Chapter-III

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT UNDER THE ZAMINDAR RULE IN MUNAGALA PARAGANA
SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Of all the Zamindary Estates in Andhra, Munagala estate had a special significance. It had been surrounded by dictatorial Nizam Estate. Raja Venkata Ranga Rao came to Munagala estate as Zamindar in 1900 A.D. The Kesara dynasty sued against him challenging his hierarchical and adoption rights, which went on in the court of Madras. The case was later shifted to Privy Council, London. Though the Zamindar won the case in his favour, he suffered heavy monetary loss, which drained his treasury. To fill in the emptied treasury, the Zamindar had taxed the public and bringing into force the civil, criminal powers to collect money through fines. He obtained money through bonded labour and other coercive methods.

The coercive methods, if observed keenly, reveal how severe his policies were. The poor farmers, as per the new policy had to cultivate the zamindary lands and had to pay the enhanced land taxes even he reaped nothing from his lands. The Zamindar had used the civil and criminal methods in order to fill his coffers. People belonging to various professions had to render free services to them. Even Brahmins had to stitch and sent the dry leaf plates freely to him. He did not show proper interest in the irrigation system, but enhanced the taxes. Twenty thousand people of 42 villages of this Paragana had to pay 1,30,000 Rupees annually in the form of taxes. He seized good lands which belonged to others. His servants turned into hired goondas, with their muscle power the zamindar seized illegally thousands of acres of land. His hired hooligans used to attack

villages, tortured, bet the farmers and damaged their huts. Some farmers who questioned it were subjected to social boycott, sometimes the zamindar simply drove away the farmers whom he suspected to be revolting. He also removed some Karanams, on the pretexts that they were joining hand with his opponents. For example, the Zamindar dismissed Aadiraju Mattupalli Rao, the Karanam of Nadigudem and seized all his lands. He dismissed the Karanam of Aakupamula, Velidenda Ranga Rao from his office and made his house collapsed. The village Munsif of Madhavavaram, Kollu Atchaiah was violently beaten up at the shore of Madhavavaram. Recovering from the wounds inflicted by goondas, Atchaiah met the Sub-Collector of Bezwada and filed a case against the rowdies of the Zamindar. The then Sub-Collector Siva Sankar, I.C.S. wrote in his judgement, what Atchaiah said in his complaint that “nobody can survive against zamindar” as a truth. The Zamindar filed a case against a poor brahmin of Repala, in the Munsif court O.S.No. 370/35, as he had earlier signed on some white papers without his will. The Brahmin later said in the court that his signatures were obtained with force. The Judge also believed it and observed that the Zamindar might have created such a situation.3

Munagala Estate was very far from the Railway line as well as the Bus station. One had to travel a complete day from Bezwada to reach the headquarters of Munagala. The Nadigudem and some of the territorial limits of this estate were in the state of Nizam and some in the Krishna district. Since two governments controlled it, the Zamindar detained the cattle of the farmers in his control, sometimes took away their crops. The farmers were troubled by not allowing them to use the water from their wells and not to

allow the farmers to take crops to their homes. The savage methods employed during the
times of Srinatha was employ of Zamindar were re-introduced to collect land tax. The
debtors were subjected to the most uncivilized humiliation. The farmers were afraid of
the Zamindar’s servants, who came to collect tax and behaved in the most insulting way
with their women. The farmers in their meetings demanded for an enquiry into these
untold sufferings. Harijans of the village Nadigudem had to provide fodder for the horses
of the Raja. Forty Harijans from every village had to work always in Nadigudem even
the washermen also suffered the same fate. In every village the Zamindar possesses own
lands. They exceeded the farmer’s lands. The water should be provided first to the
Zamindar lands and then to other farmers lands. The farmers wetlands did not receive
enough water because of this condition. Moreover, the Harijan and farmers who worked
in wetlands received nominal wages for their work. The people who were engaged in
sowing and cutting in the paddy fields could receive only half wages.4

Though, Munagala Paragana was the part of Krishna district, it was like island in
the Nalgonda district. Hence, some of the social conditions resembled those of
Telangana. The Zamindar of Munagala was a tyrant. Apart from rowdyism he made the
people of all other sections had to work for him free of charge. The Zamindar used to
give a little decayed grain with which they boiled soup and ate it. They used to do heavy
work like breaking of stones, removing rocks from one place to another. They also used
to work in the land of the Zamindar. The washermen duty was not only to wash the
clothes but they had to sweep and clean the large fort of the Zamindar. The barbers cut

the hair and applied massage not only to the Zamindar’s men but also to their cattle. The
pot maker used to give the needed pots and pans to the Zamindar and his men without
taking any money. They had only one or two acres of ‘ceeded’ lands given as gift to
them. Zamindar’s men used to take all sorts of provisions from the merchants by paying
nothing. He did not leave even Brahmins. Whoever rose his voice against the atrocities
of the Zamindar, had no proper protection to life, honour and property.5

The lands that were surveyed in 1928 were given pattas (legal documents). The
excess land that was found during the survey was seized by the Zamindar and claimed,
that land also belonged to him. He won those cases too in the courts. He did not allow
the land owners to contest and deployed his servants on Vijayawada and Jaggayyapet
roads and prevented the farmers from going to the law courts. He used to give some
financial assistance to them and later by showing heavy debts, he seized and got their
lands registered in his name. He took possession of the gifted lands of devadasis in
Repala, ‘Kumbha Harati’ lands and the lands of ‘Bhatraju’s’ in Siripuram. This shows
the atrocities of the Zamindar on the farmers and other people.6

In the name of his employees, the Zamindar took the Bharakathgudem and
Nadigudem road contract and his estate washermen attended the road work each for five
days at free of cost. They used to till his land, construction of the walls, white wash the
walls, harvesting the paddy, bringing milk, vegetables from other hamlets and also water
from Munagala to Nadigudem. When the Zamindar’s employees visited villages, milk,

