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ROLE OF SHRI RAMCHANDRA VEERAPPA IN MOVEMENT FOR LIBERATION OF HYDERABAD-KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT:

Ramchandra Veerappa was a member of the 14th Lok Sabha of India. He represented the Bidar constituency of Karnataka and was a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) political party. During 1948-1952 he was member of Karnataka Legislative Council and elected to Karnataka Assembly in 1957-1962. He was first elected to 3rd Lok Sabha in 1962. He was later elected to 4th and 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th Lok Sabha. He died on 18 Jul 2004 at Hyderabad Hospital due to kidney dysfunction at the age of 96.¹

KEYWORDS: *Ramchandra Veerappa , Karnataka Legislative Council.*

INTRODUCTION

Ramchandra Veerappa was born in 1908 in Humnabad in Bidar district. He had his Primary Education at Humnabad and Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh).² He participated in the Freedom Struggle; sentenced to Kalapani for participating in Satyagraha against Nizam's rule and spent most of his life in jails.³ During 1947-48 he was Member of Municipal Council of Bidar in Karnataka. During 1948-52, he was elected Member, Karnataka Legislative Council in 1957-62 Member of Karnataka Legislative Assembly and in 1962 Elected to 3rd Lok Sabha 1962-67. He Vice-President, Bidar District Congress Committee, Karnataka 1962-84

Member, Karnataka Congress Committee 1967 Re-elected to 4th Lok Sabha (2nd term) 1980-85 Member, Karnataka Legislative Assembly 1991 Re-elected to 10th Lok Sabha (3rd term). During 1991-94, he was Vice-President of Bharatiya Janata Party (B.J.P.), All India Scheduled Castes (SC) Cell. During 1991-96 he was Member, B.J.P. Working Committee, Bidar, Karnataka. In 1996 he was re-elected to 11th Lok Sabha (4th term) in he was 1998 Re-elected to 12th Lok Sabha (5th term). He was the Member, Committee on Food, Civil Supplies and Public Distribution 1998-99; and its Sub-Committee-B on Department of Sugar and Edible Oils Member, Consultative Committee, Ministry of Communications. In 1999 Re-elected to 13th Lok Sabha (6th term) 1999-2000 Member, Committee on Food, Civil

Supplies and Public Distribution 2000-2004 Member, Consultative Committee, Ministry of Commerce and Industry 2004 Re-elected to 14 Lok Sabha(7th term).⁴

FIGHT AGAINST RAZAKARS AND MASSACRES AT CHITAGUPPA.

Chitaguppa was a paiga Taluka of Nizam and Jahgir of Nizam's Nawab Moin Daulah and was also named as 'Moinabad'. Chitaguppa was an important centre of Freedom Movement and Fighters in the region (Bidar district). People of Chitguppa remember the story brave freedom fighters who fought against the Razakars without caring for life till today. In 1938 on goddess Bhavani Pooja day a procession was taken out in the streets. The police warned the devotees not to carry any harmful weapons with them during procession but the Aryasamaj volunteers did not pay

attention and walked in the streets. When the procession reached a Masjid near Tehsil office suddenly 300 to 400 Muslims attacked on the people in procession. There was skirmish between the two groups and 25 people were wounded. Thus started the communal disturbances in Chitguppa. There was a face to face communal fights between Hindus and Muslims in Nehru Chowk where a Muslim was killed. Police arrested some 20 Aryasamajists and Muslims (Razakars). The Muslim Razakars on their way to return after cremating the dead man's body openly attacked on Hindus and a freedom fighter Mahadevappa died. Police again arrested 40 people and issued warrant on some Aryasamajists. These warranted Kesari people escaped in disguise but Ramachandra Veerappa participated in procession and faced the police and diverted the police from arresting the absconding Aryasamajist. The Razakars murdered Shoibullah the editor of Imroz Daily for writing in favour of the Aryasamajists of Chitguppa and upholding the truth. A circle was named after him in Chitguppa which is still present as "Shoibullah Chowk".⁵

MALEFACTIONS OF RAJAKARS IN HUMNABAD AND BRAVERY OF RAMCHANDRA.

