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SRI HOSAMANI SIDDAPPA AND THE UPLIFTMENT OF THE DEPRESSED CLASSES

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Abstract:

Sri. Hosamani Siddappa was a famous nationalist leader of North Karnataka and had played leading role in the socio-political life of Bombay Karnataka. He was a social reformer, a great patriot, an organizer of peasants and non-Brahmin communities. His role in the Freedom Movement in North Karnataka was vital importance. As part of Congress constructive programmes he carried may the Harijanoddhar (Dalit upliftment) work. Thus, the paper highlight his work and contributions to the upliftment Depressed Classes in the Haveri region. This study is mainly based on historical method and biographical history. Here survey of relevant sources are done, with view to provide an biographical sketch of Sri. Siddappa Hosamani. The study also reflects his general observations regarding the social evils like casteism and untouchability.

KEYWORDS:

Harijanoddhar, Depressed Classes, Humanism, Constructive Programme, Nationalism, Harijan Sevak Sangh.

INTRODUCTION

Sri. Hosamani Siddappa was a famous nationalist leader of North Karnataka and had played leading role in the socio-political life of then Bombay Karnataka. He was a social reformer, a great patriot, an organizer of peasants and non-Brahmin communities. His role in the Freedom Movement in North Karnataka is immensable. As part of Congress constructive programmes he carried may the Harijanoddhar (Dalit upliftment) work. Thus, the paper highlight his work and contributions to the upliftment Depressed Classes in the Haveri region. This study is mainly based on historical method and biographical history. Here survey of relevant sources are done, with view to provide an biographical sketch of Sri. Siddappa Hosamani. The study also reflects his general observations regarding the social evils like casteism and untouchability.

Siddappa Hosamani was born on 13th December, 1879 at Karajagi, (Haveri Tq). His father was Kariyappa and mother was Siddalingamma. The ancestors migrated initially from Kembhavi (Bijapur Dist) to Hirelingadahalli, then to Kurubagonda and at last settled in Karajagi. The early surname was Kurubagondanavara, but later became Hosamani. He had his primary education at Karajagi and Laxmeshwara then was sent to Dharwad for high school education. He successfully passed the B.A. Degree from Fergusson College, Pune in 1906. During College days he actively participated in the Swadesh Movement (1905) along with other students. Later he had his LL.B. degree from the Presidency College, Bombay. In 1920 the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) was formed. He become president

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of it in 1930 and then its headquarter was shifted to his native Haveri. He actively participated and led the Civil-Disobedience movement (1930-33) in Karnataka including no-revenue campaign, salt satyagraha, Hullbanni satyagraha and etc. In 1935 he got elected to Central Assembly. From constituency consists of Ratnagiri, Kolaba, Belgaum, Karwar and undivided districts of Dharwad and Bijapur of Bombay presidency. In the presidential election of All India Congress he voted infavour of Sri Subhash Bose as its president in Tripura Session of 1939. Thus became well known and strait forward leader in the Congress Party.

Thus, he actively participated in the national movement, in the Congress constructive programmes and worked for the upliftment of Dalits and unification of Karnataka and also in the politics of Karnataka in the Post-independent era. He was very much influenced by the egalitarian and humanitarian philosophy of Sri Basaveshwara. Balagangadhar Tilak influenced him but did not like Tilak's attitude towards the non-Brahmins. So, was firmly believed in social progress along with political advancement of the nation. The Social reformers like Mahatma Phule and Justice Ranade also influenced him lot. He came to realize that, as the political injustice was done by the Britishers and have harassed the Indians. So, social injustice was done by caste-Hindus to the Dalits, which was no justification and comparison moral or scientific.¹ Infact Dalits were facing double slavery, one was the foreign rule i.e., political slavery of the British imperialism and another one by our own caste Hindus i.e., the social slavery. Siddappa Hosamani started upliftment work of Depressed classes ten years before Gandhiji.² Though Gandhiji's Harijan programme influenced him later but it had already working for the betterment of Depressed classes and was very committed activist.

The main objectives of this paper are,

to explain of Siddappa's ideas about caste and untouchability and
to discuss the techniques of upliftment work of Siddappa Hosamani,
then also to highlight his upliftment work and activities.

In view of above objectives explanation is given as follows:

II) His ideas about the Social Evils –Untouchability

Siddappa had a secular base in his thinking.³ He was not scholarly writer nor was ideologue of social philosophy and issues like caste system and untouchability, but had his own common understanding about these and had got simple perception. He was practical minded man, he did not believed mere in theory but was a action oriented. He practiced all his thought as a model to others. He asked the upper caste people to give up the practice of untouchability and treat them equally. Since they are also the equal human beings. He pointed out that chaturvarna system is partial and discriminatory. It does not give equal status to all classes (castes) in the society. Infact man has created classes for his own convenience. Further, he pointed out that 'the classes grouped on the basis of labour does not create superiority or inferiority as it is prevailed. (But in reality it was) No one is superior. If anybody think and act so, they are committing sin and not the untouchables. Every individual and a class in the society is depending upon one another for the fulfillment of their day-to-day activities. No one can confine to a single kind of profession or work.⁴ If need rises any body can practice or profess any work or profession. Hence all are equal.⁵

He believed that, the political revolution in India was based substantially on social and economic discontent, thus mere political freedom was not adequate.⁶ Though he was follower of Gandhiji but, he differ with Gandhiji ideologically. Gandhiji's political emancipation agenda also included the upliftment of the Depressed Classes, but he did not give much priority as it was given to the political emancipation against the British and to the Hindu-Muslim unity. Though the upliftment of Depressed Classes became a part of Gandhian constructive programmes, i.e., Harijanoddar, as a strategy/technique to widen the very base of national movement. So as to convert it as a mass movement. In this regard while defining the Indian nationalism Bipin Chandra rightly opined that, during India's freedom struggle the secondary contradiction i.e., eradication of casteism and untouchability was subordinated to the primary contradiction i.e., the fight against British colonial power. Congress did not resolve the social evils successful.⁷ Thus, Siddappa Hosamani's ideas with regard to upliftment resemble the above interpretation.