Kodad, p.29.
at Malakpet, Hyderabad, pp. 93-94.
vegetables and rice were to be given free of cost by merchants. The employees used to send the list of needed provisions and merchants had to oblige them. Money was paid only after two or three years. The merchants who supported the farmers’ associations were not paid any money.7

The people in the surrounding villages of Nadigudem had to come by rotation to Nadigudem and work till evening and go to home without their wages. Bundles of green grass should be brought and be handed over in the Estate. If wages were asked, their hair was tied to the branch of tamarind tree and thus they were hung. When the tax was not paid to estate, those lands were auctioned and fertile lands were seized. When revolted, the farmers were subjected to attacks which was a very common.8

The Munagala Zamindar tortured the farmers and made them to become bonded labourers and took possession of their lands. The Zamindar used to take some of the lands from the people and some lands having pattas were with the Zamindar. Such lands were given to the farmers for lease who had been under his control. Some of such lands as per the vogue prevalent then, were given to Brahmins who in turn looked after the needs of the officers when they visit these areas. Merchants should open only one shop in a day and Harijans had to buy provisions only from that shop. When the Zamindar’s servant visited, they had to bear the expenditure too. These lands stretched to some hundreds of acres. A man who used to denote time by bell also was employed in the estate in those days. He had been given some lands by Zamindar. The Zamindar had an

escort person, a “Svaaru Saheb” who had also been given some lands. When these lands were distributed, some lands still remain under the control of Zamindar, which he said should belong to him. Even after the cancellation of Zamindary system, he himself approached the settlement Collector and appealed to him to hand them over to him. The Farmers’ Associations and the leaders of communist party joined together and recovered some of the lands seized by the Zamindar. They were later distributed to the public. This was the condition of the Zamindary system in those days.\(^9\)

Even though, the 1320 Act (Pasali) and 1344 Act (pasali) had given the permanent rights with actual pattas for regular use of wells and tanks by the farmers, in course of time, these rights were replaced by Zamindar with selfish motive. Henceforth, water cess had been collected for the repair of the tanks, Zamindar collected Rs.10/- per head.

*Mosalibavi:* The lower duct of the tank.

*Manikabavi:* The upper duct of the tank.

There, used to be a difference of ½ yard between the lower and the upper ducts by the time of kisan Satyagraha the difference increased to 1 yard. For the lands of the Zamindar and ordinary farmers water was used from ducts of Mosalivayi and Manikabavi respectively. This system is exploitative. The Zamindar used to punish the cattle of the farmers, whenever they drank water from tanks. From 1925 to 1937, the Munagala Zamindar appropriated lands of the farmers through different methods. The service Enams, Traditional Enams and other lands were appropriated without the knowledge of the farmers. Whenever there is a controversy between two persons about the land, the

\(^9\) Oral interview with Chillamcherla Raghunadham participant in Munagala struggle.
Zamindar used to mediate and occupied such lands. Even the community lands were occupied and in this way Zamindar owned nearly 3,293.37 acres of dry land and nearly 336.59 acres of wetland totalling nearly 3,629.96 acres of land.\textsuperscript{10}

Kotamma, Vysya woman died in Siripuram village. Her heir Bandaru Sambaiah of Chennakesavapuram, after her last ceremonies, gave away all her property to his village. When the estate manager came to know about this he called Sambaiah to the estate and recovered all the property again. The Zamindar took the piece of land belonging to Yadavalli Veeraiah. He also took possession of Vempati Kanakaiah’s land. He filled the wells with soil which were at their houses. Yelaka Ranga Reddy and Yelaka Lakshma Reddy of Repala, purchased a site and got it registered. The Zamindar snatched the documents and made them payment for those sites. He took possession of the charitable house in Siripuram village and also the school building constructed by the residents.

In 1930, social boycott was organised against the village Karnams Velidenda Ranga Rao, Kondapalli Ramachandra Rao, Kodati Venkata Narasimha Rao and Karivirala harizans as they were the supporters of Kisan struggle. All rights including civil and criminal powers were rested with the Zamindar. If anybody opposed the Zamindar or tried to occupy his property, he was beaten up cruelly. When the victim became unconscious they gave him some water and bring him back to normalcy and was beaten up again and again till he was surrendered. Kandula Ramulu and Palle Guravaiah were beaten up similarly. In Madras State, Congress Government was formed after the

elections in 1937, under the leadership of C. Rajagopalachari and Tanguturi Prakasam Pantulu was the then Revenue Minister.\textsuperscript{11}

A Committee called Estate Land Act inquiry was framed by Madras Legislative Council on 10-9-37 and by Legislative Assembly on 25-9-37 to make a thorough enquiry of the following:

1. The relation between the farmers and Zamindars as per the legal code.
2. The rate of tax and the concession in its collection.
3. The record of surveying rights, rights of irrigation and reasonable taxation.
4. Collecting additional taxes apart from land tax.
5. The commodities that are available in the village to be allowed for the use of the farmers’ families.
6. To take care of water resources and to develop it.

The above committee consisting of three council members and six members of Legislative Assembly of Andhra Pradesh. The Zamindary system was introduced by the East India Company in 1802. The rights of farmers were not clearly explained. This Act provided permanent dynasty rights to the farmers and confirm the tax paid till that time. Farmers were not given any rights on forests and water resources. Zamindars dictatorship went on unabated, he nullified the Act and enhanced taxes from 1802. B. Viswanatha Das and Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao were of the opinion that farmers should have total rights in the rural forests, tanks and wastelands. A memorandum was also submitted.

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., pp. 38, 40.
The important points in the Memorandum

1. The Zamindars had no right on the lands.
2. The permanent settlement of Land Revenue of 1802.
3. Rent recovery Act of 1865.
4. Estate Land Act of 1908, etc.

Along with the memorandum, the Committee prepared a rough Bill which was called Madras Land Revenue Act.\(^\text{12}\)

Because of the above social conditions in the villages of Munagala estate led to the emergence of village farmers organisations. Donations were collected by the organisations. Estate’s ‘Zameen Rytu’ Association of Munagala was formed. Voluntary groups also farmed in the villages and used to sing the songs while patrolling at nights in the streets and secretly gathered news regarding the moves of the enemy.

