



Research Paper

Mohammed Murtuza: An Unsung Hero of the Quit India Movement in North Bihar

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ABSTRACT: Mohammed Murtuza, a native of village Ranipur of the present-day Siwan district, was one of the true blue patriots of North Bihar, who exhibited unusual heroic presence during the Quit India Movement in 1942. When Mahatma Gandhi sounded the bugle on 8 August 1942 against the British asking them to quit India and activated the Indians with the slogan of 'Do or Die' under the banner of the Indian National Congress, Mohammed Murtuza was as Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) of Police, posted at Khazanchi Hat Police Station in Purnia. Inspired by the call of Mahatma Gandhi, he quickly resigned from his service and fearlessly jumped into the Quit India Movement to liberate the country from the yoke of the British colonial rule. It is to be noted that the roles of Mohammed Murtuza and many other such freedom fighters are still untouched by the scholars. The present paper is a humble attempt to fill up this gap and highlight the participation and patriotic struggle of Mohammed Murtuza for cause of India's independence.

KEY WORDS: Mahatma Gandhi, Quit India Movement, Do or Die, Mohammed Murtuza, ASI, Ranipur, Barharia, Siwan, Khazanchi Hat Police Station, FIR, Purnia, North Bihar, true blue patriot.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The region of modern Bihar is endowed by nature with a temperament which never submitted to any tyranny, and rather always took it up as a challenge, and which has often taken a lead in shaping the destiny of India.¹ This is true not only to the ancient times, or to the times of Sher Shah or the Mughals but also to modern times.² The people of Bihar displayed their unusual heroic presence during the revolt of 1857, the first major challenge to the British colonial rule, under the leadership of Peer Ali and Kunwar Singh.³ Again after its separation from Bengal as a province in 1912, they began to play their role in the national movement. And especially with the outbreak of World War I in 1914, they exhibited all the way a tremendous response to the struggle for India's independence.⁴ And, in this anti-colonial struggle, the people of North Bihar never and nowhere lagged behind.

Mohammed Murtuza was one of such fearless, passionate patriots of North Bihar, who, on Mahatma Gandhi's call in 1942, resigned from his post of ASI of Police and jumped into the Quit India Movement to liberate the country from the British colonial rule.⁵ It is to be noted that the roles of Mohammed Murtuza and many such other freedom fighters are still untouched by the scholars and they have not got their proper place in history. However, Subaltern School of historians has designated such political activists fighting against the British rule as real freedom fighters. The present paper is a humble attempt to fill up this gap and highlight the participation and patriotic struggle of one such unsung hero of the struggle for India's independence, particularly in the light of contemporary official records and testimonials given to him by such contemporary leaders with whom he had been in different jails of Bihar.

II. MOHAMMED MURTUZA AND HIS ROLE IN THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

Mohammed Murtuza was born to Sharafat Hussain⁶ and Bibi Haseen Bandi on 4 December 1919⁷ in Ranipur, a village under Barharia Police Station in the present day Siwan district.⁸ He passed the matriculation examination in 1936 from Goreya Kothi High School, then under Patna University,⁹ and joined the police service in August 1938. In August 1942, when Mahatma Gandhi sounded the bugle against the British asking them to quit India with the slogan 'Do or Die' under the banner of the Indian National Congress, Mohammed Murtuza was an Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI), and was posted at Khazanachi Hat Police Station in Purnia or, as also spelt, Purnea.¹⁰ This historic event woke up the young Mohammed Murtuza's patriotic passion for India's independence buried in his heart. He made an open declaration of non-cooperation with the British government, for which he was accused of rebelling by colluding with the enemies.¹¹ He was first detained u/s 129 Defence India Rules on 14 August 1942¹² and was finally arrested at the order of the Supt of Police¹³ and imprisoned in the Purnia Jail. In this context, the following extract from the FIR registered against him at the Khazanachi Hat Police Station in Purnia by the then Inspector-in-Charge L.M. Mukherjee is noteworthy:¹⁴

I on return from S.P.'s bungalow at about 8.30 Hrs. on 14/8/42 found the A.S.I. Md. Murtuza dressed in Khaddar Punjabee pajama and Gandhi cap. I asked him why he had dressed himself in the manner and did not put up uniform as police was expected. He stated that he was no longer in service and then he handed me over his resignation letter in which he alleged that he was tendering resignation, as he feels for the country, and for its cause. I along with A.S.I. B. Dubey explained to him the consequences, requested him not to be carried... by temporary and transitory impedes with final request to withdraw the resignation letter. He could not listen or could be persuaded in any way. He stated that he was determined, would not withdraw the resignation letter and that he was prepared to suffer consequences. Soon after D.I. Sadar Maulvi (now Khan Shaheb) F.D. Hyder arrived at the P.S. and the resignation letter was handed over to him. He also persuaded in various ways and means but the accused would not listened or could be persuaded to withdraw it in any way. Immediately after Suptt. of Police Mr. M.K. Sinha arrived at the P.S. and the accused was made over to Suptt. of Police along with the resignation letter, and he was pleased to take away the accused in car. The accused was detained u/s 129 D.I. rules, and is at present lodged at Bhagalpur Jail.

