



VANDEMATARAM MOVEMENT IN RAYALASEEMA- AN INSIGHT

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ABSTRACT

The tragedy of the partition of Bengal in 1905 left a profound and far reaching impact on the public life of not only Bengal but the entire country. The teachings of the nationalist leaders had a very great impact on the Rayalaseema people and they responded to the Vandemataram movement spontaneously. The paper neatly narrates the incidents occurred during the vandemataram period in the Rayalaseema region.



KEYWORDS : public life , nationalist leaders , vandemataram period.

BOYCOTT AND SWADESHI

One of the important methods of Campaign during the Vandemataram Movement in Rayalaseema was the holding of the public meetings in which resolutions were passed urging the people to patronise indigenous goods and exclude foreign goods from use. A public meeting was held at Gutthy (Gooty) on 10th September 1905 with M. Subba Rao, a prominent pleader of the place, in the Chair. A number of weavers attended the meeting. The speakers gave a detailed account of the Bengal Movement. A resolution of cordial sympathy with the Bengal agitation to bring about the revival of indigenous industries and to discourage the use of foreign imports was duly passed on the motion of P. Kesava Pillai. A second resolution was passed to start a society to encourage local weavers and a fund to procure Indian made goods, which could not be made locally to meet local demands and to discourage the habit of going in for foreign made articles. A third resolution was also passed to send some intelligent weavers to attend the exhibition of the improved looms proposed to be held in connection with the anniversary of the Penugonda Agricultural Society on 23rd September 1905.

In 1905, Narasing Rao, a prominent pleader of Jammalamadugu in Kadapa District gave a lecture on "Industrial Problems" in the premises of the Hindu Club. Another meeting was also held at Jammalamadugu where a Swadeshi Society was formed with Nanjundappa as President. It was decided to open a shop in the town in which articles of native manufacture only should be stocked and sold. It was proposed also to obtain a Japanese loom and to arrange to teach weaving with the fly shuttle and gradually to introduce this method into the country. An attempt was also to be made to add technical education on the curriculum at one of the Municipal Schools and to teach carpentry of weaving. Prominent leaders who attended the meeting announced their contribution of Rs. 100/- each towards the Swadeshi cause. At this meeting, various suggestions were made to send students to Great Britain or America for technical education. In 1905, Bala

Gangadhar Tilak came to Bellary to inaugurate a Dramatic theatre and delivered a public lecture which instilled a fresh, patriotic fervour among the people of the area.

RAYALASEEMA STUDENT'S TO JAPAN AND FRANCE

The Congress leaders of Madras decided to raise funds and send their representatives abroad to get good training in technical aspects. They knew that unless some training was given in technical education, no headway could be made in meeting the demand of modern industry, particularly from the competition of British imported goods. So, G. Subrahmanya Iyer took the initiative in raising National Fund from door to door during Diwali festival and with the funds thus collected, he sent some representatives abroad. One such person was K.T. Atchayya from Ceded Districts who received training in sericulture in Japan and France.¹

Syamji Rama Rao, a student of Bellary, was also sent to Japan in 1906 to learn glass and watch making. His expenses were borne by the Madras National Fund and Industrial Association.² Subscriptions were also collected in Kurnool to help Rama Rao. P. Kesava Pillai urged *The Hindu* to start a subscriptions list and acknowledge contributions in *The Hindu*. The *Hindu* started a fund in aid of the Indian Student in Japan with a donation of Rs. 100/- by M. Venkateswara Rao of Nuziveedu. In a letter to the *The Hindu*, Gadicherla Harisarvothama Rao mentioned his collections in Vijayawada and other places on behalf of Rama Rao and the small amount which he had been able to send to Rama Rao by Money Order. A reader from Harpanahalli wrote about the benefits of performances being organised in his place in aid of Rama Rao and a third reader suggested a one rupee fund be started all over the Presidency to help Rama Rao.