People belonging to various professions joined ‘Zameen Farmers’ organisation. They stopped working as bonded labourers. People were not afraid of the servants of the Zamindar. Among the people of the estate villages, new inspiration could be seen. Slogans were given against the Zamindar.\(^\text{13}\)

Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy was the family God of the Zamindar of Repala. He used to celebrate the Deepavali with ‘Kagadas’. As a part of convention the barbers attended the celebration to hold torches, but they were driven away by the Zamindar employees stating that they have joined farmers associations. The washermen considered

it unjust and they too stopped carrying the carriage of God. The celebration came to a stand still for two days. People placed the photos of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose, and N.G. Ranga in the place of gods and goddesses and conducted the procession and a meeting too, which was led by Nanduri Prasada Rao. This caused friction between people and the Estate authorities. No action was taken against the Zamindar when complained by the farmers. But every time, the Zamindar complained against the people, the police filed cases, people used to give out slogans such as “Zamindary system” should go and the atrocities of the Zamindar should not be allowed.¹⁴

For ages people underwent untold sufferings and torture because of the Zamindar and the police. When their patience lost, people began to revolt. They boycotted the Zamindar and his servants by not attending to their work and by stopping payment of taxes. The Zamindar with the assistance of the police went on seizing their lands and the ornaments of the women. The farmers determined to fight it out.¹⁵

The Zamindar had 22 acres of wetland in Kalukova which had been cultivated by the bonded labours. He had to employ paid workers that year, as farmers had refused to work. He promised to pay 60 kgs. as remuneration per acre. 72 Harijan labourers worked 14 days for which the Zamindar employees offered only 45 kgs per acre and that too spoiled and decayed paddy for which they refused to accept it. They said that the matter will be placed before the Farmers’ Association. The Association leaders Nanduri

Prasada Rao, Nallapati Venkata Rama Narasaiah met the Raja at his Fort, they were told to send the complaint by post. Thus, satyagraha was inevitable. Along with the labourers, Nallapati Venkata Rama Narasaiah started Satyagraha on the advice of Prasada Rao. On the first day 500 members, on the second day 1,000 and on the third day 3,000 people participated in it. The Zamindar was very angry at this Satyagraha. His henchmen came and threatened that they would murder Nanduri Prasada Rao, Moturi Parandhamaiah and Vemulapalli Hanumantha Rao. But the farmers were not afraid of this, Satyagraha went on unabated and made the Zamindar-intolerable. He sent telegrams to officials complaining that the leader of the farmers were going to rob and plunder his fort. The Krishna District Collector, the Bezwada Sub-Collector, District Police Superintendent arrived at the spot on 24th of December 1938 by three lorries with full of police. Congress leaders N.S. Murthy and Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao also arrived to Munagala. When, officials forced the farmers they said that they were fighting only for their just remuneration. The Collector understood the fact. He went to Kalukova and saw that the labourers were given 60 kgs of good paddy. The Satyagraha was a success, it gave a lot of courage to the people. The Zamindar had to come down for compromise and the association also extended its hand for an amicable conclusion.\(^\text{16}\)

On 9th and 10th of January 1939, the two parties met and framed the conditions of compromise and it was agreed upon in the presence of B.S. Murthy, Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao, the Collector of Krishna District, the District Superintendent of Police. On behalf of the Zamindar, Kumar Raja Rama Krishna Reddy and from the side of the farmers association, Velidenda Ranga Rao, Kodati Venkata Narasimha Rao, Nanduri

Prasada Rao, Nallapati Venkatarama Narasaiah, Vuppala Ramaiah and Kondula Ramulu signed the document which was later came to be known as Brahmaiah award.¹⁷

On the occasion of the above compromise, Gottipati Brahmaiah, the compromiser heard the complaints and conditions of both the parties and recorded them in the documents. As per the agreement, the rights of the farmers were enhanced. Any problematic affair between the Zamindar and the farmer would be resolved as per the above Award. Brahmaiah is the final authority in this matter.

Gottipati Brahmayya said that, “I employed Yerneni Subrahmanyam, the founder of Gandhi Ashram in Kommaravolu, Gudiwada taluk to implement the Mungala Award effectively. He toured the villages of the region for three months and to some extent he succeeded in his efforts. I considered it my duty to express my thanks to him in this regard”.¹⁸

The residents of Ramapuram village constructed a primary school for themselves. The Zamindar occupied the building. But eventually in 1939 it was occupied by the people and they hoist a red flag and a congress party flag. The Zamindar complained it to the Sub-Collector and he promalgamated 144 section. A case was filed against Nanduri Prasada Rao, the school Secretary and 29 others. The farmers had to conduct Satyagraha, they thought that the practical application of the Brahmaiah Award was only a dream. On June 2nd, the Satyagraha committee was formed in Nadigudem under the presidentship of Nanduri Prasada Rao. The Zamindar had by force taken the land of Immadi Papaiah, the President of the first ‘Zameen Rytu’ in 1930. The farmers

considered that, to start the proposed Satyagraha in this land of Immadi Papayya and occupied by the Zamindar. On June 2, 1939 under the leadership of Vuppala Ramaiah, Vice-President of the Paragana Farmers’ Association, the first eight member-group entered the land with flags. The police arrested and took them away immediately.

