

Role of Dr. Rajendra Prasad in Indian major political movements

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ABSTRACT

The story of Indian independence dates back to the early twentieth century when the resentment against British colonial rule had started taking a big shape. Indian history is full of sacrifices of leaders who left their stable career and life to fight for the freedom of our country. Their leadership and guidance has steered the face of our country towards independence and its development in the post independence era. Those leaders might not be with us anymore but their work and contribution towards building the bright future of our independent country is phenomenal and would always be remembered.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad is one such leader whose presence during the struggle for Indian Independence cannot be forgotten. His work during the freedom movements was a big support to our nation putting a strong pressure on the British rulers. His peaceful and continuous dedication towards the country laid the foundation for an independent nation which was ready to spread its wings for a better future. This paper would talk about his role in the freedom struggle and post independence major political movements which have brought a revolution in the Indian political history.

Keywords: *Indian politics, Political leaders, President of India, Political movements*

Introduction

Dr. Rajendra Prasad (1884-1963) was the first President of independent India. He was born in Ziradei which falls in the Siwan district of Bihar. He was the right hand of Mahatma Gandhi and led the freedom struggle movements. He was an independent activist, scholar, lawyer and held the president post in the Indian national congress party. He was a major leader from Bihar and was a part of non cooperation movements for freedom of the country. Mr. Prasad was a part of the political unrests started against the British Rule like Satyagraha and Quit India movement during the struggles for independence. He served a couple of years in jail for these political movements with other members of the party. But his dedication and zeal to work for the country did not subside

Dr. Prasad was brought up in a middle class land owning family where education was given high importance. He pursued his career in law and graduated from Calcutta Law College. He practiced law in Calcutta High Court and then Patna High Court during the early twentieth century. He was doing a notable work in the law field when he was offered to work with Mahatma Gandhi for improving the conditions of peasants working in Indigo plantations under British rule. His flawless management and sincere dedication made him the minister for food and agriculture during the interim government formed during the independence of India. He had later given up his law career and practice to join the freedom movement for the independence of our country. His sacrifice was well acknowledged by the party leaders and was unanimously elected as the President of independent India. Dr. Prasad was honoured with India's highest civilian award Bharat Ratna for his great contributions. He then retired from work in year 1962 because of his deteriorating health.

History of colonial rule in India

India came under the company rule in year 1858 which was also known as the British Raj. The East India Company ruled India until year 1947 when the country got independence from the British rulers. Before this Indian states were ruled by the Maharajas and were popularly known as the princely states. Different states had their different rules made by their leader and that was one of the main reasons which helped Britishers to rule

over India so easily. British East India Company was under Queen Victoria who was then called the empress of India. Post independence the country was divided into two sovereign states called Republic of India and Dominion of Pakistan. Pakistan had two parts, which was East and West Pakistan. East Pakistan later got separated and was called Bangladesh and West Pakistan became Pakistan.

The British rule had brought a huge change in India with respect to culture, ideology and infrastructure. British had brought some good changes in the Indian infrastructure and introduced the country with the latest available technologies. This was the period when a self sufficient country got the exposure of the western world. Under British Raj, many schools and colleges were built and English language was taught in the educational institutions. The company was preparing the people of the country to match to their requirements and to be able to interact with the British rulers. The advances brought in the field of education, technology and policies were some of the welcoming change for the history of India which surely laid the path for today's success and development. There were unrests throughout the colonial rule, but the major movements started in the early part of twentieth century.

Indian political movements for independence and role of Dr. Rajendra Prasad

After the revolt of 1857, the company rule was implemented in India and the control was given to the Queen of England. The company closely managed the country and since then the resentment started building up and then it became a dream for every Indian to see their country free from the British rule. The struggle started in 1850s when the Indian National Congress party was formed and the leaders started building the plan for an independent India. Here is the list of major movements happened during this period which finally led to the freedom of India from the British rule

Formation of Indian National Congress: During the period of 1860-1890, a new section was rising who were educated and were questioning the policies made by the British East India Company. During this period seventy men rose and founded the Indian National Congress to discuss and debate the impact of British rule on India. They identified that the tax paid by Indians are being used to pay the British civil servants and that maintains their lifestyle. They blamed the company for draining India's wealth. The resentment had started to build with this exposure.

Swadeshi movement: The starting of the twentieth century saw the rise of unrest between Muslim dominated east Bengal and Hindu dominated west Bengal and later the Bengal province was split. The partition of Bengal was followed by the boycott of foreign goods and Swadeshi movement started which was led by Mahatma Gandhi. The movement supported the use of Indian made goods and the intent was to empower the desi artisans. Dr. Prasad played a pivotal role here by becoming the right hand of Mahatma Gandhi

Satyagraha Movement: Dr. Prasad emerged as a young congress leader during Satyagraha movement started in the Champaran district of Bihar. The farmers there were forced to plant indigo on a portion of their land and had to sell the harvest at below the market price to the Britishers. The condition of peasants was really bad during that time and Mahatma Gandhi had appointed Dr. Rajendra Prasad to work in this area. He left his law practice and started working for the peasants of Bihar and emerged as a strong leader from this region.

