



## A review on Freedom movement in Andhra Pradesh

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**Abstract:** The role of the Andhras in the Freedom Struggle is next to that of none and they had always been in the forefront along with the rest of the countrymen. The first War of Independence in A.D.1857 did in no way affect the state of affairs in the south, though ripples were felt in the State of Hyderabad, in the shape of a raid by Rohilla and Arab soldiers against the Residency and a rebellion by the Gonds in the Adilabad district under the leadership of Ramji Gond. However, in A.D.1860, the English suppressed all these rebellions.

**Key words:** Freedom Struggle, poligars, East India Company, Non-Cooperation

### Introduction

A struggle which was nonviolent pitted the moral strength of a subjugated nation against the might of a colonial power to emerge victorious as a free land. We present history of the national movement in States and also regional agitations, which proved to be a milestone in the country's freedom struggle. This is an opportune moment to recreate the past and learn from the experience of these events.

Clamour for freedom throughout the country and the patriotic fervour of the nation were reflected in no small measure in Andhra Pradesh. They were part of the nation's determination to get the British out of India and free the motherland from the shackles of foreign rule. Prominent among these freedom struggles were the revolt in Rayalseema in 1800, No Tax campaign in Cherala and Perala in 1919, Rampa Revolt in East Godavari district led by Alluri Sitharama Raju in 1921, 'Simon Go Back' campaign in 1927 in Vijayawada and Ongole, Civil Disobedience Movement and Salt satyagraha in Dendulur district of West Godavari in 1930, the Left movement at

Tenali in 1938, 'Quit India' movement in Tenali, Bhimavaram and Guntur, and 'Join India movement in Hyderabad and others.

In fact, the entire State was agog with the fervour for freedom so much that several of them had laid down their lives in the process.

### Resistance of Poligars

The poligars of Rayalaseema backed by people of the region were a terror to the British. According to the data available, there were 80 poligars in Rayalaseema in 1800, who had refused to accept the authority of the Englishman. The then principal collector of the region, Thomas Munroe, ordered the poligars to lay down their arms and pay cess to the East India Company. They refused to budge and Munroe had to slog for 18 months before they could be brought under control.

A patriot poligar, Narasimha Reddy of Kurnool district, rebelled and attacked the treasury at Koilakuntla and marched towards Cumbam. Capt. Holt tried to nab him but Reddy managed to give him a slip and moved over to the then Nizam



State. After six weeks, he was caught and hanged in the full view of the people at Koilakuntla.

Munroe then ordered the take-over of properties of all the poligars and introduced a scheme of permanent land settlement in the region.

### **No Tax Campaign**

Chirala and Perala, the two tiny villages, then in Guntur district and noted for production of handloom sarees carved out a niche for themselves in the history of freedom struggle. The two villages had a population of 15,000 with a revenue of Rs. 4000.

The then Madras Government decided to elevate them to the status of municipalities in 1919 with the intention of collecting Rs. 40,000 as tax. The middle class segment of the villages revolted against the proposal and launched a no-tax campaign under the leadership of Duggirala Gopalakrishnaiah. He formed a group of volunteers under the banner of 'Rama Dandu'.

Mahatma Gandhi, who visited the area, directed people to leave the villages and settle down elsewhere so that the Government will not be able to collect the taxes. About 13,000 people left the villages and lived at a camp, Ramnagar, for eleven months. The Government cut the revolt to size by arresting Gopalakrishnaiah. The campaign literally shook the legislature but fizzled out once Gopalakrishnaiah was arrested.

### **Non-Cooperation Movement**

Non Cooperation Movement attained its greatest strength in the Andhra delta region, with outstanding leaders like Konda Venkatapayya, A Kaleswara Rao, T Prakasam and Pattabhi Sitaramayya among others. Among the highlights of the Andhra upsurge, as part of the freedom movement, people of the Palnadu area of Guntur district launched a non-cooperation movement to resent the attitude of the then government, in preventing them from grazing their cattle in the adjacent fields. The area was in the grip of severe drought in 1921, for a long time.

The people refused to cooperate with the officials and imposed a social boycott. When veteran freedom fighter Unnava Lakshminarayana and Vedantam Narasimhachari visited the area for assessment of the situation they were arrested. Resenting the police action, people organised a successful bandh in the area for a week. Konda Venkatappaiah, popularly known as 'Desabhakta', urged people to cooperate with the government but boycott the official socially. Kannaganti Hanimanthu was leading a no-tax campaign later was killed in police firing. Since then, the movement subsided.

The incidents that took place at Pedanandipadu in Bapatla taluk of Guntur district during the no-tax campaign as part of freedom struggle rocked the British Empire. Parvataneni Veeraiah Choudhary, a veteran freedom fighter, led a non-tax campaign. While the officials were not collecting the land revenue, people were directed not to pay taxes. Harris, a revenue board member, sent by the government, reported that the situation was out of control and



might lead to a revolt as people were told not to resume duties and pay taxes.

However, the movement was discontinued on the advice of Gandhiji, who wrote to Venkatappaiah to call off the campaign.

### **Rampa Revolt**

Alluri Seetharama Raju, a legendary hero of Andhra Pradesh, virtually declared a war against the British. He carried out his campaign against the British in the agency areas of East Godavari and Visakhapatnam district. Inspired with a patriotic zeal from the revolutionaries of Bengal and the decisions taken by them at a meeting in Chittagong in 1921, he raised a number of police outposts in and around Chintapalli, Krishnadevipeta and Rajavommangi, killing several British army officers, including the ruthless Scott

Coward and Hites, near Damanapalli. The British then deployed Malabar special police near Pedagaddapalem, in December 1922. Seetharama Raju, who went underground since then, surfaced again after about four months and continued the fight strengthened by tribal volunteers. He was ably assisted by valiant Mallu Dora and Gantam Dora. His forces attacked Annavarani police outpost on September 18, 1923. Subsequently, Mallu Dora was arrested.