The text of the said FIR clearly speaks that call of Mahatma Gandhi for the Quit India Movement and the local response of the freedom activists had created a deep impact on the young ASI Mohammed Murtuza. Being so charged with Mahatma Gandhi's simple but powerful slogan 'Do or Die' the young police officer in his patriotic impulse quickly decided to quit his charming police service.¹³ And despite being conscious of the dire consequences for his rebellious act against the government, he wore a dress typical of the nationalists activists of the freedom struggle and remained there at the police station of his posting to declare to his seniors of his decision to join the nationalist movement and that of his relinquishing his job of ASI of Police.¹⁵

Mohammed Murtuza seems to have been uniquely a dedicated and disciplined police officer with a patriotic fervour in his blood. His senior L.M. Mukherjee, Inspector-in-Charge of the Police Station, was utterly surprised to see him in an attire of the nationalist activists.¹⁶ When the said officer asked him as to why he was not in a proper police uniform, Mohammed Murtuza fearlessly expressed his decision of quitting the police service for the cause of his country.¹⁷ The said Inspector-in-Charge, Mukherjee, and other ASI, B. Dubey, tried to make Mohammed Murtuza understand the consequences of his fleeting stimulation for his country's cause and asked him to withdraw his resignation letter.¹⁸

Since being a police officer, Mohammed Murtuza was well aware of the police secrets, he was not only put behind the bars but also kept on shifting from one jail to another. Initially, he was kept in Purnia Jail where after an incident in protest against the excesses of the Jail Administration, an army squad under the command of Sergeant Major beaten him and other political prisoners very brutally. Thereafter he was sent to Bhagalpur Central Jail. From there he was again brought back to Purnia Jail. Here he was tried behind closed doors. He refused to obey the Court and offered no defence, and was eventually sentenced to 13 months' imprisonment on 17 March 1943. Then from the Purnia Jail, he was sent to the Patna Camp Jail, and from there after a few months, he was sent to the Hazaribagh Central Jail, where he spent the remaining days of his sentence. Since there is paucity of contemporary records of these jails where he was kept during his imprisonment, we may assume that he did not refrain from arousing nationalist feeling among the jail inmates as well as jail staff. This might be the most important cause of his continuous shifting from one jail to another.

Testimonials given by Kamaldeva Narayan Sinha,¹⁹ Anath Kanta Basu²⁰ and Mudrika Sinha,²¹ Members of the first Bihar Legislative Assembly of independent India, in 1953, by Abul Hayat Chand,²² Member of the first post-independence Bihar Legislative Council, and Avadhesh Kumar Singh,²³ President of Patna District Congress Committee, in 1954, and by Darogha Prasad Chaudhary,²⁴ President of Purnea District Congress Committee, in 1956 also corroborate the facts that Mohammed Murtuza resigned from the post of ASI in 1942 on Mahatma Gandhi's call and took active part in the freedom struggle, and that he stayed in various jails of Bihar with those leaders and served a long sentence.

III. CONCLUSION

Thus, the available records and their analysis lead us to the conclusion that Mohammed Murtuza was a lionhearted, true blue patriot, who sacrificed his life for the cause of the country. In 1942, inspired by the call of Mahatma Gandhi against the British asking them to quit India and his most innervating slogan 'Do or Die', he not only resigned from his police service but also fearlessly joined the Quit India Movement and embraced long-term rigorous imprisonment to liberate the country from the yoke of the mighty British colonial rule. It is however unfortunate that a true nationalist activist like Mohammed Murtuza had to struggle hard for long to prove himself as a freedom fighter. Moreover, instead of getting befitting reward in terms of promotion and medals of honour, he had to struggle hard for long to get reinstated on the same post of Assistant Sub-Inspector.²⁵ He retired as an ASI from Jamui in 1978 and passed away on 2 August 1988 at his native village Ranipur in Barharia, Siwan. His name deserves to be recognized at the official level in the regional history. The fearlessness and patriotic zeal he exhibited during the Quit India Movement is both interesting and inspiring particularly to the later generations of this region.

REFERENCES

- [1] Shaukat A. Khan, *The Struggle for India's Independence in Bihar 1912-22*, New Delhi, 2023, p. 1.
- [2] *Ibid.*
- [3] *Ibid.*; For more information, see Shaukat A. Khan and S. Bashir Hasan, 'Pir Ali, the Pioneer of the Revolt of 1857 in Bihar: As Witnessed by Shad Azimabadi' in *Abhilekh-Bihar*, Vol. 8, BSA, Patna, 2017, pp.288-95.
- [4] Shaukat A. Khan, *The Struggle for India's Independence in Bihar 1912-22*, *op.cit.*
- [5] Vide Appendix I.
- [6] *Ibid.*
- [7] Vide Appendix III.
- [8] Vide Appendix I.
- [9] Vide Appendix III.
- [10] Vide Appendix I.
- [11] *Ibid.*; Also vide Appendix II.
- [12] Vide Appendix I.
- [13] Vide Appendix II.
- [14] Vide Appendix I.
- [15] *Ibid.*
- [16] *Ibid.*
- [17] *Ibid.*
- [18] *Ibid.*
- [19] Vide Appendix IV.
- [20] Vide Appendix V.
- [21] Vide Appendix VI.
- [22] Vide Appendix VII.
- [23] Vide Appendix VIII.
- [24] Vide Appendix IX.
- [25] Vide Appendix X.