Non cooperation Movement: In the year 1920, Mahatma Gandhi started the non cooperation movement against the British rule as the company was not ready to back down. He requested the Indians to return the awards and posts given by the company and boycott all the British goods. Dr. Prasad played a major role in the implementation of this movement and his consistent efforts forced the company to plan and free the country from their colonial rule.

Round table conference and Government of India Act: In 1930s, the Indian National Congress party demanded for Purna Swaraj and Dr. Prasad led this movement. Discussions happened in the party to completely gain the freedom of the country from British Raj.

Quit India Movement: Started in 1942 under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawahar Lal Nehru and Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the movement demanded immediate withdrawal of British forces from our land. The persistence of boycotting the British rulers by Indian national congress leaders led to the pressure building on the company and eventually they resigned.

Independence of India and partition: On 15th August, 1947, the country got freedom and was partitioned into Dominion of Pakistan led by Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Dominion of India led by Jawaharlal Nehru. Dr. Prasad

was elected as the president by unanimous voting and then started developing the path for a brighter future of the country.

Post independence developments:

After the freedom of our country from the British Raj, the role of Indian leaders became very important in shaping the outlook of the country. Entire nation was looking forward to them. Dr. Prasad was a scholar and a lawyer and was very much aware about the possibilities and work to be done in this sector which could have helped the farmers, boosting the Indian economy. He utilised his knowledge and then helped in setting up an agricultural University in Bihar. The university has evolved now and is called as Dr. Rajendra Prasad Central agricultural University situated now in Pusa, Samastipur, Bihar. He was a pioneer in establishing the knowledge centres for helping the farmers in getting awareness about the best practices for their farming.

Coming from a middle class family in a small district from Bihar, Dr. Prasad could relate himself with the problems of the farmers. He had spent his entire life living very close to the primary sector earners of Indian society and has seen the challenges and developments in this field. He knew the scope it had for development and was aware about the possibilities to achieve that goal. He understood the deep rooted problems in the agricultural sector and was determined to work in this area to improve the condition of farmers' by helping them in improving their farming yield. He was a well educated and well informed citizen of our country who had the exposure of both modern and traditional societies. He wanted both to complement each other. He believed that change is the only constant and we should change our techniques of work with the changing time.

He then did major contributions to the agriculture through this university with the aim of creating educated individuals to work in the agricultural sector. His efforts were fruitful in the long run when graduates in agriculture started working in this sector and slowly brought improvement in this area. Mr. Prasad knew the power of education and had understood that the root cause of all the roadblocks existing in agricultural sector is primarily illiteracy. He believed that educating people about agriculture would bring a systematic development in this sector and would eventually empower the farmers to develop their farming methods. He also wanted the support of tertiary sector to enhance the existing situation of farmers and wanted to set up services like banking and knowledge centres which would have helped the farmers in the long run.

His vision for the farmers was for the long term and he wanted to work on the roots rather than just making policies without doing a proper ground work on the basic problems faced by the farmers in our country. He not only worked on the primary sector development, but was insightful to make advancements in the tertiary sectors as well to make both these sectors work in tandem and create jobs for each other. His plans were long term and effective in solving the crisis situations of droughts and floods where the farmers used to be in huge problem. His institutes and centres are continuously working for the development of agricultural sector and helping the farmers grow slowly but steadily. Though the impact of this long term planning is still going on and would now need more reforms in this direction. But the initial work done by Mr. Prasad has laid the foundation for the development and has established a revolutionary path for the future work to be done in this area. [8]

Conclusion

The struggle of Indian independence has been a phenomenal example of persistence and perseverance. The sacrifice done by our political leaders shaped the future of our independent country. It laid the path and created a foundation for a developing country which is in league with the other developing countries today. Huge population and cultural diversity of our country makes it even more glorious to remember the efforts of our political leaders. Dr. Rajendra Prasad was an asset to the Indian history whose work has defined the future of our country. His continuous efforts brought a major change in the face of Indian history and brought independence for our country from the British rule.

Our country would always be indebted to him and we will learn from his working style in future. His unconditional support to Indian politics has been acknowledged by the people of our country and he would be remembered forever in the Indian history of independence. Politics has a lot to learn from such leaders who have changed the way for Indian politics and have brought a mature change to be revered and followed by the young generation politicians.

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