazharul Haque was closely associated with the Bihar Provincial Conference from the very beginning and had served as its General Secretary (1908) and Vice President (1909)². It succeeded largely in developing a joint Hindu-Muslim political front for the demand of a separate province. The significance of this development has been dwelt upon by Sachchidanand Sinha, and a contemporary and one of the main architects of the constitution of Bihar as a separate province. Following this new alliance the first general session of the Bihar Provincial Conference was held in April 1908 under the leadership of Ali Imam. A resolution was moved by M Fakhruddin for the formation of a

separate province of Bihar and was supported by all the district representatives. Haque also moved for reforms in which he criticised the proposals for separate electorate. In August next, the three leading public bodies of Bihar- the Bihar Landholders Association, the Bihar Provincial Conference and the Bihar Provincial Muslim League organised a joint deputation to the Lieutenant Governor and presented a memorandum detailing Bihar's grievances. Haque was elected the President of the third session of the Bihar Provincial Conference held at Gaya in November 1911³. In the Presidential address, which may be taken as his political testament Haque outlined his views on various important national and international questions. Haque also examined the state of education in the province and highlighted its deficiencies. He was bemoaned that there was only one Government college in the entire province with a population of 30 million and that too was not a model college. Haque vigorously supported the Elementary Education bill of Gokhale. He underlined the great importance of the bill which was so far reaching in its effect that it will effect a profound change in the destiny of our motherland.

Haque also spoke at length on the much vexed and controversial subject of the partition of Bengal. The Biharis regarded it as a step forward towards the cherished goal of a separate province. In the reconstituted province of Bengal, Bihar by virtue of its area and population enjoyed a somewhat important position it was halfway towards full separation. On December 16, 1909, Mazharul Haque was elected a non official member to the Legislative Council of the Governor General of India. The year 1917 saw a quickening of national consciousness throughout India and widespread popular agitation in

favour of Home Rule. The agitation spread to the remotest corners of the land and Home Rule Leagues were established all over the country. In Bihar also a protest meeting against the internment of Mrs Besant was held in Patna under the Presidentship of Mazharul Haque on July 1⁴. Meanwhile Montague made his famous declaration on August 20 that the goal of British policy in India was the gradual establishment of responsible Government in this country. The declaration cooled down the tense atmosphere in the country. In pursuance of the new policy Mrs Besant and her associates were released on September 16, 1917.

The Khilafat and Non-Cooperation movements, taken together, constitute an important chapter in the history of India's Freedom movement. The period covered by these movements (1919-1923) also constitutes the most formative and active period in the life of Mazharul Haque⁵. An ardent apostle of Hindu Muslim unity, Haque found the prevalent atmosphere of communal harmony exhilarating and highly conducive to his activities. Soon after the Calcutta session of the Congress (September 4 to 10), Mazharul Haque and seven others withdrew their candidature from the Council elections in accordance with the resolutions of the Congress. Mazharul Haque his withdrawal in a letter which was published in the Searchlight (September 19, 1920). Henceforth Mazharul Haque threw himself heart and soul into the movement⁶. He gave up his lucrative practice at the bar and withdrew his two boys from the Patna New College. During the Non-cooperation movement, Mazharul Haque's energies were directed mainly to three objectives-organisation of boycott against the government, organisation of National Schools and promotion of communal harmony. He attended the Bihar students Conference, held on October 10 and 11 at Daltonganj

under the Presidentship of C.F.Andrews. Mazharul Haque's activities were not confined to the student community. He availed himself the opportunity of his visit to Daltonganj to organise a public meeting there to educate people on the Non-cooperation Movements. He made extensive tours of the provinces of Bihar and Orissa and made highly inspiring speeches. He was often accompanied by Rajendra Prasad. Wherever it was felt that people did not show sufficient interest in the movement the local leaders invariably sought Mazharul Haque's help and he never failed. Mazharul Haque advised the Indians to give up habits, customs and manners of the Europeans. On October 30, Haque addressed a meeting at Islampur (Patna) and on November 1 at Biharsharif. He spoke more or less in the same vein in all these meetings. A move was made for putting a restraint on Mazharul Haque by arresting him. But the higher authorities including the Lt. Governor did not consider such a measure advisable. In December Gandhiji accompanied by Shaukat Ali made a hurried tour of the Province. Mazharul Haque accompanied them to most of the places, and also took part in the meetings. On all such occasions he reiterated the wrongs done to the Indians by the British government. According to the reports of the district officers the effect of Mahatma's visit on the progress of the Non-Cooperation Movement in Bihar was tremendous. After the Nagpur session the Non cooperation movement gained further momentum. In Bihar also Hasan Imam, Sachchidanand Sinha and others withdrew from it. In pursuance of the Non-cooperation resolution of the Nagpur Congress, the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee set up an Organisation Committee "to organise, direct and control Non-cooperation activities throughout the Province". Mazharul Haque was one of the nine members of the committee. The other members were Deep Narain Singh, Braj Kishore Prasad, Rajendra

