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HISTORY

HISTORY OF INUNDATION IN NORTHERN BIHAR

Madan Paswan*

Department of History, L.N.M. University, Darbhanga, Bihar

Abstract

India is a land of various natural and cultural diversities where natural calamities like floods, storms, earth quack, land slides are very natural occurrences. The problem of Inundation (floods) that has caused thousands of human lives occurs when a gently flowing river suddenly gets overflowed of their edges during Monsoon. The demonic flow of the huge stream has devastated the entire Northern Bihar which has always been its victim over the years. This paper is a micro yet analytical scrutiny of the problem of Inundation in the Northern Bihar in particular touching it with historical perspective.

Keywords: Bihar, Floods, Inundation, Disaster, Monsoon

Inundation is a natural occurrence, which happens when rivers overflow of their edges during Monsoon.¹ It is purely a natural occurrence and the controlling of which does not come under the powers of man. Similarly, rivers cannot be tamed or protected from flood in any way. The flow of the huge stream is so fast and destructive that it destroys every raised land coming on its way and this not only destroys animals, men and migrates them but it altogether creates stagnation in the life of living creatures. This is the reason that Northern Bihar has always been the victim of disastrous game of flood from a long time and the inundation is increasing on a rapid pace each year breaking all safety measures.² Approximately, 18 villages of Northern Bihar have to bear the tormentation of flood each year.³ Out of these 18 districts, besides all the districts of Darbhanga, Tirhur and Koshi zone; Begusarai and Khagadiya District of Munger zone and Bhagalpur's Naugchiya zone are also completely swallowed by inundation.⁴ In 1952, flood damaged 25,0000 Hectare of land which increased to 68.91,0000 Hectare in 1994. So, 17% of flood affected area is only in Northern Bihar. According to the statistics of water Resources Department, 76% land of Northern Bihar is flood affected and an average 60,0000 people after becoming homeless and migrated are cursed to bear the stings of diseases and poverty. After 19th century, a serious brooding began to bind the uncontrolled rivers, appropriate solution to the problem of flood and adequate use of river water.⁵

During the whole colonial era and even after independence several Committees of experts were organized, seminars and discussions were held and a long chain of movements and counter movements started by Government and Self-service organizations.⁶ Dames and embankments were constructed to prevent flood and to control all chief rivers, a Multipurpose

River Valley Plan was executed, reservoirs, canals and dames were constructed and attempts were made to utilize the water of river in agriculture and electricity production but all the attempts to eliminate the problem of inundation are proving futile. Now, dames and embankments are demolishing continuously and resultantly, the flow of flood is increasing and the people of Northern Bihar are facing the tormentation of flood.⁷

Due to the construction of dames and embankments, Lacs of people are migrated or compelled to live within the belts of dames and Government is unable to rehabilitate or secure them. This is another problem that the dread of flood is always ready like Sursa (a demon) to swallow all, but it is also becoming such a challenge which is still unanswerable.⁸ The destruction caused by war can certainly be decreased. Keeping this in mind, with the consent of engineers, geologists and water management experts, all the chief rivers of Northern Bihar like Koshi, Kamla, Balan, Bagmati, Budhi Gandak, Jeevach, Kareh, Dhemura and Tilyuga were embanked and dames were constructed there and some River Water Multipurpose Plans were executed⁹ but when the dreadful flood broke all the embankments, a new group of engineers, environment experts and other experts came who insisted on unbinding all the rivers.¹⁰

'Break all the Dames and Embankments' became a matter of sheer debate. Politicians started lobbying either in favour of it or in opposition and long series of movements began.¹¹ On the one hand, Ramchander Khan and Dinesh Mishra, revolutionaries having great interest in the problems of flood and Megha Patkar like revolutionary leaders fighting for public interests with their slogans like 'Break Dames and Free Rivers' activated a new public movement and on the other, leaders like Bhogendra Jha and Devendra Yadav are

* Corresponding Author, Email: maanastha@gmail.com

getting constructed high dams from the last five years and are also leading the public movements for the permanent solution for the problems of draught, flood, electricity and irrigation.

Flood brings several other problems with it and flood is not only politicized but Mafias are also going to be interested in it.¹² Just after the flood, the problems of food, clothes and houses come before the majority of population in flood affected areas, then the problems of rehabilitation, safety of animals, agriculture, epidemic, transportation, reconstruction of roads and regaining the damage are created. The measures to meet out the disaster of flood also remain a great trouble.¹³

During the 63 years of 20th and 21st century, flood related problems and their solutions are politicized on a large scale. Flood may be the reason of troubles to common man but leaders, officers, engineers and contractors get a better opportunity to immense earning of money. Relief, help, compensation and rehabilitation are well politicized as from local, district and state level, the misuse of public treasury by political activists and leaders on the name of reconstruction and permanent solution is very common. The misappropriation of relief funds by Mafias and criminal elements has criminalized the scenario rather giving an adequate solution of ailments of flood. When the flood retreats, it not only leaves destructive scene behind it but it also shakes the confidence of man and structure of society and leaves an impression of soar memory. Flood unmakes the confidence and self-respect of man.¹⁴

Undoubtedly, the politics and psychology is such history of flood in which if discovery is made, new facts may come out. So, to know about the history of flood, it is necessary to keep in mind not only the history of flood or to make necessary interference in the debates on solution of flood but the investigation of the politics and criminalization of flood and effects of flood is also desired.¹⁵ After independence, as much quick attempts were made in Northern Bihar to eliminate flood, it became more disastrous. The government made

arrangements for flood relief, rehabilitation and compensation, the ratio of looting the diseased was also increased and the problem of flood not only remained same but it is also increased largely now. So, all human efforts are futile to tackle the disaster of flood.

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