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SHAIBAL GUPTA



Asian Development Research Institute

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Papiya Ghosh Memorial Lecture

OCTOBER 8, 2013

Nehru Memorial Museum and Library

IDEA OF BIHAR

I must congratulate Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and Papia Ghosh Memorial Trust for instituting this lecture in memory of Papiya Ghosh. I am extremely grateful to Professor Mahesh Rangrajan, its Director and a very good friend of mine, for inviting me to deliver the PAPIA GHOSH MEMORIAL LECTURE. Any form of tribute in memory of Papia is an honour to me, that too a lecture at this august Institution. I have always considered this Institution as an ultimate destination for scholars who value the pluralistic heritage of our country and are proud of the democratic nation-state that Nehru had helped to build since India's 'tryst with destiny' in 1947. Our tribute to Papia is indeed more stirring and historic, since it is being organised in an institution named after Jawaharlal Nehru.

Papia would have been sixty-year old today. Even though she was a little junior to me, I had the privilege of knowing her since the college days. Even at that time, we were mesmerised by her scholarship and erudition. She was one of those rare scholars who, through her academic rigour and penetrating intellect, had bridged the moffusil and metropolitan divide, commuting effortlessly between the two worlds with clarity and authenticity. One of her enduring academic interests was Bihar itself, not merely because she was located in the state, but it had provided her a challenging research agenda. Even though an insider, she studied the state from the intellectual vantage point of the renaissance matrix that created a new benchmark of scholarship. I am really surprised and somewhat perplexed that Mahesh opted for me — a man of very limited academic attainment — to deliver this memorial lecture in her honour.

Formation of a modern state: transcending many histories

I want to use this opportunity to calibrate my own idea about the 'Idea of Bihar'. Being a resident of the state, a detached view on Bihar is not easy for me. The inputs about my 'Idea of Bihar' are, thus, generally contributed by the outsiders. Unfortunately, those ideas about the state are not necessarily flattering. In contrast, my idea about some other states is quite positive, formed over the years, through numerous visits. For example, two events have shaped my idea of two cities — Ahmedabad and Mumbai. In early eighties, once I and my wife had to go to Ahmedabad under emergency condition, when my brother-in-law had met with an

accident. After we reached the railway station, we hired an auto-rickshaw to reach my brother-in-law's house, which we found to be locked, because he was admitted in the hospital. We rushed in the same auto-rickshaw to the hospital, but the visiting hours were over by then. But, to our pleasant surprise, the driver of the auto-rickshaw ensured our entry through the back door. In another event, I had to go to Mumbai, this time again with my wife. She stayed back with my friend's family in Mumbai and I left for Pune for a seminar. The following day, after the conclusion of the seminar, I left for Mumbai in late evening. Since I was to reach the city by the midnight, I was making anxious enquiry from a textile worker who happened to be my fellow passenger about the safety of a taxi ride in the midnight in the city. He laughed at my apprehension and said very confidently that the underworld in Mumbai will not be interested in the small amount that I was carrying. The textile worker was right, the taxi ride from the bus stand to the Malabar Hills, my destination, was without any problem. Incidentally, both in Ahmadabad and Mumbai, the drivers negotiated through the shortest route and charged me the least fare. What an experience for an alien who carried the general impression that taxi/auto drivers never miss an opportunity to exploit newcomers to a city!! In the process, some idea of the respective states of Gujarat and Maharashtra also got formed in my mind. In contrast, visit to New Delhi was always a frightening idea. One cannot move with gay abandon the way we had experienced in Ahmadabad and Mumbai. Ironically, the initial idea of the state for me was not based on elite construction of the province, but my engagement with one section of the subaltern.

Amongst the capital cities of three presidencies, Mumbai has emerged over the years as the polestar in India, thanks to its superstructural construct, which is the most cosmopolitan and modern. Even though it was earlier controlled mainly by the Gujarati capital, its confluence with Parsi work culture and concomitant western ethos had consolidated its cosmopolitan construct, ensuring its hegemonic sway in the country. The principal trigger of a national identity for the city was because of its financial muscle and cosmopolitan ethos. Interestingly, the trade union movement there was equally cosmopolitan. Over and above, the metropolitan city was not only home to several ideas, idealism and ideology, but also of several institutions of high scholarship in science, technology and management. Two parallel worlds were created there — at the one end, Tatas, Godrejs etc. built the most advanced industrial empires; on the other, S.A. Dange, S.M. Joshi, Madhu Dandewate, George Fernandes

