CHAPTER - V

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE
The last phase of the Non-cooperation movement was the Civil Disobedience towards the government. Its main emphasis was the non-payment of the taxes. Gandhi made it clear that this phase would be implemented only after substantial success is achieved in the second phase—the constructive programme. As noted in the preceding chapter, the constructive programme made relatively more progress in Andhra than in other parts of the Presidency. The Government of Madras admitted that "the demand for Swaraj has been widely and firmly implanted in the districts of Guntur, Krishna and Godavari" and its authority "had seriously deteriorated". Further it apprehended that the unrest might spread to Cuddapah district also where the people had some grievances against the officials of the Department of Forests. The Government of

1. See also, F.N.R., 17 March, 22 June, 4 August and 6 December 1921.
3. Ibid.
India also cautioned the Madras government of the dangers of the movement on "the ignorant masses."  

**Government's Attitude**

The government was not worried about its loss of revenue from the abkari auctions or the impact of the movement on the fortunes of the textile mills of Lancashire. It was more concerned about the effect of the movement on the prestige of the government since the British rule in India depended on two main props, namely the prestige it commanded among the masses and the fear it inculcated among all sections of the population.

Hence to contain the growing influence of Gandhi and the Congress party, the Government of Madras decided to extend its patronage to the Justice Party which came out successful in the elections of 1920 mainly due to default of Congress which made the boycott of election as one of its planks of the Non-cooperation movement.

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The Justice Party on coming to power in 1921 launched a tirade against the Non-cooperation movement, and ministers like K.V. Reddi Naidu visited different places in Andhra to counteract the growing influence of the Congress. But his attempts to dissuade the people from the Non-cooperation movement failed miserably as the people boycotted the meetings addressed by the ministers.

Further, the government found to its consternation that it could not depend on the non-officials to arrest the progress of the growing influence of Gandhi and the Congress. The Collector of Guntur district confessed that in the entire district there was only one individual, P.V. Krishnayya Chowdari, who made an attempt to "start an open public anti-Non-cooperation campaign". He made this attempt to escape prosecution from the government for publishing a defamatory article in Ryot Patrika edited by him.

5. G.O.No. 171, Public (Misc.), 20 March 1921.
6. Andhra Patrika, 2 and 3 February 1921; The Hindu, 10 December 1921.
7. G.O.No. 483, Public (Confidential), 30 July 1921.
8. Ibid., P.N.R.; 2 July 1921.
for the anti-Non-cooperation meetings, government relaxed rules and allowed the officials to attend them. Only few officials availed this relaxation and attended the pro-British meetings.9

As all these measures failed to arrest the movement, government decided to invoke the provisions of the Penal Code to harass the jailed Non-cooperators and break their morale. Government of India allowed free hand to the Provincial governments in their policy of repression. However, it cautioned that leaders of all India stature like Gandhi should not be arrested without its prior permission.10 As none of the Andhra Congress leaders has all India stature the Madras government found it easy to arrest, imprison and harass them without any fear of censure from the Government of India. Several of the local leaders were asked to furnish security for their good behaviour on the ground that they are likely to disturb the peace and tranquility of their district. Persons who tried to obstruct the

government servants in the discharge of their duties and incited people not to pay the taxes due to the government were asked to furnish security and sent to prison. As no one came forward to furnish security, the accused were imprisoned. In Kakinada several persons were sent to prison for obstructing the police when they attempted to remove the Congress flag hoisted on its own office. In several places many Congress workers were sentenced to imprisonment for picketing the shops selling foreign cloth and liquor and for trying to persuade the contractors to abstain from abkari auctions. Magistrates frequently issued orders prohibiting public meetings and issued warrants for the arrest of several non-cooperators under section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code. In a word, government unleashed repression and trampled on the fundamental rights of the people.

Again the treatment of imprisoned non-cooperators beggars description. They were subjected to all sorts

11. The Hindu, 9 December 1921.
12. The repressive measures of government are graphically described by Andhra Patrika, 3 and 30 May, 6 June, 19, 23 and 30 September, 3, 15, 21, 26 and 31 October and 22 November 1921; and The Hindu, 13 and 19 May, 10 and 18 November 1921; F.N.R., 20 September 1921; A. Kaleswara Rao, Naa Jeevitha Katha..., pp.355-356; G.V. Subba Rao, Sri Gopalakrishnayya (Amalapuram, 1967), p.73.
of hardships bordering on cruelty. No distinction was made between criminals and political prisoners. Like the former the latter were also subjected to rigorous physical labour and denied facilities to communicate with their kith and kin outside the prison.

The non-cooperators in spite of the harsh treatment they received in the prison kept their cool and rarely confronted with the jail officials. The news of the harsh treatment meted out to the political prisoners, however, reached the public to the embarrassment of the government. The non-cooperators on their release received hero’s welcome from their admirers.

Government harassed the retired officials who were suspected to be in sympathy with the Non-cooperation movement by withholding their pension. Mohammad Raza Khan Saheb Belgami, a retired Deputy Collector and the Chairman of Guntur Municipality, had lost his pension on this account.

14. The Hindu, 4 June 1921.
15. Ibid., 14 September 1921; G.O.No. 506, Public (Confidential), 10 August 1921.
Karnam in Godavari district was punished for offering food to a semi-starved non-cooperator. Similarly, Mohammad Shamoo, a trader of Rajahmundry, suspected to be a Khilafat sympathiser, was punished by raising his tax on income from Rs. 200/- to Rs. 27,000/- and made him to sustain heavy losses in trade.

People expressed their resentment towards the government by observing hartal whenever the leaders are arrested and imprisoned. For example, when Unnava Lakshminarayana and Vedantam Narasimhachari of Guntur were imprisoned, the town observed hartal for entire week. So is the case with other districts also.

The policy of repression failed to contain the movement. On the other hand, it provoked the people to be more defiant and abhor the government. The Congress exploited the resentment of the people towards the government and intensified the movement. The

16. The Hindu, 14 September 1921.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid., 29 July 1921.
AICC session meeting at Delhi on 5 November 1921 allowed the different Provincial units to intensify the movement at their discretion.