Prasad, Dharnidhar, Krishna Prakash Sen Sinha, Muhammad Shafi, Abdul Bari and Ram Binod Singh. The committee proceeded to frame rules for the guidance of the district organisations. Special emphasis was laid on the non-violent character of the movement. Civil disobedience did not form part of the Non-cooperation programme at this stage. The activities of the workers were to be confined mainly to the organisation of the Sabhas and Panchayats and to educational, sanitation and other works in villages. The Non-cooperation Movement made rapid progress in Bihar in 1921. Mazharul Haque, Rajendra Prasad made extensive tours and held frequent meetings in different parts to carry out the programme of Non-cooperation. The movement stuck deep roots by March 1921 and the situation was considered to be very serious by government officials. Mazharul Haque's activities during these months again became a source of great anxiety for the government. Despite prohibitive measures of the government he continued to organise the people with unabated zeal. In June 1921 Mazharul Haque undertook extensive tours in Orissa and Chotanagpur to convey the message of Non-cooperation to the people of these regions. Mazharul Haque dwelt on the wrong done by the British government and made a powerful plea for the achievement of Hindu-Muslim unity, boycott of foreign goods and abstention from intoxicants. On August 6, 1921 Mazharul Haque addressed a Non-cooperation meeting at Supaul in which he explained to the audience the wisdom of non-violent, although the situation in the country was immensely provocative⁷. (Mazharul) Haque wielded a powerful pen and the editorial comments of the weekly, The Motherland established by him in September 1921 caused some stir in the local government circle. A Central Board of Control was formed with headquarters at Muzaffarpur and Mazharul Haque was elected as one of its five members. But in

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December 19, 1921, the Government of Bihar and Orissa declared the Congress volunteers to be unlawful associations under section 16 of the Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908. The 30th session of the Indian National Congress which was held at Ahmedabad on December 27 and 28 reiterated the fixed determination of the Congress to continue the programme of non-violent, non-cooperation with great vigour.

An important part of the non cooperation programme was the boycott of purely government and government aided educational institutions. At the call of the national leaders a number of students of Patna College applied for College Leaving Certificates which were refused on the ground that they did not bear the signature of the guardians. Among the early applications for withdrawal were those of the sons of Mazharul Haque. The process had begun to withdraw from government educational institutions from all over the province. The case of the Bihar School of Engineering at Patna, however gained much prominence. There fifteen students had withdrawn in November 1920. Meanwhile the movement for starting national universities, national colleges and national schools of all grades all over the country was started by Mahatma Gandhi. Bihar too was to have a Vidyapith. A National College had already been started in a rented house on the present day Patna-Gaya road, but Gandhiji wanted that Bihar must have a Vidyapith at an early date. The organisers were finding it difficult to get a suitable site for the Vidyapitha in the neighbourhood of Patna. When Mazharul Haque came to know of it he immediately sent for Rajendra Prasad and got a house constructed for the Vidyapitha as senior leaders had all parted company on the question of Non-Cooperation. But Mahatma Gandhi gave them the much needed impetus by placing at their disposal a suitable

amount which he had collected at Jharia. He himself reached Patna on the morning of February 6 and on that very day performed the formal opening ceremony of the Bihar Vidyapith. The Vidyapitha was “to coordinate the activities of all the national institutions that were springing up in the Province and to control and guide them. Mazharul Haque became the Chancellor and Braj Kishore Prasad, the Vice-Chancellor of the Vidyapitha⁸. Arrangements were made for examining the students who did not want to appear in the Government college examinations. In 1921 examination was held under the auspices of the National University at ten centres in the Province. The matriculation examination was held at all the ten centres while I.A, ISc, B.A and B.Sc examinations were held only at Patna, Bhagalpur, Muzaffarpur and Monghyr. They were examined in the course they were preparing for the Government University examinations. The National College was started with Rajendra Prasad as the Principal. Others on the staff of the college were Acharya Badrinath Verma, Jagannath Prasad, Prem Sunder Bose, Jagat Narain Lal, Ram Charita Singh and Abdul Bari. The National College was owned by the Rashtriya Siksha Mandal which guided its general policy the details of administration were left in the hands of the College council consisting of the Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor and the Registrar of the Vidyapitha, the Principal and five members of the staff of the Rashtriya Mahavidyalaya and six persons elected by the Rashtriya Siksha Mandal⁹.

Mazharul Haque ‘s creation and association with Bihar Vidyapith and Sadaqat Ashram though remained for a shorter period yet it may be confidently said that it gave turning point to the freedom struggle and new educational system in Bihar with a sound base for the posterity. Sadaqat Ashram remained the chief centre of the Provincial

Congress Committee in Bihar which gave trusted sons for the freedom struggle by imparting real training to the freshers through the selfless services and utterance of patriotic passion of its leaders. The creation of Sadaqat ashram itself gives an idea of organisational ability of Mazharul Haque⁹. He remained in the Sadaqat ashram as a Faqir. The students of Bihar Vidyapith respected him so much that they regarded him as their spiritual leader. The naming of Sadaqat ashram itself shows, Mazharul Haque's great regard for Hindu -Muslim unity. Sadaqat is a Persian word meaning abode of truth and Ashram meaning a place for living of dedicated persons and pilgrimage to a spiritual seeker. Mazharul Haque actually perfected the Sadaqat Ashram in the same spirit as it literary meant by organising two great institutions of Bihar Vidyapith¹⁰ and Provincial Congress Committee in its campus.

The Khilafat and the Non-cooperation movements represent the finest hour of Haque's life. Mahatma Gandhi's call for Non-cooperation struck the deep chords of Haque's soul¹¹. Haque contributed much in practical terms to the success of the non-cooperation movement. He tried to concentrate on three main objectives-organisation of national school and colleges, promotion of communal harmony and boycott of government institutions and foreign goods. His activities in connection with the first objective led to the establishment of Sadaqat ashram and the working of the Bihar Vidyapith deserve notice. They give an idea of his organisational policy along with the promotion of communal harmony. The boycott of Government institutions and foreign goods created a sense of self sacrifice in the hearts of millions of the common people. A devoted and disciplined congressman, Haque at the same time maintained a strong independent, personal opinion. His identification with the

Congress programme of work was virtually complete but he reserved his right to differ from the organisation and to criticise it if “our conscience thinks it absolutely necessary for the good of the people and the country”. This was not an empty reservation, he exercised it fearlessly in the course of the Non-cooperation Movement.

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