and others built the most radical trade union movements. This societal contradiction, even though quite intense, could be bridged by the soft power of the film lyrics of Sahir Ludhiani, script of K.A. Abbas, direction of Raj Kapoor, music of S.D. Burman or melodies of Lata Mangeshkar. In the process, a new institutional composite culture of India was invented in Mumbai. Ahmedabad, on the other hand, was part of Bombay Presidency earlier and is one of the few regions of the world which has an unbroken history of entrepreneurship, both in production and trade. In its societal incentive structure, based on production and productivity, the artisans, traders and industrialists had enjoyed due recognition, unlike in many other states where the feudal value system still reign. Mahatma Gandhi could establish his moral and intellectual hegemony, earlier in South Africa and later in the country, with the Gujarati variant of Waberian ethos. By 1920s, the centre of Indian political gravity shifted from east to west. Interestingly, all segments of society in Gujarat, organized sector (both private and public), and informal sector played a decisive role in creating the economic construct of the state. For example, Sarabhais, one of the most embedded entrepreneurs of the state, had played a decisive role in promoting the organized industry, public institutions, culture and mechanisms for resolving labor disputes in the state. Sarabhai is a classical 'renaissance family' in that part of the country who scripted the superstructure of the state. One of the striking features of Bombay and Ahmedabad was that there was no essential disconnect between the subaltern and elite construction of the respective cities. The two streams supplemented each other in making the magnificent edifice of a cosmopolitan value system.

Even though my personal outlook was not conservative, the cognitive world of our family was rather limited. My ancestors came to Bihar from Bangladesh generations ago (almost 175 years). Yet, for more than a century, we could not build bridges with the local milieu. The Bengali-speaking population in general and the expatriate in particular had supercilious cultural superiority. This cultural construct must have been a part of the psyche of our family. Conversing in Hindi or picking up friendship with a local boy or being glued to Radio Ceylon listening to Hindi songs, was considered to be a sacrilege. But my father was exception in the family; being a communist, his interactions with the provincial social milieu was intense and wide. Indeed, at a young age, after becoming a doctor, he decided to migrate to a rural village in a North Bihar for practising modern medicine. This was a classic case of reverse migration. In the

process, integration with the local society was not only complete, we became authentic Biharis over the years.

Roots of Bihari sub-nationalism

It might sound as Bihari fundamentalism, but once upon a time during the ancient period, the 'Idea of India' was essentially an 'Idea of Bihar'. For a considerable period of Indian history, the cultural, educational, scientific and social construct of Bihar was essentially the identity of India. Amartya Sen, in one of his recent articles opined that Bihar was an "extraordinary part of India"; it played a "stellar role as the centre of Indian civilization for over a thousand years". ² For the first time in the Indian history, pan-Indian Mauryan empire was established in Pataliputra. The basic concept of state and governance evolved first here. This was possibly one of the few places in the world where social decisions were taken on the basis of public discussion, promoted by Buddhist global council. The dialogic component in society got so much internalised that it triggered a profound knowledge-based academic agenda. Not only Vikramshila (fifth century AD) and Nalanda (twelfth century AD) universities were ultimate destination of scholars, even Aryabhatta, the great mathematician and astronomer, opted for Kusumpur ³ (that is Patna) as his workplace. Incidentally, even now mathematics is a mass movement in rural areas of Bihar. Arthashastra, a unique treatise on statecraft, governance and economics, could not have been written in the void by Kautilya, without a vibrant knowledge-based dialogic society of Bihar. It is not a coincidence that not only two religions (Buddhism and Jainism) originated in Bihar, but Sufism and Sikhism had a powerful base here. After that there was stagnation and sloth for several centuries. However, there was brief period of revival of Bihar, during the tenure of Sher Shah – or Farid, "after lapse of about millennium that separates the rise of Afgans from the decline of Guptas". His tenure not only was marked by the excellence in system engineering which included infrastructure based governance, budget based taxation, "but also a model land – revenue reforms based administrative system which, in course, opened a new era in the history of land revenue administration in medieval India." ⁵ The 'ideas ' from Bihar once again got national pre-eminence. But, unfortunately, Bihar was relegated to stagnation and an antediluvian world-view in subsequent centuries. In the contemporary narrative of the state there is now a disconnect between the glorious past of Bihar and its present status.

