CHAPTER - 4
RESISTANCE TO DOMINANCE

The obnoxious practices of the *vetti* and the *Baghela* system and the slave labour were adopted under the most worst feudal oppression of the Asaf jahi dynasty. In fact the conditions of the peasants and the agricultural labourers were no better in the neighboring regions and British provinces; but the uniqueness of the Asaf Jahi Dynasty in Hyderabad state was the cultural hegemony by minority muslims over majority of Hindus. Telangana has become in popular perception, a symbol of people’s rebellion in the recent past. The Telangana movement of the 1940’s the *doras* (the dominant local landlord’s in villages) the *razakars* (a paramilitary force), the ‘police action’ (the central government’s military action in 1948).

The revolt of Telangana and in the adjoining districts of the Andhra delta was one of the two post-war insurrectionary struggles of peasants in India. The Telangana revolt began in the middle of 1946 and lasted for over five years till it was called off in October 1951. The sustained peasant resistance provoked a land reform inquiry and legislation that produced ‘some perceptible change’ in the agrarian social structure of the region.¹ The Telangana peasant revolt is often considered to be pragmatic, and the only instance worthy of attention in a comparative sociological study of peasant movements in India. Hyderabad state was one of the largest princely states in India before Independence, and here a political structure from medieval
muslim times had been preserved intact till the state merged with the Indian federation in 1948. The Nizam who was seventh in the line was both an absolute and the wealthiest ruler in the world, and ruled over the state from 1911. The state of Hyderabad covered a substantial part of the southern plateau in the Indian peninsula. There were three linguistic regions of Hyderabad; Telangana constituted of nine districts of Telugu speaking people. A majority of 47% of the total population while the other two regions shared the rest except the 12% Muslims who spoke Urdu, the official language of the state, and ruled over the Hindus who formed a majority of nearly 80%.

The agrarian social structure in Hyderabad was like a page from medieval, feudal history. There were two main types of land tenures; Khalsa or diwani tenures implied what in some parts of India was called ryotwari, i.e., the peasant proprietary system. About 60% of the total land was held under these tenures in 1941. The landholders were not called ‘owners’ perse but were treated as pattadars (registered occupants). The actual occupants within each patta were called shikmidars, who had full rights of occupancy but were not registered. As the pressure on land grew, the shikmidars, previously the cultivators of lands, began to lease out land to sub-tenants (asami-Shikmidars) for actual cultivation. These latter were tenants –at – will having neither legal rights in land nor any protection against eviction. The process of sub-infeudation had steadily penetrated deep into the system of ryotwari system/tenures, particularly from 1920 to 1950.
The doras faced occasional outbursts from the people as response to these changes from the beginning of this century. During the years of Economic Depression (1928-1934) and the Second World War the outbursts became violent clashes. The period during inter-war years were the years of peasant assertions and boycott of work demanding higher wages in place of the customary vetti. The doras took it as a serious challenge to their domination and tried to assert their superiority. First, attempts were made to impose cultural and social domination. Any violation of customs was severely punished. It was enforced as a custom that any agricultural activity like yeruvaka (a rite with which cultivation begins every year), sowing of seeds, transplanting, and so on had to begin with him in the forefront. Collective festivals were to be celebrated in consultation with him, seeking his permission and sometimes to be inaugurated by him or his representative. In jataras (processions) his prabha bandi (decorated cart) would necessarily lead. Any violation of these practices was met with severe retribution as had happened in Palakurthi in 1945 when the AMS workers wanted to take their prabha bandi to lead. They made the practices of subordination more particular and severe. When the dora set out from his gadi to go out, people had to bow their heads and move to the side to give way. Women had to run into their houses. When he went out on tours in his cart, the vetti servants had to run in front and at the back of his cart.

The doras to reinforce domination restricted the development of the land market from the beginning. The majority of the cultivators of makta, banjara lands
did not get the right to transfer the lands they were cultivating. Such lands were under the direct control of the doras. The landlords also occupied or exchanged the lands that were both fertile and suitably located near their fields.

Another important function of these village bosses, which they enjoyed most, was the distribution of food-grains to needy people. They had to set up sales societies and collect share money from the people (to make them members) to purchase grain from the government for distribution among the members. No evidence of the distribution of the grains was found even at the government sources but the share money was forcibly collected from the people. The grains to be distributed through these societies used to be sold at the black market. The government was aware that “the watandari system [was] undoubtedly the root cause of many agrarian evils but the government did not attempt to change it because making any” sweeping change at this stage in the watandari system…… will lose the sympathies of the watanadars also.

The deshmukhs, who had transformed into doras over a long period of time, played a central role in the transition of Hyderabad economy into colonial economy. They legitimized their superior position by superimposing and maintaining caste-based inequality. Caste perceptions played a significant role in establishing the new power structure. While reconstituting a new power base they meticulously maintained the subordinate postures of the people below them on the basis of caste in the social hierarchy. They controlled the economy, society and life of the people and
developed a new culture of domination. They established dora raijyam, new hierarchy of power and culture headed by them and maintained it well into the mid-twentieth century.

The people, however, realized that the doras were primarily responsible for their poverty, misery and sufferings.

The raids of the state’s forces during October and November 1946 on the villages (against the defiant villagers obviously on behalf of the landlords) had become a political conflict between the struggling masses and the state. The belief and the argument in certain quarters that the Nizam was unaware of the landlords’ atrocities receded into the background and became a myth for the people during the November 1946 military raids on the villages. In the opinion of the government bureaucracy the movement was no more against ‘the tyranny of Deshmukhs and Watandars’ but for the ‘complete overthrow of the Government’. The movement was not for ‘the redress of grievances’ but for the establishment of the ‘Russian System of distribution’. Further, the government did not want to displease the doras during such a crisis. Rather it wanted to use them in crushing the movement.

From the side of the resistant masses the struggle was to be organized at a higher level in terms of area, skill and planning. Since a large number of them came to believe in the establishment of their own raijyam or swaraijyam for the final solution of their problems, they needed an educated and knowledgeable leadership.
The people from well-to-do families, who initially hesitated eventually, joined the struggle against the razakars. The fence-sitters and opportunists, who acted as mediators between the gadi and sangam, also jumped on to the side of the sangam. They had realized that the government was responsible for all the atrocities and cruelties. The Nizam’s government, they believed, had wantonly made looting and violence the ‘daily programme’ and sent the ‘cruel army’ and ‘hunting dogs’ (razakars), with weapons to take revenge against the people. Thus almost every section of the rural society was compelled to take a position and joined the struggle during this period. Even a section of the small landlords like well-known Renigunta Rami Reddy formed their squads to resist the razakars.