The Muslims especially Rajakar volunteers were conducting harassment of one type or the other on Hindu men and women. One such incident happened in Humnabad of Bidar district in 1940. Hindu women usually went to wash their cloths to streams or wells near the villages and towns. A beautiful Lingayath woman used to go out to wash the cloths of her family members to a well in her fields, some 20 youths belonging to Razakar volunteer army who used to see her everyday and were fascinated by her beauty followed her till a lonely place and started misbehaving with her and tried to rape her. The lonely woman found herself helpless and started screaming and shouting for help and protection. A woman who was working in nearby field heard the helpless women's voice and immediately ran to Ramachandra Veerappa who was working in his nearby field and explained about the matter. He immediately ran to help the woman in danger. The Muslim youths were armed with swords and daggers but the brave Ramachandra singly pounced on them fearlessly, hit them with bamboo and tried to drive them away. The youths started running away but suddenly one of them stabbed Ramachandra in stomach with his dagger and the intestines started coming out. The youths ran away thinking that Ramachandra had died. Ramachandra fell on ground with wounds and was on deathbed but he told the woman to run away home for safety and the women reached homes safely.⁶

But the lingayath woman who was saved from molestation couldn't find solace. She ran to Ramachandra's brother Laxman and explained the condition of his younger brother. The other women who informed Ramachandra about the Muslim youths' malefactions was observing Ramachandra struggling for life rushed to him but was helpless even in finding a vessel to fetch him water and started screaming in sorrow. In the meanwhile, Laxman came with a bullock cart and the volunteers of Arya Samaj of Humnabad. They brought them to hospital but there was no doctor in the hospital, the compounder who was in hospital somehow managed to put back the intestines back into the stomach of Ramachandra and tie his stomach. He made all the possible first aid to save him and asked them to take Ramachandra to major hospital as the doctors would come late. They immediately rushed to the Government hospital Gulbarga in the car of the grain merchant of humnabad. Seeing the grave Dr. fazal Ahmed the surgeon of the hospital worried and explained, 'I can't guarantee his life, I will do my best and all my sincere efforts to save him but let us pray the almighty for his fate.' Ibid., pp.17-18

MANIK NAGAR JATRA (FAIR) INCIDENT.

Festivals and fairs are the mirrors of our culture. These festivals provide enjoyment to the people who work all the year. During these occasions, people spend time wearing new dresses sharing sweets and purchase new things. A fair is held every year on Margashirsha Poornima, December at Manik Prabhu Samsthan Humnabad. On the day in 1940, the Arya Samaj leaders and volunteers were propagating the teachings and religion of Arya Samaj fearlessly. Arya Samaj leaders like Ramlal, Shri Bansilal, Pandith Shivachandraji, Bhai Shamlal and Dharmaprakash etc had come to Manik Nagar. The programmes were running peacefully and without any hindrances. Seeing this Muslim hooligans rushed to the place and tried to kill the Arya Samajists. The news reached the ears of brave Laxman and

Ramachandra. They immediately put guns on their shoulders, came to Manik Nagar, and stood in front of the Muslim hooligans. At this time, too the Muslim hooligans pounced on stage and tried to beat the Aryasamajists, Laxman and Ramachandra fired in air and people ran in fear. The Muslim hooligans also returned finding it difficult to disrupt the programme. Many innocent and unarmed Hindus were wounded, Bhai Shamlal's leg was wounded badly and he fell to ground. He was given medical treatment and the brothers made arrangement for his safe journey to Bidar. Thus Ramachandra saved future tragedy by saving lives of innocent and unarmed Arya Samajists.⁷

HUMNABAD HOLI FESTIVAL INCIDENT.

Numerous events occur in History but unique events are remembered more by people. As in other parts of the country Holi festival is one of the of the unique festivals Humnabad taluka also and the unique and tragic event that took place on the day of Holi Festival in Humnabad is still alive in the minds of people of Humnabad till today. Though this festival is not colourful and grand as other festivals in India, but is one of the important festivals of the people. In this festival all the males wear old cloths hold tins and packets of colours in hand, drink intoxicants, exchange dirty scoldings (which are permitted only one day) sing and dance together in groups and pour colours on each other. But in 1942 all the Hindus decided not to drink and exchange dirty scolding in the festival and celebrate in a clean way.⁸