In 1906, the twenty second session of the INC was held at Calcutta from 26 to 29 December 1906. It was presided over by Dadabhai Naoroji. The Chairman of the Reception Committee was Rash Behari Ghosh. It was at this session that the song "Vandemataram" was adopted as the National Song of India as a rallying point for all the nationalists to fight against the British. It is from the name of this song that the name of the movement "Vandemataram" was derived. From Rayalaseema, P. Anandacharyulu and Gadicherla Harisarvothama Rao attended the session and joined the side of the nationalists. P. Anandacharyulu who introduced the "Swadeshi" resolution at this session spoke thus: "The wealth of the raw material with which this country, this continentabounds, should be utilised to the utmost by indigenous skill, might be made to ensure for the benefit of the people of this land....If the needed still is not ready to hand, steps should of course be taken to get it acquired from abroad".³

The one political incident of 1906 which created in Rayalaseema as it did in the other parts of the country was the arbitrary arrest of Surendranath Benerjee and prominent nationalist leaders of Bengal while attending the Barisal Conference in Bengal and the forcible dispersal of the Conference itself. A protest meeting was held at Gutthy condemning the action of the Government. Manifestation of hostility towards the Europeans among the natives was the chief feature of the Swadeshi Movement in India. In Anantapur, Vandemataram slogans were raised at Mr. Power, a British Official. At the Ceded Districts students conference held at Madras in 1907 and a reference was made to Swadeshi.

NATIONAL EDUCATION

Another feature of the Swadeshi Movement was the visit of several leaders to Rayalaseema either in connection with the collection of contributions in support of National Education or to preach Swadeshi. M. N. Sinha, the Secretary of the Society for the Resuscitation of the Indian Literature of Calcutta and his brother, both working under the leadership of Surendranath Benerjee, arrived in Anantapur District in 1906 and engaged themselves in the work of securing oaths from the supporters of the Swadeshi Movement. The famous nationalist, Koppalle Hanumantha Rao of Machilipattanam collected subscriptions at Gutthy for his National College.⁴ Several important persons from Krishna District visited Kurnool to collect funds for an institution of 'national learning' at Machilipattanam. A free Night School for the depressed classes was also run at Kadapa with about thirty Panchamas, mostly day labourers enrolled. The grain merchants of the place contributed liberally for providing free clothing to the pupils of this Institution.¹³ Police reports of 1906 contain the names of leading Congressmen in Rayalaseema 13 in Kadapa District and 6 in Kurnool District.⁵

GADICHERLA HARISARVOTHAMA RAO AND RAJAHMANDRY COLLEGE INCIDENT

Gadicherla Harisarvothama Rao, a native of Kurnool was the first student to be rusticated by the Principal of the Government Training College, Rajahmundry and this happened at the time of the visit of Bipin Chandra Pal to Rajahmundry. On 26th March 1907, Mark Hunter, the Principal addressed the students of the Training College. Gadicherla Harisarvothama Rao was a teacher-trainee during this period and was not present on that day. On 22nd April 1907, Mark Hunter learnt that the students were completely carried away by Bipin Chandra Pal, that they were idolising him and coming once again to college wearing Vandemataram medals. He also learnt that one of the teacher-trainees, Harisarvothama Rao, had presented an address to Pal before he departed from Rajahmundry wherein he reiterated the determination of the students and the people to attain Swaraj through the methods advocates by Bipin Chandra Pal.