For the recent history of Bihar, one may start from the day when 'Dewani' of Bihar was granted to East India Company in 1765. If the state is analysed through a prism of historical origin of Bengal Presidency, many of its societal construct and limitations get revealed automatically. Being a part of the Bengal Presidency, where East India Company had first established its authority, Bihar was subjected to more colonial exploitation than any other parts of the country. Whereas Bengal proper received some investment and enlightenment leading to some social change even during the colonial period, Bihar remained in the quagmire. Apart from de-industrialisation, which literally exterminated the artisans, the land tenurial sysem of 'Permanent Settlement', introduced by Lord Cornawalis in 1793, brought about a permanent agony to the economy of the state and forestalled any possibility of creating an incentive structure by delinking returns from efforts. Other tenurial systems like 'Ryotwari' or 'Mahalbari', with the absence of intermediaries between the state and the cultivators, introduced in southern, western and parts of northern India, had not only made way for agricultural growth in respective states, it also created conditions for generation of surplus, some semblem of governance and emergence of a social agenda. I would like to draw your attention here to a few examples of barbarism and exploitation in Bihar which characterized its economy and society. A Report of the Bihar State Kishan Sabha, organization of the peasants, under the leadership of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, way back in 1930's recorded 45 types of atrocities in one district of south Bihar. Apart from raging the huts with the help of an elephant, a peasant was beaten black and blue for failing to turn up at the house of landlord to provide him with an oil massage. While societal incentive structure was aborted, incentive for buccaneering accumulation was embedded in Bihar's feudal structure. For example, Champaran district, the birth place of George Orwell, was home to some of the biggest beneficiaries of the 'Permanent Settlement' (zamindari), like the Bettiah Raj and the Ram Nagar Raj. Leakages from the estate administration could be so staggering that the managers of some of the estates could acquire massive amounts of land and a strong social hegemony. The story of crime, brigandage and primitive accumulation was thus integrated in the social structure of the state. Even though Champaran movement catapulted Mahatma Gandhi decisively on the national firmament and integrated Bihar into pan Indian freedom struggle, it had practically no impact provincially in altering productive relations and forces, leading to any structural changes in the economy. In fact, the origin of the input based scam which led to conviction of several leaders by a recent judgment of the Ranchi Court could be traced back to the days of buccaneering accumulation of 'Permanent Settlement' as mentioned earlier. Like 'Bettiah Raj Loot', the 'fodder scam' was also a caste and political party neutral phenomenon. In this process, a culture was promoted when earning wealth without working was considered as a status symbol (as was done by landlords) and 'not working hard to earn more'. This feudal mindset acts even now as the major deterrent for any economic initiative or entrepreneurship. The functioning of the state was also guided by the same mindset. In contrast, in the developed states of India, an institutional memory of governance was created which, after the end of colonial rule, helped the newly-elected government to co-opt the best practices of the earlier regime.

During the colonial period, Calcutta in the east had emerged as the centre of earliest social movement and Varanasi in the west emerged as the centre of Hindu orthodoxy. Bihar was not a part of either of the movements. Instead, its society remained wholly feudal, divided along caste identities. Overall, while large landowners strengthened their stranglehold, the intermediate identity of Bihari sub-nationalism remained elusive. In 2012, The Telegraph, the daily newspaper, organized a debate in Patna on 'In its centenary year, Bihar needs a strong regional identity for a strong national identity'. After the impassioned deliberations from both sides, when the house voted, the motion got defeated, revealing the inherent mental construct of the intelligentsia of Patna. Even after the substantial resurrection of the state during the last couple of years and a cultural cohesion of the province witnessed for the first time in the last one century, the sub-national identity is still transient amongst the Bihari 'Bhadralok'. The national identity has still more appeal and glamour than sub-national one. However, unlike in many other states of the Hindi Heartland, 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 at any point of time. These 'mutinies' range 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 Sabaha against the Zamindars, or social stirring by the Triveni Sangh (involving the Koeri, Kurmi and Yadavas) could not expand their 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 movements — were the most powerful in Bihar in comparison to any other Hindi Heartland state.