The people, the squads and the political leadership attacked the gadis (mansions) of the doras and took possession of their guns before they were handed over to the razakars or police. The arms were acquired from the village officers and deshmukhs like police patel of Ebulkesvapuram, deshmukhs of Chitakodur, Erragollapadu, Aswaraopalli, Vallampatla, Seenapalli (Jangoan taluq), Kondapuram (Huzurnagar taluq), Kasarlapadu, Kondlapalli, Rajaram and Kummari Kuntla (Warangal taluq) and many other villages. In about thirty-one incidents people of Nalgonda district seized about 124 guns, revolvers and rifles and about fifteen swords along with ammunition. All these arms were seized from the ‘people’s enemies’ who were likely to surrender them to the police.
The squads took out jaitra yatras (victory marches) in Jangoan taluq acquiring arms, seizing and burning revenue records from patwaris and credit documents from landlords apart from hoisting national and communist flags. The yatra taken out by Nalla Narasimhulu dalam (consisting of eleven members) covering about one hundred villages, admitted about sixty members into the dalam. The people welcomed the yatras by offering buttermilk and milk, arranging for lunch and dinner. These yatras helped to bring about (political and caste) unity of the people. An important aspect of the movement during this period was that activists came from ‘fighting elements’ or chillarollu of the rural areas and the more educated persons had planned and coordinated the squads in the region, thus making the unity of the entire rural population possible.

The rural people reacted differently in different villages to the growing threat of the razakars. The masses adopted different tactics and programmes of action based on their village social composition, previous fighting experience and the nature of the leadership. The Jangoan taluq mostly all sections of the villagers were united in isolating the dora and a small group of his henchmen. They gained the experience of fighting vetti extraction and levy collection apart from organizing the fight for their land. In villages like Kadivendi and Devaruppala, ‘village governments’ were established. In Visnur Rapaka Ramachandra Reddy was still in command. The outcaste Madigas of this village were dependant on Visnur Ramachandra Reddy, joined the razakars, established a camp and frequently raided the surrounding villages more for pillage. In a different set of villages like Vadlakonda and Akunur, which
had been well-organised, a part from the formation of village squads, drums were arranged to give signal of enemy’s attack by beating them.

Whenever the raiders were about to attack the village, the people got ready started pelting stones and firing with muzzle-loaders. In a fight in Vadlakonda village some activists were shot at. The villagers of Akunur who earlier fought heroically against the levy collection in 1945, got ready to fight the razakars and police by acquiring slings and muzzle-loaders. Once the razakars demanded Rs.10,000 from them for not raiding the village, they refused to pay and killed two razakars. Later, seven villagers died in the firing. Consequently, thousands of people from the neighbouring villages surrounded the raiders who then ran away.

The villagers had invented their own canon known as *jhajjayi*. It was made from an engine pipe filled with lead balls, nails, glass pieces and stones. It made a very big sound frightening the raiders. It was fixed on a built battlement over an elevated place. When a police party led by the deputy collector Iqbal Hussain came to Baironpalli the people got ready by beating a drum and started firing with jhajjayi. They resisted the entry of the police with slings. However, the deputy collector who had come along with a firangi destroyed the major portion of the fort from where the people were fighting. The resisters’ ammunition was getting exhausted and they got demoralized. The deshmukh mediated to bring about a comprise between the army and the village squad. Consequently, the people stopped their fight and came over to a place suggested by him instead of running away. However, the army lost no time in
avenging its earlier discomfiture by shooting down eighty-eight unarmed members of
the local squad and destroying the entire village.

Squads sprang up spontaneously against the razakar/military raids. When in a
jagir village Jagidepuram, the naib (assistant) of a jagirdar, brought the razakars who
raided the village killing five people and looted jowar, paddy, sheep and goats and
burned hayricks, the people formed a local squad. Then the surrounding villages
under the leadership of the village defence squads and guerrilla squads formed on
their own sent a message to the Perrlapelli Communist Party office to accompany
them to demolish the jagir office. The squads planned the attack in a meticulous
manner estimating the strength of the enemy. The central commander Kurraram
Rami Reddy, local squad leader Bondugula Narayana Reddy and Rami Reddy of
Renigunta joined the people along with their respective squads. The attackers were
divided into four batches. The first batch consisted of 3,000 people armed with lathis,
spears, daggers and slings, the second batch with country-made guns, the third batch
with weapons like twelve-bore guns, and the fourth batch with 303 stenguns and
brenguns. The first day the direct attack continued from morning till evening without
losses. The second day Pasam Rami Reddy of the local squad was shot dead. The
commander, therefore, ordered the squads to retreat. The third day the ‘people’s
army’ attacked from different sides inflicting heavy losses on the razakars and police
eventually making them retreat. The people took away their sheep and goats and
burnt jowar and paddy hayricks possessed by the jagirdar.
The significance of the struggles of Jagidepuram, Ammanabrolu, Renigunta and Kutigalla was that they were planned by the village squads with massive fighting strength using traditional but powerful weapons and ammunition (locally made) against the razakars. They were not part of the area party committees; the party joined them because the villagers had decided to face the enemy. It is also significant that local small landlords in the villages led some of these struggles.

The well-known hero of Renigutta, Rami Reddy, was determined to fight the razakars after they had raided his village and killed his fellow villagers (Katike Saiylu and Siddheswar Rao of Mutakodur village). In these villages the village leadership resorted to ‘positional warfare’ in typical ‘feudal heroism’ manner unlike communist – inspired guerrilla warfare and, therefore, suffered heavy losses.

Reddy formed his squad with fifty young men and got ready to face the raiders. The entire village was united behind him. One day in March 1948, the army with 400 to 500 soldiers attacked the village at about 4.30 in the morning. As per the guerilla strategy the entire village was to be evacuated under such contingencies. But Rami Reddy resisted them from entering the village up to 12 ‘o’ clock. By then his ammunition was almost exhausted. Meanwhile, a tehsildar got on to a tree behind Rami Reddy, who was resisting the army from the terrace of his bungalow, and shot him from behind.
In these struggles the people used new techniques of attack. They invented new armaments like jhajjayi, smoke bomb, chembu bomb, etc. These struggles also produced many fighters called ‘Rifle Ramudu’, ‘Military Gopaiah’, ‘Russia Lingulu’ and ‘Telangana Tiger’, and so on. Under their command many areas in Nalgonda and Warangal districts were ‘liberated’. They successfully drove out the cavalry forces and protected the village committees and ‘liberated’ areas. What is noticeable was that the people and squads collectively planned the attacks in close collaboration for their success.