On the evening of 24th April 1907, the Principal passed orders dismissing Harisarvothama Rao from the Training College. The Madras Government in its G.O.No. 385, Education, dated 18th June 1907 not only debarred Harisarvothama Rao from College but also debarred him from employment in any Government or aided school and later on he was debarred from employment in any office under the Government. Harisarvothama Rao was to grow to be a Theosophist, a nationalist and editor of the Nationalist, Andhra Patrika and other papers.⁶

SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY

A Central Intelligence Report of October 1908 gives details of the Servants of India Society with which one Adhi Seshachalam Naidu from Madanapalli was connected. The report says that Adi Seshachalam Naidu, was a probationary member of the Servants of India Society. He was educated in the Madras Christian College and passed the F.A. Examination. As a result of his visit to Poona in June, 1907 where he met Gopala Krishna Gokhale who offered him a position as an Assistant on Rs.25/- a month with free boarding and lodging. He resigned his position as Assistant Manager of the High School, Proddhatur, which was a private institution maintained chiefly by local pleaders and left for Poona in July 1907. In September, he collected subscriptions for the Society and also for The India Journal. He returned to Poona in December 1907, on the way to the Congress at Surat. A Correspondent from Rayadhurgam wrote to the Andhra Kesari of Rajahmundry dated 26th July 1907, stating that: On 14th July 1907, Swami Rao of Bellary, who was a Swadeshi Lecturer, was taken in a procession round the village by the inhabitants with Vandemataram flags and cries. He delivered lectures on Swadeshism, boycott and reading rooms which attracted many people. It was resolved to open a reading room and the merchants were induced to send for Swadeshi articles. Swami Rao also visited Anantapur in 1908 and delivered lectures on Swadeshi to large audiences.

Though it was clear that after the 1907 Surat session, there was an open rift between the extremists and the moderates, the people of Rayalaseema region, by and large, stood by the policies of the moderates. It is evidenced by the effort of the leaders of the North Arcot District Association in Chittoor to keep away G. Subrahmanya Iyer of Madras being invited to preside over its general body session. About this incident, the Correspondent of The Hindu wrote on 30th July 1907 thus: "There is a strong feeling here against him on account of his extreme views on the important public questions of the day, as disclosed in some of his recent writings and speeches and consequently a strong and influential body of the local members voted against him, but most of the members that came from other places voted in his favour, so that he was chosen by the majority. But there is very little reason for hoping that the question will be allowed to rest here. When the Conference meets and his name is formally proposed, the opposition will very probably assert itself again and the issue will finally be settled by the votes of the majority of the delegates that will assemble them."

The above General Body which met in Bhima Rao's Choultry in Chittoor was largely attended. A good number of people came from places like Vellore. Several moderate leaders spoke on the disadvantages of inviting an extremist leader like G. Subrahmanya Iyer. They suggested adjournment of the Conference in view of the developments in places like Rajahmundry and Kakinada in the wake of the visit of Lala Lajapat Rai. A strongly worded requisition signed by the members was sent to the Secretaries of the Congress expressing their unhappiness over the proposal to invite G. Subrahmanya Iyer to preside over the District Conference.

Similarly in Penugonda, a meeting of the local people was convened in Jumma Mosque for the purpose of explaining the Swadeshi movement to the masses. The meeting which was attended by both the Hindus and the Muslims tried to impress upon the people the need to strengthen mutual friendship between the Hindus and the Muslims. Ranga Rao and Siva Sankaram delivered lectures encouraging Swadeshim. Slogans were raised with shouts of "Vandemataram".

SAMITHIS

Samithis or Associations were formed at many places to spread the Swadeshi programme by organised activity. Among such other associations were the 'Proddutur Taluk Association' at Proddutur in Kadapa District. These associations vigorously carried on agitation to advance the cause of Swadeshi and boycott through various ways and means devised specially for the purpose.⁷ In Kadapa, Jangam Kota Hariappa and Bhadrachalam Venkateswara Rao started a Swadeshi cloth shop.