APPENDICES
APPENDIX I

| | | | | | |
|---|---|--|---|--|---|
| Date of application for the copy 55/20/27/50 | | Date fixed for notifying the requisite number of stamps and folios 8/2/42 | Date of delivery of the requisite stamps and folios 8/2/42 | Date on which the copy was ready for delivery 8/2/42 | Date of making over the copy to the applicant 8/2/42 |
| First information Report. | | | | | |
| No. 147 of 42 | | Cognizable | | Crime | |
| First information reported under section 154, | | Criminal procedure Code at Police station | | Kharanchi Hat. | |
| Subdivision sadar and town of occurrence | | District Purnea. | | No. 12, date 14-8-42 @ 8-30 AM. | |
| Date and hour when reported. | Place of occurrence and distance and direction from police station. | | | Date of despatch from police station. | |
| 27-XI-42 9 AM | Kharanchi P.S. itself | | | 28-XI-42 | |
| N.B. A | | First information must be | | authenticated by the signature, name or thumb impression of informant and attested by the signature of the officer recording it. | |
| 1. | Name and residence of | Name and residence of | | Name and residence of | |
| | Mukherjee of K. Hat P.S. | S. 9 | | L. M. | |
| 2. | Name and residence of | Name and residence of | | Name and residence of | |
| | M. Murtaza s/o Sarif at village Ranipur, P.S. Barkharia | S. 9 | | L. M. | |
| | Saran at present in | | | | |

| भारत FOUR ANNAS | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|--|-------------|
| Date of application for the copy. | Date fixed for notifying the requisite number of stamps and folios. | Date of delivery of the requisite stamps and folios. | Date on which the copy was ready for delivery. | Date of making over the copy to the applicant. | |
| 3: | Bhagalpur Jail. Brief description of section, of essential service 1941. | and | of any maintenance order of | offence, and property carried | with Sec. 7 |
| 4: | Slips of delay due to look up investigation. | been | regarding investigation in delay to | explaining information obtained orders. | |
| 5: | Result of | of | in case: | nil. | |
| | | | | sd- L. M. Mukherjee S. J. of Police. | |
| | | | | I, L. M. Mukherjee is the accused | |
| | | | | officially Assistant | |
| | | | | Sub-inspector of Police, joined this | |
| | | | | P.S. on 25-7-42 on transfer | |
| | | | | from B.D.'s Office, Kishanganj. He | |
| | | | | underwent training as Constable this | |
| | | | | year at Government cost. Since | |
| | | | | then he was working | |
| | | | | Assistant Sub-inspector of Police at | |
| | | | | this P.S. The Congress | |
| | | | | started on 10/2/42 or | |

| Date of application for the copy. | Date fixed for notifying the requisite number of stamps and folios. | Date of delivery of the requisite stamps and folios. | Date on which the copy was ready for delivery. | Date of making over the copy to the applicant. | |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|--|--|-----------|
| So. | there | were | 19 | accused | persons, |
| all | Congress | Volunteers | and | leaders | at |
| the | P.S. | Look | up | from | 4-30 Hrs |
| of | 14/8/42, | who | were | arrested | in |
| connection with | Sharhera | P.S. | | burning | and |
| Railway line | uprooting. | 9 | | on | return |
| from | S.P.'s | house | at | about | 8-30 Hrs. |
| on | 14/8/42 | found | the | A.S.P. | M.D. |
| Murtuza | dressed | in | Khadder | Panjabee, | Pyjama |
| and | Gandhi | cap | | asked | him |
| why | he | had | dressed | himself | in |
| the | manner | and | did | not | put |
| up | uniform. | as | S. Police | was | expected |
| He | stated | that | he | was | no |
| longer | in | service | and | then | he |
| handed | me | over | his | resignation | letter, |
| in | which | he | alleged | that | he |
| was | tendering | resignation, | as | he | feels |
| for | the | country | and | for | its |
| cause. | | along | with | A.S.P. | B. Bulley |
| explained | to | him | the | consequences, | request |
| him | not | to | be | carried | away |
| by | temporary | and | transitory | impedes | with |
| final | request | to | withdraw | the | request |
| letter. | He | could | not | listen | |

| Date of application for the copy. | Date fixed for notifying the requisite number of stamps and folios. | Date of delivery of the requisite stamps and folios. | Date on which the copy was ready for delivery. | Date of making over the copy to the applicant. | |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| <p>or could be persuaded in any way. He stated that he was determined, would not withdraw the resignation letter and that he was prepared to suffer consequences soon after D. J. Sader Maulvi (now known as Shabir) J. S. Hyder arrived at the P.S. and the resignation letter was handed over to him. He also persuaded in various ways and means but the accused would not listen. He could be persuaded to withdraw in any way. Immediately after the arrest of Mr. M. K. Saha at the P.S. and the accused was made over to Suptt of Police along with the resignation letter, and he was pleased to take away the accused in car. The accused was detained up to 12/9 at present lodged at Bhagalpur. On receipt of orders from chief secretary, this case is instituted to-day and charge the accused up to 7/9 of the</p> | | | | | |