Movement in Andhra

In Andhra, the Civil Disobedience movement and non-payment of taxes was started much earlier than 5 November 1921. Guntur district became the active centre of Civil Disobedience when local movements like no-tax campaign in Chirala and Repalle protesting against the creation of municipalities for these towns and Forest Satyagraha in Palnadu which started at the beginning of 1921 merged into the Non-cooperation movement.

At the beginning of 1921, the air was thick with rumours that independence is round the corner and that in free India there would be no taxes. The gullible and illiterate masses gave credence to those wild rumours. 19 Even in urban centres like Vijayawada,

campaign was started for the non-payment of taxes to the municipality.\textsuperscript{20} The campaign soon spread to the neighbouring West Godavari and Guntur districts also.\textsuperscript{21} Simultaneously the movement to break forest regulations which began in Palnadu region of Guntur district spread to other districts notably Cuddapah and Nellore.\textsuperscript{22}

The APCC braced itself to start Civil Disobedience movement on receiving instructions from the AICC. It was only in November 1921, AICC allowed the Provincial Committees to launch Civil Disobedience at their discretion provided they observed the basic tenets of the Gandhian ideology like the Hindu-Muslim unity, eradication of untouchability, promotion of Khadi and adhere to non-violence.

The Ahmedabad session of the Congress held in December 1921 ratified the AICC resolution on Civil Disobedience movement passed in the Delhi session.

\textsuperscript{20} F.N.R., 3 May 1921

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 20 May and 6 October 1921; The Hindu, 13 and 15 June, and 10 August 1921.

\textsuperscript{22} F.N.R., 3 May, 18 June and 6 October 1921.
Gandhi, however, cautioned the Andhra delegates not to start the Civil Disobedience movement in their over-enthusiasm without knowing the general reaction of the peasants for the non-payment of taxes to the government. Actually Gandhi wanted to start the movement at Bardoli in Gujarat under his direct supervision and after observing its results extend to other parts of the country. But as noted earlier, the Civil Disobedience movement started in Guntur and other districts of Andhra much earlier than the stipulated date. Gandhi did not countenance the irresponsible conduct of the Andhra Congressmen and asked Konda Venkatappayya to stop the no-tax campaign in Guntur district. Further he directed that all the taxes due to the government should be paid by the end of January 1922. On knowing the Gandhi's mind, the Andhra Congress workers in other districts caved in. But in Guntur the campaign continued. To save the face of

25. Ibid., p.391.
of the Guntur leaders, Gandhi sent a telegram to Venkatappayya condoning their action. The campaign in Guntur district continued till February 1922 when Gandhi suspended the Non-cooperation movement.

The Guntur episode indicates that the Andhra Congress leaders were irresponsible and indisciplined. They were carried away more by emotion than reason with the result they became the butt of ridicule and invited censure from Gandhi and other higher-ups in the Congress hierarchy. They integrated the issues of local grievance with Civil Disobedience movement which is against the stand taken by the AICC. However, in defence of these leaders, it may be stated that though they transgressed the guidelines issued by the apex body, still they succeeded in giving momentum to the Civil Disobedience movement in Andhra and built up the heroic image of Gandhi. It were the so-called local issues like the Chirala-Perala Struggle, Palnadu Forest Satyagraha and the no-tax campaign of Pedanandi-padu that gave pith and substance to the Non-cooperation

26. The telegram runs as follows: "You are the best judges of the situation. If Delhi conditions are satisfied and if you feel confident, I have no right to interfere. God speed. He will bless all honest humble efforts. Keep me daily informed", see The Hindu, 23 January 1922.
movement in Andhra. In the following pages we will analyse their impact on the Civil Disobedience movement.

NO-TAX CAMPAIGN IN MUNICIPALITIES

Chirala-Perala

The one event in the Non-cooperation movement in Andhra which had attracted the attention of the entire country was the Chirala-Perala struggle. Chirala and Perala were two neighbouring villages in Bapatla taluk of the Guntur district. They together with the two hamlets of Jandrapeta and Viraragavapeta formed a rural conglomeration with the population of about 15,000. These four villages formed into an administrative unit called Chirala union. Among the four villages Chirala was a noted centre of handloom textiles. As it is located on the main railway line connecting Madras and Calcutta, government wanted to develop it into an important centre of textile trade also. Under the Government of India Act of 1919, Local Self-Government
was one of the transferred subjects.\textsuperscript{27} In the elections of 1920, the Justice Party which is opposed to the programme of Congress Party came to power.

As Chirala happened to be one of the strongholds of the Congress, the Justice Party wanted to undermine its influence by creating a municipality for Chirala and its adjacent Perala. By this move the tax burden of the people increased from Rs. 4,000/- a year to Rs. 40,000/-, a tenfold increase.\textsuperscript{28} As most of the inhabitants were weavers below the poverty line, the local Congress leader Duggirala Gopalakrishnayya opposed the move by galvanizing the citizens into a coherent force.

In spite of the protest from the people, the municipality was constituted on 12 January 1920.\textsuperscript{29}

Thereupon, the Rater-Payers' Association was formed in the following month and it petitioned to the government to rescind its decision.\textsuperscript{30} On the refusal of the government to reconsider its decision, the association

\textsuperscript{27} The Government of India Act, 1919 distinguished government departments into two categories, viz., Reserved subjects and the Transferred subjects. The former were under the control of the Governor while the latter were transferred to the ministers appointed under the Act.

\textsuperscript{28} The Hindu, 27 May 1921; T. Prakasam, Naa Jeevitha Yatra, p.233.

