



THE ROLE OF MUSLIMS IN THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Dr. P. Athaulla Khan¹ and Dr. M. Nazeeruddin²

¹Associate Prof. of History & HOD, Osmania College, Kurnool.

²Associate Prof. of Economics & HOD, Osmania College, Kurnool.

ABSTRACT :

In the later stages of struggle for freedom, the concept of two nations came to play an ugly role leading to the partition of India.. The part played by Muslim League in this respect is well known. Freedom movement spread to Rayalaseema also and several individuals sacrificed their lives and properties in this movement. But it is a debatable question as to how much of this rising was popular and spontaneous. More so, what was the part played by the Muslims in this Movement ? We have seen that the Muslim League in North India exerted its influence upon Muslims, but it is to be examined how much out of volition did the Muslims in South India, and of Rayalaseema participate in this movement and whether they were subjected to any outside influence.

KEYWORDS : Muslim League , later stages , struggle for freedom.

INTRODUCTION :

The Muslims could have, if at all, changed the minds of their kinsmen of south and desist them from participation. To what extent did they influence ? Did they pressurise and influence the Muslims of this region either in participation or in maintaining neutrality in this movement. The available evidence at our disposal shows that Freedom Movement in the Madras Presidency as a whole was forceful. But as compared to the other regions, there were not many muslims who took the leadership in the movement, but the movement itself was of such a magnitude that people in the country generally jumped into fray with a desire to fulfil the aims of the movement. Our examination of the evidence shows, however, that although the people participated willingly often-times, they did not know the purpose of the several phases of the movement in which they were participating. It is proposed to examine briefly in this paper, how far the Muslims participated in the movement and to what kinds of influence had they subjected themselves. Besides examining the available records, effort has been taken to collect oral evidence by interviewing several of those Muslims who had participated in the Freedom Movement and tried to checkup with documentary evidences. In the course of this study, several Muslim Freedom Fighters who actively participated in the Freedom Movement, but who have been today very much forgotten came to be known. They contributed their mite to the cause of India's struggle for freedom, but there were very few in Rayalaseema who remained in the lime light after independence. A pen picture of some of the patriots belonging to this community is given below :

Mrs. Rabiya Bee' Sixty one year old Rabiya Bee is the first muslim lady of the entire Andhra who actively participated in the struggle for freedom. Hailing from Cheyyedu, in Anantapur District, she had married Mulla Mohiddeen Sahib who was a member of the Congress. It was perhaps natural that she drew inspiration first from her own husband. She participated in the individual satyagraha of 1940-41. Encouraged by the local leader, Sri Pappuri Rama-charyulu, she offered Satyagraha near the Government Arts College, Anantapur. By then the jail had become full and only for want of space in prison she was not taken into custody. It is interesting to note that when she came forward to offer Satyagraha, some of her co-religionists objected on the ground that she was a lady who would, by her action, come out of the Purdah, something considered essential for a Muslim lady. Also, after all, she being a Muslim, she need not have interest in what they considered to be a Hindu agitation. But their objection did not desist her from doing whatever she did, since it was for a national -cause. 2

Md. Rasool Sahebs Only son of Rajak Saheb, a peasant of Kasapuram in Anantapur District, Rasool studied upto the V class and he took to agriculture. He had developed friendship with Sri Ramanujacharyulu, G.A. Narayanacharyulu and Avati Anjaiah of the same village. They moved together in a company and were influenced by the district leaders like Kalluri Subba Rao, I. Sadasivan and Pappuri Ramanujacharyulu. Added to these, the tours of Gandhi in 1934 and Rajendra Prasad in 1938 kindled the patriotic spirit of these youngsters from Kasapuram who participattd in the Ouit India Movement enthusiastically. Like others of the day, they too showed interest in removing railway tracks in two places near Guntakal and damaging the Madras-Bombay trunk road. For a while, they went underground, staved in a temple in Sirigapatnam, near Vanaparthy. There was initial objection from the people for a Muslim to seek shelter in a temple. K. Ramachryulu solved the problem by giving Rasool a Hindu name. Later on, they surrendered to the Magistrate who sentenced them with 6 months' regorous imprisonment (24-11-42 to 25-5-43). He spent his jail term in prison at Gooty, Anantapur and Penugonda.4