Later leaders of the farmers, Nanduri Prasada Rao, Moturi Parandhamaiah, Vemulapalli Hanumantha Rao, Jostyabhatla Satyanarayana and Nallapati Venkatarama Narasaiah were taken into custody. When they were being taken away three hundred women folk belonging to Ramapuram, Barakhatgudem and Narayanagudem villages, obstructed the police and let them go only when their leaders interfered. Violent lathi-charge took place on the participants of Satyagraha on the 4th of June. 25 members suffered heavy injuries and 43 were taken into custody. The Zamindar felt happy at this and spread rumours that the farmers out of fear gave up fight. But on 5th, Kukkadapu Ramaiah, Krishnasagar Janaiah, Chilukuri Kankaiah and Chilukuri Narayana, entered the land with the group of Ramapuram and started Satyagraha. Thus, people began to fight for their pending demands through Satyagraha. Such were the conditions in those days.19

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

There were 42 villages under Munagala Estate. The estate income in 1802 was Rs.6,012 whereas Peshcus was Rs.4,008. The income of the estate by 1908 A.D. was Rs.46,000. By 1930 peshcus remained the same but the income has increased to Rs.1,40,000. There was no proper survey and settlement. Cess was exorbitant. The

irrigation was monopolised by Zamindar, very less amount of water was released for farmers. In order to avoid these difficulties the farmers digged water pits for their irrigation. Cess was extracted even from the wells and pits of the farmers. All the ‘banjer’ (wastelands) were under the zamindar even the service enam (gift) lands which were given to service castes like potters, washermen, barbers etc., were also appropriated by zamindar by keeping these lands under mortgage and made them to serve his purpose.\textsuperscript{20}

There used to be a good organisation in the Estate, with working capital, but there was no one to help this organisation and also it was subjected to zamindar’s total control, and due to this it was ruined. In this Estate, the Government employees were always partial towards the zamindar. The farmers here depended on the manual labour and they had no rest at all. The monsoon is less in this estate and also lands were not fertile. Even then the cess was high, before 1905, cess on the dryland was 40 paise and on wetlands it was Rs.2/- . Later the land assessment per 1 acre wetland cess Rs.10/- in khariff season and Rs.5/- in Rabi season. The Nandigama taluk is very backward and also poor. According to late Deevan Bahadur, Arogya Swamy Modaliyar’s financial enquiry, it was told that the cess was high. On wetlands it was 12 Rupees and on dryland it was Rupees 4, and there was an increase in cess by Rs.4, on drylands Rs.10 on wetlands. In this estate, the irrigation facility was poor when compared to Government villages, the farmer of the government villages depended on irrigation whereas the zameen farmers in the Estate depended on the wells and pits which were dug by themselves. Where as in zameen villages only for the second crop from the wells was given remission but for the

first crop there was no remission and Rs.12 to Rs.18 was collected as cess from the wetland. Even, when there was no monsoon, the cess was collected based on the artificial calculations. The cess was from Rs.18 to 27. It was really hard for the farmers to hire in hot summer and poor monsoon and it is very difficult for them to pay cess.\textsuperscript{21}

Until 1908, in Munagala Estate there was no right to succession on land, in the name of introducing succession right, miscalculations were made to collect more money, depending upon the ancestors 2 to 4 ‘Anas’ were collected. By this enhanced calculations more cess was collected for the same land. Estate rent was enhanced to Rs.1,30,000 from Rs.46,000. The estate rent was enhanced by 200\% but the peshchus remained at Rs.4,008 only.\textsuperscript{22}

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>Rs.4,008-00</td>
<td>Rs. 6,012-00</td>
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<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>Rs.4,008-00</td>
<td>Rs. 46,000-00</td>
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<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Rs.4,008-00</td>
<td>Rs.1,30,000-00</td>
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According to the Krishna district Collector, T.Bhaskar Rao Naidu’s letter dt.4-5-1938, 22-5-1939, there was a system of paying cess in kind. There were 70 tanks in the estate which were in good condition. The total amount of cess collected in the estate was Rs.80,876 and peshcus was Rs.4,008. Four thousand acres of Reserve forest comes under this estate had no valuable trees. There was a grazing tax of 60 paise for cattle and Rs.10/- per 100 sheeps or goats. This estate was surveyed, however, it was considered to be a private survey.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{22} Dt.25-1-1935 “Zameen Rytu” Weekly.
Farmers were not allowed to use the lands which were obtained by the ownership rights which were situated between rocks, waste lands, pastures, if these lands were used or dug for any purpose farmers were asked to pay cess.\(^{24}\)

Tanks were more profitable for the estate than to the farmers, Rs.10 per head was collected as cess for repairing the tanks. Even the bricks and white wash was supposed to be brought by the farmers. If farmers avoided ‘vetti’ or the repair works to the tanks they were restricted to use the grazing (pullari) lands. Even those who paid the grazings (pullari) were not allowed to use the grazing lands. The hardships under the zamindar was three types. (1) The poverty of farmers, (2) Psychological depression, and (3) Helplessness.\(^{25}\)

Zamindary enquiry committee of 1938, the zamindar saw to it that nobody could give witness before the committee. During the last hours of the committee, Velidenda Ranga Rao, Tangella Venkaiah and Kukkadapu Ramaiah secretly left Munagala for Madras to give witness.

Witness No.1 Velidenda Ranga Rao, Akupamula village, Munagala Estate
Witness No.274.

The present income of the estate was Rs.1,20,000. Only private survey was held. Every year there should be a zamabandi or land assessment, there should be distribution of pattas and grazing rights to farmers should be provided. Only \(\frac{1}{6}\)th should be the cess on the total production of the land there should be proper calculation by karanams. Actually there were 19 karanams of which 11 were suspended and removed from the


\(^{25}\) Dt. 25-1-1935 Zameen Rytu ‘weekly’.  

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service. The Karanams were refused to act as per the wishes of the Zamindar and fell in troubles.

Witness No.2 Tangella Venkaiah, Gopavaram village Munagala Estate, Witness no.275.

He was a village administrator who used to work for zamindar without any salary. He was actually provided 11 acres of Enam but zamindar appropriated this land.

Witness No.3 Kukkadapu Ramaiah
Munagala village, Munagala Estate, Witness No.337.