READING ROOMS

The opening of reading rooms was another method adopted by Swadeshi leaders to ensure the success of the movement. Among the places where reading rooms were opened were Kurnool, Proddhatur, Vayalpadu and Kadapa. The Ramakrishna Free Reading Room was opened in Kadapa and a few select English and Telugu newspapers and magazines were subscribed for the purpose. In January 1906 a reading room called "The Vayalpadu Swadeshi Reading Room" (later named as Kanyaka Parameswari Room) was started by some young men at Vayalpadu (Valmikipuram) with the object of propagating a desire for Swadeshi enterprise. The members belonged mostly to the Vaisya community. A teacher of the Lower Secondary School by name K. Krishna Rao was the Secretary and Namali Subba Rao, a teacher in the Hindu High School at Madhanapalle was the President. The members were early twenty in number, each paying a subscription of four annas a month. They subscribed for three Telugu Journals. *The Deshabhimani*, *The Andhra Kesari* and *The Krishna Patrika* and two English papers. The *Madrass Standard* and *The India*. The members used to meet in the evening at the reading room premises and discussed Swadeshim and related subjects. They supplemented their subscriptions by levying contributions from people performing marriages. In their premises, they had about ten photographs of "Patriots" hanging. The photographs of Gopalakrishna Gokhale, Bipin Chandra Pal, Balagangadhara Tilak, Lala Lajapat Rai, G. Subramanya Iyer and R.C. Dutt were among them. The most active member was the Secretary who was very enthusiastic in popularising of Vandemataram. In April 1908, during the celebration of some Yagnam, one Gupta of Guntur delivered lectures on Swadeshi at Vayalpadu Swadeshi Reading Room.

FIERY PUBLIC SPEECHES

The release of Bipin Chandra Pal from prison in March 1908, was celebrated in Kadapa, Proddhatur, Vayalpadu and Chittoor. The members of the Vayalpadu Swadeshi Reading Room carried the photograph of Bipin Chandra Pal in a procession. Public meetings advocating extensive boycott at British goods were held and processions were taken out in 1908 through the streets of Proddhatur and Kadapa with Bipin Chandra Pal's photograph profusely garlanded. It was resolved in one of the meetings at Kadapa to gift a few handlooms to poor weavers.

It is to be noted that the local leaders who addressed the meetings during the Vandemataram movement had very clear perception on local, national and international events of the day. With pungent criticism, they used to impress upon their audiences how the British masters looked down upon the Indian population. They used to narrate the anti-British movements elsewhere to suggest that the British rule should be opposed at all costs in India also. The police intelligence reports refer to one M.C. Rama Rao, who took an active part in the movement by delivering a series of impressive lectures on Swadeshi and boycott in Proddhatur, Jammalamadugu and the neighbouring places in Kadapa District during 1908, in the Bazar street of Jammalamadugu, it was reported that he spoke at length about the exports and imports of foreign goods. He said that Indians should never allow the exportation of raw materials and at the same time resolve not to

take goods from other countries. He narrated how when the Prince of Wales visited our country, every one received him with warmth. But it was reported that he went back home and told his father, the King Emperor that he met friends in Bombay, Sowcars in Calcutta, but 'slaves' in Madras. The speakers then narrated how Americans were subjected to British colonialism and how they became very opulent after getting rid of the foreign yoke. He also impressively spoke on the affairs in Transwal thus: "More than a century ago, several Hindus emigrated to Transwal. After some time, they were asked to vacate the country on the ground that their presence there would cause much more trouble. They refused to leave the country. They were threatened with violence. The man represented the situation to women but they would listen to no such proposal and protested that they would not be called cowards as they were bound to be if they vacated the country. The women said to their men 'You wear our petticoats and gowns and give us your trousers. We will show you how to behave'. So saying, they armed themselves with swords. It would appear that by doing so. It was found impossible to interfere with them."