\textsuperscript{29} G.V. Krishna Rao, Chirala and Perala Tragedy: An Episode of Voluntary Exile (Madras, 1922), p.8

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., p.53.
decided in December not to pay municipal taxes until the municipality is abolished.\textsuperscript{31} It also succeeded in making 9 out of 12 councillors resign their positions and created a deadlock in the Civic administration.\textsuperscript{32}

The Premier of Madras Raja Ramarayanagar, who was also in-charge of the Local Self-Government, visited Chirala to study the situation first hand. His visit instead of defusing the situation aggravated it still further. As he found the people subscribed to the Congress ideology he threatened them with reprisals like the abolition of communication facilities by closing down the railway station and post-office. Further he threatened to station the punitive force in the area.\textsuperscript{33}

When the Premier mishandled the situation, Duggirala Gopalakrishnayya, a Master of Arts from the Edinburgh University and a former Professor of History of Government College, Rajahmundry, who subscribed

\textsuperscript{31} Krishna Patrika, 28 May 1921.
\textsuperscript{33} G.V. Krishna Rao, Chirala and Peralam Tragedy..., p.10.
to the Gandhian ideology, stepped into the arena and took up the cause of the Chirala citizens. Gopalakrishnayya after resigning from government service settled down at Chirala and started an educational academy called 'Andhra Goshti' to foster traditional learning and culture. He also created a volunteer force called 'Rama Dandu' to harness the energy of the local youth into constructive purposes. Gopalakrishnayya succeeded in intensifying the agitation against the municipality.\(^{34}\)

The agitation acquired political overtones since Gopalakrishnayya was a Congressmann and further a Brahmin—the two things which are anathema to the Justice Party. The government decided not to yield on the issue and made it a question of prestige.\(^{35}\) The agitation attained momentum by the end of March 1921. By that time twelve persons including an aged women, Alamelu Mangamma, were arrested and sentenced to imprisonment for refusing to pay taxes.\(^{36}\) Mangamma was

\(^{34}\) T. Prakasam, Naa Jeevitha Yatra, p.233.
\(^{35}\) G.V. Subba Rao, Sree Gopalakrishnayya, p.49
Here it may be stated that the movement was spontaneous and the Congress has nothing to do with it till the end of March 1921. It was only in April 1921 Gopalakrishnayya sought the advice of Gandhi when he visited Chirala after attending the Vijayawada AICC session. Gandhi after studying the situation first-hand felt that there are only two alternatives before the citizens of Chirala: first, to continue the struggle non-violently and face the repression of the government, and second, to migrate from the town for good. In other words he advocated the mass exodus of all the citizens from the town which would automatically result in the disappearance of the municipality. 38 Gandhi perhaps never expected that the citizens of Chirala would give countenance to his second advice. But as it turned out, it is this advice that attracted Gopalakrishnayya who undertook

to implement it both in letter and spirit.

The citizens of Chirala had such an abiding faith in Gopalakrishnayya that they agreed to follow him into exile. A new township, called Ramnagar, was built on the outskirts of Chirala and its entire population of 15,000 left their hearth and home and migrated to the new homes. The migrants included the aged and the infirm women and children, Brahmins and Harijans, high and lowly. The 'Rama Dandu' which successfully organised the exodus tried to alleviate the sufferings of the population in their new surroundings by organising community living on the model of the ancient panchayat system. For eleven months beginning from April when the temperature in the shade recorded 113°F, following by the rainy season of July and August when about 11" of rain recorded in few weeks, the population in exile bore

their sufferings with equanimity.\textsuperscript{41} The difficulties of the new life did not in any way weaken their strength of will.

Government tried to break the morale of the people by persecuting some of them for minor offences like carrying on their petty trade without taking proper license. Even bullock-cart drivers were arrested.\textsuperscript{42} The houses of the rate-payers were put on the auction for the non-payment of taxes, but as no one came forward to bid at these auctions, government relaxed rules and permitted its officials to take part in these auctions.\textsuperscript{43} By August 1921 repression increased manifold. About 200 persons who built their huts on government waste land at Ramnagar received notices of eviction or to a penal fine of Rs. 1,026/-\textsuperscript{44}

The exodus of the population which was a unique occurrence received wide publicity throughout the country and also abroad. The visits of the press correspondents

\textsuperscript{41} The Hindu, 27 July 1921.
\textsuperscript{42} Andhra Patrika, 6 June 1921.
\textsuperscript{43} The Hindu, 24 October 1921.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 27 July 1921.
and others who were curious to know the developments at Ramnagar placed the government in an embarrassing situation. 45

Unfortunately for the citizens of Chirala, Congress cold-shouldered the movement and refused to come to their succour in money and material, though it had at its disposal huge funds collected from the Guntur district itself. 46 Gopalakrishnayya, the spirit behind the entire movement won accolade, but not money to keep the show going. In desperation he visited Berhampur to canvass for funds before the Andhra Mahasabha which gathered there for its annual session in the last week of September 1921. While at Berhampur Gopalakrishnayya was arrested and imprisoned. 47

With the imprisonment of Gopalakrishnayya and his associates, the movement became leaderless and began to fizzle out. It became increasingly difficult to sustain the morale of the people as no Congressman came forward to take up the mantle of Gopalakrishnayya. 48

45. The Hindu, 27 July and 3 August 1921.
46. G.V. Subba Rao, Sree Gopalakrishnayya, p.94.
47. Andhra Patrika, 4 October 1921; G.V. Subba Rao, Sree Gopalakrishnayya, pp.72-73.
48. The Hindu, 20 October 1921.
The foremost Andhra leaders were jealous of Gopalkrishnayya and his work. Taking advantage of the situation government stepped up its repression. Hired hooligans set on fire some of the huts in Ramnagar. The final blow came when Gandhi withdrew the Non-cooperation movement in February 1922. People were completely demoralised after eleven months of exile. They therefore returned to their homes in Chirala and reconciled themselves with the municipality.

The Chirala episode shows how one individual with strength of character and courage of conviction could galvanize the simple rural folk into a disciplined band ready for supreme sacrifice for the sake of their cherished principles. It is no exaggeration to state that the Chirala-Peralah struggle is one of the glorious episodes in Andhra’s struggle for India’s freedom. Gopalkrishnayya fully deserves the

49. G.V. Subba Rao, Sree Gopalkrishnayya, p.93;
   G.V. Krishna Rao, Chirala and Peralah Tragedy, p.37.
51. The Municipality was abolished in 1938 when Congress party came to power in the elections of 1937 held under the Government of India Act, 1935, See G.V. Subba Rao, Sree Gopalkrishnayya, p.92.
epithet 'Andhra Ratna' the Jewel of Andhra, endearingly conferred on him by the people of Andhra.