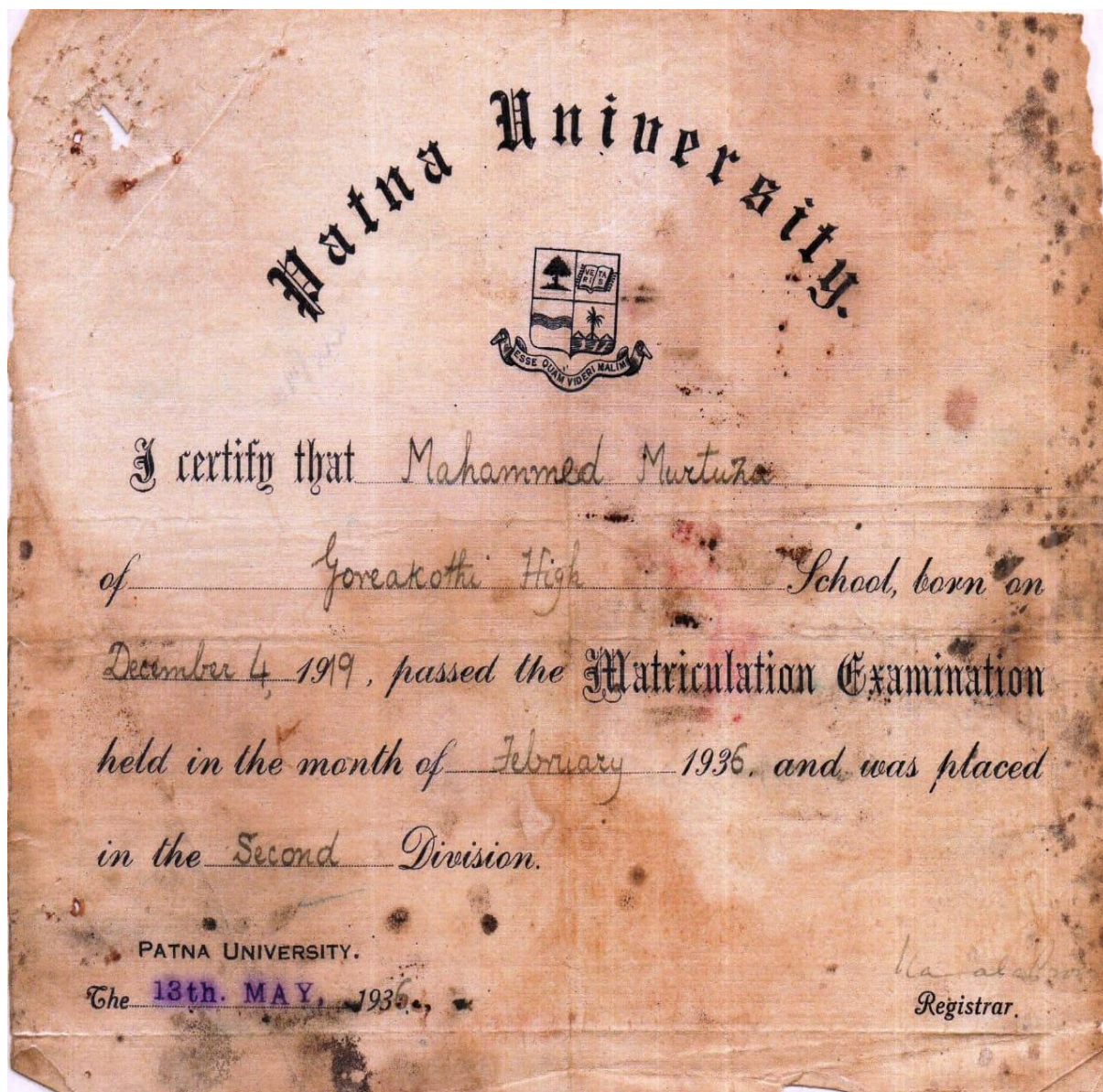
| Date of application for the copy. | Date fixed for notifying the requisite number of stamps and folios. | Date of delivery of the requisite stamps and folios. | Date on which the copy was ready for delivery. | Date of making over the copy to the applicant. |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| 5/2/18 2/2/18 | 2/2/18 | 2/2/18 | 2/2/18 | |
| Essential service maintenance ordinance. | | | | |
| Sd- L. M. Mukherjee | | | | |
| K. H. P. S. | | | | |
| 27/XI/42 | | | | |
| copy show copy 3/2/18 | Company for stamp 2/2/18 | | | |
| 4/2/18 2/2/18 | | | | |