So as per the decision all the inmates of the Arya Samaj met in Venkateshwara Temple on March 3 1942, under the leadership of Pandith Shivachandraji Nellagi and decided on the above programme. It was this temple, which was used as the centre of Arya Samaj activities like spreading the teachings of Arya Samaj, training in Exercises (Vyayam), using of weapons Homa, Havana, prayers, meditation etc without any caste discrimination under Arya Pandith Shivachandarji, Shri Shivaprasad, Pundalik Rao, Hanumanth Rao, Vitthal Rao, Laxman Rao and Ramachandra. On the day of Holi festival, a procession of Shivachandraji was taken out in Humnabad. The Razakars who were furious, forced the Aryasamajists to take procession through shopping lane and were secretly plotting the massacre of Aryasamajists in association with the police Officer Nizamuddin. When the procession was passing through their lane made sudden attack on the Aryasamajists. As the number of Razakars was larger than the Aryasamajists started running hither thither in confusion and helplessness, many Hindus came to help the Aryasamajist to escape to other places. The formed line on both sides of the lane and succeeded in escorting them from the shopping lane through a gate. But, all of a sudden Razakars came from behind and attacked the Aryasamajists and wounded there was a fight between both groups 7 Aryasamajists and a large group of Razakars. An Aryasamaj volunteer Parit faced the Razakars bravely and followed the Razakars until last bullet in his gun. But behind him the Razakars with swords, knives and dangerous weapons came searching for Shivachandraji and others. They walked attacking them severely and everyone in the way. Four Aryasamajists fell to the attack of Razakars and Arya Shivachandraji was one of them. Hearing the news Ravajirao Ingle, Laxman Rao, Narsimharao and others rushed to the spot and they too were massacred mercilessly. This made the Hindus specially Aryasamajists burn with anger. The brave Arya samaj youths came out on streets and challenged the Razakars to come out and fight with them shouting "Come you cowards, we have come to fight you and ready to die bravely, if you have drunk milk from your mothers breast come out and fight us face to face and stop attacking from behind", but the Razakars cowardly ran away from Humnabad. Laxman and Ramachandra (Veerappa brothers) came to the spot and were aggrieved at the scene screamed in agony and carried the bodies of their beloved and respected Guru Shivachandraji and others to the Laxminarayana temple and cremated them with due respect in Aryasamaj rituals. The scene was green in the minds of all the Aryasamajists who decided to avenge in future.⁹

In the meanwhile, another event of martyrdom and grave atrocity of Razakars and the Nizam happened in Hyderabad. Bhai Shamlal a staunch Nationalist, Aryasamajist and an intelligent lawyer was working in Nizam's High court. As a staunch nationalist and patriot, he had good links with almost all National leaders (freedom fighters) of India. He had become a dominant factor in Hindu factions in Hyderabad, he was arrested and kept in Bidar jail without any reason. The Nizam Mir Osman Ali Khan

Bahadur and the Razakars were plotting schemes to assassinate Bhai Shamlal in the jail. As per the scheme atrocities were on him every day by serving him roti (bread) mixed with cement and glass powder, this continued for several days. On night he was poisoned to death. Nizam even refused to hand over his body to his relatives and Aryasamajists. The aryasamajists somehow managed to produce forgery order to the jailor in the name of Nizam in the night. The dead body was transported to Solapur in the midnight, a big meeting of Aryasamajist was convened under Veer Savarkar and Barrister Aane. A procession of dead body of Bhai Shamlal was taken out in the morning cremated as per the customs of Aryasamaj. Thousands of the youths took an oath "to fight till last drop of their blood to fight against the Nizam and dig out Nizam's state and administration from India."¹⁰

BOMB CONSPIRACY IN HUMANABAD.

The above incidences of Holi festival and the murder of Bhai Shamlal of 1942 were still paining in the minds of Aryasamajists and Ramachandra Veerappa who were longing to avenge. "Our guide was murdered in front of us and we stood helplessly at the merciless massacre." Many Arya leaders met at Humnabad and planned a conspiracy to kill the merciless Muslims and Razakars. To bring this plan into execution, Shri Datturao Suryanshi, Manik Rao Bhandari, Pundalik Arya, Shivalingappa, Laxman Arya and Shri Ramachandra Arya started preparing bombs in the nights after 12. After preparing the bomb they were planning to bombard it during the Muharram procession of the Muslims. The bomb was planted under the ground on the route of the procession, which connected with thin wires. The edge of the connecting wire was to end near the Venkateshwara temple. In this procession the Razakars of whole Bidar district used to participated. The next day a procession of 'peers' was to be taken out and it was planned to blast the bomb at that time. But the will of the time was different, the wire of the bomb ad come up on ground at a place which struck to the feet of a boy who was flying kite nearby. The wire got pulled and as a result the bomb exploded with huge sound. The Arya leaders who were waiting in the temple ready blast the bomb were in a situation of helplessness. The explosion of the bomb earlier than planned made them worry. Police started searching the people behind the conspiracy, knowing this in the night Ramachandra carried his four comrades, fled to Dhannura Railway Station, and arranged to transport the comrades to Udgir in train, which was to come at 5 AM.¹¹