Repalle

Repalle, a glorified village of Guntur district, was constituted into a municipality in September 1920. Like Chirala, agitation was started in Repalle also, but on a much lower key for the abolition of the municipality. The reasons for the agitation are obvious enough. The people of Repalle, though well off when compared with their counterparts elsewhere in the district, were not prepared to pay little higher taxes for better sanitary amenities provided by the municipality. So even before the municipality was constituted an agitation against it was spearheaded by a little known Telugu tabloid Durbar which contended that Repalle needed no municipality since it is a healthy place with sandy soil and copious water supply. The Collector of the district also felt that the place does not deserve a municipality and reported to the higher-ups accordingly.

52. Andhra Patrika, 20 August 1921.
54. G.O.No. 57, L & M (Misc.), 5 January 1922.
Eight of the twelve municipal councillors sensing the opposition against the municipality resigned their positions and demanded the abolition of the new local civic taxes. The Chairman of the Municipal Council who desired to improve the civic amenities like providing a cart-stand and vegetable market levied new taxes to raise the required funds. But the cart-drivers and the vegetable vendors who carried on their business unauthorisedly without obtaining licences from the municipality were prosecuted and fined. When they defaulted the payment of fines, they were sentenced to undergo imprisonment for six weeks. In the surcharged political atmosphere the law-breakers were extolled as patriots. The government which had learnt its lessons in Chirala felt it discreet to defuse the situation by heeding to the wishes of the people. Accordingly the Repalle municipality was abolished following the visit of the Minister for Local Self-Government to the place in September 1921. The government, however, made it a point to collect all the taxes due to the municipality from its rate-payers.

56. *Andhra Patrika*, 18 and 23 May 1921.
before issuing the notification of the abolition in July 1922.\textsuperscript{58}

\textbf{Vijayawada}

While the trouble in Chirala and Repalle arose due to the creation of new municipal councils, in Vijayawada it was otherwise. Elections to the Municipal Council of Vijayawada were due in November 1920. But the government postponed the election on one pretext or the other. First the elections were postponed to enable the Council to make arrangements for the 'Krishna Pushkaram', a twelve-year socio-religious gathering of the people on the banks of the Krishna river at Vijayawada scheduled to be held in August-September 1921.\textsuperscript{59} The second extension to the council was given to collect arrears of the tax from its rate-payers before 31 March 1922.\textsuperscript{60}

The public of Vijayawada felt that the real intention of the government in postponing the election

\textsuperscript{58} G.O.No. 1103, L & M (Press), 26 June 1922; N.N.R., 1922, page 740, para 30.


\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
is to prevent the Congress from capturing power in Vijayawada municipality. So the prominent leaders of the town formed a 'Swarajya Sevaka Samithi' with Dasu Mudhusudana Rao and A. Kaleswara Rao as president and secretary respectively, demanding immediate elections to the local body. The 'Samithi' threatened to launch an agitation by withholding the payment of taxes to the municipality until the elections are held and a new council is constituted. Thereupon Kaleswara Rao, Addepalli Ramaseshaiah, Lakkaraju Satyanarayana who were active in the agitation were arrested and sent to jail. The Vijayawada Rate-Payers' Association protested these arrests and decided to intensify the agitation of non-payment of taxes. T. Prakasam also supported the move. As the agitation intensified 18 out of 24 councillors resigned their positions. Finally the government announced elections to the council in

63. Andhra Patrika, 16 February 1922.
64. Ibid.
65. Andhra Patrika, 16 February 1922.
May 1921. In the new council most of the members subscribed to the ideology of the Congress and supported Gandhi's call for Non-cooperation.

From the above account it is evident that Chirala struggle was the trend-setter to similar agitations in Repalle and Vijayawada. However, these agitations were called off within a short period as the government yielded to the popular demands. But unlike in these places, government did not yield in Chirala, as we have already noted that the agitation in that place acquired political overtones and confronted with the government defiantly. Krishna Patrika observed that the government could not abolish the municipality in Chirala as it did at Repalle because the Chirala struggle by that time gained great publicity and hence, if conceded, would undermine its prestige.68

68. Krishna Patrika, 1 July 1922.
Forest Satyagraha or disobedience of forest regulations formed another important facet of the Non-cooperation movement in Andhra. Like the Chirala no-tax campaign, these movements also were not originally spearheaded by the Congress. They were the spontaneous protests of the poor people who suffered most by the strict imposition of the forest regulations. Forests catered the varied needs of the people by supplying wood for fuel and agricultural implements, and leaves of the trees for manure and fodder for animals. But with the advent of the British rule, government's control over the forests tightened.

From the closing decades of the last century, government designated certain forests as 'Reserved' in order to arrest the alarming depletion of the green cover and protect certain valuable species of trees from total destruction at the hands of ignorant and unscrupulous vandals. The strict enforcement of the
forest regulations naturally affected the interests of some classes of people, including the poorer sections. The poorer sections resented the regulations since the officials ignored them provided they are adequately bribed. By 1920 friction between them and the forest officials became common. The simmering discontent of the rural poor developed into an organised protest when the government enhanced the rates of fee for allowing the cattle to graze in the forests. 69

The corruption of the officials and the enhancement of the grazing fee led to the sprout of forest crimes like illegal grazing and cutting of grass and theft of other forest products. Unauthorised felling of trees reached alarming proportions in the forests of Guntur, Nellore, Chittoor, and Anantapur districts. 70 In 1919-20 nearly 8,900 forest crimes were detected. Of these 2,434 related to Guntur district alone. 71


70. See, for details, R.A.F.M.P. for the years 1915-16 to 1918-19.

The alarming rate of the forest crimes made the government enforce its regulations more effectively. This decision of the government synchronized with the Non-cooperation movement. The law-breakers got an opportunity to commit crimes with impunity in the name of fight for freedom. Thus by 1921-22 stray forest crimes developed into a systematic and organised plunder. The educated urban public approved these acts since the law-breakers invoked the name of the Mahatma to justify their acts. Leaving aside the play of politics one has to admit that there were compelling reasons for spurt in the forest crimes. During the years 1920-22 seasonal rains failed and the entire Andhra was in a grip of severe drought. As a result fodder for cattle and water to drink became scarce and compelled the rural poor to lay their hands on the reserved forests where they could get these things. The government could have alleviated the sufferings of the poor by suspending the forest regulations for the time being. Instead it decided to enforce them effectively.

