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ACTIVITIES OF FREEDOM MOVEMENT IN DHARWAD IN 1920

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ABSTRACT

Activities relating to struggle for freedom in 1920 were mainly concentrated in Dharwad next to Poona and Bombay. Dharwad was not only a cultural and educational centre but it was a political centre too. Dharwad has gained a name in freedom movement next only to Poona. Lokamanya Tilak established Swaraj Party and started the movement for the entry of Council. The Karnataka's Political Conference held its first session on 12-05-1920 in Dharwad to extend support to the movement. Shri V.P. Madhavarao the retired Diwan of Mysore presided over the session. The session was attended by Shivaram Pant Paranjape, Shri Kadilkar of 'Kesari' Newspaper, Shri Gangadhar Rao Deshpande, Shrinivas Rao Kaujalagi and other leaders. This helped the freedom movement in gaining momentum throughout Karnataka.



KEYWORDS: Freedom Movement, Dharwad.

Activities of Freedom Movement in Dharwad in 1920 :

INTRODUCTION :

The non-cooperation era started by Mahatma Gandhi was started on 1st August 1920 the very day on which Shri Balgangadhar Tilak died. Dharwad was in the forefront to enshrine in the memory of non-cooperation and boycott activities. The daily newspapers like 'Rajhans' and 'Vijay' and weekly newspapers like "Karnataka Vrutt" and "Karmaveera" were giving support for the freedom

movement and were publishing articles creating hopes and aspirations about freedom among the people without caring for the reaction of the British rulers.

Katti Arts College and Victoria High School were closed as soon as the non-cooperation resolutions were passed at the Nagpur Congress and a National School was established in that place. There was no shortage of students for the same. Some teachers from the closed high school started teaching in the National School. Similarly, there was a widespread publicity of Khadi and hand spinning on a

large scale. An amount of Rs. 38 thousand was collected for the Tilak Swaraj Fund. Membership of the Congress Party exceeded 25000. Hundreds of students boycotted the Government schools and colleges and joined national schools and colleges. Many college students undertook the propaganda work of the Congress Party. A total number of 10 advocates left their legal profession and joined the freedom movement.

People in Dharwad started picketing of liquor shops on their own inspiration. Congress and Khilapat Committees took on the responsibility of guiding

picketing. Volunteers started picketing in a peaceful way. This resulted in the reduction of sale of wine. This provoked the wine-liquor contractors. They surrendered to the collector and requested for help. The then collector Mr. Painter got convinced himself about the decline in the sale of liquor after observing the picketing.

On the orders of the British DSP, Mr. Marston in 1971 June complaints were filed on volunteers. Fines were collected from drunkards and the collected amount was credited to Khilapat Fund.

The then District Collector Mr. Painter had kept a watch on the newspaper editors and got a report to the Government on "Karmaveer" Journal and a cautionary notice was obtained. A warning was issued to the twin editors of the newspaper Mr. Rangarao Diwakar and Madhwa Rao Kabbur for the writings in the paper. He shouted at them saying "I am thirsty of your blood. I may be happy if I see you in jail for at least one year". The very next day there was a writing in "Raj Hansa", "Diar means a Banagar and Painter means Bangar" was the caption of the editorial published in the paper (It compared the collector with the Diar of Jalianwala fame).

On July 1st 1920 Magistrate's award of 6 months hard jail term punishment for 2 volunteers led to complete Hartal (boycott) in Dharwad town to express anger against the punishment. All shops were closed. A public meeting was convened at Khilapat ground in the evening. Unjust punishment of the volunteers was condemned by people through speeches. Rajhans office was in the present Bombay Restaurant building. The open space opposite to the building was known as Khilapat Maidan. A picketing was going on the wine shop at 2 furlong away from the public meeting by about 50 to 100 youths and hundreds of people were attending it as spectators. They used to shout "Mahatma Gandhiji ki Jai" when somebody came out drunk from the wine shop and they used to follow the drunkards for some distance. The spectator's numbers swelled to 1000 as the evening darkness set in. Some miscreants among the crowd brought out the curtain from the wine shop and put it on fire. The observing British officers considered this as an opportunity. They gave orders to open fire on the crowd without warning and without reason. Three rounds of firing took place. Three Muslim volunteers were killed and more than 50 spectators were seriously injured.

President of the District Congress Committee Mr. Vinayakrao Joshi sent a telegraphic message to the Government asking for removal of the District Officers who were responsible for the firing and appoint an independent enquiry committee. But the government ruled out this suggestion. But the Home Minister of Bombay Government Mr. Hayward came to Dharwad and met some people and went back. Mr. G.T. Lawrence ICS was appointed as Special Magistrate to conduct the case relating to the firing. Barrister Kemp was appointed to conduct the case before the Special Magistrate and the Sessions Judge on behalf of the Government. For conducting the case on behalf of the accused prominent advocates like Narayanrao Karagudari, Vishwanathrao Joshi, Bandopant Joshi, Ramrao Ballari, etc. and Sarave's Dadasaheb Karandikar Court on the first day. The Special Magistrate had located his court in the Jail itself. The advocates were stopped at the Jail's gate itself and were not allowed to enter the jail. One or two advocates were allowed inside after some argument. But they decided that the accused should not make self defence.

The bodies of the 3 people who were shot dead were handed over to the people on the night of July 1st. The bodies were taken to the moratorium on the 3rd day. A minimum of 15000 people joined in the procession of the dead body. In the moratorium Congress and at Khilapat Maidan a public meeting was convened. At that time leaders like Gangadharrao Deshpande, D.V. Gokhale of 'Maratha' newspaper, Moulvi Kutubuddin Saheb, etc. paid tribute to the dead and pacified the people. During the procession of the dead body the police officers arrested 29 citizens and issued warrant on them accusing them of loot, dacoit, and theft and for torching the property. Based on such cheap accusations warrants were issued. However, none of them had gone near the wine shops.

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