

C H A P T E R - I VH O M E R U L E M O V E M E N T I N K R I S H N A D I S T R I C T

The political activity that was widespread during the Swadeshi movement at the national level became active again with the Home Rule League movement. Annie Besant had declared the plans of the movement in September, 1916. Home Rule league soon acquired all India character although Tilak started his Home Rule League in Maharashtra in April 1916. Besant's League with its headquarters at Adayar and with the Theosophical Society's contacts, organised the activity through its branches. The activities mostly had the character of moderate politics, and the sustained work was intensive through discussion groups, lectures, pamphlets and reading rooms to spread the message of Home Rule.

In Andhra Home Rule branch was formed with G. Harisarvottama Rao as the Secretary. Extensive propaganda was carried out by G. Harisarvottama Rao, who declared "Nothing can be a greater mistake than to suppose that in the case of such a great country as India self government will not be conducive to afford political training to her - Just as the time passed away when it was believed that boys could not be educated unless they were beaten". It is the principal object of the Home Rule league to dispel that repulsion to kill that love of power and to secure strength for the British empire by

making a system of self government recognised as the primary basis of the political progress of India."¹ He also issued several pamphlets in Telugu defining Swaraj. He translated into Telugu the song of Sarojini Naidu "Awake Mother". All these pamphlets were priced at three paise each and sold among the people to spread the ideal of the Home Rule. He also wrote articles in the press advocating self government. For his writings the security deposit for the Nationalist paper, an English weekly run by him was forfeited under the India Press Act of 1911.

The Telugu Newspaper 'Deshmata' run by Ch. Lakshmee Narasimham also wrote articles during this period for which it was asked to pay a security deposit. While another newspaper thus warned 'Hitakarini' of Ellore wrote that the 'Sin finners' of the Ireland type would come into existence in India also if the British government failed to solve the Home Rule problem.²

The Andhra Patrika commented that "It is not known while it is impossible to grant the small aims of the Indians while the Irish Home Rule problem is being solved in the middle of the war. The sooner the Prime Minister begins to work in this direction the sooner will his object be fulfilled."³

Again the Krishna Patrika wrote "A Home Rule League has been established at New York with Mr. Lajapathi

Roy as the President. This is auspicious. It is said that not only Indian exiles but also Americans are joining it. What is there strange in the new world, which is a glow with the fire of independence extending a helping hand to Home Rule for India".

Andhra Patrika published a pamphlet on Home Rule for India League.

Home Rule for Indian League pamphlet reveals that "India does not wish to drive away the English. What she wants is equal treatment with them in her own land. Indians will be glad to have the English as their fellow subjects and not as their superiors and rulers. It is no where to be found in history that one nation ruled over the other for ever. So the government of India should cease to be foreign and become Indian."⁴ Loyalty to the sovereign in India is unshakeable. There has never been loyalty to the Anglo Indian. The gulf of difference between the Anglo Indians and the Indians is ever widening.

In the 20th century, England should not commit the same mistake with reference to India as she had done with reference to America in the 18th century. The stability of the world wide British empire depends on the help that England willingly gives to India in establishing self government in that country.

PAMPHLETS ON THE HOME RULE LEAGUE:

The pamphlets written in Telugu on the Home Rule are as follows:

1. PARAMODDESAMU: The ideal of Home Rule. This pamphlet discussed how every man civilised upto a point, is always fit for self government, and proves that it is the birth right of man to be free. It clearly lays down that the ideal of the Home Ruler is to secure, in order to add to the strength and glory of the British empire, this birth right by taking measures to induce the bureaucracy to accept the inevitability of a change of the system of administration in this country, and give up the pride of power which they may have so far most benevolently exercised.

2. SWATANTRYA VARADANA PATRAMU: The magnacarta of India. This is a translation of Queen Victoria's proclamation with a commentary as thow set at nought by later administrators of the land.

