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A brief history of national movement in Ananthapuramu district from 1906-1920

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Abstract

The national movement has taken new turn with the division of Bengal in 1905 on the pretext of administrative convenience. At national level the path of the leaders changed from placatory nature to revolutionary nature. The demand for swaraj became the important slogan of the leaders. Several leaders at nook and corners of the country resorted violent methods to attain swaraj. In Andhra Pradesh here and there violent incidents took place against British rule. Whereas, in Ananthapuramu district the movement still continued on peaceful lines. With the annulment of partition of Bengal in 1911 the Vande Mataram movement subsided. Then most of the leaders concentrated on the problems facing by Telugu speaking people in composite Madras State.

Keywords: Partition, Swaraj, Vande Mataram, home rule

Introduction

The last official act of Lord Curzon was the partition of Bengal. The province of Bengal was sought to be divided into two parts, i.e., the western and the eastern Bengal. In western Bengal, Hindus were in a majority and in the eastern zone Muslims were in preponderance. It was said that Partition was necessary for administrative convenience and efficiency because the Province had become unwieldy. But Indians, in general, and the Bengalis in particular, clearly realised that it was a subtle move on the part of the British Government to weaken the forces of nationalism in Bengal by weaning away the Muslims. Lord Curzon visited east Bengal and in his attempt to win over Muslims in favour of the Partition, said that the Partition would create in east Bengal a province, where the Muslims could flourish without the dominance of any other community. The Partition was taken to be a diplomatic move to play the game of divide and rule. Some of the Muslims were apparently caught in the snare. The speeches and intentions of Lord Curzon and other British officials might have been misunderstood, but the subsequent riots which occurred were attributed to those speeches, by the Hindus.

A vigorous agitation started against the contemplated Partition. Swadeshi movement had already been gaining ground in Bengal and other Provinces of India for some time. The people of Bengal retaliated by giving a vigorous start to the movement for the boycott of foreign and especially the British goods. The Swadeshi and the boycott movements spread throughout the length and breadth of India and especially in Bengal. Curzon implemented the Partition Plan and rode roughshod over the sentiments of the Indian public. Many authorities on the national movement are agreed that the Partition became the direct and immediate cause of the growth of the Extremism and terrorism in the country. The partition was, no doubt, accomplished under the threat of the British bayonets; but it left Indians bitter and the Bengalis wounded. Many a young man in Bengal took a vow to get the wrong righted by peaceful agitation, if possible, and by violent methods, if necessary. The Partition day began to be observed in India everywhere to register protests. Many young men formed secret associations, whose object was to avenge the wrong by fair or foul means. People lost faith in the integrity and sense of justice of the English rulers. Mr. Gokhale was sent to England to appeal to the British Government to undo the wrong. The Secretary of State, Mr. Morley, told Gokhale that Partition could not be annulled. Even the Moderates, who were in full sympathy with Bengal in its agitation against the partition, began to doubt the efficacy of their constitutional methods, which they had been following so far.

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Gokhale admitted that “young men are beginning to ask, what was the good of constitutional method, if it was only to end in the Partition of the Bengal.”

The preachings of nationalist leaders prepared the Andhra people to participate in the Vande Mataram movement with dedication and sacrifice. During the Vande Mataram movement the students and press played a dominant role. The Andhra Student studying at Madras State capital held a meeting in September 1905 under the leadership of Sri G. Subramanya Iyer, the editor of the *Swadtscha Mitran*. The prominent among them includes Sri Kaleswar Rao, Ramasastry Naidu, Gadicherla Harisarvothama Rao, Komarraju Lakshmana Rao, Gollapudi Sitarama Sastry and Chakriah Chetty. During the course of meeting the students raised ‘national fund’ as a support to Swadeshi movement.

The 22nd Indian National Congress was convened at Calcutta in December 1906. At this session the Vande Mataram song of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was declared as the National Song of India. It is also considered as the uniting point for all national leaders to fight against the British raj. Under the name of this song a movement called “Vande Mataram was initiated all over the India.

The movement reached its culmination with the tour of Bipin Chandra Pal on 3rd April, 1907. He toured several students and leaders to open several educational institutions and native stores in Rayalaseema and Andhra region. Several students inspired with speech of Pal and started wearing Vande Mataram badges as a mark of unity. Students started to greet one another with Vande Mataram slogan.

