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FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF ATHANI REGION



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ABSTRACT:

In the freedom struggle of India the role of Belagavi district is higher. Freedom fighters of this district's Athani taluk region have given significant contribution to the history of the country. In those people major are Smt. Ambakka Baligar, Basagonda Kallappa Belagi¹, Muttappa Terdal, Sangappa Gulagatti, Ramagonda Basaragi, Siddappa Pelaguddi, Appanna Dalingali, Rajasab Sultan Nadaf, Saibanna Mallappa Athani, Nemanna Tavanappa Lende, Tammanna(Sidaraya) Nandagouda Kottalagi, Ramappa Monappa Kamble, Mahadev Pandappa Poddar, Sindhura Lakshmana, Babu Hujare, Chi. Shrinivas² Gopalacharya, Kulkarni Vishnu Ramachandra, Karvekar Veerappa Rudrappa, Korema

Adivappa Basappa, Kosmi Shivaram Mallappa, Koulagudda Ramarao Shrinivas, Khemalapur Kallappa Ramappa, Jeere Babu Vaman, Joshi Narasing Madhavacharya, Tange Lakshman Annappa, Dambalakar Dinkar Sakharan, Dukale Gundam Sidram, Nayak Vasudev Allappa, Mutalik Rango Narayan, Hosur Bhimaji Gopal, Haler Brahma Lakshman Nandishwar, S. B. Dalawayi, A. S. Kulkarni and other Dalit as well as backward freedom fighters' history of participating in Quit India Movement of 1942 is electrifying³.



KEY WORDS: *freedom struggle, Freedom fighters*

INTRODUCTION :

These people responded to the call of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. "Do or Die" was the last mantra of their life. With the encouragement of the leaders of this region, still some more people became active in the freedom struggle, fought sacrificing their lives and have been immortal. The historical study of such people has to be reached to the next generation. In that regard, these freedom fighters' history is analysed here. The history of the martyrs who fought for the war of freedom is still

alive today in the 'Belavala' country's Athani region. The objective of this paper is to record the event of such freedom fighters' establishment of Swaraj in the history. Along with that so many Dalit freedom fighters namely Ramappa Monappa Kamble, Sindhura Lakshmana, Babu Hujare, Vasudev Nayak, and Dalit women freedom fighters such as Ambakka Baligar and others and backward classes people and Muslims also have taken part in the freedom struggle but their chronicle is vague in the history. Attention is drawn especially towards this aspect in this article.⁴

History and Nature of Freedom Fighters of Athani Region:

Athani taluk of Belagavi district has contributed its service in its own way. According to the records of the Government around 80 to 90 people have participated in various movements of freedom struggle.

Freedom fighters formed Athani Congress Committee in Satti and Jugula villages of Athani Taluk and gave call to participate in the Freedom Movement. As a result veteran leaders like Vallabh Bhai Patel⁵, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and others visited this taluk and pleaded the citizens to join hands for the national integrity. Then the people of this part regardless of caste or creed Hindus, Muslims, Dalits, Backward classes' people, Lingayats, Veershaiva Mutts, women came forward in large number. By using Swadeshi(indigenous) goods/things such as khadi, handicraft materials they gave call to rebel against the British administrative policy. As a result freedom struggle was intensified in Athani region. The fighters involved in this movement cut down the cables of communication. They surrounded Post office, Railway stations and protested. In addition to that they warned the Britishers by cutting down the sendhi and Sarayi (Arrack) producing eechala trees. The police tried to curb this movement by giving various kinds of tortures to the activists who participated in these activities.⁶

In the context of National Freedom Movement Gandhiji visited Shedabal, Mangasooli, and Athani villages of Athani taluk and gave a kind of inspirations to the freedom fighters³. This made so many people of Athani taluk to participate in the Freedom Movement. Here an attempt is made to give detailed information about such people. Collecting money for Harijan's fund in Shedabal village, Gandhi said that untouchability is a sin. He urged to treat upper caste Hindus as their siblings.⁷

Major Freedom Fighters of Athani Taluk:

1. Babu Hujare (1910 to 1992)-

He was born on 1/2/1910 in Jatt Province's Khojanatti village. Though his birth place was Khojanatti, his childhood was spent at his mother's native Telsang village of Athani taluk, Belagavi district. He got primary education in the same village. A teacher named Vitthal Namdev Pol appreciated his intelligence and encouraged a lot to get school education. Later after the transfer of Vitthal Pol, another teacher named Narasing also encouraged even more. Right from the childhood the devil of poverty was behind him. Along with going to school he decides firmly to sell beetle leaves. He never thought that the leaves he would sell will be purchased or not. He was unaware of the superior-inferior concept. When he entered that work having the good notion that others are also human beings as he was, the people sprinkled water and took the leaves from him. He asked why they did like that, the reason they told that he belonged to inferior caste of Chambar (Cobblers), if they eat his leaves disease will infect them. This shook his heart and made him to take an oath to fight against it.