3. SWARAJYA SABDAMU, BHAVAMU: Swaraj, the word and the thought. This is a very brief survey of the history of the thought of Swaraj or self government, how it is neither the fanatic's creed, nor the creation of Juvenile enthusiasm.

4. SWARAJYAMU KORUTAKOKA KARANAMU: One reason why we want Home Rule. This is practically a translation of the pamphlet of the same name published in English. It sets-

forth how expenditure on official machinery in India is out of all proportions to the accepted standards of the civilised world, and draws attention to the sure economic advantage that the country can derive by setting up genuine self government.

5. NUTANA HAINDAVA MATRU GEETAMU: Another leaflet has also been printed. It has not been given the regular serial number. It is a translation in easy verse of Sarojini Devi's poetical preroratory address to the motherland at the end of her speech on self government at the Indian National Congress of 1915. Most emotional and ennobling reiteration of our resolve to serve the mother.

The proceeds of these leaflets are always invested in the preparation and promulgation of further literature by the Andhra Provincial Office.

While thus the Newspapers and the pamphlets were spreading the broad ideals of Home Ryle League for self government, the organization of Home Rule meetings and the resolutions adopted in the Conferences brought a tremendous impact on the public for the spread of not only the ideals of self government, but also the aspirations of the Indians for their ultimate goal of independence.

The Krishna Patrika commented, "It is very much to be regretted that in the eleven Telugu districts only few Home Rule leagues have been established. We will not feel ashamed to hear that no league has yet been founded in Eluru, to which place the honourable Mr. Ramachandra Rao has brought so much credit. In Nellore, honourable Mr. A. Krishna Rao is indifferent following perhaps, the honourable Mr. Ramachandra Rao. No body need fear to found Home Rule Leagues, for the Madras High Court has, in the New India case, stated that the desire for swaraj is not an indication of disloyalty."⁵

But the political activity is not wholly absent. In March 1916 at the Chittoor District Conference held at Chittoor Mrs. Besant delivering her presidential speech impressed upon the audience thus "No self respecting honourable man can remain content, to live in his own country as an alien shut out from the higher reaches of its public life, denied the common rights of citizenship, holding life liberty and property at the will of officials not by the judgement of the law."

In Cuddapah District Conference held at Rajampet in November, 1916 the presidential speech made by Azad Ali Khan passionately exhorted the people not be contented unless and until they had real local self government in all its entirety in village Panchayats or the Taluq or

District Boards and the Town Municipalities. He also stressed the need for financial independence and responsibility within certain well defined limits to local bodies."

Again K.V.R. Krishna Rao made a powerful presidential speech at Third Kurnool District Conference in which he reminded that the primary need of the hour was to educate the people regarding the Home Rule, "so that the agitation in this respect may have the weight of a strong and influential public opinion behind."

Again in the meeting held at Bapatla on 21st June 1917 a resolution was adopted stating that internment orders "were opposed to individual liberty and national justice" and constituted a blow to constitutional agitation for securing self government for India within the British empire. As a result of her activities her paper 'New India' became very popular specially in Tenali taluq villages also. Even non-brahmins became the followers of Home Rule organisation.

The following are the notable persons in Andhra who participated in the Home Rule movement. Ranganadha Mudaliar, Kesava Pillai, Shiva Shankar Pillai, H. Siva Rao, H. Shankar Rao, Doraiswamy Ayyangar, Raja Rama Rayanim, Muniswamy Nayudu, K. Nageswara Rao, K. Venkatappayya, U. Lakshmee Narayana, P. Sitaramaiah,

G. Sita Rama Sastry, M. Krishna Rao, A. Kaleswara Rao, M. Ramachandra Rao, Venkata Reddy Nayudu, N. Subba Rao, Ch. Lakshmee Narasimham, B. Samba Moorthy, B. Venkatapathi Raju, P. Venkatapathi Raju and A.P. Patro etc.⁶