Even Siddappa's idea of social reformation resemblance Dr. Ambedkar's remedial measure viz; inter-caste marriages, inter-dinning and participation. Siddappa was of the opinion that, the reform should start from upper strata of the society. The upper caste (priestly class) people have created this inhuman system in society, i.e., untouchability. So, the eradication of this evil also must start from the upper castes.

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Further Siddappa observes that, the poor always treats the untouchables equally. But the rich people will not imbibe that, whatever the rich and upper caste people do will be of great importance and influenciable. Hence the upper caste people should start and participate in the social reforms. Automatically the others follow and imitate it. Then undoubtedly the eradication of the evil from its root becomes easy.⁸ Dr. Ambedkar also had similar view as far as imitation theory was concerned. Dr. Ambedkar pointed out that upper caste people to take lead in the inter-caste marriage.⁹ So, that casteism and untouchability could be eliminated permanently.

III. His public work and activities

In this part Sri Hosamani Siddpa's public work and activities with regard to upliftment of Depressed Classes are highlighted. These includes creating awakening through education and to encourage them to fight for the civil rights and liberties. In this direction he started boarding school at Haveri, he allowed the Depressed Classes people to take the water from public tank at Kaveri and actively involved in the programmes of Harijan Sevak Sangha of Karnataka province.

i. Boarding School at Haveri:

Due to Gandhiji's tour in Karnataka and elsewhere in 1930's there was a great enthusiasm sprang up. At Hubli Harijan Balika Ashrama was started by Veranagouda Patil and his wife Smt. Nagamma. Siddappa was associated with the work and maintenance of this Ashram. At the same time Hosamani Siddappa started a hostel for the Depressed classes children at Haveri. It benefited the students of that region.¹¹

ii. Harijan Sevak Sangha:

In 1933 Harijan Sevak Sangha was started. Karnataka did not lag behind in its mobilization and activities. Branches of the Sangha established in Bijapur, Belgaum, Karwar, Mangalore, Coorg and Bellary with Hubli as its headquarters and Sardar Veernagouda Patil as its Prant (province) President. Siddappa collected Harijan has fund in 1934. When Gandhiji came to know this, he told him that, this money is collected in Haveri, hence this amount must be utilized for the benefit of Dalits of this area only. It is your responsibility to work for removal of untouchability.¹² According Desai G.D., the service rendered by him to the Harijan Sevak Sangha was appreciable and unforgetable.¹⁰ The above statement shows that, he had contributed lot to the Sangha.

Siddappa did not like the publicity of the work he has done to the Depressed Classes, but was more concerned about the implementation of it. Mrs. Sarojini. R. Huggi in her Ph.D. thesis pointed that, the (upper caste) Brahmins controlled almost all press as result, Siddappa did not get much publicity the work he has rendered to the Dalits. She further pointed out that, Siddappa himself did not have the habit of writing for news paper or periodicals. Thus, enough records of his service is not available and was not recorded purposely by upper caste papers. But his work is still fresh in the public memory of Haveri region. Thus, from child to the age old man speak proudly about him and his contributions.

iii. Opening of Public Pond to Depressed Classes:

Sri Siddappa was a President of Haveri Municipality for about 1 year in 1930. Then he made better use of his office for the well being of all. Dalits were not allowed to take water from the public tank (pond) but were to wait hours together till upper caste person comes to pour the water. He rejected the idea of separate wells to Dalits as other members of municipality suggested. He argued that, if we go on digging well, for each caste, we have to dig pits in the whole town of Haveri.

In direction he issued public notice, informing that, tank (pond) will be kept open to Dalits also. If any body has any objection should inform immediately with proper grounds for the objection. But none had the courage to raise objections in front of him.¹³

Then resolution passed in the very next Municipality meeting as follows;

"Now onwards the one and the only drinking water pond will, be kept open to the Harijans also. None can prevent them from touching water."¹⁴ Not simply passed the resolution sat aside but went to Dalit colonies and encouraged them to take water from tank. Thus, they followed him and started using the water.

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IV. Involvement in Family Functions:

He has carried the Dalit upliftment work not only in the public life but in his family functions also he involved them and set as model to others. In the engagement function of his own daughter he invited Sri. Gattakamble, a Mamaledar of Haveri, who belong to a untouchable community. In one of the marriage party Machagar Yallappa, a cobbler caste, was asked to serve tea to all invitees and guests. His house was there on the way to Dalit colony and was closely mingled with activities and functions of Dalits.

CONCLUSION :

Thus, Hosamani Siddappa as staunch follower of Sri Basaveshwara, he fought for the rights of the Depressed Classes. And did not belief in caste or community discrimination. As an Gandhian follower in Karnataka, he under took the work of Harijan Sevak Sangha and rendered the humanitarian service to the Depressed Classes. He firmly believed in humanism, peace, non-violence and equality of all human beings. At some time he had respect and fascinated towards the revolutionary ideas of Subhash Chandra Bose and other revolutionaries of Quit India Movement of 1942. So, work and contribution of Siddappa Hosamani to Depressed Classes, women and other backward classes is unique event in the history of Bombay Karnataka.

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