Rama Rao also narrated to the audience an incident which just then occurred and which everyone was aware. At Tiruvamala in Jammalamadugu Taluk, a person committed a double murder and went about with the weapon in hand dipped in blood. Everyone was afraid of him. The policemen, he said, arrested the culprit only when he threw away the weapon and not before. This incident was narrated to convince his listeners that the British Government was only a paper tiger and that the Indian natives need not be afraid of the force with which the British may act. He ended the meeting in the midst of shoutings: "Vandemataram"

In North Arcot District, public meetings were organised at places like Chittoor and Tirupati where passionate appeals were made for the boycott of foreign goods, particularly British. C. Narayana Reddy, an influential resident of Vayalpadu was very clear in saying that the rigorous collection of revenue and the enforcement of the forest rules had ruined the country and rendered the Ryots very poor. Thousands of sheep and goats had to be sold away to butchers during the land rigorous enforcement of them by the Forest Department. Narayana Reddy lost Rs. 70,000 in the "Arbuthnot Crash". P. Venkata Ramana Chetty, the richest merchant of Vayalpadu and an enthusiastic swadeshist, also spoke in the same vein.

The people in Kadapa District used to openly discuss that the English were going to leave the country sooner than later. T.M. Muriswamy Iyer, Municipal Chairman, A. Nanjundappa, President, Theosophical Society, C. Ramachandra Rao, V. Ramanuja Rao, C. Srinivasa Iyengar, N.C. Kuppa Rao, B. Subba Rao, Ramayya and V. Pitchaiah were the leading Congressmen who used to organise meeting in Kadapa District.

The United Native Club at Kurnool was patronised chiefly by lawyers and it became the centre of political discussion of an informal character since the Minto-Morley reforms were pending. Expressions such as "Scoundrel", "Imperialistic Scamp", "Arch hypocrite" were freely used about Lord Curzon. The Club stopped subscribing for The Madras Mail. S.V. Narasimha Rao, S. Sessa Sastri, S. Narasinga Rao, K. Dhakshina Murthy, K. Venkataranga Reddiar, K. Srinivasa Rao were among those pleaders from Kurnool who used to sympathise with the Congress movement. These lawyers used to hold informal meetings once a year and remit small sums subscribed to the Congress headquarters.

SWARAJYA SEDITION CASE

The year 1908 was a year of repression all over the country. It was on 13th July 1908 that Tilak was sentenced to six years imprisonment and was sent to Mandalay Jail. However, the crowning act of repression in Andhra was the victimisation of Bodi Narayana Rao and Gadicherla Harisarvathama Rao, Managing Proprietor and Editor of *Swarajya* for the publication of an article considered to be "seditious" in nature. Harisarvathama Rao, after his expulsion from the Training College, Rajahmundry, settled down at Vijayawada and devoted his time in collecting funds for building the National College at Machilipatnam, and in the cause of social reform. Later, he also revived a nationalistic Telugu weekly, *Swarajya* in which he wrote several articles on the revolutionary movements that took place in various parts of Europe. In 1908, Vachinatha Iyer shot at Ash, the District Magistrate of Tirunelveli, in Tamilnadu, for which Chidambaram Pillai was arrested and was awarded life sentence. The people of Madras were greatly agitated at the arrest of Chidambaram Pillai and to contain the agitation, one Englishman shot dead two Indians. Harisarvathama

Rao wrote an editorial under the heading "*Vipareetha Buddhi*", condemning the action of the Englishman in his journal *Swarajya* of 26th March, 1908, wherein he said that the cruel English tiger had devoured two Indians. In the editorial, he wrote:

*Arere! Firangi Krura Vyagrama.. Niskarnamuga Neevu Iddharu
Hindhuvulanu Okkasariga Pottana Pettukontivi Kadhara!*

The government treated this editorial as a seditious article and arrested Harisarvothama Rao and the publisher Bodi Narayana Rao on 13th July 1908. The Sessions Judge in Krishna District originally awarded 6 months simple imprisonment for Harisarvothama Rao and 9 months for Bodi Narayana Rao on 9th November 1908. When an appeal was made to the High Court in Madras, the High Court Judge Benson, while conforming 9 months imprisonment for Bodi Narayana Rao, increased the sentence of Harisarvothama Rao from 6 months to 3 years rigorous imprisonment. The Government felt that the Sessions Judge, Kershasp, was too lenient in his attitude towards Harisarvothama Rao and demoted him from the post of District Magistrate to that of Sub-Collector and transferred him to Narasaraopet. Thus Harisarvothama Rao and Bodi Narayana Rao were the first political sufferers in Andhra who went to jail during the Vandemataram Movement. On 22nd September 1908 Subbanna Chari, a clerk in the Burma oil Company at Anantapur, burnt publicly his shirt, cap and braces, demonstrating his intense indignation against British made goods.

