

The Freedom Movement in Bombay Karnataka: Role of Gangadhar Rao Deshapande, Siddappa Hosmani and Hardekar Manjappa

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Abstract

During the course of Freedom Movement of Swadeshi in Bengal, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, like a victorious general, undertook a propaganda tour in 1906. Tilak covered the North Karnataka and delivered inflammatory speeches at Belgaum, Dharwad, Gurlahosur, Pachchapur and Bijapur on boycott, Swadeshi, Swaraj and national education. The cardinal aspect of his message was that saving the country from the alien bureaucracy and reviewing its ancient glory would be possible only through Swaraj or self-government. This understanding could come only through national education, which imparted heritage and infused an intense love of the motherland and determination to revive the splendour and glory of the part. The agitation for Swadeshi was given a new lease in 1896 when the whole country protested against the counter-availing excise duties on Indian cloth and received a fresh impetus after the partition of Bengal in 1905. The view stressed was that Indians shout unite irrespective of their religion or any difference and 'wake up to the national cause' by adjuring the use of Lancashire cotton. By 1905, the creed of "Atmashakti" or self-reliance filled the air of Bengal with Swadeshi schemes of textile mills, improved handlooms, river transport concerns, match and soap factories, earthen-ware factories and tanneries, National Education through Muffosil Schools, the Taraknath Patil Society for the prohibition of technical education and efforts to translate Tagores' Swadeshi Samaj into practice were the highlights of this age.

Keywords: Journalistic Venture, Khadi Propaganda, Freedom Movement, Swadeshi Movement, Harijan Sevaka Sangh, Hullibanni Satyagraha, Dalit Upliftment and Chaturvarna.

Introduction

The Karnataka was in the forefront of India's freedom struggle. Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan was pioneer in combating the British. Even small Kittur (1824) principality raised the banner of revolt. Sangoli Rayanna, Dhondiya Wagh, Halagali Bedas, Naragund Babasaheb, Hammige Kenchangagouda, Mundaragi Bhimarao and many others revolted against the British mighty power. Since the foundation of Congress people from this region especially Bombay Karnataka actively participated in every activity and movement of it. Sri Narayan Rao Chandavarkar, Sri Bhate, Sri Mailar Madevappa, Channabasppa Wali, Veeranagouda Patil, R.R. Diwakar, Gangadharrao Deshpande, Hardekar Manjappa, Sir Siddappa Kambli, Hosamani Siddappa and Kaka Karkhanis many other hosts of local leaders played significant role in national movement. There were ardent leftiuent followers of Tilak and even of Gandhiji, Jawarhal Nehru,

Sardar Patel, Subhash Chandra Bose. The National leaders visited Bombay Karnataka several times and have addressed and presided in the rallies, functions and the sessions. The intellectuals like poets, Folk Poets novelists, play writers and Biographers too contributed threw their writings and participation. So, vast literature consists of events, memories, episodes of freedom movement were produced.

Thus, the Swadeshi movement spread all over the nation, in a short period of time it scattered in Karnataka also. The people across the country gave their full-fledged support to the progress of this movement and they were fully responsible for the growth of industries and establishment of national schools, colleges in their respective areas. But the heroic deeds of the leaders of the Swadeshi movement and the growth of this movement are highly neglected. Even on some occasions the role of Karnataka State in the Swadeshi movement is often neglected and even on some of the occasions many regional and national scholars and the researchers underplayed it. Hence, the present study makes an honest attempt to probe out the valuable role played by the Karnataka State and its revolutionaries in the epic movement of Swadeshi. There was great response to Swadeshi movement (1905-11), Khilafat and Non-Co-operation movements of 1920-23. In early 1930's Salt Satyagraha at Sirsi, Siddapur and Ankola carried successfully. There was Forest-Hullubanni Satyagraha, Non-revenue campaign in Hirekerur taluk and other places of Bombay Karnataka. Even Quit India Movement of 1942 was successful beyond expectations; especially it was a center of underground activities. Thus, compare to other parts of Karnataka the Bombay Karnataka was greatly contributed and was the centre of Congress activities and also the freedom movement.