The changes in labour relationships and living conditions during the twentieth century adversely affected the family life and the women too. However, the extent of the impact of changes depends upon the caste and the traditional profession of the family. Since the artisans/service castes became labourers it is natural that the women would also bear the brunt. The status of the family also changed from the artisan to vetti family. The worst victim of the change was the outcaste woman as most of them were converted to vetti service. When the men were drawn into vetti the responsibility of running the family fell upon the women. The most significant aspect of the change was the women and children had to work compulsorily to supplement the family incomes. The women as active members of family suffered the impact of vetti. This caused militancy among the women of this century, thus they participated actively in the struggle from the very beginning.
However, there is no overt evidence of gender consciousness and ideological homogeneity among them. In fact, they did not participate with a set of objectives in clear terms, unlike the chillarollu and asamis. The women’s participation in the movement was however, not without gender deliberation. The labour women were specifically used for transplantation, picking groundnut, cutting jowar and paddy, winnowing, grinding and sweeping the cattle sheds, and similar labour. When the landlord’s goondas attacked the villagers or the police raided the villages, the women felt that it was to continue to oppress them as women. That was why they militantly came cut and resisted the police and landlord’s goons.

It was natural that women should have a share in the struggle since women labourers constituted a high proportion of the labour force in Telangana compared to Marathwada region. Most of them belonged to the families, which were subjected to vetti. When their male members were in vetti service, they had to earn as wage labourers for the family. The transplantation of paddy was the main vetti work for them from morning till night often without enough time to prepare food and feed their children. The work sometimes continued for two months and that too, without proper wages. They therefore, revolted as they did not get time even to nurse their babies. Not only that the Goundla (toddy taper) women did not like to give their toddy free to the doras. The shepherdesses were sometimes forced to part with their sheep. The Chakali and Kummari women were the direct victims of exploitation, as they had to do domestic work.
The peasant women, as part of the peasant family, fought for their lands and other demands. Since they were married off early into the known families, they knew the particulars of landed property, etc. As housewives, in charge of domestic affairs, they were naturally deeply involved in the family’s economic well-being. They did not, however, participate in the struggle mainly with gender consciousness but with class-consciousness. Since men and women in labour families usually work together thus both were subjected to class oppression. Therefore, gender differences among themselves did not come to the fore as much as they did in the case of landlord families, thus they mainly participated in the struggle against the landlord’s exploitation as peasant women and labour women.

Among women who participated in the struggle were adabapa / dasi women, women subjected to rape or sexual assault, women as head of the family due to widowhood, women who led unhappy family life either because their husbands were drunkards or had developed illicit relationship with other women and women who were interested in the village affairs. Their struggle had the elements of gender consciousness against the male – dominated culture though it was not uniformly and collectively expressed nor developed. Their struggles in Dharmapuram, Patasuryapet, Mallareddigudem and Balemula were not without this consciousness. They did not play the subsidiary role of just helping the fighting male members, rather they themselves fought the goondas and army as happened in Mallareddigudem and Balemula. They showed extraordinary courage and determination to wipe out the landlord’s / Nizam’s rajyam. The outcaste women labourers Guravamma, Tondamma
and Nagamma died heroically while preventing the entry of the army into the village Mallareddigudem in December 1946.

Women from the rich and educated families also participated in the struggle under the influence of the nationalist agenda for women. They raised demands like equality with men, widow remarriage, economic independence and education. The women of the rural elite from rich peasant/educated families had altogether different nations of life, as they were mostly dissatisfied with the pattern of marriages and family life imposed upon them. They had experienced gender oppression too. They joined the struggle with the demand for equality between men and women. They expected a ‘new state’ wherein they thought, that men and women would work together and ‘enjoy life as they wished. Therefore, for them the overthrow of a ‘feudal’ rule meant greater freedom and gender equality.

Young children had been part of the struggle along with their parents and primarily acted as couriers or informers in the struggle. Employment of child labour was a dominant mode of labour exploitation and many landlords preferred it due to low wages paid to them. There were certain landlords who preferred only children as pointed out elsewhere. The children did most of the agricultural work. They could plough the land, drive the cart and look after routine agricultural operations with responsibility. However, removing cow-dung, cleaning cattle sheds, taking care of cattle and guarding fields was their exclusive work. They usually wore only torn
lagu, knickers given to them by the landlords. Children’s natural desires like playing, wearing new clothes, etc, were the privileges of landlords’ children.

Such children experienced daily scolding, beatings and suffered from lack of care. Sometimes the sons of bhagelas started their service in the gadi of doras as children and spent their whole life there itself without knowing the world outside. It is difficult to gauge whether they had a sense of being deprived of the pleasures of childhood. They, in fact, never knew of those pleasures. However, by attending meetings, singing sangam songs along with the elders imbibed some of the latter’s notions, feelings and participated in the struggles. The tradition of children’s participation continued throughout the struggle period. The well-known publicized case of Daily Venkadu, a thirteen-year-old boy sentenced to death by a military court in 1949, evoked widespread worldwide protests.

Most of the razakars were Muslims except a few like the henchmen of doras and outcastes of Visnur. Some of the Muslims in Kutigallu, Kodagandla (Jangoan taluq), Ammanabrolu (Bhongir taluq), Gudibanda (Huzurnagar taluq) and Rayaparti, Wardannapet (Warangal taluq) were razakars or at least sympathizers. The razakar camps were set up in these places because of a large number of Muslims though only a few of them actually supported the razakars. But by and large the activists of the anti-razakar movement perceived the doras as their chief enemies and razakars as the doras’ agents. Therefore, the movement did not turn into a communal conflict. In certain cases when the squads asked the headmen of Muslims to hand over the
razakars (as happened in Gudibanda) they handed over the Muslim razakars to them. It is also significant that many Muslims were protected by the people immediately after the Indian army started indiscriminately arresting the Muslims branded as razakars. The mass actions on the whole were not determined by the communal considerations.

The movement during this stage was transformed into a ‘liberation struggle’ from the doras and the Nizam for the independence and freedom of all agrarian classes of rural Telangana. They all believed in the destruction of the doras’ rajyam.