72. G.O.No. 483, Public (Confidential), 30 July 1921.
Palnadu

In the Palnadu taluk of Guntur district violation of forest regulations took the form of Civil Disobedience with its attendant manifestations like the no-tax campaign and social boycott of the officials of revenue and forest departments.

Palnadu is a semi-arid region in the interior of Guntur district with poor communication facilities. Majority of the population of the region were illiterate and poverty-stricken. Even in normal times they led a very harsh life and the drought of 1921-22 made their living much more miserable. Though the taluk was in the grip of famine, still in the reserved forest zones water and green grass was available in considerable quantity. Under the forest regulations persons trespassing into the reserved forest zone are liable for prosecution. The villagers though well-aware of these regulations trespassed into the forests to save their cattle from starvation and also collect water and dried wood for fuel. Thereupon the forest authorities impounded the cattle and prosecuted the offenders.
The confrontation between the forest officials and the violators of the forest regulations took a serious turn as the latter were brain-washed by the Congress workers that the freedom is round the corner and that in free India there would be neither forest regulations nor taxes. However, those who violated forest regulations found to their dismay that the government was determined to enforce its authority by launching prosecutions. Many violators were fined and some were imprisoned for serious offences like assaulting the public servants on duty.

The Congress leaders of Guntur district incited the public of Macherla town, the headquarters of the taluk to organise a social boycott of the government officials as a mark of their protest against the forest regulations and the excesses committed by the officials against the tresspassers into the reserved forests.73 The social boycott was a success. Officials could not get even the services of washermen and barbers. Shopkeepers refused to sell articles and the hotel-keepers declined to serve food.74 The Deputy Tahsildar of

73. F.N.R., 17 February 1921.
74. Konda Venkatappayya, Sweeya Charitra, pp.231-32.
Macherla could not get even milk for his children. The Collector of the district who camped there to study the situation first-hand could not get food stuffs for his entourage or carts for their conveyance. The Superintendent of Police also had a similar experience. The Collector could not get his notification announced in the town by the beat of 'tom-tom' as he was told that all the drums in the town were damaged.

Fearing that the confrontation between the people and the government might take a violent turn, the APCC sent two observers—Unnava Lakshminarayana and Vedantam Narasimhachari—to study the situation first-hand and present a memorandum to the Government detailing the demands of the people which included (a) dereservation of half of the reserved forests; (b) reduction of the grazing fee, (c) right to fell trees to make agricultural implements and take a headload of fodder and

firewood free of cost, and (d) allotment of arable forest lands to ryots for cultivation. Government refused to concede these demands as most of them are outrageous. The Congress which made the public believe that the government would accept their demands was now in dilemma. It was neither in a position to continue the agitation nor make the government accede to the demands. It tried to wriggle out of the situation by asking the public to continue the social boycott, but exempt the revenue and police officials from its scope.79

The situation took a violent turn when three Muslim political workers--Nabi Saheb, Chintapalli Hussain Saheb and Jan Ahmed--were arrested on 22 July 1921 on the charge of trespassing into the house of a forest guard.80 During the trial of these workers, the Magistrate issued summons on Unnava Lakshminarayana and Vedantam Narasimhachari to appear before

80. Krishna Patrika, 30 July 1921; Andhra Patrika, 11 August 1921.
him to face the charge of inciting the public against the government. The public of Macherla on hearing this news took the two leaders in a procession with the beat of drums which they had earlier declined to the Collector.\textsuperscript{81} The two leaders were sentenced to undergo imprisonment for one year.\textsuperscript{82}

The imprisonment of the leaders aggravated the situation throughout Guntur district. A six-day hartal was observed in Guntur town from 24 July 1921. At Ongole and Bapatla courts were boycotted. Konda Venkatappayya and others were arrested.\textsuperscript{83} Their arrests complicated the situation further and the agitation spread to other districts like Krishna and West Godavari.\textsuperscript{84} At this juncture Gandhi came to the rescue of the government. He directed the local Congress leaders to call off hartals and other forms of political agitation.\textsuperscript{85} Meanwhile the government ordered the release of Venkatappayya and others which helped to

\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Andhra Patrika}, 2 and 11 August 1921; \textit{F.N.R.}, 4 August 1921.
\textsuperscript{83} \textit{The Hindu}, 28 and 30 July 1921; \textit{Andhra Patrika}, 2 August 1921; \textit{Krishna Patrika}, 6 August 1921.
\textsuperscript{84} \textit{F.N.R.}, 20 August 1921.
\textsuperscript{85} \textit{Krishna Patrika}, 6 August 1921.
In Palnadu the agitation was intensified and the no-tax campaign gained momentum. Meanwhile, the Congress leaders of the district convened a special conference on Palnadu at Karampudi from 15-17 August 1921 and decided against the Civil Disobedience. People of Palnadu were advised to obey the forest regulations but at the same time continue the social boycott of the officials. The public of Palnadu felt cheated by the Congress and decided on their own to continue the agitation. 87

On 2 September 1921 the villagers of Rentala, Palwi and Manugula led their cattle into the reserved forest at Ekunampet Agraharam and refused to pay the required grazing fee. Thereupon about 175 heads of cattle were impounded and were handed over to their owners only after the payment of fines. 88 To counteract

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86. Konda Venkatappayya, Sweeya Charitra, p.245.
87. The Hindu, 22 August 1921; F.N.R., 20 September 1921.
88. Krishna Patrika, 3 and 24 September 1921; Andhra Patrika, 15 and 22 October 1921.
the measures of the government an association called 'Palnadu Gorakshakanidhi Sangham' was formed. The hide and seek game of illegal grazing and impounding of cattle continued till February 1922 when the matter came to a crisis.

The agitation spread to other Palnadu villages like Karampudi, Gurajala, Mutkur, Rentachintala, Macherla, Mandadi and Veldurti. On many occasions when the cattle were impounded, people assaulted the officials and rescued their cattle. At Veldurti the officials were confined in the Inspection Bungalow and with considerable difficulty they could manage to escape from the clutches of the infuriated public. At Jettipallem about a hundred head of cattle were rescued and the police could do nothing till the Collector and the Superintendent of Police arrived there with additional reinforcements. During 1921-22 about fifty-eight cases of assault on forest officials were registered.