Gangadhar Rao Deshpande, Siddappa Hosamani Alur Venkatrao, Hardekar Manjappa, Sakkari Balachar, Krishna Rao Mudvedkar, Ananthrao Dabade and many others undertook extensive tours and delivered speeches. Swadeshi industries arose in many places of Karnataka like, weaving factory at Kittur and Badami, match box factory at Dharwad, a porcelain factory at Lakshmeshwar. The Karnataka Industrial Conference held at Dharwad in 1907 to decide on the lines of development of Swadeshi industry and boycott of foreign goods. Foreign cloth was burned in Ranebennur and other parts of Karnataka. This awakening came to be sustained greatly by the work of the national schools, which were started at many places of Karnataka.

Freedom Movement in Bombay Karnataka: Role of Gangadhar Rao Deshapande

Gangadhar Rao was born in a noble family of Inamadar of Hudali in the district of Belgaum. He had the privilege of being one of the most intimate friends of Lokamanya Tilak. Inspired by the patriotic example of Tilak he plunged into the political field very early in his life and became his stout follower. He was the chief exponent of Tilak's message in Karnataka though formerly he had an inclination towards Gokak party. He was a leading practitioner at Belgaum bar. He was an eloquent speaker in Marathi as well as in Kannada. The partition of Bengal and Swadeshi movement provided a great measure of political awakening in Bombay Karnataka. The Swadeshi propaganda and the boycott of foreign goods were vigorously carried on. As a result, Swadeshi industries were started in all the places. He attended the congress session at Surat in 1907. He was a principal organizer of the sixteenth Bombay Provincial

Conference held at Belgaum in 1916. Tilak, Gandhi and Danashib Karndikar were among leaders who attended it.

Tilak set up the Maharashtra branch of the Home Rule League seen after Mrs. Annie Besant her all India Home Rule League in Madras. In collaboration with Shriinivas Rao Kaujalagi, Dattopanth Belavi, Alur Venkat Rao and Gadigayya Honnapurmam, Gangadhar Rao opened a branch of the Home Rule League in Karnataka and became its president. He travelled throughout Karnataka in order to spread the Congress message swadeshi, Khadi, village industries, boycott of foreign goods and Non-cooperation. He established contact with all prominent in Bombay Karnataka including the nationalist workers in Mysore and other Kannada places. An utter neglect of Kannada was one of the peculiar features of the public life of Karnataka. That was due to the wielding of Marathi influence in the northern portion and partly due to the historical circumstances. Karnataka had come within the direct zone of Tilak's national activities. There was a lot of fuss - even now it continues as regards Belgaum being a Kannada or Marathi town. Then the quarrel was between Kannada and Marathi speaking people there as to which language should be used on the public platforms there. The time was when the public activities in Bombay Karnataka were carried on mostly in Marathi. The leaders of Bombay Karnataka started speaking in their mother tongue in the public meetings. A lot of opposition was made by the Maharashtrians who put their claim to Belgaum as a Marathi town. But the elderly leaders of Bombay Karnataka like Gangadhar Rao, D. V. Belvi, Nayayan Rao Joshi and others put their bold claim that Belgaum unflinchingly belongs to Karnataka. Herein they had the concurrence of N.C.Kelkar, a staunch advocate of Marathi.

“The leaders however persisted and in the course of time, Kannada came to occupy its rightful place without creating any conflicts with the other languages, although these continued and still continue to occupy their own place in the public life of Karnataka”. Gangadhar Rao was sentenced to six months under section 124 of the Indian penal code, for his speech made at Dharwad in 1921. He was the president of KPCC for four years in 1920-1924. He was one of the general secretaries of the All India Congress Committee. He was a dynamic force in all the political and public activities of Karnataka in those days. Therefore he was called “Karnataka Kesari,” i.e., “Lion of Karnataka”.

Freedom Movement in Bombay Karnataka: Role of Siddappa Hosamani

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 is done, with view to provide a biographical sketch of Sri. Siddappa Hosamani. The study also reflects his general observations regarding the social evils like castes and untouchability.

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His ideas about the Social Evils –Untouchability

Siddappa Hosamani had a secular base in his thinking. 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 an 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 and they are 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. Infected man has created classes for his own convenience. Further, he pointed out that 'the classes grouped on the basis of labour do 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 fulfilment of their day-to-day activities. No one can confine to a single kind of profession or work. If need rises anybody can practice or profess any work or profession. Hence all are equal. He believed that, the political revolution in India was based substantially on social and economic discontent, thus mere political freedom was not adequate. Though he was follower of Gandhiji but, he differs 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., Harijanoddhar, as a strategy or 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 castes and untouchability was subordinated to the primary contradiction i.e., the fight against British colonial power. Congress did not resolve the social evils successfully. Thus, Siddappa Hosamani's ideas with regard to upliftment resemble the above interpretation. Even Siddappa's idea of social reformation resembles 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. Even Siddappa's idea of social reformation resembles 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. 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 influential. 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. Dr. Ambedkar also had similar view as far as imitation theory was concerned. Dr. Ambedkar pointed out⁹ that upper caste people to take lead in the inter-caste marriage. So, that casteism and untouchability could be eliminated permanently.