He claimed that, he possessed 7 acres of land which he cultivated and got the yield in the name of Zamindar. The enquiry committee in its report wrote the income of the estate was Rs.1,20,000 which is collected through high cess. The joint pattas should be divided and right should be given on trees to the farmers and Karanams of this estate were not rendering proper services.26

The great depression of 1929-33 severely affected the farmers of Andhra. The land value decreased, the lands were sold at a very cheaper rates, many marginal farmers had become agricultural labourers. The British Government did not respond to this situation. Then N.G. Ranga started mobilising the farmers in defence of their rights. He toured many villages and demanded moratorium on debts and also for increase the price of the grain. The urban congress leaders ridiculed N.G. Ranga saying that the country was involved in salt satyagraha and Gandhi was trying to pursue Lord Irvin, that was the time when every one must work for national movement but not for economic demands. Thus many congress leaders did not support N.G. Ranga, Saradhi Rama Brahmam

supported N.G. Ranga in order to save the farmers from this crisis. But, yet the farmers suffered a lot.\textsuperscript{27}

**POLITICAL CONDITIONS**

The persons who strived for the socio-political development of Andhra, like Bogaraju Pattabhi Sitharamaiah, Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao, Gadicherla Hari Sarvothama Rao, Kompella Hanumantha Rao, Desiraju Peda Bapaiiah, Mutnuri Venkata Krishna Rao (Editor, Krishna Patrika), Unnava Lakshmi Narayana Pantulu etc., were all in good contacts with the Raja of Munagala. Raja attended Indian National Congress in 1906 held in Calcutta along with his Diwan Lakshmana Rao. During 1907 Krishna district congress session was held at Nandigama and Raja was the chairman of the reception committee. Raja was also a close associate of National Flag maker Pingali Venkaiah. Pingali Venkaiah stayed in Nadigudem at Raja’s estate, while preparing the national flag. Raja encouraged the production and usage of khadi and charaka. During 1926, Madras assembly elections, Raja proposed Kolanda Reddy’s candidature as congress candidate. As it was a twin seat constituency, Raja requested congress leaders for one to Kolanda Reddy. But the high command took decision in favour of Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao and Kollipara Suraiah.\textsuperscript{28}

As Congress High Command went against Raja’s wishes, Raja supported Kolanda Reddy as an independent candidate. He made his estate people to cast one vote to Kolanda Reddy, second vote was left uncast. As a result, Kolanda Reddy and Kaleswara Rao were elected. Congress candidate Kollipara Suraiah was defeated. Raja taught a

\textsuperscript{27} Venkata Subbaiah, Gorrepati (1980). “Saaradhi Ramabrahmam”, Vijayawada.

lesson to congress. In 1937 Madras assembly elections, Leftist Congress leaders Katragadda Venkata Narayana Rao, Vasireddy Durga Sadasiveshwar Prasad were chosen as congress candidates for the Vijayawada twin constituency. A.P. State Congress Committee made secret alliance with the Raja. Accordingly, congress leaders will not propagate their party ideas in Munagala Paragana. In exchange Raja will mobilise all the people in his Paragana to cast their votes in favour of congress leaders. The secret alliance was followed.29

In one way, for today’s political opportunism, Raja was the trend setter in 1926 itself. The Kesara dynasty who ruled the estate several decades file a suit against the Raja of Munagala Estate. These cases were fought at Warangal, Hyderabad, Machilipatnam, Madras courts. It went to the extent of London Privy Council also. To work on these cases, Motilal Nehru demanded Rs.5,000/- to read the file, and Rs.2,000/-per day as fees. As it was too high, Ranga Rao requested Tej Bahadur Sapru to deal the cases. Sapru accepted to work for Rs.2,000/- to read the file and Rs.1,600/- per day as long as he works on the case.30

Not only the Raja’s cases, but his wife’s side cases, Raja’s sister-in-law Rukkamma cases, Vanaparthi Raja’s son cases were taken up by Venkata Ranga Rao. Ranga Rao fought two cases for 40 years, and won the case in 1931 at London Privy Council. Regarding adoption dispute case, Raja won the case and estate was confirmed. It took another 10 years to complete the other cases. But all the cases were won by Ranga Rao only. This was written by Madiraju Ramakoteswara Rao, in his

30 Ibid., p.15.
autobiography that Ranga Rao’s name stands for success. Not only the above cases, but the Bethavolu Zamindars water diversion case and about lands belonged to Kesara family in Siripuram were some of the important cases Ranga Rao fought. Due to all these cases and court expenses, Ranga Rao had to face financial losses. This was mentioned in Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao’s autobiography.31

Zamindar’s employees along with the police attacked villages. They started and had gone to peasant leader Uppala Ramaiah’s house, when Ramaiah’s sister Rukkamma attacked them, police were taken back. Even in Thaduvaye, peasant leader Gopini Ram Reddy was attacked by police. His aged mother defended and made police to go back. Even Zamindar’s employees and police went to Ramapuram, people refused even to give drinking water. There was no other go for the employees except to leave the villages. Even though many leader were arrested, the others like Gattu Gopala Krishnaiah, Samineni Ramaiah, Kodati Venkata Narasimha Rao, Velidenda Ranga Rao, Juluru Venkata Rama Narasaiah continued the struggle. Nanduri Prasada Rao, Moturu Parandhamaiah were the activists who encouraged ‘Munagala Jameen’ peasant struggle. But the peasant leaders Vemulapalli Anjaneyulu, Josyabhatla Satyanarayana were released only after the completion of one year sentence. 1939 June 11 was celebrated as ‘Munagala Day’ all over Andhra. On that day, meetings were held all over Andhra and condemned governments policies and reactionary methods towards Munagala people. Editorials have been written in “Navasakthi”, “Vahini”, “Zameen Rytu” papers. The then revenue minister Prakasam Pantulu and peasant leader N.G. Ranga visited Munagala to

assess the situation. On the assurance of Prakasam pantulu, Munagala peasant struggle came to a halt.\textsuperscript{32}

Zamindar had started autocratic rule in this paragana. The local water ponds and the tanks were utilised by using ‘vetti’ and all the lands were appropriated. For the first time, there was an attack from Raja, in paragana against the Karanams who were village administrators. In fact, the Karanam was sympathetic towards the people. Thus, they were subjected to attacks. These Karanams have organised kisan sabhas and started anti-zamindary movement. There was left wing in congress. Prof. N.G. Ranga was one of the members in left wing who brought about anti-zamindary movement. This movement in Andhra was led by Velindenda Ranga Rao latter on by Moturi Parandhamaiah and Nanduri Prasada Rao. Munagala Paragana was surrounded by Nizam territory. There was a ban on communists under Nizam Government. So the communist used to make Munagala a good exile. The exiled communist influenced the anti-Zamindary movement and made it more active and militant during the course of movement. The Government passed a law abolishing the Zamindary system.\textsuperscript{33}