89. Andhra Patrika, 15 and 22 October 1921.
91. F.N.R., 19 October 1921.
The serious confrontation that took place between the people and the government on 26 February 1922 is commonly referred as Minchalapadu incident. The forest officials accompanied by a Sub-Inspector of police and twenty constables seized 50 goats and 120 buffaloes and were proceeding to Muthkur to impound them there. Along with the cattle two grazers and a woman were also taken into custody. On the way the police party was attacked by a group of about three hundred men and women to rescue the impounded cattle and the arrested grazers. Initially the villagers succeeded in rescuing 30 buffaloes and withdrew into the village. Later a bigger mob from the neighbouring villages attacked the police again. Thereupon the police opened fire on the mob resulting in the death of Kanneganti Hanumanthu, the leader of the crowd. One Yellampalli Seshaiah and a syce of the Police Sub-Inspector were also killed. Six persons including a woman were wounded. In the following two days about 65 persons were arrested and charge-sheeted. Punitive police force was stationed in the sensitive villages of Palnadu.

95. Guntur District Collector's letter dated 1 March 1922 to the Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Madras (H.F.S. Records, A.P.S.A.).
The death of Hanumanthu and arrest of the ring leaders dampened the morale of the agitators. Further, the withdrawal of the Non-cooperation movement by Gandhi convinced the people that they can no longer flout the forest regulations. By March 1922 the agitation completely fizzled out. But in one or two pockets the defiance against the government continued for another two to three months. 97

Other Regions

Besides Palnadu, agitations against forest regulations occurred in some packets of Cuddapah, Anantapur, Chittoor, Nellore and Krishna districts also. But as they happened to be on a lower key, did not attract wide attention in the press. However, in the Cuddapah district, the agitation took a slightly serious turn when in November 1920 the ryots of the Rajampet taluk demanded at their meeting at Kodur that their cattle be allowed into the reserved forests for grazing. 98 In August 1921 the villagers near the reserved forest

97. F.N.R., 1 March 1922.
areas of Rajampet and Rayachoti emulated the example of Palnadu and trespassed into the prohibited areas by assaulting the forest guards. An attempt was made to enforce social boycott of the officials. Government however succeeded in crushing the movement at its inception by deploying the punitive force in the sensitive areas and rounded up the mischief mongers and the ring leaders. The agitation died a natural death when Gandhi withdrew the Non-cooperation movement.

It is evident that all the agitations in Andhra against the forest regulations were spontaneous and Congress had nothing to do with them. However, when the agitations picked up momentum, the Congress leaders became vociferous in championing the movement and tried to bask in the reflected glory. As a result of the uninvited Congress intervention in the movement, government dealt with the situation with a firm hand and refused to redress some of the genuine grievances. Another fact

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100. G.O.No. 121, Judicial (Confidential), 28 January 1922.
to be noted about these agitations is that they were of local significance. The Central Congress leaders were indifferent to these developments and allowed the local leaders to deal with the situation as they deem it fit. The local leaders due to their internal bickerings did not coordinate the agitations in different districts and give a direction to the movement.

**NO-TAX CAMPAIGN (LAND REVENUE) IN PEDANANDIPADU AND OTHER REGIONS**

**Pedanandipadu**

As noted earlier, the Andhra Congress decided to launch Civil Disobedience movement including non-payment of taxes in Godavari, Krishna and Guntur districts simultaneously. But it was only in the latter district the campaign was organised more effectively. Even here the outstanding success was achieved only in Pedanandipadu firka of Bapatla taluk. The peasants of the firka resorted to the no-tax campaign to draw the attention of the government to their
long-pending grievances. The campaign was so effective that it drew the attention of the rest of the Presidency to the developments in that region.\textsuperscript{101} The government also realised that the success or failure of the movement would decide the course of events elsewhere in the Presidency.\textsuperscript{102} Hence it decided to stamp out the movement though it acknowledged that some of the grievances of the peasants merited the attention of the government and should be redressed.

Among the several causes of the movement were the enhancement of land revenue at every resettlement, and increase in the rates of water and other local cesses.\textsuperscript{103} As the above burden affected all sections of the peasantry, the no-tax campaign found ready response throughout district cutting across the class distinctions. However, the lead was taken by rich Kulaks of the Kamma caste of Pedanandipadu like Parvataneni Veerayya Choudari who were abetted insidiously by the Congress higher-ups of the district like Konda Venkatappayya.\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{101} F.N.R., 16 February 1922.
\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Ibid.}, 1 February 1922.
\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Andhra Patrika}, 9 March, 8 and 12 April 1921; \textit{Krishna Patrika}, 12 March 1921; \textit{N.N.R.}, 1921, page 274, para 17.
Though the Congress formally launched the Civil Disobedience in January 1922, the no-tax campaign of pedanandipadu started a year earlier without any prompting from the Congress. The movement was spontaneous and the Congress had nothing to do with it. However, as the movement picked up and attracted the attention of both the government and public, the Congress tried to take the credit by owning the movement and vociferously championing the cause of the peasantry, with whom it had till then little or no contact. As a first step towards their new-found sympathy for the peasants, the Congress made its presence felt in the villages by establishing local committees and the Congress bigwigs addressed the masses in their idiom and flaunted their new livery of nationalism—the Khaddar Gandhi Cap. 105

As a result of its subtle propaganda, the Congress succeeded in hijacking the movement from the hands of local leaders like Veerayya Choudari into its hands. The Guntur District Congress at its conference held at Ponnur during 10-15 June 1921 resolved to take up into

its hands the no-tax campaign of Pedanandipadu. At the AICC meetings, the Guntur delegates began to press for the early launching of no-tax campaign throughout the country. As noted in the earlier Chapter, Gandhi was not favourably inclined to this move until the experiment at Bardoli in Gujrat under his aegis yielded results. But as the Andhra delegates kept up their pressure for the early start of the no-tax campaign, the AICC agreed that the movement may be started by the Provincial Committees at their discretion. But it must be noted that even among the Andhra delegates only those from Guntur were more vocal for the early start of the movement. The latter pressurized the APCC in November 1921 to allow it to start the no-tax campaign without further delay. Finally in January 1922 the APCC acceded to the request of Guntur Congress Committee.