The political agitation ~~after~~ the arrest of Mrs. Anne Besant is not less magnanimous in nature. Protest meetings were held at Tenali, Bapatla, Guntur, Kurnool, Rajahmundry, Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada, Nellore and Ellore etc.⁷ Many in the Congress came to the decision of starting satyagraha for the release of the Annie Besant. Some leaders like B.N. Sarma, V.S. Sreenivasa Sastry, N. Subba Rao Pantulu, M. Ramachandraiah Pantulu, P. Siva Rao, P. Venkatapathi Raju and V.P. Madhava Rao etc., opposed satyagraha in view of the visit of Montague. But the Madras special conference held on 24th August rejected the opinions of the people and resolved to undertake satyagraha either in the meeting held at Guntur or in the meetings conducted by Harisarvottama Rao along with Sri Ram one of the editors of the 'New India' at Madanapalli, Bezwada and Vizag in September and they rallied the volunteers towards satyagraha. The students of the National College at Machilipatnam participated in the Home Rule activities enthusiastically from the beginning. Though the government under G.O.No.599 prohibited the students and school boys from participating in the Home Rule movement they fearlessly disobeyed the orders.

At Coconada Rs.483/- Besant Fund was collected for running the Home Rule League and the 'indignant group' of the Home Rule was formed. They used to wear the badges 'Besant Pendant'. At Egmore the students fearlessly entered the railway coaches reserved for Europeans. Thus, seeing the mounting agitation for the release of Mrs. Annie Besant, she was released on 17th September, 1917.

The tone of the papers changed gradually. The Andhra Patrika commented "we believe that in the present circumstances it is unnecessary to have besides the Indian Congress, another All India Association with the same ideals and aspirations as those of the Congress."⁸ The same paper wrote on the release of Annie Besant "It is now becoming plain what great deeds might be done by popular power."

Krishna Patrika, on the release of Besant observed, 'Constitutional agitation crowned with success'. The natural law of Independence on the part of the British is confirmed. The power of the people cannot but yield to that of the people. This is a good sign for the future acquisition of self government.

'Deshamata' on the Home Rule League gives the following observation. "The British race is a just and generous race. It is always fair minded and righteous.

It will certainly appreciate our aspirations and our ideals. We have always been passing resolutions and have not as yet adopted the practical ways of the west. The people should be made to take interest in politics, and a desire for political freedom and for associating themselves with the administration of the country should be created in them. Everybody should have written on the tablet of his heart that service rendered to the motherland is the greatest of services. The Indians should represent their aims to the British and try to obtain Home Rule". Mrs. Besant is endeavouring to establish a Home Rule League for this purpose, and in this she has the support of most of the educated Indians⁹. It would be but bare justice to say that the Home Rule movement inaugurated by her gave a tremendous momentum to India's claim for self government which the congress has been advocating for years.

The Home Rule movement started by the leaders was gaining ground and becoming popular. The government was searching to arrest the movement and Annie Besant along with her two co-workers Arundel and Wadia were imprisoned at Ootacamund. But the things were not peaceful. There was First World War on the one side and the people whose confidence and service to be employed during the war time, were agitating for the release of

leaders. The government knowing the critical position released Annie Besant on September 17, 1917.

The 'Commonweal' in its issue of 29th June, 1918 writes "The government has its own way of recruiting sepoys. It is grooming out Englishmen for officers, even though they be hair dressers, drappers and the like.....".¹⁰

The political activity during the time of Home Rule movement in Krishna District was not so impressive as it had been during the time of swaraj & Swadeshi movement. The latter movement was very popular and the effects of its struggle were felt directly or indirectly by all. In contrast the Home Rule Movement was confined to the intelligentsia section only.