APPENDIX II

| Date of application for the copy | Date filed for notifying the date number of stamps and folios | Date of delivery of the requisite stamps and folios | Date on which the copy was ready for delivery | Date of making over the copy to the applicant |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 55/29/4/56 | 8/1/56 | 3/2/56 | 3/2/56 | 7/2/56 |
| <p>923 Order-Sheet For Magistrates' Records.</p> | | | | |
| <p>District Purnea.</p> | | | | |
| <p>R. No. 1478 of 1942.</p> | | | | |
| Emperor | Versus | Murtaza Murtaza | | |
| <p>u/s 7 Essential Service maintenance Ordinance of 1941.</p> | | | | |
| <p><u>ORDER.</u></p> | | | | |
| 17.4.43. | <p>Examined in chief three P. Ws. charge u/s 5(b) of Ordinance XI of 1941, framed and explained to the accused pleads guilty. His statement recorded. He will not enter into defence & examination of P.Ws. declined and they are discharged.</p> | | | |
| <p>The case of the prosecution is that in August 1942, the accused was working as officiating A.S.I. attached to Khazanchi Hat P.S. on 14.8.42, there were about 21 Congress prisoner in Thana lock up. The accused abandoned his post without any lawful excuse and gave his resignation letter to the S. I. and Inspector of Police, in sympathy with the Congress movement. Ex. 3 is his resignation letter. The accused was arrested at the order of the S. P. and the complaint/was filed against him. S. I. L. M. Mukherjee (P.W.2) S.I. U. N. Thekur (P.W. 1) and Khan Sahab</p> | | | | |

| Date of application for the copy | Date fixed for notifying the requisite number of stamps and folios | Date of delivery of the requisite stamps and folios | Date on which the copy was ready for delivery | Date of making over the copy to the applicant | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|
| 5/2/48 | 3/2/48 | 3/2/48 | 3/2/48 | 3/2/48 | | | |
| <p>Sahab F. D. Hayder (P.W. 3) have proved that the accused abandoned his post of A.S.I. on 14.8.48 without any lawful excuse in sympathy with Congress movement. The accused was admitted by member of an essential service within the meaning of section 3 of the Ordinance. He has confessed his guilt before this court. The charge against him has been established satisfactorily by the prosecution.</p> <p>I accordingly find the accused persons guilty u/s 5(b) of Ordinance XI of 1941, convict him and sentence him to undergo R. I. one year and to pay a fine of Rs 35/- in default further R. I. for one month.</p> <p>The accused was an A.S.I. and is also a matriculate. In my opinion, he is fit to be classified in division II. I would therefore recommend for moving the Government for placing him in division II. Put up draft for approval of the District Magistrate.</p> | | | | | | | |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Sd. B. P. Singh Magistrate 1st class. 17.4.48.</p> | | | | | | | |
| <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Certified to be a true copy</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>H P Singh</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">District Magistrate</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DATE: 3/2/48</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Authorised by: 1872</p> </td> <td style="width: 20%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Typed by: <i>H P Singh</i> typist.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3/2/48</p> </td> <td style="width: 30%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>Compared by: <i>H P Singh</i> C. clerk.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">3/2/48</p> </td> </tr> </table> | | | | | <p>Certified to be a true copy</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>H P Singh</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">District Magistrate</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DATE: 3/2/48</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Authorised by: 1872</p> | <p>Typed by: <i>H P Singh</i> typist.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3/2/48</p> | <p>Compared by: <i>H P Singh</i> C. clerk.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">3/2/48</p> |
| <p>Certified to be a true copy</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>H P Singh</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">District Magistrate</p> <p style="text-align: center;">DATE: 3/2/48</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Authorised by: 1872</p> | <p>Typed by: <i>H P Singh</i> typist.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3/2/48</p> | <p>Compared by: <i>H P Singh</i> C. clerk.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">3/2/48</p> | | | | | |

APPENDIX III



APPENDIX IV

सदस्य,
बिहार विधान सभा

11/9/1953

Patna 88431

This is to certify that Md. Murtuza of village Ranipur P.S. Barharia, Dist. Sharan is personally known to me since 1942. He was serving in Police department as an A.S.P. at Purnea in the year 1942. On the call of freedom movement led by Mahatma Gandhi, he left his service and took active part in the battle of freedom. He was arrested and put into jail with us. He suffered a long imprisonment in different jails and we lived together as colleagues in Purnea + Patna Jail. He is a political sufferer and I wish every success in his life.

