

The Role of Press and its Support Peasants in National Movement in Andhra: A Study

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The press in Andhra, during the National Movement gave a considerable importance to economic issues and moulded public opinion in favour of economic Nationalism. From the Swadeshi movement in 1905 to the salt Satyagraha and civil disobedience movement in 1932, economic matters like, the use of indigenous goods, boycott of foreign goods promotion of Indian trade and industry, opposition to the oppressive taxes of the government, and various aspects connected with the exploitationist policies of the colonial government were inextricably linked with the fight for the freedom of the country. Hence, the nationalist papers devoted considerable space in their columns for matters of economic importance. The general theme of the nationalist press in Andhra on economic matters was the promotion of economic nationalism. The press looked at all economic matters from the national point of view, exposed and condemned the economic imperialism of the colonial government, and rendered great service in preparing the minds of the people against the economic policies of the British government and in favour of the economic ideology of the Indian national leaders. An attempt is made in this paper to study the role of the Telugu press and its support to peasants and their problem in Andhra during the British rule.

The drain of Indian Wealth into England was one more theme of the Indian press in its attack of British imperialism in India. (*Ganguli: 1977, p.127*). The drain was considered to be one of the important causes for India's poverty. Some papers considered it to be the fountain head from which all the economic evils of India sprouted. They pointed out that the huge flow of Indian wealth into England should be stopped, to make India prosperous. The Swadeshi of May 3, 1905, explained the theme of the flow of Indian wealth into England, in its historical perspective

and concluded that Indians were growing poor because of the drain. The paper wrote since 1857, the Indians have suffered considerably and the country is drained to the last available pie. The indigenous industries of the country have died out and all procurable articles are dug out of the mines and taken away by the British. Thus, the Indians are growing poor day by day (*National Press Reports 1905, p.171*).

The Andhra Kesari estimated in 1907 that 20 crores of rupees was being drained from India annually, because the country was not producing cloth from the cotton grown in the country. (*NPR 1907, p.14*). The Manorama also emphatically proclaimed that the drain of economic wealth was the cause for the poverty of India. It remarked if the money that is collected through the taxes is spent here only, India will not have any poverty (*Manorama April, 1907*). The lending of large amount of Indian money by the Indian office in London to British merchants was also considered to be part of the drain and was criticized by the press.

The *Krishna Patrika* of September, 14, 1912 regretted that a cash balance of 66 crores of Indian money was used for the benefit of England merchants to lending amount to them. The Hindu in its editorial on August 18, 1920 wrote the question of Indian poverty is not one of deficiency of National income. It is one of needless expense and drain caused by the maintenance of the earliest services in the world. The money so paid mostly going to the foreign land (*The Hindu August 18, 1920*).

Conditions of the Peasants in Andhra

The Telugu papers which attacked the imperialistic economic policies of the British used the theme of the deplorable condition of the peasants, to convince the people that the British rule in India had many evil economic

effects. The *Krishna patrika* and *Andhra patrika* eloquently wrote about the neglect of agriculture by the British government and frequently commented that the peasants under the heading "Ryots difficulties". In April and May 1918 a retired revenue official brought to the notice of the public several in convenience of the agriculturists, through the columns of *Krishna Patrika* in its regular feature "Ryots difficulties" heavy tax burden on the agriculturists and their high indebtedness were frequently mentioned as the major difficulties of the cultivators. The Ryot patrika which gave prominence to the problems of the ryots, but was pro british in politics, also complained of the heavy tax burden on the agriculturists, and wrote that because of heavy taxes imposed on the they were reduced to a state of utter poverty under the heading "Taxes on land" the journal in its issue dated November 14, 1920 wrote: 75% of the ryots cannot get full meal twice a day. The nationalist point out the defects of the governments and make mountains of more hills. May there be no occasion given to them to criticize the government severely (*NPR. 1920, p. 1479*).

The *Andhra Patrika* mentioned that the ryots were crushed under a heavy burden of taxation (*NPR 1914, p.953*). The paper pointed out that while ryots who worked hard to pay heavy taxes the merchants who conducted business in a smoth manner paid very little to the government (*Ibid*). the paisa paper in Telugu Janmabhoomi of November 25, 1931 declared that the position of the ryots in India was worse than the position of the beasts of burden. The *Hitakarani* enunciating that taxes should be reviewed on those who can pay them mentioned that the levy of heavy taxes on ryots cannot be justified as they were not aspiration to pay them the paper also mentioned that whenever additional revenue was required it was the ryot who was taxed. (*NPR, p.211*).