All of them looked up to the communists for guidance. The communists had coined slogans like ‘land to the tiller’ to bring all anti-landlord agrarian classes under their leadership. All the agrarian classes considered the land distribution programme as the destruction of the landlords’ rajyam, as primarily the landlords’ land was distributed. Though the labourers did not benefit from land distribution, they were the real beneficiaries of the seizure of food grains of the landlords. To the village folk, who would not dare to enter the landlords’ lands earlier, it was something amazing to seize or divide the same lands among themselves. It was really a ‘people’s rajyam’ to them. Conflicts over land distribution cropped up in many places (like at Kodagandla village) nevertheless, it was considered to be an ‘internal affair’ of the people. They thought that it could be decided later first the villages and lands had to be liberated first from the hold of the landlords. Liberation to the people, was the establishment of their hold over the lands and resources of the village.
Another slogan the communists had given was Vishalandhra. The slogan Vishalandhra was not very much clear to the people but in border taluqs they understood it as joining ‘cumpiny’. They believed that joining ‘cumpiny’ would be the collapse of the Nizam’s state. The people in Central Telangana taluqs did not understand what Vishalandhra was, whether it was a place or another religion. They thought it was something very good because Kasim Razvi did not like it. What they all understood was that it was something due to which the Nizam would not continue as their ruler. The slogan ‘land to the tiller’ was seen by them as the establishment of their rajyam in the village (after the destruction of doras’ rajyam).

There were some special tenures called Jagirs. Sarf-e-Khas, was obviously the most important of them, being assigned to the Nizam himself as crown lands. Scattered in several parts of the state, the Sarf-e-Khas covered 1961 villages, and fetched revenues totalling about 20 million rupees which met the Nizam household, revenue and other expenses and partly met the cost of his army. There were various types of other Jagirs besides Sarf-e-Khas. The Jagirdari system of land administration was the most important feature of the political organization of Hyderabad. The Nizam created his own noblemen and bestowed on them one or the other rank and order- each with a large grant of land. In return the trusted noblemen undertook to maintain an army for the Nizam to rely on in time of need. These Jagirs were thus typically feudal tenures covering some 40,000 sq. km in area but scattered in different parts of the state. Nearly 6,500 villages i.e., about a third of the state’s
total area, were under the Jagirdari system.⁷ Over the years the number of Jagirdars steadily multiplied. In 1922 there were 1167 Jagirdar in the Nizam’s dominions; In 1949 their number had gone up to 1500.⁸

Conditions were, however, far more oppressive on Jagir lands than on the Sarf-e-Khas. The civil courts had no jurisdiction on Jagir land and therefore the jagirdars and their agents – or middlemen – were free to extort from the actual cultivators a variety of illegal taxes and thus to fleece them.⁹ Conditions remained practically unchanged until the jagirdari system was abolished in 1949.¹⁰

The Khalsa (diwani) land or the rytwari system produced no better alternative. On such lands, deshmukhs and deshpandes were the hereditary collectors of revenue for groups of villages. As the system of direct collections was introduced in the last quarter of the 19th century, these intermediaries were granted vatans (annuities) based on a percentage of the past collections. This only propped up their position in the agrarian hierarchy. Very often the deshmukh landlord a figure roughly midway between the bureaucratic official and the feudal seigneur himself became the newly appointed village revenue official or atleast had access to land records. His influence thus permitted him to grab lands by fraud which, in countless instances, reduced the actual cultivator to the status of a tenant-at-will or a landless labourer.¹¹

Nowhere in Hyderabad was feudal exploitation of the peasantry more intense than it was in the Telanagana districts. Some of the biggest landlords, whether
jagirdars or deshmukhs, owned several villages and thousands of acres of land each. Such concentration of land ownership in the hands of a few landed magnates was more pronounced in Nalgonda, Mahboobnagar and Warangal districts than elsewhere. Significantly, it was this region which was the locus of the peasant insurrection in 1946-51.

In the local dialect these powerful jagirdars and deshmukhs were called ‘dora’ also spelt ‘durra’, meaning ‘sir’, ‘master’ or ‘lord’ of the village. A durra, often a combination of a landlord, money lender and village official, traditionally enjoyed several privileges including the services of occupational castes in return for some payment either in cash or kind. But the durra tended to exact these services free owing to his power and position. Such exactions had become some what legitimized by what was known as the vetti system, under which a landlord or a deshmukh could force a family from among his customary retainers to cultivate his land and to do one job or the other, whether domestic, agricultural or official, as an obligation to the master. Vetti exactions were thus a symbol of the dominance of landlords in Telangana. Most of the agricultural labourers on whom the vetti obligations fell, were from the lower and untouchable castes of Malas and Madigas.

Like the vetti, the system of baghela serfdom was prevalent in the Warangal and Nalgonda districts. The Baghelas, drawn mostly from aboriginal tribes, were customary retainers tied to masters by debt. Doing domestic and menial labour and deeply in debt, they had to work for their masters generation after generation on a
pittance. Legislation passed in 1936 to limit and curb bhagela serfdom had remained largely ineffective.\textsuperscript{14} It seems that the vetti and bhagela arrangements were perversions of the traditional Hindu \textit{jajmani} system which was based on the principle of reciprocal exchanges. Its Telangana variant was highly exploitative, being based on the economic power wielded by those jajmanis, like the durras, who owned land. The hierarchical nature of caste Hindu Society, in which economic power is frequently correlated with political influence and ritual status, reinforced the power of the landed \textit{jajmans}.\textsuperscript{15}

Brahmins were once predominant among the substantial land owners and pattadars in the Telangana districts. With the rise of the Reddys and Kammas the two notable castes of peasant proprietors the influence of the Brahmins as a land owning caste declined. The Komatis, a caste of traders and money lenders, had considerable influence on the economic life in the country side. From the turn of the century, however, sahukars (marwadi) gradually penetrated rural Telangana and established their ascendancy as money lenders, although the komatis still remained on the scene as traders, Shopkeepers and merchants. The bulk of the rural masses the poor peasants, unprotected tenants, Share-croppers and agricultural labourers came either from the lower untouchable castes such as the malas, madigas\textsuperscript{16} or from tribal groups like the Hill Reddys, Chenchus, Koyas, Lambadis and Banjaras.\textsuperscript{17} These tribal communities had long standing grievances against the government on account of its taxes and levies, against money-lenders and revenue officials who usurped their
lands and also against private contractors who exploited the tribal labourers in the forests, on construction sites or in mines and collieries.\textsuperscript{18}

Two important aspects of the agrarian economy of an otherwise backward region like Telangana must be noted. First, the development of irrigation facilities and cultivation of commercial crops had been taking place. The main commercial crops of Telangana are Groundnut, Tobacco and Castor seeds were grown in Nalgonda, Mahbubnagar, Karimnagar and Warangal districts. Both the total acreage and the produce of commercial crops increased steadily and after 1925 commercial farming assumed an increasingly greater importance in the regional economy.\textsuperscript{19} Secondly, the development in commercial farming was not, however, matched by any corresponding growth of towns, neither of industrial enterprise and markets nor even of transport and communication facilities consequently, cultivators had to depend almost entirely on urban money-lenders, traders, merchants and businessmen who controlled the few and highly centralized markets in Telangana for the sale of produce. Local retailers, agents and village sahukars helped urban commercial interests in securing the produce from the cultivators and thus managed to have a share in the profits of the marketing enterprise.