In the year 1916 Mrs. Annie Besant visited Bezwada and as a result of her speeches in the public meeting here, the members of the 'Divyagnana Samaj' came forward to join the mainstream of political agitation for swaraj. In the 25th Krishna District Conference held at Gudivada on 20th April Gutti Kesava Pillai, the President reminded the audience in the course of his address that "what they incessantly demanded was self governing villages at the bottom leading upto self government at the top."¹¹

At a meeting of Bezwada Home Rule League in 1916, 17th Nov., Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya was elected as the provincial Secretary of Andhra Home Rule League. The League passed a resolution advocating the formation of provinces on linguistic basis and self government.



Home Rule movement in west Krishna under Bezwada Division Congress, spread to the villages. In the meeting held at Bezwada when Devi Bhayankar addressed many people came forward to offer resistance at the illegal arrest of Mrs. Annie Besant. Kotagiri Venkata Krishna Rao Zamindar of Gampalagudem actively participated in the Home Rule movement.

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In the meeting held at Machilipatnam 30 people signed their signatures to offer resistance and 10,000 signatures were collected in West Krishna District in support of the Congress League Scheme.

Subsequently in all the District Conferences the Home Rule League movement was supported.

The anniversary of the Bezwada Home Rule League was celebrated on the 19th, 1916 instant in the Mylavaram Rajah's Hall under the distinguished presidentship of the honourable Mr. K.V. Ramaswamy Ayyangar of the Imperial Legislative Council.



The report of the secretary of the league, shows that the league held public meetings to discuss all the burning topics of the day and agitated for the release of the interned and organised meetings.

The special conference of the people of Gudivada taluq was held at Kowtavaram on November 25th, 1916. The special feature of this Conference is that it went in advance of the Congress resolutions and demanded that it asked for a quarter of the seats of the Imperial Parliament to be thrown open to for election to the Indians besides investing upon the holding in India alone of the Civil service and other competitive exams for government service. Other special features of the Conference are that it demanded immediate establishment of military Colleges and organisation of national militia in India and also passed the resolution for carrying out the administration in vernacular languages so as to give effective voice to the people.¹³

Another meeting was held at Bezwada on November 26th, 1917, in which Mr. P.K. Telay delivered an address on "The present Political Situation". He advocated for self government and asked for the people to work for its achievement.¹⁴

'Desabhimani' patrika commented on the political activity in Krishna District during the Home Rule agitation. The paper observed that the political agitation during that time was carried more indirectly.¹⁵

Although Conferences and meetings were held, the impact of these was marginal. However the press carried the fight.

But this political activity of Home Rule movement as given in the C.I.D. Reports confirms that intelligentsia section of the society was more involved in the movement than the masses.¹⁶

1. Sarojini Regani, Highlights of the Freedom Movement in Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad, 1972, P.50.
2. Ibid, P.51.
3. Andhra Patrika 11th April 1980. State Archives, Hyderabad.
4. Andhra Patrika 30th June 1916. State Archives, Hyderabad.
5. Krishna Patrika 30th September 1916. State Archives, Hyderabad.
6. M. Venkatarangaiah, N. Innaiah, Freedom Struggle in Andhra Pradesh (Telugu), Secunderabad, 1972, P.49.
7. B. Seshagiri Rao, History of Freedom Movement in Guntur District, Ongole, 1981, P.29.
8. Andhra Patrika October 5, 1915. State Archives, Hyderabad.
9. Desmata 27th October 1915. State Archives, Hyderabad.
10. The issue of 'Commonweal' 29th June, 1918.
11. B. Kesava Narayana, Political and Social factors in Andhra (1900-1956), Vijayawada, 1976, P.62.
12. The Hindu 21st Nov. 1916, State Archives, Hyderabad.
13. The Hindu 27th Nov. 1917, State Archives, Hyderabad.
14. The Hindu 30th Nov. 1917, State Archives, Hyderabad.
15. Desabhimani 9th June, 1918. State Archives, Hyderabad.
16. C.I.D. Reports of 1918. State Archives, Hyderabad.