On receiving the approval of APCC, the Guntur District Congress Committee met at Ponnur again on 12 January 1922 and resolved to start no-tax campaign in

106. Andhra Patrika, 13 June 1921.
107. Ibid., 21 November 1921.
108. Ibid., 10 January 1922.
the district. To make the campaign effective, the Congress wanted to enlist the support of the village officials like the munisiff and the Karnam by making them resign their positions and paralyse the administration at its grass roots. The astute village officials who had their own scores to settle with the government complied with the request of the Congress. In Pedanandipadu except one all officers of the eighteen villages resigned. Their leaders Machiraju Ramamurthy, the Karnam of Chandavolu, and Parvataneni Veerayya Choudari of Pedanandipadu spearheaded the movement. By February 1922 the movement spread to other areas of the district. By then 104 village officers had resigned.

The village officials backed the movement since the government has not solved their standing grievances. Their first grievance relates to the job security. The posts of munisiff and karnam are hereditary without enjoying the privileges of the government posts. At the same time the government had the right to terminate the services of the officials. Hence the village officials wanted security of the positions with attendant privileges enjoyed by regular government servants. Secondly they demanded better pay scales as they drew only nominal salaries. Government sat over these demands for a long time.113 Hence these officials backed the movement. Of course some are also influenced by the prevailing nationalistic sentiments.

Government accepted this fact and stated that the village officials were "undoubtedly influenced by political agitators".114 The Collector of Guntur district, however, opined that the resignations of the village officials were not due to the political reasons but purely based on their own service grievances.115

113. Report of Harris, Member, Board of Revenue, on the situation in Guntur, Krishna and Godavari districts, 16 January 1922 (H.F.S. Records, A.P.S.A.); Andhra Patrika, 19 and 23 July 1920.
114. F.N.R., 6 December 1921.
L.T. Harris, a member of the Board of Revenue who was specially deputed to report on the actual conditions in Godavari, Krishna and Guntur districts concluded thus:

"There is one outstanding cause of present situation—the N.C.O. movement working on the real or imaginary grievances of the village officer and ryot (by chiefly the former) through the District Congresses, the Village Officers' Associations and the agitator. The grievances are many and some of them are real—but none of them by themselves, nor all of them together, could have produced the situation without the Non-cooperation movement".116

The resignation of village officials gave a boost to the no-tax campaign because the collection of land revenue tax depended entirely on the Karnams, who maintained the accounts and the munisiff who collected the tax. When they resigned the revenue collection came to a halt. The government could not substitute an equally effective collection agency within a short period of time.

116. Report of Harris, Member, Board of Revenue, on the situation in Guntur, Krishna and Godavari districts, 16 January 1922 (H.F.S. Records, A.P.S.A.)
To oversee the conduct of no-tax campaign on peaceful and non-violent lines, a volunteer force called 'Santi Sena' or the army of peace was constituted with an enrolment of four thousand volunteers in Pedanandipadu itself. Actually the Santi Sena was the cheer squad of the Congress to boost the declining morale of the Congress workers and prevent the government from getting support in the villages. 117 Rutherford, the Additional District Magistrate of Guntur, felt that the Santi Sena was effective in discharging its assigned tasks and suggested to the government to counter its propaganda by suitable alternative measures. 118

With the resignation of village officials and the formation of peace army, the no-tax campaign reached its climax. When the government wanted to attach the properties of the tax evaders and realise its dues by auctioning them, no one came forward to participate in

117. The Hindu, 10 December 1921: Konda Venkatappayya, Sweeyacharitra, pp.290-91.

the biddings. To embarass the government further, the Santi Sena enforced the social boycott of the government officials. By the end of January 1922, the no-tax campaign spilled over to areas beyond Pedanandipadu and covered about one hundred villages.119 The Santi Sena while refurbishing the battered image of the local Congress leaders succeeded in transforming the image of Gandhi from being a political leader into a demi-God.120 This helped the Congress leadership not only in mobilising the masses but also in integrating the local movement into the general Non-cooperation movement.

Government could not collect its land revenue tax. Out of the total demand of Rs. 14.75 lakhs it could collect only Rs. 3.50 lakhs.121 The Collector in his despatch to the government described the situation as a 'revolt of the village officers' and confessed that their attempt to create an alternative to

120. The Hindu, 25 January 1922; Andhra Patrika, 11 February 1922.
121. F.N.R., 1 February 1922.
the village officer system failed. But Harris, a member of the Board of Revenue was candid enough to state thus:

"The movement is usually referred as Non-cooperation or Civil Disobedience. It would be more appropriately described as attempted revolution. Its express object is to subvert the existing government".123

On receiving these reports government tried to tackle the situation with a policy of carrot and stick. First it adopted the policy of persuasion. Village officials were promised hereditary rights and an increase in pay after they call off the agitation.124 When this soft approach failed, it threatened the village officials that their resignations would not be accepted and

122. Guntur District Collector's Report, N.C.O. 1 of 122, 8 January 1922, to the Chief Secretary to the Govt. of Madras (H.F.S. Records, A.P.S.A.).

123. Report of Harris, Member, Board of Revenue, on the situation in Guntur, Krishna and Godavari districts, 16 January 1922 (H.F.S. Records, A.P.S.A.).

124. G.O. No. 130, Revenue Department, 19 January 1922.
those who resigned would be dismissed depriving the right of succession to their heirs.Collector was instructed to appoint new village officials by relaxing minimum educational qualifications, and also prefer Muslims and Harijans. But no one came forward for fear of social boycott in the villages.

Government then made another attempt to undermine the movement by playing the communal card. A Muslim Sub-Inspector of Police and Deputy Collector belonging to the Kamma caste were posted to wean away the respective members of the community from the movement. When these efforts also failed, government resorted to open repression. Properties of tax evaders were attached and auctioned in places like Pedanandipadu, Yellamandala and Vinukonda. Government officials were permitted to bid at the auctions. It was

126. G.O.No. 130, Revenue Department, 19 January 1922.
127. F.N.R., 1 February 1922.
128. G.O.No. 85, Public (Confidential), 30 January 1922; Andhra Patrika, 19 and 21 January 1922.
129. Andhra Patrika, 12 and 19 January, and 1 February 1922.
130. G.O.No. 130, Revenue Department, 19 January 1922.
further notified that the confiscated lands would be distributed among the ex-service men and the depressed classes.\textsuperscript{131} To create terror among the peasantry military forces staged flag marches in the villages. Punitive fines were also imposed.\textsuperscript{132} These measures, instead of weakening the movement, had an opposite effect and strengthened the resolve of the people to fight till the end and looked to Congress leadership for advice and guidance.