Land alienation increased considerably between 1910 and 1940 particularly during depression, when many lands previously owned by tribal peasants passed into the hands of non-cultivating urban interests.\textsuperscript{20} Economic surveys carried out in 1928-30 showed that in Warangal district alone 9\% of the total land and 25\% of the
irrigated land had changed hands, Most of the land thus transferred went either to big landlords and deshmukhs or to sahukars, traders and non-cultivating pattadars who dominated the economic life of the district. As a result of growing land alienation many actual occupants or cultivators were being reduced to tenants-at-will, Sharecroppers or landless labourers. This trend dominated till 1930 or so. Significantly, the decline in the number of non-cultivating occupants and the increase in the number of cultivating owners and landless labourers were more marked in the Telangana districts particularly in Mahboobnagar, Nalgonda, Nizamabad and Warangal.

The number of landless labourers in Hyderabad increased phenomenally. Landless labourers did not constitute a homogeneous class; not only was their caste and ethnic composition complex, but also several occupational categories such as rural artisans, craftsmen and tenants at-will were swelling their ranks. Widespread seasonal unemployment and acute competition for work kept agricultural wages low in Telangana. The despotic rule of the Nizam permitted neither political freedom nor any representative institutions. Harassment of suspected political activists, detention of leaders and potential agitators were such common forms of repression that a straightforward political movement was almost ruled out in the state till 1930 or so.

During the Second World War, the Andhra conference (which operated in the Telangana districts, was set up in 1928) expanded its network in the Telangana villages by taking an active interest in agrarian problems such as vetti labour. In the
Telangana region, the branches of the Andhra conference and Andhra Maha Sabha functioned in close collaboration.\textsuperscript{24} The Telangana movement began with the occasional outbursts during the inter-world war period. Mass protests and agitations against vetti extractions and non-availability of food grains started in 1938. Later the movement against vetti transformed into a fight against the pettanam (domination) of the doras. The movement was widely spread. The economic conditions of all strata of the Telangana peasantry had deteriorated, first due to the depression and later on account of the war. The peasants groaned under the tyranny of landlords, deshmukhs, deshpandes, and sahukars an unsympathetic police force and unfair revenue, judicial, administrative machinery that added misery to his poverty. Through the Andhra conference young communists voiced the peasants’ grievances, paid more and more attention to agrarian problems in Telangana and mobilised opinions in favour of abolition of landlordism and the oppressive vetti system.\textsuperscript{25}

The agrarian slogans and demands of the communists included abolition of vetti; prevention of rack-renting and eviction of tenants, reduction in taxes, revenues and rents, confirmation of occupancy (patta) rights of cultivating tenants and so on, which naturally attracted the poor peasants, tenants and labourers to the Andhra conference. Telangana has become in popular perception, a symbol of people’s rebellion. The village landlords belonging to a superior caste are called ‘doras’ even today in the Telangana villages. Mostly, the former deshmukhs or watandars were called the doras. In course of time all superior caste landlords or their relatives were also called ‘doras’. The people’s struggle in Telangana was carried out against the
jagirdars and the doras. The jagirdars without strong local roots either surrendered or ran away. But the doras put up a strong fight against the people. All doras need not be former deshmukhs. The structure of their domination and power was based on a combination of obstruction of free market in land and labour and enforcement of physical coercion. Therefore, they became the prime target of the people.

The *Doras* in Telangana present a unique case in the survival of the landlords having their roots for over three centuries in the pre-independence period, undergoing transformation, and adapting to the changing circumstances and needs. Even in the face of opposition from the people at the beginning of the twentieth century, the doras attempted to consolidate their domination at social and cultural levels, citing reasons like their superior caste position and domination in the past. In Telangana, a part of the Deccan region, the office of deshmukh, came into existence during the medieval period, and survived for a long period as local chiefs, whose sphere of power often spread to a pargana. Unscrupulous collection of land revenue by the Tahudars, Sarbastdars, during the early 19th century widened the scope for usury. The combination of mercantile and usurious interests impeded the production process leading to a severe agrarian crisis in mid 19th century. During the period of salarjung (1853-1884) reforms, the revenue collecting power was transferred to the taluqdars, who were appointed by the government.

The deshmukh watan’s were abolished to bring the entire land under diwani tenure. Though the loss of watans deprived them of their title of deshmukh and power
over paraganas, yet under the new reforms, they were converted into big landlords with judicial and legal guarantee to their proprietary rights. These reforms helped them to stabilize their position as permanent landlords.

The pattern of land settlement during the 1880’s was in favour of land holdings (large), which naturally helped the emergence of big landlords/landholders. The sceptre of landlords as a powerful dominant group in the village’s controlling the entire rural society of the Telangana. The other dominant group of the village, below the landlords in the hierarchy, was that the village officials (patels and patwaris). The patel could belong to any caste but a patwaris was invariably a Neogi Brahmin. They were police and revenue functionaries respectively. They lived in comfortable bungalows in the style of landlords served by many jeetagallu (farm servants) and vettollu (vetti labourers).

The landlords subdued the people with their authority whereas the patwaris exercised control over them through various kinds of machinations. The deshmukhs in the process of becoming landlords with their own patta lands during late nineteenth century. Practically usurped the authority of the state and kept the whole countryside in their possession to establish their power. Their power and prestige as landlords depended more upon their past glory as revenue farmers but, by the turn of the century, it was determined by other factors like the caste, land, money, ruthlessness and above all their proximity to local government officials. Any upper caste person with all the above accomplishments was called a ‘Dora’. As such most of them
belonged to upper castes, primarily the Reddy caste. But Brahmin, Velama, Kamma & Muslim Doras were also found in some villages.

The people had to depend upon the doras for land, work, credit and enforcement of justice. The Doras being watandars in the past assumed and exercised magisterial powers over their respective areas. Though the patwaris/ police-patels were actually incharge of law and order in the village, the doras on the basis of past glory and present influence practically dominated them. Since the landlords had in all the activities they were called sarkar or doras and their subordinate servants like village officers and village servants, sheksindi were called sarkar manushulu. Thus there was a mini-government in every village under a dora.