On the other hand, at Humnabad, the police were searching the heroes of Humnabad Bomb Conspiracy. Ramachandra after sending his comrades started towards Humnabad hiding in disguise and reached Benchinholi where two Muslim youths Mastan Sab Nandan and Nadeem Sab Nandan met him and warned him, "Police aree searching you in every house of Humanabad, Humnabad has become very tense you can hide in our fields, jowar is ready for harvest pass your time by roasting the raw Jowar. We will our best to save you." Ramachandra hid in their fields for two days as per their advice. However, within his inner soul Ramachandra started thinking "If I hide here and spend time the police will unnecessarily create problems to innocent people by searching and arresting them and give all types of tortures. It is better to go to Humnabad and arrest rather than subject innocents to problems and atrocities." He came out of hideout and immediately started towards Humnabad. On reaching Humnabad met his family members and explained everything to them and went to police station. He met the police officer and took the responsibility of the Bomb Conspiracy and asked officer to arrest him. Hearing Ramachandra the police took long breathe thinking that there task was completed.¹²

The police started enquiring Ramachandra about the reason for conspiracy of bomb blast, other masterminds behind it. They tortured him severely beating with cane even though his body paining severely due to the beatings Ramachandra never spoke a word. Police were surprised seeing his patriotism and love for country. He was sent to Hyderabad jail on charges of keeping several bombs in his fields. At Hyderabad jail the police used to warn him saying 'Look Arya you are very fortunate that you are detained in nearby Hyderabad jail, it is not jail for you it is for your protection place. The Razakars would not have spared you if you were free, they would have killed you and thrown to beasts." The case was filed in Hyderabad Court, B. Krishna Rao was deputed to present the case for Ramachandra. He studied day and night and advocate for Ramachandra and took assistance of Vinayak Rao Vidyalkar and Laxman Bapuji. The case was decided quickly due to the efforts the three

advocates. He was acquitted from case in Hyderabad court. But the joy of was short lived, he was punished for jail by another session court and was jailed to Chanchaguda jail.¹³

THE PUNISHMENT OF KALAPANI.

As per the decision of Session Court, Ramachandra was imprisoned at Chanchaguda jail for some months and later on punished for Kalapani (imprisonment at Andaman Jail). This was a very strange and severe punishment where the prisoners were not allowed to meet anybody, were even kept away from sunlight and were tortured by dipping them into sea. Ramachandra was given such a severe punishment and he bravely faced it for the cause of his motherland. He used to say "foreigners have come and imprisoned our mother, I will not rest until they are thrown out of my motherland and mother is freed." Other parts of India were facing single beast but, the people of Hyderabad Karnataka were facing two beasts i.e., the British and the Nizam. But fearless patriots like Ramachandra faced them fearlessly and fought for the freedom of the motherland. Ramachandra completed his prison term on 18 September 1948 and was released on the liberation day of Hyderabad Karnataka.¹⁴ And the story of his life after release is as discussed in the introduction of this article.

CONCLUSIONS.

The oldest Member of Parliament and nonagenarian Bharatiya Janata Party leader Ramachandra Veerappa passed away at a corporate hospital in Hyderabad on Sunday evening 18 Jul 2004.

He leaves behind his wife Revamma, three sons and four daughters. The body was shifted to his hometown Humnabad where it will be cremated with full state honours on Monday. A fearless freedom fighter and prominent Arya Samaj leader, Ramachandra Veerappa played a key role in almost all the struggles of Aryasamajists in the Hyderabad-Karnataka liberation movement to free the region from Nizam's rule. A devoted social worker, Shri Veerappa strove for removal of social and economic disparities in the society and for inculcating human values among the people.

In his political career spanning six decades, the revered Dalit leader served as a member of the assembly in the erstwhile Hyderabad state and the Old Mysore State (now Karnataka) after Kannada-speaking areas of Hyderabad state were merged with Mysore in 1956. He was elected to the Lok Sabha from Bidar (SC- reserved) constituency on Congress ticket in 1962 and 1967. He lost in the subsequent elections to the Lok Sabha in 1971 and 1977. He then joined the BJP and elected to Lok Sabha five times from 1991. Though the aging leader had serious health problems in the run-up to the recent Lok Sabha election, the BJP renominated him.

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