In 1939, some vysyas of Nadigudem led by Immadi Papaiah joined the anti-zamindary movement. For which the Zamindar reacted against these people and taken away their lands. In 1939, it was represented to kisan leadership and hundreds of people joined the movement who were subjected to lot of repression and terror. In fact, the

\textsuperscript{33} Oral interview with Kodati Narayana Rao.
Gottipati Brahmaiah award says that these lands should be liberated from the clutches of the Zamindar.34

The west Krishna, district congress condemned the atrocities of the Zamindar. With the advice of Prof. N.G. Ranga, the then district congress president Peta Bapaiah and the Secretary, Kakani Venkata Ratnam with some young people worked in the Paragana villages. The Zamindary goondas troubled them a lot. The local farmers were mobilised for Satyagraha movement, Nallapati Venkata Rama Narasaiah, Immadi Papaiah, Nanduri Prasada Rao, Gattu Gopala Krishnaiah, Ponnaluri Radha Krishna Murthy, Uppala Ramaiah and other were imprisoned in this Satyagraha. Some young people have secretly collected the information on the atrocities of Zamindar and made it public. Kakani Venkataratnam, Vangaveti Achaiah, Pinnamaneni Sitaramaiah, Gondi Koteswara Rao, Bandi Tirupataiah, Vejandla Venkata Subbaiah, Repala Buchirama Seshaih Sresti and the President of Nandigama taluk kisan organisation, Kapa Lakshmi Narayana, Ponduri Anantha Ramaiah and others participated in this task. During this movement, Indulal Yagnik and N.G. Ranga visited the Paragana and gave relevant advices. Later, during the West Krishna district congress meeting held at Konakanchi, the report was unanimously accepted and this report was sent to state congress and also to the Government Andhra Kesari Prakasam Pantulu, the then revenue minister in Madras Government visited the Paragana to understand the real conditions.35

Nanduri Prasada Rao, the communist leader was the President of Satyagraha committee, Nadigudem was the centre of the Zamindar where Immadi Papaiah’s land

34 Oral interview with Chillamcherla Raghu Nandham.
lies. The Satyagraha started on June 2, 1939 under the leadership of Uppala Ramaiah of ‘Zameen Rytu Sangham’. Eight farmers were arrested by the police as soon as they started ploughing the land. The communist leaders were also arrested, 3000 women from three villages stopped the police but they retreated on the advice of their leaders and in the second phase of Satyagraha, 43 people were arrested and many more were injured. Satyagraha and arrests became common, on this occasion 42 cattle were taken into custody on the grounds of violating 144 section. They were given neither food nor water. The congress government has created history by using 144 section not only on people but also on cattle. This is the best example to say that the congress government is ruthless than the British Government. The Satyagraha continued for 17 days, 350 people were sent to jail. 72 people and faced trail were sent to Rajahmundry and others were released soon. The police who came to destroy the properties of Satyagrahis were opposed by the people. So police retreated. The leaders of the congress advised to stop the Satyagraha and it was stopped. The peculiarity of this movement is though the leaders were arrested the movement continued Gattu Gopala Krishnaiah, Samineni Ramaiah, Kodati Venkata Narasimha Rao, Velidenda Ranga Rao, Juluri Rama Narasaiah and other secretly led the movement against the government, this is the peculiarity of the movement.  

Congress leadership had tried for compromise. Meanwhile, congress ministry resigned and Second World War started. The Government has released the Satyagrahis but not the communists. They were released only after completing full term. Finally, the Zamindar returned the land to Immadi Papaiah in 1930. But hundreds of farmers were

denied this opportunity. There was an atmosphere where, the farmers were ready to plough their lands. But the leadership did not provide such opportunity. In the name of Satyagraha, the agitation was concentrated on only one farmer land. The farmers were convinced by the congress leaders that through satyagraha the lands could be retained back and there was no need to struggle further. But where as communists fought for the lands alone. In the villages where the kisan sabha was powerful, the farmers should have been allowed to plough their lands which would have strengthened the kisan movement. Obviously, the Government repression would have been severe but people were ready to face it. But Satyagraha did not give any such scope.37

On 12-11-1940 Kisan Sabha submitted a memorandum to the then Collector of Krishna district, C.J. Paul, which stated to take necessary action to implement the pact with the Zamindar. The collector had accepted to take action provided both the parties bind to the official decision. It was accepted by Kisan Sabha. The President of Krishna district Kisan Sabha sent a representative, similarly Zamindar also sent his agent. The Deputy Tahsildar was made the judge, to listen both parties demands and to provide a solution. Judgement of the Tahsildar was accepted by the Kisan Sabha, but the representative of the Zamindar did not accept. The Paragana ‘Zameen Rytu Sangham’ again submitted a memorandum to the new District Collector, D. Mahanti. In this memorandum, the Kisan Sabha described the present conditions of the Munagala estate and also pleaded to take necessary action for the implementation of Brahmaiah award. The District Collector announced on 4-9-1941 that a committee would be formed to look

37 Ibid., p.108.
into the affairs which was accepted by Kisan Sabha. But the Zamindar rejected this Proposal. Thus the Collector became helpless and withdrawn this proposal.38

The model school was established in Jaganadhapuram by Kesaboyina Mottaiah. First and Second standard education was started here for both boys and girls. Eight teachers were appointed and they maintained discipline. The teaching methods were so easy for the students to understand. Students were taught nationalism, humanity, love and respect and also politics. They used to sing patriotic songs and also songs about Kisans and agricultural labourers. Students came to this school from almost all villages of this paragana. About 200 students joined this school and made it very popular.39