Kamalchandra Narayan
Bihar
M. A.
Purnea

APPENDIX V

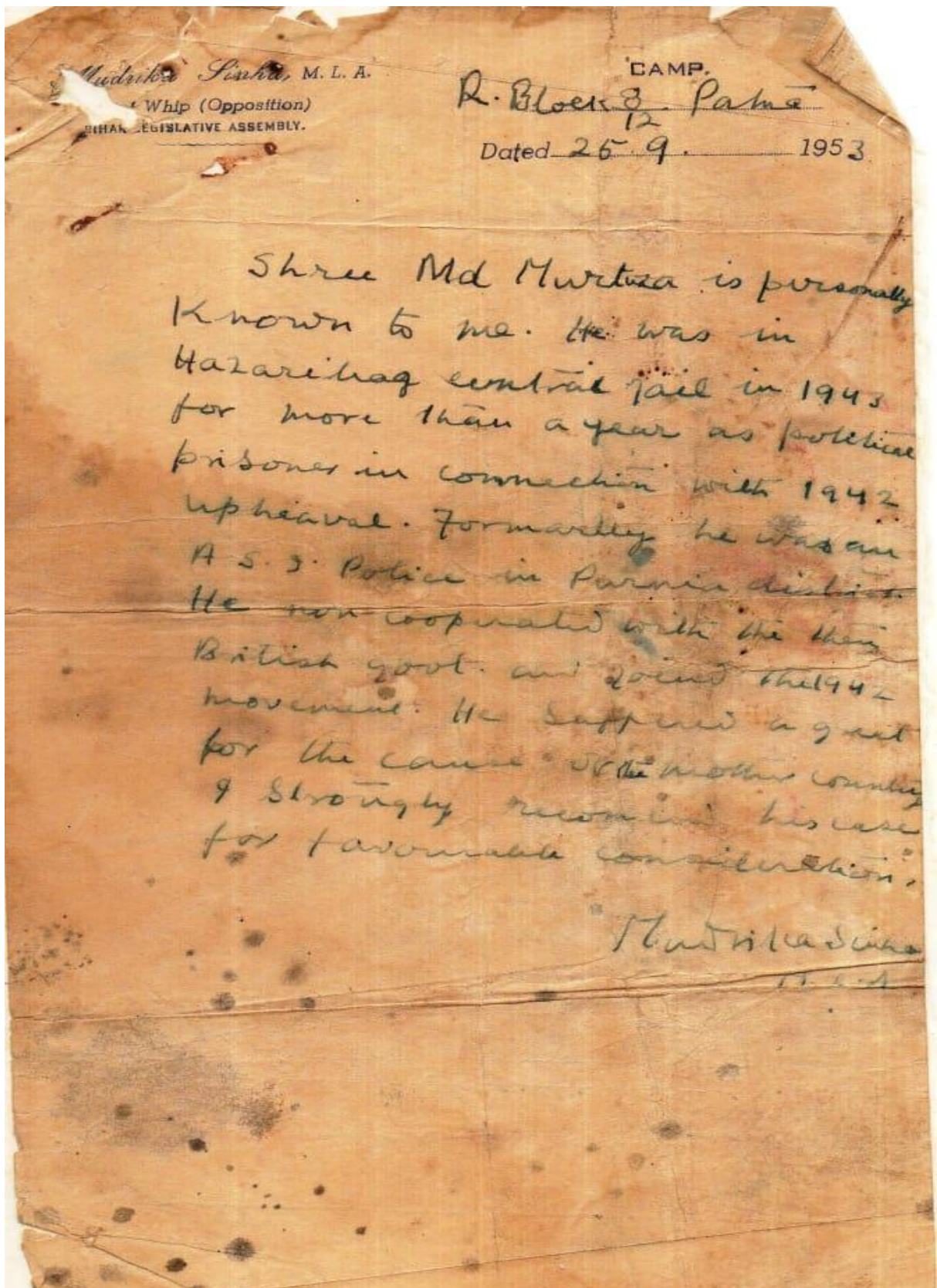
Patna
Date. 11th Sept. 53.

Anath Kanta Basu
M. L. A. (Bihar)