His Public Work and Activities

In this part Sri Siddappa's public work and activities with regard to upliftment of Depressed Classes are highlighted. These include 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.

1. 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 11 region.

2. 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 12 responsibility to work for removal of untouchability. According Desai G.D., the service rendered by him to the Harijan Sevak Sangha was appreciable and unforgatable.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 had the habit of writing for newspaper 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 speaks proudly about him and his contributions.

3. 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 wellbeing 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 anybody has any objection should inform immediately with proper grounds for the objection. But none had ¹³ the courage to raise objections in front of him. 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. 14 None can prevent them from touching water.” 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.

4. 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.

Freedom Movement in Bombay Karnataka: Role of Hardekar Manjappa

He was a great son of Karnataka and a greater servant of India. He was born in a poor and humble family in 1885 at Banavasi in the North Kanara District of the then Bombay presidency. He stepped on the scene of public activities when he spoke in favor of Swadeshi at Gokarna in 1905.¹⁰⁵ Tilak's paper "Kesari" attracted Manjappa's attention journalistic venture. He had the gift of oratory and the art of writing. He started a weekly Journal "Dhanurdhari" in 1906. It contained mostly the Kannada translations of the Marathi material in the journal "Kesari". He also published the speeches of the National leaders such as Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, and Lala Lajpatrai in his paper. Thus, he contributed much to the renaissance of the national awakening through his paper which heralded a new change in Kannada journalism.

He visited Arya Samaj at Bombay in 1911. He had a profound influence on his mind and requested Mrutyunjya Swamiji of Dharwad to start an association, on the basis of the Prayer Association of the Arya Samaj. It was thus founded in 1911 and a series of lectures were held once in every week under the auspices of the association. He was out-spoken in his religious views. He publicly criticised child marriage, urged the spread of primary education and stressed the prime necessity of social reforms. Thus created religious and social awakening through his lectures. In 1914 Tilak was released from prison. Manjappa Hardekar went to greet him at Poona. He attended the national conference in Madras during this year. In 1905, he attended a meeting at Bangalore which was held under the presidency of Sir K. P. Puttanna Shetty. He founded the Veerashaiva Taruna Sangha at Davanagere in 1917. He instilled the spirit of social consciousness. Gadigayya Honnapurmath, a liberal thinker and a great orator of Dharwad presided over the association on the day of Basava Jayanti Celebration in 1917. It was a great success. He was influenced by Mrs. Annie Besant's Home Rule Movement in the same year.

The Indian National Congress recognized the principal of re-distribution of the province on linguistic basis. As a result, a provincial Congress Committee was constituted for Karnataka. So there was new life in the masses of Bombay Karnataka. This was a period when M.K. Gandhi had launched the Non-Cooperation Movement. The propaganda of khadi was the first item in Gandhiji's fourfold constructive programme. Manjappa Hardekar came under the spell of Gandhiji. He took a vow of Khadi on 1st August 1920. He gave up the use of mill cloth, began to wear Khadi, and started the Khadi propaganda. The

Veerashaiva community was opposed to the khadi propaganda in the early period as it thought that the activity was only of Brahmins. Manjappa was in the beginning looked upon as a Chela Brahmins. “Thanks to the intervention of Hardekar Manjappa, it soon came to view it more sympathically. The genius of Manjappa lay in interpreting the Khadi ideal in accordance with the tents of Veerashaivism. He argued convincingly that spinning with one owns hand was an activity that was sanctioned by the Veerashaiva faith”. He published the books “Veerashaiv Samaja Sudharane” and the lectures of Swami Ramananda Teerth (in four parts).