There have always been two levels of nationalism in many other parts of India. One is regional nationalism (also referred as sub-nationalism) and other is all- India nationalism. These two identities are not in contradiction. In fact, during the freedom struggle, these two identities had complemented each other. One could afford to be a 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), became the national anthem of two countries, indicating the concurrent commitment to two separate (but not incompatible) identities. In most of the southern and the western states in India, the ultimate home of any social movement was sub-nationalism. For example, the anti-Brahmin movement in Tamil Nadu had got converted into an agenda for sub-national identity. The sub-national identity had emerged only after the consolidation of the social movement. This helped in building bridges with those social sections that felt marginalized (mainly the upper castes) earlier due to the plebian character of the social movement. This strategic policy leap from 'anti-Brahminism' to 'subnationalism' had later 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 other southern and western Indian states. The reverberation of economic consolidation of these states could be felt at the national level with the political and economic centre of gravity shifting to the south and western India.

Even in the realm of culture, elements of a Bihari identity are underplayed. In spite of our rich folk/classical culture, our local artists are not given pride of place. In other cultural regions/states, dance forms like *Bharatnatyam* and *Kuchipudi*, or songs like *Rabindra Sangeet* enjoy a preeminent position. On the contrary, in Bihar, the native songs like *chaita*, *holi or bidesia*, *ghato*, *birha*, *kajari*, *irni/birni*, *pachra*, *ropnigeet*, *sohar*, *jhumar*, *jatsari*, *aalah-rudal*, *nirgun or dance forms like jat jatin*, *bamar nach* or *jharni*, *jhijhia*, *natua nach*, *vidyapad nach*, *sohrai nach*, *gond nach* never got a

pride of place in Bihar. If our folk tradition could be properly packaged for national-international audience, then Bihar's sub-national identity could have got a different meaning. The only exception to this trend is the *Chhath* festival in Bihar that has emerged as a sub-national festival of the state. If *Chhath* could be the cultural convergence point for the broadest possible caste and class coalition, there is no reason why other social traditions cannot transcend their origin and be a base for subnational identity.

Elite formation and power politics in modern Bihar

Apart from the internal constraints as mentioned before, the discriminatory attitude of the central government was an equally strong external constraint for the development of the state. The most important element of this discriminatory attitude was the 'freight equalisation policy' which covered steel, coal, and cement, and not oil or cotton; this policy had subverted the state's (and the Eastern Region's) natural advantage as a premier mineral region. In the process, Bihar's economy was ruined in an untold manner. While economic stagnation put Bihar onto the lowest pedestal of the national economy, in contrast, the social churning and subterranean ferment was witnessed all over the state. It had started as early as thirties, but had gained considerable momentum since the seventies. Consequently, there was a change in the social profile of the political elite, implying democratization of its politics by the nineties. In most of the states, after independence, the power structure had oscillated between the traditional and the vernacular elite, both essentially from the ranks of agricultural entrepreneurs, small industrialists and traders. In Bihar, however, there is a third group, who have been christened as 'cockney elite', essentially an underclass. This social conglomeration is outside the market structure or in its fringe. They produce essentially for self-consumption and not necessarily for the market. Their engagement with the state structure is minimal. Development as understood by rest of society is for them a mere rhetoric. The traditional elite in Bihar lost their hold over state power because they were oblivious of new stirring of change in the state. While other states took up the development agenda, albeit with varying seriousness, the elites in Bihar failed in the task. Secondly, the social agenda that autonomously surfaced in Bihar had also been ignored by the traditional elite. In the process, elites in Bihar were on a double disadvantage. At the one end, they failed to chart out an independent incentive structure for economic growth and, on the other, they failed to ensure the political stability in the state by not sharing power with the subaltern. The

new political dispensation that took over the reigns of the state and its social agenda in the early nineties was co-scripted initially by a group of young political leaders, who were product of ideology neutral J.P (Jai Prakash) movement. However, after coming to power, the new ruling social dispensation committed the opposite mistake of excluding the traditional elite in the state-building exercise. Thus, the new regime had two negative characteristics — first, it did not have a development agenda and, second, its social base was narrow and exclusionary. Consequently, acrimony and retribution was order of the day, causing tremendous suffering to Bihar, both economically and socially. In fact, it was on the question of broadening the social base of the ruling coalition on which many leaders from the rank had later distanced themselves from the earlier ruling party. The present government of Bihar, while ushering in a development strategy, tried to incorporate all the sections of society. So the 'dialogue of the deaf' among different social groups became a thing of the past. This phenomenon has been christened as 'coalition of extremes'. However, there is a fracture in the coalition now. After the split in the NDA coalition, upper caste, albeit, powerful social group is ranged against the subaltern. The present JD(U) government essentially represents the agglomeration of non-powerful backward caste. It is to be seen, whether this 'counter coalition' against the 'coalition of extremes' will survive or capitulate before the powerful upper caste social backlash.