The Government entrusted the task of containing the hero's activities to Rutherford. The first salvo was fired by Rutherford when his forces arrested Pericherla Suryanarayana Raju, popularly known as Aggirju, a strong follower of Seetharamaraju.

At this point of time, treacherous persons aided the British to apprehend Seetharama Raju and ultimately Jamedar Kanchu Menon succeeded in arresting Seetharama Raju on May 7, 1924. He brought him to Kayyuru and shot him dead. Thus, the 'Rampa Rebellion' as the revolt was known, ended with the killing of the great warrior.

### ***Simon Go Back***

The Simon Commission, which toured India in 1927, had a taste of the will of the people when it visited Vijayawada and Ongole. At Vijayawada, the municipality had passed a resolution asking Simon and company to go back, as part of the nation-wide boycott of the Commission, which was sent to India to review the reforms initiated by Montague and Chelmsford. An envelope was passed on to Simon. As he opened it, he found a paper in it with the slogan 'Simon Go Back'.

### ***Civil Disobedience Movement***

The clarion call of Gandhiji for Civil Disobedience movement through Salt satyagraha had caused intense tremors of patriotism in Andhra Pradesh. Among the veterans who took part in the movement were Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao, Tanuguturi Prakasam, Gade Rangaiah Naidu, V.L. Sastri and Durgabai Deshmukh. In this process, a small village in West Godavari district, Dendulur, stood out prominently, though the event was violent, which was not the code of Gandhiji? About 150 persons attacked the town's railway station and set it ablaze. They raised patriotic slogans.

### ***Students' Wrath***



Students in Andhra Pradesh had been actively participating in the freedom movement. Inspired by the speeches of Bipin Chandra, students of Rajahmundry participated in the 'Vandemataram' movement.

In 1938, students of Osmania University carried further the 'Vandemataram' movement. An order was issued on November 28, 1938, prohibiting students from singing the national song at the university hostel campus. The students appealed to the Vice-chancellor to lift the ban but it was turned down. They were forced to vacate the hostel. The students of the university then went on a strike. Students of other schools and colleges joined the fray and 350 students of Osmania University were expelled in retaliation. Other universities were asked not to admit students but the Nagpur University did not oblige the authorities. The expelled students included P.V. Narasimha Rao, Tiruvarangam Hayagrivachari, and Arutla Ramachandra Reddy. The students received letters praising them for their patriotism from Jawaharlal Nehru, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, V.D. Savarkar and several other leaders.

### ***Quit India***

The 'Quit India' movement had a great impact on the people of Coastal Andhra, especially in Nellore, Guntur and West Godavari districts. In Tenali, thousands of farmers responded with a gusto. The police, who could not control the surging mobs on August 12, 1942, opened fire, killing seven farmers. In Guntur, there was a similar demonstration supported by several thousands of farmers. At Bhimavaram in

West Godavari district, the situation was similar on August 17, the police, of course, opened fire at both the places.

### ***Join India Movement***

Popular awakening took place in Telangana region during 1937-1945 with the formation of the Andhra Mahasabha. People of the former Hyderabad State, were keen on joining the Indian Union as the then Nizam was frantically trying to keep the State independent. A resolution was passed at a social session of the Hyderabad State Congress in May 1947, giving a kick start to the 'Join India movement'. It was led by Swamy Ramananda Thirtha, Burgula Ramakrishna Rao and others. They sat on Satyagraha and were arrested. People observed the Join India Day on August 7, 1947.

They wanted to hoist the national flag on the Independence Day but the Nizam had declared that the State was already independent, on August 13, 1947 and banned hoisting of the National Flag which gave a momentum to the patriotic fervour of the people of the State. They defied the ban and went on a flag-hoisting spree, on August 15. Ramananda Thirtha hoisted the flag at Sultan Bazar. During 1946-1951, Telangana saw peasant guerilla armed struggle launched under the aegis of the Communist party, led by Ravi Narayana Reddy. By then, another Mahasabha had allied itself with the Communist party which had penetrated into the Telangana countryside.



Meanwhile, the Ittehad-ul-Muslameen decided to oppose the Communist movement. The Razakar organisation then emanated in the State under the leadership of Khasim Razvi, initiating communal violence. Though the Indian Union signed a standstill agreement with Nizam on November 29, 1947, the Nizam was boosting up the army and approached the United Nations, pleading for independence of the State. The Indian union launched a police action on September 13, 1948 and the Indian Army led by Gen. J.N. Choudhary entered the State four days later. The Nizam surrendered and the State entered the main stream of the country with Gen. Choudhary as the military Governor. By 1950-51 the guerilla action had considerably degenerated.

**Conclusion:** Thus, the freedom movement in Andhra Pradesh was a thrilling saga of patriotic zeal, popular outbursts against alien autocracy, sacrifices and a dedicative approach to free the motherland from alien domination. The Andhras all along their fight with the British authorities thought that the exit of the Britishers would facilitate the early formation of the Telugu areas as a separate State. But the Constituent Assembly had to decide otherwise and this proved to be a bitter pill for the Andhras to swallow.

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