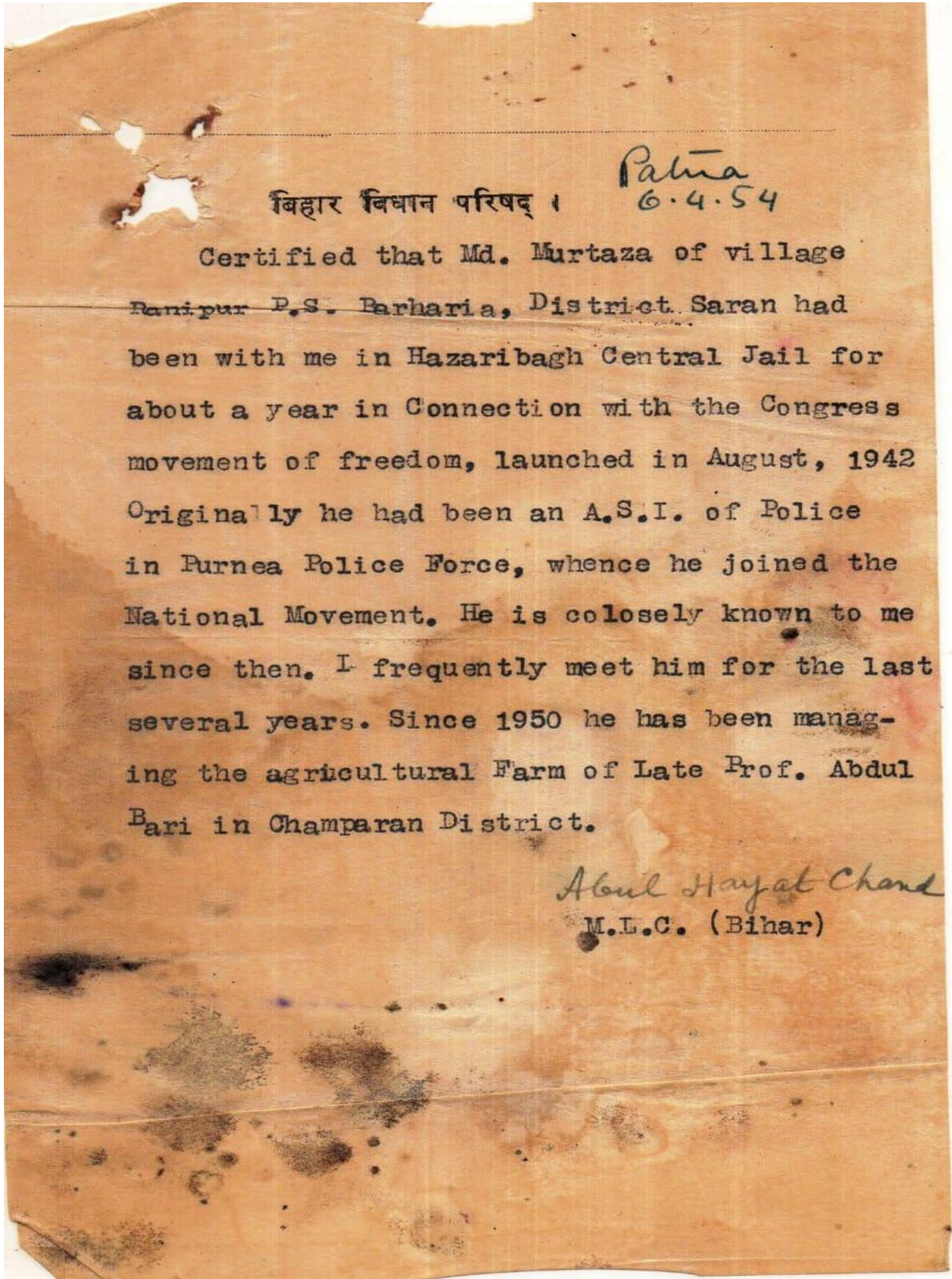
Shree Md. Murtuza of village
Ranipon Dist. Saharan, formerly
an A.S. 9 of Police in Purnea
district was with me in the
jail during the 42 movement.
He left his services and joined
the movement. He was arrested
at Khajanchihat, Purnea and
as a political prisoner he was
sent with us to Patna Jail
from Purnea. He is personally
known to me since then. I read
that he bears a good moral
character. As a political
prisoner he should get
a chance to maintain his
family as he left his job
for the Country and suffered
much along with many of us.
I wish his success in life.