For higher education he left Telsang and came to the historical city Vijapur. Famous businessmen namely Siddappa Nimbaragi, Basayya Purani, Murigeppa, advocate Sugand Vandra, Bharamanna Hosamani, Raanasi Kattimani, Headmaster Athani these all encouraged his studies. In

1928-29 before attending the Matriculation exam, plague spread all around and took the lives of his brother and sister. He skipped his exams and went to perform cremation rituals of his brother and sister. Once again he returned to Bijapur and attended the Matriculation exam. Later he fought against British for the liberation of the country. In 1945 he was arrested and imprisoned and punished rigorously at Puna's Yarwad Jail. He set fire to many police stations, cut down Post communication cables and conducted strikes against the British. In such situation he worked hard to eradicate social evils. He rendered his humble service to Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar in his visit to Bijapur. Overall it is a matter of proud to call him a social reformer and freedom loving patriot. He has worked as a member of Bombay Legislative Assembly from 1946-1952. During 1946-1952 Congress party recognized his loyalty and made him the chairman of Vijapur District Congress Committee. From 1953 to 1959 he worked as District Congress Organizing Secretary and as Secretary from 1959 to 64. As a member of Vijapur Taluku Land Ownership Judicial Board, he worked hard for the development of farmers. He implemented Madivala Aeta Neeravari (an irrigation scheme). On 1st November 1992 he was honored by the Rajyotsava Award as well. Freedom fighter Babu Hujare has been honored by so many awards.⁸

2. Ramappa Monappa Kamble-

Ramappa Monappa Kamble of jugular, jumped into freedom struggle by breaking the fence between Kagwad and Shedabal, demolishing Railway pole, burning Lokhur panchayat shelter, looting the Kagwad and Shiraguppa post, burning toddy supplying vehicles and cutting off Pine trees.

3. Saibanna Mallappa Athani-

He took part in Quit India Movements of 1942 and burnt down Athani post, for this he was imprisoned for three months in October 1942.⁹

4. Tammanna Mallappa Nandagouda-

He was born in Kottalagi, on 12/06/1916. He was basically farmer. With the influence of N. B. Dalawai and A. S. Kulkarni, he looted the post which was coming to Kottalagi. He, with his fellow activists cut down the telephone cable connecting Bijjaragi and Kanamadi. In Jatth taluk's Sessions Court he was sentenced for an imprisonment of five months and a fine of Rs. 100.

5. Rajasab Mastansa Nadaf-

He was born in Shankratti, on 1 June 1922. He is also from the family of Farmers. He entered the Freedom Movement with the influence of Wali Channappa, and Shantinath Ingale. He worked as an informer between Vasudev Naik and Wali from Hidakal and shared information with each other. Mahadev Pandappa Poddar also did the same work in the Freedom Movement.

6. Sindhura Lakshmana-

Sindhura Lakshmana is a brave man who had got the trait of rebelling against the injustice, untruth, and irreligion right from his birth. He is the audacious brave man who rebelled against the injustice. When situation demanded, he fought without caring for his life and had become a challenge for the British government. Born in 1898, birth place - Sindhur of Jatth province. Father's name – Bedar Sabu, mother's name – Narasavva, her native was Radderatti of Athani taluk. He grew up in this locale.

*Gandasiddare irabeka yenthava
Nammanna Sindhura Lakshmana nanthava
Mallina angi maimyale*

Chakari kolu kaiyaaga shaman ghtika suttu
Chaavadige ontaana

Though Sindhura is a small village, it had got a big name for the administration of Goudas. Sindhura Lakshmana was so bold that he confronted with such Goudas and questioned their atrocity. After that the Goudas filed a complaint against Sindhura Lakshmana that he has cheated the government in revenue collection. At the same time Dolli Bhimappa, Hiremath Irayya, Manohar Kulkarni were ready to become eye-witness and give statement that Lakshmana's elder sister's sons named Saaba, Narasu, Gopali had robbed in Basaragi, Beeluru, and Sindhur. Sindhura Lakshmana had mastery in various power-adventure exhibiting qualities such as using catapult, running backward fastly, wrestling, pulling carts of full sacks, climbing the wall from backwards. He participated in all those talent exhibition shows. He encouraged the people around him to do those adventures. He would defeat the people opposed him. In this background Sindhura Lakshmana inevitably had to rebel against the politically strong Indians who tortured the innocent. Those politically strong people were the followers of the British. So naturally in a way he raised war against the British. Any freedom loving provincial rulers or any other institutions did not patronage him. But still he continued to oppose the British. He started looting the rich. He was selfless hence distributed the looted money to the poor. Lakshmana, a mutineer to the British stood as a rebel till the end of his life.