The operational component of the culture of stagnation and the feudalistic hegemony also gets reflected in the day-to-day village life. Let me narrate my experience in one village of North Bihar. Even though the village in particular, and the district in general, were not particularly dominated by a feudal ethos, the brashness and extremely high social intelligence of its inhabitants were inbuilt in the local culture. Ironically, the level of brashness often depended on the size of village one belonged to. In the district, residents of some of the mega villages had their brashness level higher than the district average. This village-based advantage was utilised for the electoral gain. Even one communist Member of Parliament, during an election campaign, wanted to evoke this village racialism as he belonged to one of the largest villages and one of the most brash villages of the district. The slogan coined in the name of the founder of the village was "Bhikan Baba Ke Santan 'Suraj Dada' Laal Salam". This village-based racial slogan sent shivers down the spine of the recalcitrant voters of other villages, who may dare to opt for other candidates. The village-based racialism was a common phenomenon, one Congress and another

Communist candidate could ensure victory in the respective legislative assembly constituency on the basis of their respective sprawling and brash village support. In case of the former, way back in 1957, the history of booth capturing in elections started with him. Armed gang riding on the horse-back was dispatched to capture electoral booth in an upper backward caste village. Even in the seating arrangement in a college, the village racialism operated. In one of the premier colleges in the district, the first row in the class was reserved for girl students. In the row immediate behind, only students from a large village had the right to seat, so that they can torment the girls at will, without any censure from the college authorities.

The brash reputation of the village, however, was not always used for wrong reasons. In the district, mass copying was a menace during Annual Board examinations. Before Kedar Pandey came to power as a Chief Minister, marks achieved in the examination conducted by the Bihar State School Examination Board determined the merit list in the admission to medical and engineering colleges. Unlike general trackrecord, one particular school in the district was known for probity and transparency in the Board examination, thanks to a fearless and honest Headmaster. He could ensure this quality of examinations by stationing armed goons who were converted into sentinels from the village from which the communist MP also belonged. Nobody dared in the school to use unfair means in the examination even if he had strong social connections, as they feared the resident armed sentinels may notice. When the performance in the entrance examination became a norm for entry into the elite colleges, the education industry in the district overnight converted into furious centres of 'coaching'. The district was again in the centre stage, in ensuring success in several entrance examinations. It is no surprise that an offspring of a shooter of one smuggler got selected in the IAS examination last year. Incidentally, Bihar is a competitive examination-driven society. I had once prognosticated that all 600 districts of India will have a D.M or S.P or both from Bihar, not so in distant future. In the district, the brashness of persons will generally be displayed through his words; but in the absence of words, it would also get revealed by an extended name. For example, somebody will be referred to as so and so 'Hitler' or so and so 'Mai Ka Lal'. A smuggler or an anti-social used to be referred with reverence. One smuggler from the district, who also attained notoriety in booth capturing in election, was so revered that whenever he visited the provincial capital in Patna the elites from his caste would compete with

each other to extend hospitality to him. The stock of a person in society from his caste was determined by their proximity to him.