The following extract from the *Andhra Patrika* of December 31, 1913, gives an idea of how even moderate papers blamed the British government for the unenviable condition of the *Kisan* in India in general, and in the *Andhra* region in particular the paper wrote "The government is solely bent on the collection of revenue and in finding out the ways and means by which it may be raised. They have not granted the ryot any permanent settlement, nor have they afforded him sufficient opportunities to better his agricultural prospects. They do

not listen to his appeal for remission, when crops fail from causes beyond his control. The burden of taxation is growing heavier day by day. The government have not yet released the necessity of giving the ryot free and compulsory education owing to such circumstances, the ryots have not prospered but are in the same condition in which he was some fifty years ago (*NPR 1914, p.53*). The money lenders were also blamed for the poverty of the cultivators and government and private agencies were urged to provide easy credit facilities to the poor cultivators, the *Hitakarani* of August 4, 1918 wrote it is not wrong to say that one of the causes of the miserable conditions in which he was some fifty years ago (*NPR 1914, p.53*). The money lenders were also blamed for the poverty of the cultivators and government and private agencies were urged to provide easy credit facilities to the poor cultivation. The *Hitakarani* of August 4, 1918 wrote it is not wrong to say that one of the causes of the miserable condition of the ryot is the sowcar (*NPR 1918, p.1232*). The *Trilinga* in an editorial on the difficulties of the ryots, wrote that life would become unbearable for them unless steps were taken by the government and prominent people, to make credit to the ryots available early and its at low rate of interest (*Trilinga 22, December 1930*). The educated Indians and the bureaucracy were also blamed for the miserable economic conditions of the ryots. The *Hitakarani* wrote: It is a misfortune of the country that the educated do not discharge their duty to the ryot. It is still more regrettable that the bureaucracy should fail to show their gratitude to the ryot for their salaries of thousands of rupees are obtained from the labour of the ryots. (*NPR 1918, p.1282*). The *Andhra Patrika* among other things mentioned that the expenditure of the cultivator was more than his income and advised the agriculturists to improve the methods of cultivation in order to raise their own economic status (*Andhra Patrika, Deceber 24, 1919*).

The congress of October 15, 1929 emphasised the importance of the ryot and mentioned about the examples of Ireland where land hagues were established to improve the conditions of the ryots. The paper wrote it is the ryot alone that constitutes the life of the country. It is the ryot that is the main stay for political and social greatness and for industrial progress. It is essential to improve the condition of the ryot first, in order to bring out the

redemption of a dependent country. Before Ireland attained independence the leaders of that endeavoured only to establish land hagues and improved the conditions of the ryots (*NPR 1929, pp. 1460. 61*). The *Krishna Patrika* welcomed the efforts of Andhra leaders like Duggirala Balarama Krishnaiah, Dandu Narayana Rare, Bapineedu and N.G. Ranga to organize the ryots. In an editorial on November 21, 1931 the *Krishna patrika* declared that the future of India was linked with the association of the ryots.

Some papers championed the cause of the ryots in the estates of the Zamindars. Besides the *Krishna Patrika* and *Andhra Patrika* the *Janmabhoomi* in telugu focused much light on the difficulties of the ryots in the zamindari estates. The *zamin ryot* published from Nellore from 1928 was mainly intended to help the ryots in the zamindari estates, in their crusade against the oppressions of the zamindars. The *zamin ryot* was particularly interested in helping the cause of the ryots in the principality of Venkatagiri in Nellore district.

The land tax policy of the British government in India was severely criticized by the press in Andhra. The most important criticism against the taxation policy was that the revenue derived from the people was spent mostly on the army and the bureaucracy and not for the benefit of the people of India. Whenever additional taxes were reviewed the press generally criticized the levy of such taxes.

The enhancement of land tax, whenever it was done also met with the universal disapproval of the press in Andhra Commenting on the proposed enhancement of the land tax in 1919 the *Sudarsini* of January 15, 1919, wrote "the proposal of the government to enhance taxes on land at the present juncture come like a rain of fire in the mid summer (*NPR 1919, p.201*).

While criticizing the economic policies of the British government, the nationalist papers of Andhra wrote that Swaraj was the only remedy for all the economic evils created by British rule. That was logical out come of their belief that the economic evils of the country were the result

of the foreign rule in India having argued that the poverty of the country, frequent famines unfavorable trade unemployment, decay of handicrafts were all the cumulative effects of British rule the Nationalists papers pointed out that political remedy also for the deplorable economic situation in the country. The political remedy suggested by them was Swaraj for India.

The Andhra Patrika while making comments on the annual budgets, frequently wrote the political independence alone would solve the economic problems of the country the similar views expressed by several nationalist and Telugu news papers peasants problems largely focused in their news items as well as editorial columns.

Notes and References

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