The twenty third session of the INC was held at Madras from 28th to 30th December 1908. It was presided over by Rashbehari Ghosh. K. Krishnaswamy Rao was the Chairman of the Reception Committee. Prominent leaders who attended the session from Rayalaseema were: P. Kesava Pillai and Y. Seshappa (Anantapur District), K. Krishna Rao, J.H.B. Venkoba Rao, T.M. Narasimha Charyulu, K. Gundu Rao, V. Pitchaiah, C.Narasimhacharlu, and G. Venkataramayya (Kadapa District), etc.

Political atmosphere underwent a complete change by the beginning of 1910. The Provincial Conference met at Kurnool in 1910 under the Presidentship of P.R. Sundhara Iyer, a leading advocate of Madras. He went to the extent of saying that there was necessity for legislative measures for the suppression of sedition though he was against the seditious meetings Act being extended to new areas or its being permanently placed on the statute book, which the Government was bent on doing. The *Krishna Patrika* referred to his address and said that his statement that the East India Company was from the beginning working hard for the welfare of the country was contrary to the facts. The *Krishna Patrika* further observed: "It is regrettable that Sundhara Iyer has not criticised the repressive measures of the Government on the spirit of an eminent lawyer. It is, of course, the duty of the subjects to co-operate with the Government in suppressing sedition and rooting out anarchism. But Iyer would have done justice to the eminent position he occupied had he, at the same time, said that it is also their duty to criticise those repressive measures which are a block in the way of national progress and see to their being repealed by the Government." District Conference like the one held at Anantapur followed more or less the same course.

IMPACT OF FIRST WORLD WAR

When the First World War broke out, in 1914, public meetings were held in Rayalaseema to extend their loyalty and support to the British Government in its war effort. S.V. Narasimha Rao from Kurnool, A.S. Krishna Rao from Kadapa and A. Ranganatha Mudhaliyar from Yemmiganuru (Kurnool District) have convened meetings and expressed their solidarity to the British. To meet the War efforts an Imperial War Fund was raised.⁸ Dr. Sayeed Ghulam Hussaini from Adoni denounced Turks for its enmity with British and its alliance with Germany. He said "We express our thanks with a sincere heart and promise to be devoted and obedient to our Government forever." All these leaders wanted that Britain must emerge glorious in this holy war.

The twenty ninth session of the INC was held during 28th to 30th December 1914 at Madras. P. Kesava Pillai opposed the treatment of Indians as inferior in their own country. V. Subrahmanyam Panthulu from Kadapa demanded self-government suited to the condition of the Indians. P. Keshava Pillai was invited to

Bombay to attend the Conference in December 1915 to decide on the necessity of self-government for India and draw up rules and elect its All India Officers.

IMPACT OF VANDEMATARAM MOVEMENT

Like other parts of India, Rayalaseema was also influenced by the Swadeshi Movement. The movement led to the Boycott of foreign cloth and night schools were started. Some students from Rayalaseema were sent to Japan and France for technical education. The visit of Bipin Chandra Pal had an electric effect on the youth. Gadhicharla Harisarvothama Rao was attracted towards the national movement. Organizations like servants of India Society, the Taluk Associations, and the establishment of Reading Rooms helped to inculcate Nationalist spirit among the youth. The victimization of newspapers editors was opposed. The foreign cloth was burnt down. The number of participants from Rayalaseema at the INC also increased. Thus, the Vandemataram Movement helped the people mentally prepared to take part in bigger events for the cause of freedom.

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