

**Dr. Kumari Priyanka**

**History department**

**Notes for pg semester 2 (CC-7, unit 4)**

## **“The Creation of Bihar in 1912 Was Not Merely an Administrative Reorganization but an Expression of Regional Nationalism” — A Critical Review**

### **Introduction**

The formation of the province of Bihar and Orissa on 22 March 1912 is often described in official colonial records as an act of administrative convenience. However, a deeper historical analysis reveals that it was also the culmination of sustained regional assertion and identity formation. The demand for separation from the Bengal Presidency reflected emerging regional nationalism within the broader framework of Indian nationalism.

Therefore, the statement invites a critical examination of both administrative and nationalist dimensions.

### **I. Administrative Reorganization: The Colonial Perspective**

#### **1. Administrative Efficiency**

The Bengal Presidency was one of the largest provinces in British India. Governing such a vast territory posed serious administrative challenges. The British justified the reorganization on the grounds of:

Better governance

Decentralization

Improved efficiency

After the annulment of the Partition of Bengal (1905) in 1911, the British government reorganized eastern India, leading to the creation of Bihar and Orissa in 1912.

#### **2. Political Strategy of the British**

The colonial state aimed to balance regional aspirations while maintaining imperial control. Reorganization allowed the British to:

Reduce administrative burden

Manage political pressures

Prevent excessive concentration of nationalist agitation in Bengal

Thus, administratively, the decision appeared pragmatic.

## **II. Emergence of Regional Nationalism**

### **1. Growth of Regional Consciousness**

The demand for a separate Bihar was not initiated by the British; it emerged from Bihari intellectuals and political leaders. Leaders such as Sachchidananda Sinha, Mahesh Narayan, and Ali Imam articulated grievances related to:

Political underrepresentation

Economic neglect

Cultural marginalization under Bengal

Their advocacy transformed regional dissatisfaction into organized political demand.

### **2. Assertion of Cultural Identity**

Bihar possessed a rich historical legacy—Magadha, Nalanda, Mauryan and Gupta empires. Educated elites revived this historical memory to construct a modern Bihari identity.

This cultural revival was not merely nostalgic; it was a political assertion aimed at reclaiming dignity and recognition.

### **3. Linguistic and Educational Factors**

Biharis often felt disadvantaged in education and government employment due to Bengali dominance in administration. The assertion of Hindi and regional languages became a symbolic form of resistance.

Thus, linguistic identity strengthened regional nationalism.

## **III. Regionalism Within Indian Nationalism**

The Bihar movement did not oppose Indian nationalism. Instead:

It sought administrative justice within the colonial framework.

It linked regional development with national progress.

This demonstrates that regional nationalism and Indian nationalism were not contradictory but complementary.

Bihar's later active participation in national movements (Champaran Satyagraha, Non-Cooperation) indicates that regional assertion strengthened national consciousness.

#### **IV. Critical Evaluation**

##### **Arguments Supporting the Statement**

The movement originated from local intellectual mobilization.

It involved construction of a shared regional identity.

It reflected aspirations for self-representation and dignity.

It was grounded in historical and cultural revivalism.

These features align with characteristics of regional nationalism.

##### **Arguments Against the Statement**

The separation was ultimately implemented by the British for administrative reasons.

The movement was largely elite-driven and lacked mass mobilization in its early phase.

It did not challenge colonial sovereignty directly.

From a Marxist or subaltern perspective, it may be viewed as elite regional negotiation rather than mass nationalism.

##### **Conclusion**

The creation of Bihar in 1912 was indeed more than a mere administrative rearrangement. While colonial efficiency provided the formal justification, the underlying force was the emergence of regional nationalism rooted in political assertion, cultural revival, and linguistic consciousness.

However, this regional nationalism was moderate, constitutional, and largely elite-led. It represented a phase in the evolution of Indian nationalism where regional identities sought recognition within the broader national framework.

Thus, the statement is substantially valid, though it must be understood within the limits of early twentieth-century elite regional politics.