It did not take long for the people to realise that they were left high and dry by Congress leaders. The Congress wanted an alibi to disassociate itself from the movement. So the APCC appointed a Committee consisting of K. Nageswara Rao, T. Prakasam and D. Narayana Raju to enquire whether the no-tax campaign of the Guntur district followed the guidelines issued at the Delhi session of the AICC.\textsuperscript{133} The Committee toured the villages in Pedanandipadu firka and other

\textsuperscript{131} Communiqué of Public Department, Govt. of Madras, 21 January 1922 (H.F.S. Records, A.P.S.A.); See also Andhra Patrika, 19, 21 and 23 January 1922.
\textsuperscript{132} F.N.R., 20 January and 1 February 1922; Konda Venkatappayya, Sweyacharitra, p.295.
\textsuperscript{133} The Hindu, 28 January 1922.
areas from 31 January to 7 February 1922 and submitted the report recommending the suspension of the no-tax campaign. In its report the Committee extolled the people for their adherence to truth and non-violence. But at the same time apprehended that the masses may not "remain absolutely peaceful if more drastic and inhuman measures are employed." The report concluded thus:

'Apart from other reasons, at least in deference to the wishes of Mahatma Jee the present 'No-tax' campaign must be suspended.'

So it is evident that the suspension of the movement was not due to the lapse on the part of the people, but the apathy of the central leadership towards it as it wanted to give primacy to Gandhi's own experiment at Bardoli. While the APCC was discussing the report of the Committee, it received a note in pencil from Gandhi stating thus:

134. The Hindu, 11 February 1922.
136. Ibid., p.230.
'If Andhra stops Civil Disobedience, I shall be glad. But if it cannot stop, I shall not mind it, provided of course that complete control is attained over the forces of violence and all conditions are fulfilled.'

Thus the Pedanandipadu no-tax campaign which began with a bang ended in a whimper.

Here it may not be out of place to point out that the right from the beginning of the Civil Disobedience, Telugu journals like Krishna Patrika and Andhra Patrika opposed the no-tax campaign since it was not endorsed by Gandhi. Moreover, they doubted whether people could restrain themselves in the face of state repression and apprehended that the campaign may take a violent turn.

The decision to suspend the campaign caused much heart-burning in the participants of the movement who felt cheated and complained that they were left to the


138. See for instance, Krishna Patrika, 21 January 1922; Andhra Patrika, 25 and 28 January 1922; N.N.R., 1922, page 110, para 24; Ibid., page 120, para 46; See also G.O. No. 540-41, Public (Confidential), 13 August 1923 (Annual Report on Telugu Newspapers and periodicals for the year 1922).
tender mercies of the ruthless government. The worst fears of the participants of the movement came true when government unleashed and imprisoned the leaders including Konda Venkatappayya. The kingpin of the movement Veerayya Choudari was imprisoned and forced to tender an apology on the pain of death. Later he was released to show that the British Raj was compassionate even towards its erring subjects. The Pedanandipadu episode clearly illustrates how the vain-glory Congressmen at the district level brought untold misery to the people by unnecessarily interfering in their problems with the government, without the prior permission either from the provincial or central leadership.

Other Regions

In other Andhra districts, the no-tax campaign did not make much headway even after the central leadership gave clearance for the starting of the movement.

139. Konda Venkatappayya, Sweeyacharitra, p.298.
140. Ibid., pp.299-302; Andhra Patrika, 31 January 1922; U.S.S.F., No. 407, 6 May 1923 (Guntur Collector's Report, 13 February 1923).
141. Andhra Patrika, 18 February 1922; Konda Venkatappayya Sweeyacharitra, pp.299-300.
In Gajam district the Congress workers expressed their unpreparedness for no-tax campaign. In East Godavari district about 40 village officials resigned their positions, but the movement subsided when the government rushed armed police to the district. The villagers caved in when the government threatened to stop water supply in the canals irrigating the fields. The picture in the Krishna district is also the same. In Nellore, Chittoor and the ceded Districts sporadic attempts were made to start the movement.

From the above, it is evident that the no-tax campaign in Guntur district which was mismanaged by the local leaders had a debilitating effect on other Andhra districts. No one came forward to start the movement even though the chances of success were more

142. Andhra Patrika, 10 January 1922.
143. The Hindu, 10, 18 January and 8 February 1922; F.N.R., 16 February and 3 July 1922; U.S.S.F., No. 407, 6 May 1923 (Godavari District Collector's Report, 22 January 1923).
bright especially in the districts like Nellore and East Godavari.

By the beginning of March 1922, government felt that the movement had collapsed in Krishna and Godavari districts and the collection of revenue was normal. By April 1922, it could declare with satisfaction thus:

"In Guntur most satisfactory progress had been made with the collection of revenue and less than a lakh and a half remains to be collected out of a total of about 60 lakhs. In fact the movement for withholding of taxes may be said to be dead and the situation is rapidly becoming normal. The troops are leaving the district and the general attitude is one of repentence." 

Meanwhile, Gandhi suspended the Non-cooperation movement following a violent incident at Chauri Chaura near Gorakhpur in U.P. on 5 February 1922 leading to the death of 21 constables and a Sub-Inspector who were burnt alive in the police station. Thereupon on 12 February 1922 the AICC met at Bardoli and passed

146. F.N.R., 1 March 1922.
147. Ibid., 1 April 1922.
resolution suspending the movement and called upon the people to involve themselves in the constructive programme. On 13 March 1922 Gandhi was arrested and was sentenced to a six-year imprisonment. As a result of all these developments, the movement came to an end in April 1922.

From the foregoing account it is clear that the Civil Disobedience campaign in Andhra was a spontaneous movement of the rural folk who wanted to settle their grievances with the government. The Congress hijacked the movement to draw political mileage and mismanaged it. It did not have any compunction to leave the villagers in lurch to face the wrath of the government.