During the Vandemataram movement the prominent national leader Balgangadhar Tilak was arrested and sentenced to 6 years imprisonment in 1908. After magisterial enquiry he was sent to Mandalay Jail on 13th July 1908. This infuriated the nationalists all over the country. A nationalist by name Chidambaram Pillai shot the district Magistrate in Tamil Nadu. In retaliation to this the British citizen shot dead 2 Indians. Gadicherla Harisarvothama Rao in his journal ‘Swarajya’ editorial condemned the acts of British harshly. The then British Indian Government treated this editorial as rebellious and imprisoned Gadicherla Harisarvothama Rao and Publisher Bodi Narayana Rao. Against the arrest and imprisonment of the Andhra leaders, on 22nd September 1908, a clerk by name Sri. Subbanna Achari of Burma Oil Company in Ananthapuramu district burnt his shirt, cap and braces in public, demonstrating his intense indignation against British made goods.

One of the practical measures taken for the Vandemataram which included Swadeshi was to send students to Japan. Those incidents were referred in Suryodayaprakashika a Telugu paper in Andhra connected with this movement. Bhavanachari in Guntur made efforts to raise funds from the Zamindars and others for the purpose and succeeded in his attempt to some extent. Funds were collected in Kurnool in Rayalaseema to send a student to Japan for undergoing training of glass-making^[11]. A second measure taken for the purpose was to open Swadeshi stores in important towns. Many such stores came into existence in 1906 A.D. A third measure was to open weaving mills though not on a large scale. The enlightened and patriotic Raja of Munagala opened such a factory at Bezawada in June, 1906 A.D. with Mohi

The Congress leaders of Madras decided to raise funds to give aid to the pupil who desired to go abroad for technical knowledge in the field of industries. At this juncture, Syamji Rama Rao, a pupil of Bellary was sent to Japan in 1906 A.D. to learn glass and watch making. His expenditure for technical education was borne by Madras National Fund and Industrial Association^[11]. The subscriptions were also collected in Kurnool for the same purpose. P. Kesava Pillai a prominent leader of Gooty urged ‘The Hindu’ an English daily to publish a list of subscribers to acknowledge the contributions for this.

As an outcome of partition of Bengal into East Bengal and West Bengal, the Swadeshi Movement was launched in the country. As part of movement several debates and discussions were held in different areas of the Andhra region. In Ananthapuramu district a meeting in connection with Swadeshi movement was held at Penukonda town. The meeting was held with the intention of propagating swadeshi ideas and articles among people. The meeting was held at Jamia mosque on 21st August 1907 at Penukonda. The meeting was attended by both Muslims and Hindus. The meeting on the other hand fostered the friendship between Hindus and Muslims to make a united fight against the British Raj. The chief spokes persons of the meeting were S. Ranga Rao and Sivasankaram, who inspired several people towards ‘Swadeshim’. At the end of the meeting the leaders and people have given Vande Mataram slogans as mark of integrity of the leaders in the national movement.

At this time the 23rd session of Indian National Congress was held at Madras in December 1908 under the presidentship of Rashbehari Gosh. For this session prominent leaders like P. Kesava Pillai and Y.Seshappa, from Ananthapuramu district, attended the session. During this movement K. Hanumantha Rao of Masulipatnam collected donations from the public at Gooty for the construction of National College.

During 1907 to 1910 the Vande Mataram and Swadeshi movements swayed the national movement in Andhra. With the imprisonment of Balgangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal and retirement of Aurobindo Ghosh from national scene made it inevitable for the moderates to take the lead of national movement once again. The native of Ananthapuramu district Sri. P. Keshav Pillai of Gooty along with Konda Venkatappayya and Diwan Bahadur led the national movement in Andhra. They worked during this time in building up public opinion towards the creation of a separate Andhra state. Thus from 1911 onwards the movement in Andhra takes the shape of the Andhra Movement and people of all walks of political opinion were united in the demand for the creation of a separate Andhra province.

Home Rule Movement

In 1915 Mrs. Annie Besant announced her decision to establish a Home Rule League at Madras on the model of the Irish Home Rule League. In 1916 Tilak organised his own Home Rule League at Poona. Both the Leagues worked in unison and aimed at the achievement of self-government for India. The Leagues’ objective was to educate the people and provide the Congress demand for self- government with the support and strength of a nation united in knowledge of itself and its single aim. The Home Leagues functioned independently as the Congress could not adopt a radical

programme as that. The Home Leagues aimed to pressurize the British public for granting self-government to India. In Ananthapuramu district a Home Rule League meeting was held at Penukonda on 29th September 1917. In this meeting Gadicherla Harisarvottama Rao declared that the ostensible demands accepted by the Congress were later given up. The difficulties of the people would not be solved until Home Rule was granted. The Home Rule League at Madras headed by Annie Beasant and its counterpart at Poona headed by Tilak were somewhat jubilant about this development.

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