The landlords by establishing their authority over government property, village resources and the people’s activity, acquired sufficient strength to become sarkar or doras. They established supremacy over waste lands, government lands, trees, tanks, streams and tank-beds in the village. In Telangana, there were vast areas of bancharai (grazing) lands and porambokes (unassessed) lands surrounding the village. During 1930 & 1940’s they tightened their grip over the villages to dominate and extract the people’s labour. Restrictions were imposed on peasants and shepherds grazing their cattle on labourers collecting firewood from such common resource lands. As I have mentioned earlier about the vetti, toddy-tappers, weavers, washermen, carriers, potters barbers, shepherds, merchants, etc., had to supply all the commodities and their services to the house of the deshmukhs. If they opposed the demand, they were
subject to torture and to various indignities. Peasants had to till the lands of the village officials and landlords before they could take up work on their own fields. And till the landlord’s lands were watered, the peasants would not get water for their fields. Agricultural labourers had to work in the fields of the officials and landlords without any remuneration.

These forms of forced labour and exactions were extracted not only by the landlords but also by all the officials, petty or high, either living in the villages or when they came on tours or on special visits. Thus, the vetti system had made the life of the Telangana people one of utter degradation and of object serfdom. It had ruined man’s self-respect completely. The movement for its abolition became widespread.

When these feudal lords of various hues tried to intensify their illegal exactions, to evict the cultivating peasants from their lands and lease them to some others, the peasants fought many a heroic struggle. The land concentration in Hyderabad state and the Telangana region were tremendous. The administrative report of 1950-51 gave figures to show that in three districts of Nalgonda, Warangal, and Mahbubnagar, the number of pattadars (landlords) owning more than 500 acres were about 550, owning 60 to 70 percent of the total cultivable land.

The extent of exploitation indulged in by these jagirdars, paigahs and samsthanams can be imagined from the fact that, 110 of them used to collect Rs. 100,000,000 every year in various taxes or exactions from the peasantry. The
jagirdars, deshmukhs and big landlords continued their illegal forcible forages with the active connivance of the corrupt officialdom of the Nizam state.²⁹

The labourers were the first to challenge the Doras domination. Their struggles initially originated against vetti, developed into a full scale movement for the destruction of doras rajyam and involved all sections of the labouring castes and out castes. They were from different social status, but all of them were subjected to oppression on their labour was founded the farming of Doras. Their caste, poverty and dependence on the doras were the actual foundation of the Telangana agrarian system. Their protests against the discriminating social and cultural practices and the formation of sangams demolished the dora’s power in the villages. The traditional labour class/ castes were predominant in the modern agrarian labour force. The modern landlords or doras working under the compulsions of colonialism and production oriented, extended their control over these labour segments. The agricultural labourers were almost certainly recruited from the lowest castes, particularly from the untouchable castes of Malas and Madigas.

It is significant that modern agricultural labour, therefore emerged not only due to the depeasantation but also due to the conversion of non- agricultural caste based professional workers into labourers. Rural labour was thus mainly from the lower caste. In Deccan, there was a collective system of extraction of specialized or skilled labour by the state authorities for construction or repair of forts, tanks, dams and government buildings. The emergence of big landholdings and the compulsory
payment of annual land revenue abetted the continuation of the earlier Deccani practice of extraction of Vetti begar. In Telangana, however, during the late 19th century, the vetti begar transformed into two main forms of labour extraction i.e., vetti and bhagela.

*Vetti* was the major form to which a large number of lower caste people were subjected to serve the ‘private ends’ of the landlords. Since the doras and village officials had become the representatives of the state power in the villages after the reforms of Salar Jung-I. The *inam* holding service caste eventually came under their direct control. Often the doras used to threaten the inam landholders with confiscation of their lands in order to extract labour from them. The second category of the vetti was some vetti families specially maintained by big landholders for their exclusive use. Such families continued to serve the doras for generations either as domestic workers or field labourers just for food. The third kind of vetti, extraction from all the small villagers’ occupants, tenants and labourers as such no payment was made.

The other important form of labour extraction was the bhagela or jeetagadu. This system of labour extraction was predominant where the big landlords dominated the rural scene, particularly in Warangal and Nalgonda districts. A system of labour extraction had been in vogue for a long time in Telangana districts. It was in 1928 that Andhra Maha Sabha was formed under the leadership of Madapati Hanumantha Rao and others. Its first conference was held in Jogipeta in 1930 under the chairmanship of Suravaram Pratapa Reddy.
During the whole period of 1940-44, the party and the left cadre of the Andhra Maha Sabha carried on agitation and made representations, to see that the *firmans* of Nizam that favoured the people were put into practice and not sabotaged by the landlords and the corrupt officials. This enabled to gain a wide popular image and the left wing led by communist party took over the leadership of the Andhra Maha Sabha. The communists’ efforts to build strong party bases yielded good results in Warangal and Nalgonda districts. Between 1942 and 1946 their influence over poor peasants, tenant cultivators and landless labourers grew steadily. Landlords as well as officials afraid of visiting those areas of their jurisdictions who did not pay protection money or estates where the communists had established strongholds.\(^{32}\)

In the post-war crisis, Local branches of the Andhra conference called *sanghams*, launched village level struggles for better wages for labourers, and against vetti labour, illegal exactions, evictions and also against the newly imposed grain levy. These struggles were located mostly in Nalgonda district on the estates of some of the most notorious landlords and deshmukhs. The extent of the peasants’ spontaneous action did not always carry the approval of sangham leaders. The landlords either-fled to safety, resorted to litigation or summoned by the police to deal with the rebellious peasants.\(^{33}\)

A major incident occurred in July 1946 when over a thousand peasants, armed with slings, sticks took out a procession in a village
deshmukh’s estate. The landlord hired *goondas* fired at the procession and killed Doddi Komarayya the village sangham leader. The procession, now turned into an angry crowd, went to the landlord’s house which was about to be set on fire, Komarayya’s martyrdom sparked off the conflagration and thus marked the beginning of the Telangana insurrection.\(^3\) It is significant that by the end of July 1946 the peasant resistance and militant action against landlords, deshmukhs and village officials spread to some 300 to 400 villages in Warangal, Khammam and Nalgonda districts.