Anath Kanta Basu
11/9/53

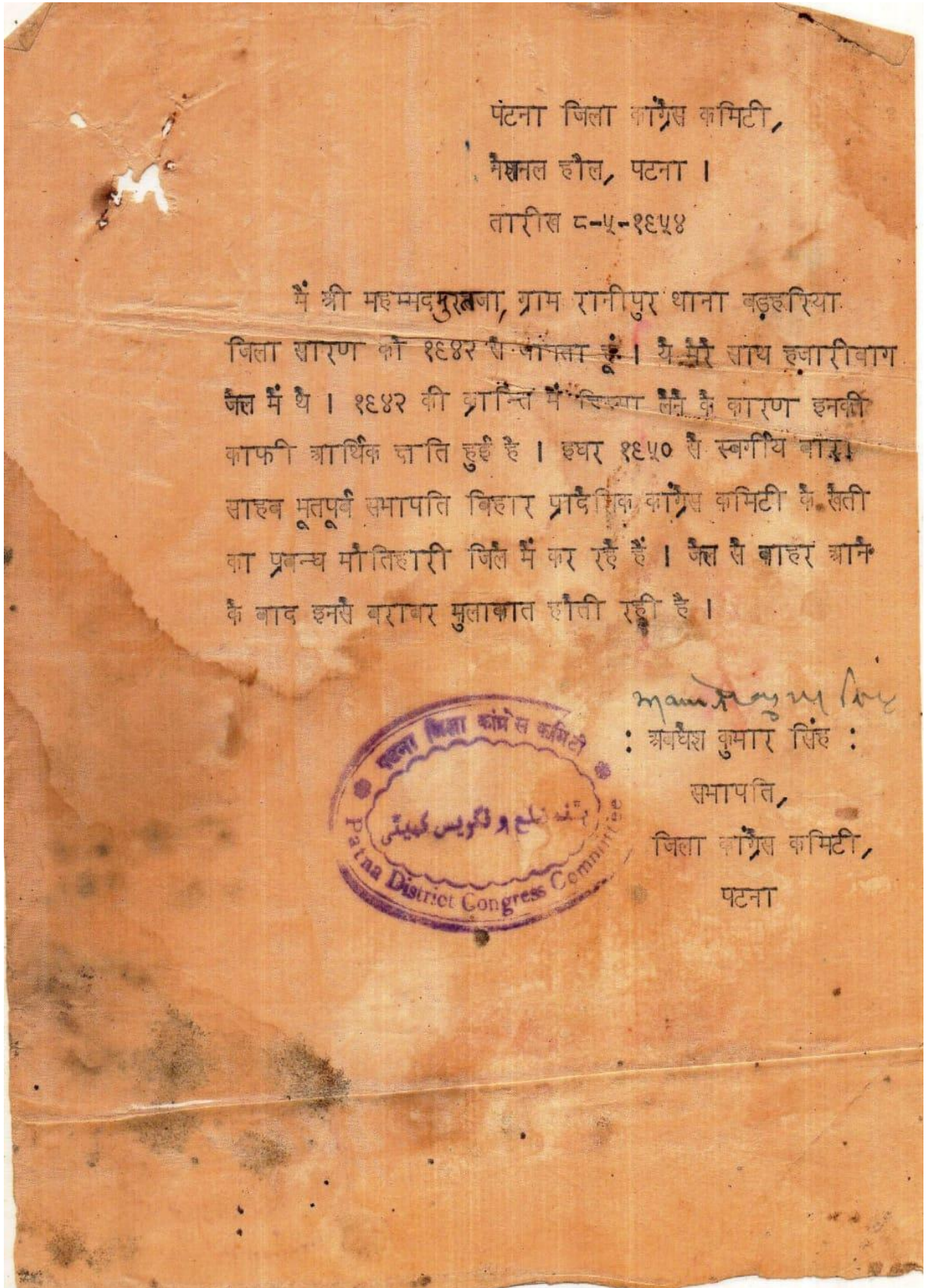
APPENDIX VI



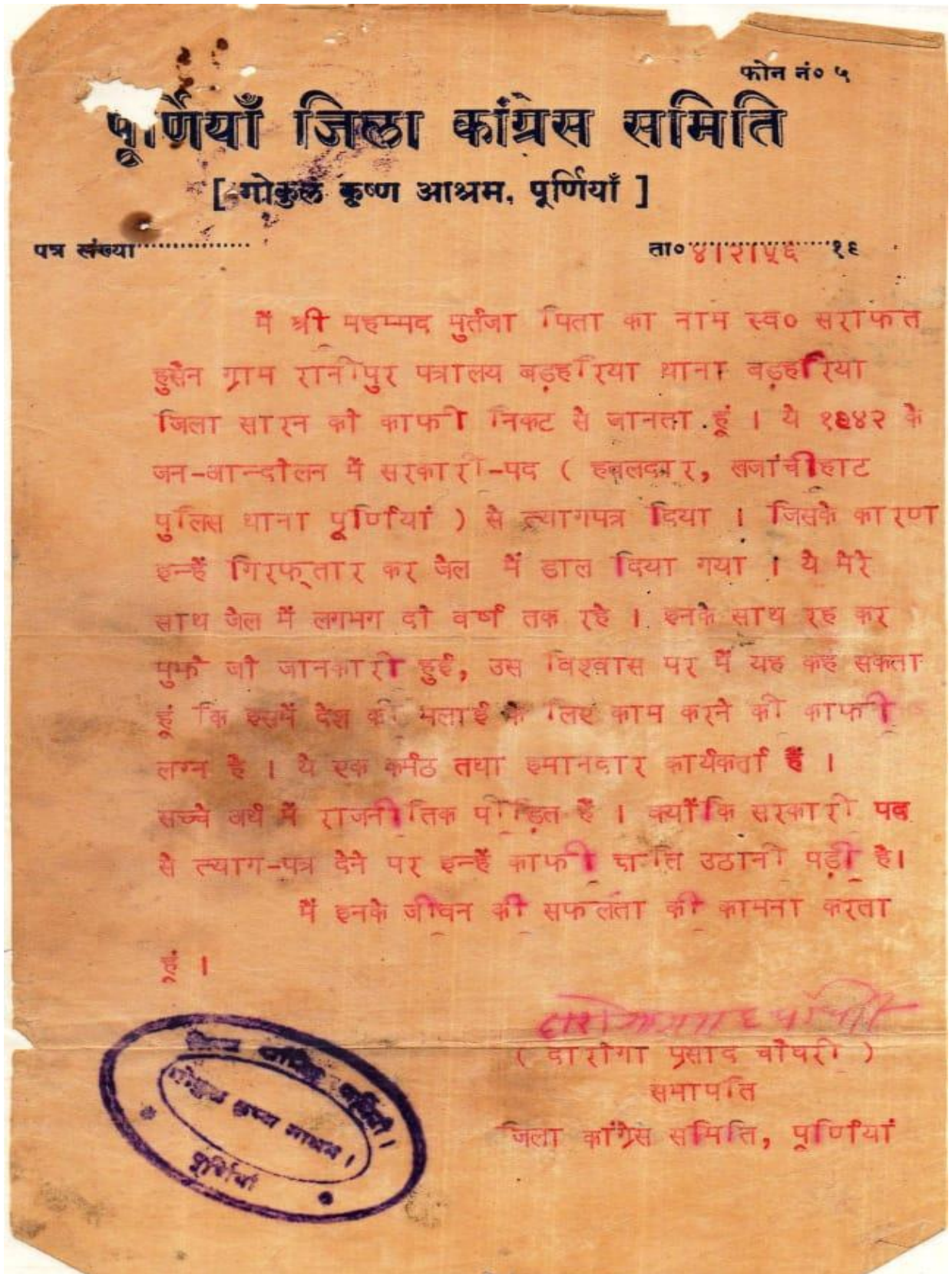
APPENDIX VII



APPENDIX VIII



APPENDIX IX



APPENDIX X