Mahatma Gandhiji dominated the Indian polrtics after 1920. Hardekar Manjappa held Gandhiji in high esteem. He preached Gandhiji’s gospel of Satyagraha at Sirsi, Kumata, Honnavar, Gokarna, Ankola, Geresoppa and Siddapur in 1922. He received the blessings of Mrutyunnjaya Swamiji of Dharwad for all his activities. He atlended the Veerashaiva Sabha at Itagi in 1922. He organized the Veerashaiva youths at Bagalakot under the presidentship of S.K. Kambli. He published the fifth part of Swami Ramanand Teerth’s lectures and “Stree Neeti Sangraha.” His most important work on Nationalism was “Bhartiyara Desha Bhakti” published in 1921.¹¹⁴ He established Satyagraha Samaj at Hubli on 18th September 1922. He wrote books and composed verses on Satyagraha.¹¹⁵ The center of his activities shifted to Alamatti on the Mank of the Riverkrishna in 1927 where it continued for the next 20 years of his life. He started editing the journal “Sharana Sandesha” from this place till his death. “Manjappa Hardekar is the story of an indomitable spirit, the stirring story of a poor young man from the backwoods of coastal Karnataka who, by the sheer weight of his worth, grew into one of the greatest figures thrown up by the freedom struggle in Bombay Karnataka, during the first half of this century.” “His rich and varied public life covered the whole span of the most crucial phase of our national struggle for freedom, a span of forty years that begum in 1906 and with his death in 1946”.

“He was a vigorous critic of all fissiparous tendencies that tended to weaken national unity. Concretely he recognized nationalism as a historical fact”. This meant that each nation was the product of an evolving, historical process, and this progress went on in accordance with its inner law, “The Rastreeya Dharma”. A nation worth the name must evolve its own language and its specific ethos. But this does not mean that a nation should shut its windows against the world. Far from it; but one should be selective in assimilating alien influence. Among the basic driving forces in India’s national evolution, Manjappa Hardekar considered two as the most important. The first was the dominance of the religious motif in pre national life. The second was the tendency towards synthesis, towards a peaceful process of absorption of foreign and hostile elements. So far as the future of India was concerned, Manjappa Hardekar suggested a democratic political pattern and evena secular state. His nationalism was neither monistic nor chauvinistic. On the one hand, it did not require the repression of group life within, but it merely required that group life and individual life should not be pursued as ideals at the cost of national integration. On the other hand, his nationalism was not aggressive. It did not imply a narrow- minded love of one’s own nation. Manjappa Hardekar had the vision of a world state; though he did not work out its details of examine its practical implications. “Manjappa Hardekar was well aware that the ideal of nationalism was not indigenous to

India, and that the problem of sustaining this imported ideal had to be tackled with the greatest determination”.

Conclusion and Findings

Karnataka has been known for many years as a land of bravemen. When British power slowly spread all over India, the people of Karnataka could not tolerate the Imposition of an alien rule and alien culture. So many decisive battles were waged by bravemen and women of Karnataka like Hyder Ali, Tippu Sultan of Mysore, Rani Channamma of Kittur, Sangolli Rayanna of Bailhongal, Bheema Rao of Mundaragi and many others. So, Karnataka as a whole has played a vital role during the freedom struggle in India. The Bedas and Kodagas have been the foremost fighting races of Karnataka, and have continuously maintained their high reputation. The Bedas of Halagali fought under the leadership of Balaji Nimbalkar against Britishers. They had the great encouragement from Diwakar Dixit son of Chidambara. Dixit of Murgod, but Nimbalkar died in the struggle. During the struggle Jadiyappa, Halappa and 19 other people were hanged. The feelings of the Bedas of Halagali, who faced with an order from East India Company to surrender their arms, are recorded in a popular Kannada folksong, which highlights the brave deeds of the Bedas. Women of Bombay Karnataka and their role in the history of freedom struggle should be written in letters of gold. They dedicated their lives to the cause of freedom of their motherland and scarified there all to achieve their goal. The role of women in the freedom movement is unique in Karnataka. The Gandhian era of freedom struggle in Karnataka began roughly from 1920. As in all human historical events, there is bound to be some emphasis upon leadership of prominent personalities like, Nagamma Veernagouda patil, Ramabai Jeevanarao Yalagi, Sitabai Madagaonkar and Mahadevitai Doddamane Hegade who were contributed out standing in freedom struggle of Karnataka. These people were greater initiative to conducting struggle activities in Karanataka.

The Karnataka State has contributed a lot for the freedom struggle. Kannadigas are very well-known for bravery and courage. They believed and continue to believe that freedom is more valuable than their life. When one speaks of freedom, one is sure to remember Karnataka rulers namely, Kadambas, Hoyasals, Chalukyas of Badami, Vijayanagar kings for their love and dedication for freedom. 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 a 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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