The communist party of India (CPI) press launched a massive propaganda campaign, Voiced the demands of the Telangana peasantry, and exposed the oppression and brutalities. The propaganda was further intensified after October 1946 when the Andhra conference was banned by the Nizam Government. Several hundred CPI workers were arrested and more police reinforcements sent to the troubled areas. But so determined was the resistance that the landlords and deshmukhs found it difficult to get the villagers to perform *vetti*. Some 156 cases of assault were registered by the police against peasants, and about ten rebels in four separate incidents of police peasants battles were killed by the end of 1946.

The salient features of the insurrection in its initial phase could be summed up thus: large masses of peasants spontaneously participated in the struggles directed against the government, landlords and deshmukhs and their agents. Initially the revolt
was spasmodic. The communist or Andhra conference *sanghams* and *dalams* (batches) acted as morale boosters for the peasant action.

Peasant militancy had not, till the end of 1946, turned into cataclysm but whatever violence occurred in the process of resistance was the doing of poor peasants, including the tribal Lambadi elements. Although a few isolated areas of Warangal, Karimnagar and Khammam districts were under the rebels influence, in general the stage on which the first scenes in the insurrectionary drama were acted out was undoubtedly Nalgonda district, mainly the Suryapet and Jangaon taluqs. Under the feudal set-up in the Nizam’s dominions the peasants suffered from both exploitation and suppression. Favours were liberally bestowed by the Nizam on those who helped him in wars, by granting them large tracts of lands as *jagirs*.

In Dharmapuram village of Jangaon taluq, Zamindar Pusukuri Raghava Rao sent his henchmen to drive away the tribals from the Lambadi *tanda* who had in their possession 80 acres of day and 25 acres of wet land. The lambadis under the leadership of the sangham took up sticks and slings, planted red flags in their fields, marching up and down, protected their fields. The landlord who had all the power in the village in his hands could not drive away the lambadis and was defeated in his plans, same as the case with Mundra village landlord, Kadari Narasimha Rao. But the landlord stationed armed policemen and dispersed the masses.
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**The spark that set afire the Telangana Agrarian Revolt:**

Visnur Rama Chandra Reddy, the hated deshmukh of Jangaon taluq, in one of his villages, Palakurthi, forcibly tried to take possession of land belonging to a washer woman, Ailamma, Who was a staunch supporter and worker of the sangham. He planned to seize the harvest directly from the fields. Just before this, at a public meeting held in that village, he had sent his henchmen to murder the sangham leaders. But the people had foiled his plans and had beaten the goonda leader, Onamala Venkadu. On this pretext, the landlord arrested 14 of the sangham leaders and lodged
a case against them for attempting murder. Under these circumstances, Visnur Rama Chandra Reddy thought that no one would obstruct him from taking possession of Ailamma’s lands. He sent several henchmen, Farm servants men and women to gather the harvest. The sangham leaders and 28 volunteers, staking their lives, and armed with lathis and with fierce determination on their faces, the goondas ran for their lives. No one was left behind. The harvest was gathered and was sent to Ailamma’s house. The same night police from Visnur arrived but they dared not touch the harvested grain stored in Ailamma’s house. This incident roused the spirit of the people.

With the incident mentioned above, the visnur deshmukh was very much enraged. He took it as a big defeat, the like of which he had not experienced in his life-time. He planned to murder the leaders of Kadavendi village with the help of the police. It was 4 July, 1946. Goondas who were drunk, pelted stones at the houses of the leaders, the people armed with lathis, raising slogans took out a procession. When it came near the house of the zamindar, goondas who had taken shelter in a shed near the zamindari house fired many shots at the people. The village sangham leader Doddi Komarayya, who was leading the procession died on the spot. But the people did not run away in panic. They surrounded the Zamindar’s house, shouting, ‘blood for blood’. The goondas who were in the shed next to the Zamindar’s house thought that they would not be able to save their lives from the wrath of the people and jumped in to the Zamindars house. But the people already surrounded it. News was sent to the surrounding villages and they came with dried grass and other fuel to set
fire to the house of the zamindar. The crowd increased to nearly 2000. Some had surrounded the gadi. People were boiling with rage. People chased them to a distance of three miles. Many of them were hit with stones.

Komarayya’s death and martyrdom set ablaze the pent-up fury of the Telangana peasantry. Peasants and people of one village would march to the neighbouring villages and rouse them. They would jointly hold public meetings before the gadi, hoist the red flag and declare: “Sangham is organized here, no more vetti, no more illegal exactions no evictions”. If the landlord or deshmukh did not carry out these orders of the sangham he was socially boycotted. None should work for him in the fields, no barber, no washerman, no house-maid, no domestic servant. These orders of the sangham were scrumptiously carried out. It was the local leaders who marched in the front, addressed and spread that movement.

People from neighbouring villages were fed by the hoist village without any distinction. The processions used to stop before the house of the zamindar and raise slogans, such as zamindari must be abolished, landlords oppression and police zulum must be put to an end, to ‘levy vetti’ corruption should be done away with ‘Amarajeevi’ (Doddi Komarayya). In Gutupalu Sangham procession along with men, women also took part not only in their villages but in other villages also. Songs which were written on the incident of Ailamma’s land struggle attracted the women a lot. For the first time, the problem of land, eviction & vetti and forcible grain levies which
had become the problems of their lives, were connected with the slogan of abolition of zamindari, and that was the main feature of this period.

In this flood of people’s movement, the Government could not collect the levy grain. The officers and men who used to collect it were not even allowed to step into the village. So also vetti was automatically brought to an end. The deshmukhs and village officials who used to get vetti done had either run away from the villages, or even if they remained in the village they could not raise their head. The movement spread within a few weeks to about 300-400 villages in Nalgonda and neighbouring Warangal and Khammam district.

**Early Rytu (peasant) Sabhas:**

The earliest attempts to organize the peasantry were made in the late 1930s in Warangal and Nalgonda districts. The Nizam Andhra Rytu Sangham, a peasant organization was formed in 1937 in Khammam (Warangal district) by Cherakumalli Hanumaiah and Ammana Machi Kamaiah. Later, Pydepalli Hanumaiah, a most popular peasant leader in the area at the time of the formation of the communist groups was associated with it. Four thousand people were reported to have participated in a public meeting organized by Nizam Rytu Maha Sabha at Tunikipadu, a border village near Tiruvur (Krishna district). The meeting was presided over by N.G. Ranga, a peasant leader of Guntur district (Nidubrolu village). It was also
reported that a Nizam Andhra Rytu Pathasala (peasant school) was set up in 1939 at Tunikipadu to study the peasant problems of the Telangana region.