In 1945, the political school was established in Munagala by Communist and Kisan Sabha cadre, 15 students came from different villages. District Communist Party Secretary-Kantamaneni Chalapati Rao, District Kisan Sabha President-Anumarlapudi Seetharama Rao taught the agrarian problems. Thatavarti Venkateswara Rao taught the political geography. Raghuvurrapu Appa Rao, the President of district ‘Prajanatya Mandali’ taught Science and Technology.40

The ‘zameen rytu’ patiently waited for the compromise between the zamindar, but in vain. Finally, on May 7th 1947, they started to fight to protect the leased land and also for the evacuation of occupied lands by the zamindar. It all started by hoisting a red flag on the fort of Zamindar at Nadigudem, on the seventh morning farmers and agricultural labourers of Ramapuram, Siripuram, Karivirala Kalukolva, Thaduvaye, Narayanagudem,
Aakupamula, Munagala etc., occupied the lands that were leased and appropriated by the zamindar. Zamindar felt, if the police force goes out from his paragana, it will be easy to continue his atrocities, he set a fire to cattle house at Aakupamula village by his servants and said that it was done by the communists. The zamindar sent selfish reports to the Collector and the police officials of the district blaming communists setting fire and lifting agricultural tools. Basing on this reports, 70 reserve police were sent. They were camped at Siripuram, Nadigudem, Munagala and Karivirala villages. Every day all these 70 police in association with the servants of Zamindar started attacking the villages. During this attacks at Siripuram, Vempati Kanakaiah and his sons Ramakotaiah and Rangaiah were arrested and sent to Central Jail at Nellore as detenues.41

Challa Ramulu of Siripuram, Kanneboina Veeraiah of Nadigudem, Vallepureddy Hanuma Reddy, Chikuri Amaraiah of Aakupamula, Mahamkali Panakalaiah of Komarabanda, Gopireddy Veeraiah of Narayanagudem, Jidimatla Seetharami Reddy of Thaduvaye. Yengali Papaiah of Narasimhulagudem, Julakanti Veeraiah, Venkatadri of Karivirala, Ranabothu Satyanarayana Reddy, Gangi Seetharama Swamy of Karivirala, Surabi Veeraiah, Mandapalli Ramaiah and Gunna Veeraiah of Kalukova were arrested as detenues and sent to Nellore Central Jail. And 19 communist party workers were arrested and sent to jail. In the last week of June, police accompanied with servants of the zamindar attacked the village in the early hours, people were subjected to indiscriminate violence. Garlapati Buchaiah, Badraiah and Gopaiah who were the members of the communist party were severely beaten up even Garlapati Kanakamma the old woman, the mother of Buchaiah was also seriously beaten up. Garlapati Gopaiah died in the

41 ibid., pp.85, 86.
violence. Nobody in Karivirala village took food on that day. They went to agricultural fields and returned only after police left. The entire village looked like a battlefield. All the streets witnessed the blood spots.\(^{42}\)

The farmers of Andhra condemned the atrocities on the farmers of Munagala who were leading a peaceful movement. The progressive people of Andhra viewed that the Munagala struggle was not just Kisan Movement, but it was the movement of the entire people against the atrocities of zamindar. Kommareddy Satyanarayana Murthy, President of Andhra state farmers organisation condemned the atrocities on farmers and gave a call to strengthen the kisan movement. He said the Munagala struggle is an inspiration for Andhra farmer and it is responsibility of Andhra farmer to give moral support to Munagala struggle. June 11\(^{th}\) 1946 was declared as Munagala day. In Andhra State, the workers of kisan sabha, congress socialists and other progressive parties celebrated Munagala day throughout the state, meetings were held at Rajolu, Pithapuram, Kondapalli, Angaluru, Kothapalli, Koruprolu, Srikakulam, Katuru, Kurumaddali, Garikaparru, Kalipatnam, Pathapadu, Konakanchi, Ongole, Challapalli etc.\(^{43}\)

The Zamindar of Munagala could not restrict the farmers, the Satyagraha which started on second June continued. Even though, 300 people were arrested many more farmers came to continue the movement. In Andhra State, there was a large scale protest against the atrocities on farmers of Munagala. Even Swamy Sahajananda Saraswathi, the Secretary of all India Kisan Sabha appreciated the farmers of Munagala and condemned

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\(^{42}\) Ibid., pp.86, 87.

the police violence. The Congress M.L.As., Katragadda Narayana Rao, Pullela Somasundara Rao brought pressure on the Government. People’s movement became widespread during this stage. The then Revenue minister Prakasam Pantulu visited Munagala on 17th of June. He approached the farmers and requested them to withdraw Satyagraha and his Government is ready to look into the problems of farmers. Basing on the promise of the government, the Krishna district Kisan Organisation declared to halt the movement temporarily on 18th June and the farmers of Munagala withdrawn the movement. They demanded the release of arrested farmers and implementation of Brahmaiah award. The Government released all the farmers except those who were important Kisan leaders like Nanduri Prasada Rao, Vemulapalli Hanumantha Rao, Moturi Parandhamaiah, Josyabhatla Satyanarayana. They were kept in jail until 1942, the Government did not uphold the promise given to farmers.44

CULTURAL CONDITIONS

The Munagala Paragana was very ancient. Literary activities were very well patronised. Raja Nayani Latchamma Rao who ruled Munagala during 1873-1892 had a special liking for literature. Komararaju Venkatappaiah was the then Estate manager. Venkata Ramaiah was the husband of Latchama Rao. Venkatappaiah worked in their court till Venkata Ramaiah died. Later, he returned to his native Penuganchiprolu along with the members of his family and lived thre a few years and died. Gangamma was Venkatappaiah’s wife. She took her children Acchamamba and Laxmanarayalu and went to Nagapur where her brother Bandaru Madhava Rao was residing. Madhava Rao was working as an engineer in Public Works Department. His native place was a village