The Kulak brashness and the counter culture were essentially emulated from the upper caste elite. Their brashness also gets reflected through their attire. A typical brash feudal or kulak will reveal his higher social standing by wearing Bracelet-brand dhoti, yellowish silk kurta, with a red towel (gamchha) slung around his neck. The person of higher stock will wear a gold chain, which will glisten from his neck. This is almost a talisman for them. In the rank of the subaltern, Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav for the first time symbolized brashness. He was born five years before the massacre of Yadavs in the Lakhochak in 1925 and died just two months after the formal eclipse of the so called Yadav- rule in Bihar in 2005. Even though he was not connected to either of these two events, yet he played one of the most decisive roles in the subaltern assertion in Bihar in the intervening period. He was possibly the first public figure from the subaltern ranks to be referred as 'Sher-e-Bihar', when such honorific titles were the exclusive preserve of the upper caste elites. Not only this honorific was used in his public meetings, he was also possibly the first group of Yadavs who defied the then social authority to affix 'Singh' in his surname. He was also possibly the first leader from the lower social stock, apart from Jagjivan Ram, who was referred with reverence as 'Babu'. The high pedestal which Jagjivan Ram enjoyed was because of his total cooption by the then ruling traditional elites, but Ram Lakhan Babu created his own brand to elicit respect. This macho assertion of the subaltern, symbolized through Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav, was rooted not only to the 'Janeu Pahno' (sacred thread) movement of Lakhochak but also to graduation of Patna and its hinterland, during the last century, as a 'cereal-milk-vegetable bowl' of the state. Patna had emerged as the state capital in 1912 of the newly-formed state of Bihar (separated from Bengal Presidency), followed by the establishment of military cantonment in its periphery, and then installation of the railway line connecting it to Kolkata and eastern Uttar Pradesh. All these created huge market for cereal, milk and vegetable capitalism. This opportunity was fully utilised by the local agro-entrepreneurs from the backward social stocks of Yadav, Koeri or Kurmi. Ram Lakhan Singh Yadav was essentially the organic leader of this upwardly mobile Yadavs of the Patna hinterland. His preeminence within their ranks remained unquestioned in spite of parallel powerful socialist and communist movement in Bihar. If he was authentically coopted in the power structure of the Congress Party, its script in the state would have

probably been different. On the contrary, many inconsequential Yadav leaders were promoted to keep him politically out of reckoning.

In the absence of a renaissance movement in the state, the display of hegemony of the elite was just not social and economic exploitation, but their brashness as well. Top grade politicians, civil servants, entrepreneurs or even academics will 'summon' their support staff routinely with brashness, laced with intemperate language. In contrast, elite or subaltern in Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, has to reckon with cultural and institutional memory of Wazid Ali Shah and the Princely Estate of Awadh. The cultural construction and etiquette of Lucknow was not one-town wonder. Even in the Quasbas of Uttar Pradesh, there was cultural efflorescence. Thus the soft cultural construction was internalized within elite and subaltern section. Unlike in Uttar Pradesh, politicians in Bihar did not feel the necessity of involving cine stars for bolstering their cultural construction. Thus, over the years, Bihar developed a grotesque brand. Two things were sniggered about Bihar — (a) that state has withered away in Bihar even without a proletarian revolution, and (b) when Indian Prime Minister agreed to part with Kashmir and give it to Pakistan provided it also takes Bihar, the Pakistani counterpart immediately refused the offer with disdain.

Taking cognizance of a promising politics

In the last couple of years, Bihar seems to have reinvented itself. Never since its establishment as a separate state from the Bengal Presidency, almost a century ago in 1912, has the image of the state been so high in the cognitive world of Indians. This image is not just limited to the shores of India, but has transcended beyond. This is reflected by the numerous visits to Bihar of international diplomats and high profile journalists from foreign newspapers and magazines. Several prestigious foreign journals like *The Economist, Newsweek, The New York Times* etc. have published laudatory articles in their columns on Bihar. Even the diplomats, who are normally known for their reticence, were unable to conceal their appreciation for the advancement of the state in recent years. Against this backdrop, it is a matter of serious intellectual enquiry whether Bihar is indeed on the path of resurrection. Can a state like Bihar with a mammoth population and with endemic problems of famines and floods create a positive idea about itself, without some substantive structural changes in its economy? The critic of the present regime, quite expectedly, attributes

this hype totally to the exaggerated media reports; the ground reality, they maintain, is totally different. Even though Bihar was not economically developed, the process of societal and electoral democratization had continued in the state for long, possibly only one of its kind in India. The installation of the present regime was initially characterized as a 'counter revolution' to banish all the gains of democratization that the state had achieved. Even though the social configuration of the ruling regime was a 'coalition of extremes', it was thought that it is the elite component in the coalition that has captured the political space and, thereby, reversing the gain of democratization in recent decades. In the name of development, a tyrannical regime has taken control over the state. With the spilt in the NDA in Bihar, the 'coalition of extremes' is no more a reality, but the fundamental question — whether the state has experienced a resurrection — is still being debated. I, sincerely, think an extreme position on this issue is not tenable. In my honest opinion, Bihar is yet to transcend from the image of being a 'lost' state to a wholly 'resurrected' one. We, sincerely, hope that once again 'idea' from Bihar will get new national and global benchmark, and we could proudly say once again that the 'idea of India' is essentially the 'idea of Bihar'.

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- to offer research results in a more innovative, demystified and useworthy form; and finally
- to restore man to his central position in social research in totality and with full dignity.