Shaik Imam Sahibs The 78 year old Imam Sahib of Vepurakota in Tamballapalli taluk of Chittoor district, more popularly known today as Gandhi Imam Sahib was the son of a petty business-man. Though studied upto V class he was politically awakened since he was in the habit of reading newspapers. Local leaders like Gopalakrishna Gupta of Madanapalli often visited his village to educate the people about the freedom struggle and about Gandhiji's message. Imam Sahib was one of those who was impressed by the lectures and became a staunch follower of the Congress. He was one of those selected by the District Congress Committee to offer satyagraha in Madras. He was joined with colleagues like Gopalachari, Kalahasthi Sundaram, Balasubramanyam, Ongole Subba Rao, M. Nagaraja Sarma, Tekuru Ramachandra Rao etc. All these Satyagrahis were encamped in the Durgabhai Deshmuch Camp. They toured from village to village in Tamilnadu explaining the people the nature of salt-satyagraha and impressing upon them the horrors of British atrocities. Naturally, he was arrested and put behind the bars in the Madras Central Jail for a period of 3 months from 27-5-1930 to 27-8-1930. Within the jail precincts, he followed the Gandhian principles, wore a Khadi jubba and Sherwani and carried out rigorous work of grinding oil seeds and extract-ing oil. With him there was another person known as Hyderabad Narasinga. On one of those days the jailor caned these prisoners abusing them as rowdies". The Congress prisoners took objection to it and started Satyagraha within the jail. Their non-coopera t ion with the Jail authorities resulted

in heavy financial loss. This continued till the authorities tendered. apologies. After his release from imprisonment, he took upon himself the task of propa-gating Congress principles, educating villagers about the stepmotherly treatment of the British Government and arousing patriotic feelings and political consciousness among the people with Chilakaneni Sundaram and Kuruva Venkateswarlu. He partici'. ted in the campaign of prohibition of liquor at Birangikottakota, Tanakallu, Kokkanit and Gattu. They also picketted the liquor shops. Today he is serving the people as a medical practioner. He was a full-time Congress worker. He has a great dislike for the way in which the country waspartitioned.6

Mohammed Ibrahim Sahib?

On the Bazar Road in Punganur in Chittoor district there is today a Soda factory in the name of Netaji, and this name has a colourful background which tells us how its owner was a soldier in the Indian National Army of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. He was one of the eight brothers and a sister, children of one Patnul Hydersab. He studied upto VII class but gave up his education in the middle because of financial problems. It was for that reason, that at the age of 20, he joined the British Army and was trained at the military centre in Bangalore. Later he was sent to Singapor to participate in the II World War. The British army was defeated, nearly 50,000 people of the army having surrendered to the Japanese army. Their services were utilised by the Japanese to renovate buildings and cleaning the war debris. But there was a great shortage of food and medicine which made them suffer greatly. At this juncture Netaji appeared on the scene. He addressed the prisoners in the camp and provoked them to join the Indian National Army for the emancipation of India from the Britishers. His slogan was "Desk Hamara Raj Hamara". With several others, Ibrahim joined the Indian National Army. The German and Japanese Governments supplied arms and ammunities to Netaji and his Indian National Army. Netaji declared war on the British. The Andaman and Nicobar islands and also Burma fell into the hands of Japan who made them over to Netaji to organise the Indian Government in exile. The Indian National Army led by Lt. Col. Aziz Ahmed, Lt. Col. Dhillon, Lt. Col. Shah Nawaz etc., moved from Malaya to Manipur with great difficulties. Since there was shortage of ammunition, they were forced to fight out battles with bayonet. Several soldiers died. At this juncture, U.S.A. intervened and the British Government had an upper hand. The Indian National Army surrendered to Britishers. To a question asked by the Britishers as to the reasons why he joined the Indian National Army, Ibrahim said that it was for the liberation of the country and liquidation of the British Government. He was therefore punished and sent back to India without salary. He got adverse conduct certificate so that he could not get any job in British India.. But it is unfortunate that he could not get any job even in free India.

The Muslims thus there is enough evidence to prove that as a whole actively supported the movement. Statistically speaking the number of such Muslims might be less when compared to their population. But, they did serve with great dedication and sacrifice. In fact, what could have happened, if they had subjected themselves to the influence of political parties like Muslim League, which was more a religious party than a National Party, is anybody's guess. What is noteworthy here is that the Nizam's kingdom which till the end did not recognise the Free Indian Republic, could not exert its force or influence over these regions. This is obviously because the Muslims themselves had the better opinion of the Nizam and were not willing to subject themselves to such outside influence.

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