44 Ibid., pp.457, 458.
called Kanchala in Nandigama taluk. When his wife died, having no children he married his niece Acchamamba, who was famous at the time as the writer of “Abala Sacchanitra Ratna Mala”. Laxmana Rao was brought up under the supervision of Madhava Rao. When Nayani Venkata Rao came to Munagala in 1900 A.D., he called on his boyhood friend and later employed him as Deevan. Laxman Rao worked as Deevan till he died in 1923. It means that the family of Kommara Raju had ties with the Munagala Estate for 50 years.\(^{45}\)

The poet Varadaraju Nandikeswara wrote “Sivatatva Sudhanidhi” with the encouragement he received from Kommarraju Venkata Krishnaiah. The book was written in three chapters. The book was translated into Telugu from Skandha. Poet Kommarraju Ramalinga or Rameswara or Ramalinga was Venkatappaiah’s father’s brother who wrote ‘Veerabhadra Sreegiri Malleswara Sataka’.\(^{46}\)

Kommarraju Venkata Sivudu the eldest son of Venkatappaiah was the writer of ‘Rajalinga Sataka’. The Rajalinga described in the poems was no other than ‘the Ramalinga Swamy’ of Repala village which was only two miles away from Munagala. The book contains 127 ‘seesa’ poems glorifying the greatness of the Lord Shiva. Kommarraju Venkata Laxman Rao is a world known scholar of the day who was the first personal Secretary of the Raja of Munagala and was the in-charge of research on scientific matters. There was a unseperable friendship between the Raja and Laxman Rao which brought them closer and made them good friends. Laxman Rao’s literary services to the Estate were unforgettable since he stands as the first and the foremost research

\(^{46}\) Ibid., p. 349.
The Zamindar of Munagala, Raja Nayani Venkata Ranga Rao Bandaddur 1879-1958 had his education in noble College, Bandar and in Madras. He had literary taste and good manners. He felicitated Adipoodi Somanadha Rao who dedicated his book “The History of Srikrishna Devaraya” to him. The Raja was the life patron of “Andhra Pracharin Grandhamala” of Kakinada. “Aryabharati Grandhamalika” of Madras and “Saraswati Grandha Malika” of Bandar. The Research Institute of the epics of Andhra, Rajamahendravaram. He himself was the founder of Vignana Chandrika Grandha Mandali Publishing House. The books published from this Mandali are popular and are considered to be models not only in those days but even today.\(^{47}\)

The Raja was the President of Sri Sarada Niketan Committee, Guntur for this he gave away ten thousand square yards of land at Brodiepet, Guntur and a residential area which cost about eighty thousand rupees. He was the first among the patrons of Srikrishna Devaraya Andhra Bhasha Nilayam, Hyderabad. He established a trust in the Andhra Viswakala Parishat in commemoration of Kommaraju Venkata Laxmana Rao. He donated eight thousand rupees to the National College, Bandar. He was the Chief Patron of Gellet, a European and linguist who published a dictionary on colloquial Telugu. In 1953, the Raja was honoured by Andhra Viswakala Parishat with the award of ‘Kalaprapoorna’.\(^{48}\)

\(^{47}\) Ibid., p. 350.
\(^{48}\) Ibid., p.351.
While studying at Noble College, Machilipatnam, Venkata Ranga Rao had familiarity with Laxman Rao. Raghupati Venkata Ratnam Naidu who attracted the youth of those days, also was working in Noble College, Venkata Ranga Rao was influenced by Naidu. With the assistance of Ramichettu Ranga Rao, Zamindar Venkata Ranga Rao and Deevan Laxman Rao established the “Sri Krishna Devaraya Bhasha Nilayam” in 1901. In Hanumakonda too, they started the Raja Raja Narendra Bhasha Nilayam in 1902. Both the institutions received good amount of donations from Munagala Estate. Venkata Ranga Rao had been the President of the institution for fifty years and whenever the institution needed financial help he gave it. At the same time, Laxman Rao started Vignan Chandrika Grandha Mandali in Madras with the financial support of the Zamindar. This publishing House (Mandali) published many books on politics, economics, the life Histories of great men, historical novels and translations from other languages. Eminent people of the day such as Ravichettu Rangarao from Telangana, Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao from coastal Andhra, Gadicharla Hari Sarvothama Rao from Rayalaseema, also supported the publishing house. Andhra Vignana Saraswathi publishing House was commenced and Mallampalli Somasekhara Sarma, a famous research scholar in History was appointed to look after it. Adipoodi Somanadha Rao wrote the History of Sri Krishna Devaraya and dedicated it to Venkata Ranga Rao. Vedas were translated into Telugu by Munagala poets Kodati Gopala Rao, Gollapudi Seetarama Sastri who received financial help from the Raja. In commemoration of Kommaraju Laxman Rao an endowment was furnished by Venkata Ranga Rao so that research in the field of History might be taken up. The Zamindar of Munagala gave fabulous donations to the Publishing House in Rajahmundry. He also extended his
financial assistance to the Arya Bharati Publishing House in Madras. He donated a big amount for the publication of the complete works of Chilakamarthi Lakshmi Narasimham, a famous poet and reformer of the day Doctor Achanta Laxmipathi also received donation from the Raja to continue research work in Ayurveda medicine.49

Venkata Ranga Rao had very good relation with Cattamanchi Ramalinga Reddy who had been the Vice-Chancellor of the Andhra University for a long time. With the co-operation of Madapati Hanumantha Rao, Burgula Rama Krishna Rao and Mandumula Narasimha Rao, he tried a lot for the educational and cultural development of the people of Nizam State.50

Scholarships were arranged for the students who were studying Chemistry in Andhra University. The Raja founded an endowment in memory of Kommaraju Laxmana Rao for research work in History. Because of his multifarious activities in the field of publications and education and also for giving financial assistance to many institutions, on January 5th of 1953, on the occasion of Silver Jubilee of Andhra University, S. Radhakrishnan conferred the title ‘Kalaprapoorna’ upon him.51

Venkata Ranga Rao did not evince the same liberal mindedness in his administration. Farmers and labourers were subjected to inhuman atrocities that reminded the Middle Ages. He was criticised by his own well wisher Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao for the lapses in Zamindar’s administration.52

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