Bandeddu naavelli aaglara hididu
Kandalli thulidu barona bennatti
Oandinlli haaki thuliyona

Sidduba of Kohalli was his soul mate. Police of Jatth province were running behind him. Foujdar Kalal, Pavadeppa, Dildar Khan were the main people in them. When Sindhura Lakshmana and Foujdar Kalal were fighting neck to neck, Narasu's axe cut down Kalal's neck. This made the British officers and the people terrified. British Representative Garmon came to power. Venkatagouda was the Policepatil. Gormon threatened the Policepatil and pressurized to capture Sindhura Lakshmana. Eventually Venkanagouda made a conspiracy to retain his existence. In 1922 during the Shravana month, he camped at Kappara Padeyavvana Gudda (a Hill) in Taggi. He arranged a cordial social gathering and invited Lakshmana. Lakshmana trusted him and attended the event but he was killed (on 15th July 1922) while having the food⁵.

Paragani Jatthi Umarani deshada maahee
Aaluvanta dani Davale Saradara
Jatthi samsthana paiki sanna halli Sindhura
Sindhura Lakshmana hutano bhanta enisyana
Kotta vachana huttri tappalilla
Ghata hoguva thanaka hidida hata bidalilla
Lakshmananu thirugi heilutthane naale barteeni
Hushari iru ni chaavadi balaga
*Ee maathu sulla alla gandu haakupadaraaga*¹⁰

7. Dhanavant Rayappa Halingali-

Great freedom fighter Dhanavant Rayappa Halingali was born in 1926, at Athani taluk's Jinjarwad village. Mother's name is – Chandravva, father's is name – Rayanna. He completed his primary education at Jinjarwad itself. During childhood it was a curious thing for him to participate in the freedom movement. Because his father, uncles participated in the freedom movement by the influence of Inchageri Mutt. This helped him to participate directly as well as indirectly in the freedom

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movement. According to the guidance of Madhavananda Prabhu, his father and uncles participated in the freedom movement and were busy in cutting down the post cables, burning British bungalows, cutting the railway tracks. They went away from the residential area and hid themselves in forests. Hence they were unable to come to their villages. This boy used to carry the rotti butthi (meal bag) to the forest and give it to them and inform them about the movements of the British. During the struggles of Freedom Movement in villages participated and sung this kind of songs:

*"Dhare etthi nade munde saagu bedarade munna
Nee nodivideshi jana roodi pishachi horadoodidaraache"*

His fellow activists in the Freedom Movement, Uppar Nandrekar, Narayan Katkar, Balappa Teli and others were fighting ceaselessly against the British for the freedom. He has been in jail for nine months on an imprisonment as well. He has served the nation by staying at Birla Bhavan, Mumbai for seven days with Khan Abdul Gafur Khan who is known as the Gandhi of the Frontier. During the Freedom Movement by organising groups he set fire to the police stations and plundered weapons. They stormed into the police station of Savalagi, shouting the slogan "Madhavaanand ki jai" tied the watchman, snatched pistol and rifles and escaped. They cut down the railway tracks and cut down the telephone poles in order to disturb movements of the British. In 1948 Goonda Act was imposed. During that there was famine. They stopped a lorry carrying food grains at Halalli which was coming from Jattth and distributed it among the poor, Dalits. Due to that he was imprisoned in Darga Jail, Bijapur. People say that, according to Goonda Act, he had to leave the district so he came and settled in Telsang. He had social and political concern for the poor and Dalits. He gave a tractor as donation to the Inchageri Mutt as donation in 1978. And in 1986 he gave away his land to the Government Primary School. In this way it can be said that he has played a significant role in social and political issues.

Role of Women:

The men of Athani region were wandering from one place to the other. M
Meanwhile the women of those men's family circulated the pamphlets in the disguise of selling the wood, or giving meal bag to the men working in the fields. Women have taken part in such tasks. Especially the role of the poor and Dalit women is very important in that. A Dalit woman named Sharada Hujare is important among them.

Role of the Mutts:

The role of the Mutts in the Freedom Movement is very important. The Mutts co-operated by providing facilities to stay at night and food during the night for the freedom fighters. In such Mutts major are: Athani's Gachchina Mutt, Inchageri Mutt, Arabhavi Mutt, Inchal Mutt, Khilegaon Mutt, Sulebhavi Mutt etc. Overall, Mutts have played an important role in the Freedom Movement of those days.

Freedom Movement of Athani Region in the Folk Songs:

Description about the freedom fighters participated in the Freedom Movement in Athani is recorded in variety of folk song formats such as gee gee pada, chowdiki pada, bhajana pada, and moharram pada. The women and men of this region appreciate those freedom fighters in their songs.

Role of Muslims:

Muslims also have played a very important role in the Freedom Movement. Rajasab Sultan Nadaf did the work of sending news to the freedom fighters. Muslims knew the skill of manufacturing

the pistols. They manufactured the pistols for the Freedom Movement.

Role of Hindus:

People belonging to the communities of lower strata of society (Chalavadigaras, Walikars, Barikars, Ambigas, Talawars, Dalapathi, Natikars) were working under the British by virtue of that they gave inspiration to the freedom fighters by giving information about the movements of the British.

Overall this paper attempts to focus highly on the neglected freedom fighters of the Freedom Movement. It is found that these freedom fighters had social concern. Here an attempt is made to throw light chiefly on the Dalit freedom fighters.

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