After making the Nizam Andhra Rytu Sangham, a member of the All India Kisan Sabha, Hanumaiah represented it at the Gaya session in 1939. At the same time the Paleru, Patti Rytu conferences were also held in the villages under the Paleru Irrigation Project. These Rytu Organisations had come together by the beginning of 1939 and formed the Warangal district Rytu Sangham. A serious attempt was made to study the problems faced by the peasantry in the state. The Telangana regional committee of the communist party of India was formed in 1941 under the leadership of Peravalli Venkataramanaiah. Ramanadham, Venkateswara Rao, Lakshminarasaiah and Venkataramanaiah set up the Warangal district committee in early 1942. Perhaps, this was the first district committee of the C.P.I. in Telangana. Among those who joined it were

1. Ravella Janakiramaiah
2. Neduri Jagannadha Rao,
3. Vattikonda Nageswara Rao,
4. Vasireddy Venkatapati
5. Pendyala Satyanarayana
6. Pacha Durga Prasad Rao
7. Rangaiah
C. Tirumala Rao and C. Yadagiri Rao built up the tenants’ movement in Suryapeta area. Devulapalli Venkateswara Rao was a prominent person of the communist party of Telangana. He was instrumental in building it up in Warangal and Nalgonda districts.

The communist Andhra Maha Sabha leadership, to expand their base in Suryapet taluq, reduced the membership fee from one rupee to four annas to attract more villagers to join the sanghams. Due to large scale joining of the people in the Andhra Maha Sabha by paying four annas possessing chittilu (receipts) came to be known as “Chittila Sangham”. Possessing a chitti was not only prestigious but also understood as freedom from vetti Suryapet area was next only to Khammam-Madhira area in establishing a coherent party unit and perhaps it was the first unit, which had taken up the peoples issues in the whole of Telangana. One should remember Vediri Raji Reddy, the most inspiring leader of the area, who had attended the Tirupur session of the All India Congress Committee in 1939. He was appalled by the groupism among the older generation within the congress. No wonder after the session he moved towards leftist ideology. It was through his work that many were recruited to the communist party in Huzurnagar taluq. Prominent among them were Dodda Narasaiah and Kota Narayana.

The Communist Andhra Maha sabha workers had taken up the issues of tenancy and vetti in Suryapet taluq. In this area there were a large number of small
landlords with *patta* lands, who got their lands cultivated by tenants. The latter, were not entitled to any tenancy rights as elsewhere. There was widespread discontent resulting in occasional outbursts in some villages. The Andhra Maha Sabha leadership took up the tenants’ issues in Vallabhapur, Chintala Cheruvu, Akkaladevigudem and Desaigudem villages where the discontent had already reached a flashpoint. Once the Andhra Maha Sabha workers threw their weight behind the tenants, struggles started in many other villages. These spread to Nalgonda taluq, Cherukupalli and Chandupatla villages and Miryalagudem taluq, Pamulapadu villages.

The Andhra Maha Sabha workers took up the Vetti issue and advised the people not to perform vetti. A landmark struggle waged in Suryapet was against the local dora, Kunduri Lakshmikanta Rao, a deshmukh of thirty villages, who was believed to possess about 10,000 acres of *patta* land.

The communists had drawn a broad ‘anti – feudal’ agrarian programme to bring all anti – landlord classes into the movement.

- Ban *Vetti* Extraction
- Ban collection of fines, taxes and cesses
- Return the lands illegally occupied by the landlords.
- Confirm the *patta* rights of the cultivators and of *makta, Jagir* lands, etc.

The Village sangams in Visnur area set up a volunteer corps to face the *goonda* party. The volunteers were given training to use traditional rural weapons, sticks and slings – in defence. Soon the corps became a military wing of the sangams. In an incident at Kadivendi on 4th July, 1946 when twenty volunteers of the village sangam took out a procession, Muskeen Ali, a goonda leader who was waiting in the *gadi of dorasan* (Ramachandra Reddy’s step Mother), fired on the volunteers killing Doddi Komaraiah and injuring his brother Mallaiah. Immediately, the Volunteers and the villagers came to the spot and attacked the goondas with sticks and slings.

A mob of about 4000 people from the surrounding areas attended the funeral of Komaraiah. He had become the first martyr. The new upsurge strengthened the people’s determination to demolish the *doras rajyam*. Immediately after this incident many new volunteer corps came up in Jangaon taluq. The volunteers, the sangams and the people cried ‘death for death’.

The volunteers also took out ‘Jaitra Yatras’ carrying red flag from one village to the other. Singing songs in the yatra became an important form of propaganda. While on the yatra, the people formed sanghams and volunteer corps, to fight the local landlords. The sanghams restored lands to the peasants, distributed the grains stored in granaries and demanded the landlords return the penalties and fines
collected. In the villages of Tadikammala (Miryalaguda taluq) Anantharam, Pattapadu (Suryapet taluq), three thousand people participated in a ‘victory march’ and broke open the stores of the landlords. They seized grains and distributed them among the needy.\(^{39}\)

The sanghams with mass support became ‘Power center’ in place of the doras, in settling their disputes and problems. The villagers in Vadlakonda, armed with muzzle loaders and slings, used to take up positions at the beat of the drum. Once the police and the Razakars raided the village but local volunteers and the guerilla squad drove them away. The communist party distributed the lands of the Nagulancha landlord as well as the grain seized from him to agricultural labourers and poor peasants. The lands and grain of Kalakota landlords were also distributed. The Kalluri family which owned about 80,000 acres in over 80 villages Annapareddipalle, Ammapalem, Gundapudi and Garravodu etc., was the most hated oppressor in this area. The party had distributed all the lands of this family or helped the tenants to exercise their ownership rights on the lands they had been cultivating. The \textit{koya} people were the largest beneficiaries of this.

As early as 1935, Kalluri Rajeswara Rao had been killed by the people who were fed up with these atrocities. After the police action, the Kalluri family seized back the lands, but \(\frac{1}{4}\) of them were retained by the peasants, utilizing the Tenancy Acts enacted by the State Government. This success was due to the constant efforts of the communist party. Similarly, in Arekayala Padu (Madhira taluq), Landlord
Edunutola Gopala Rao’s lands were distributed. After the Indian army’s entrance, he tried to seize those lands again. The peasants and people fought back and ultimately he had to agree to give ownership (patta) rights on 400 acres accepting token payment of Rs. 10 per acre. Telladorupalli was a Muslim Jagir village. This was a strong centre of the Andhra Maha Sabha. Many a tenancy struggle was conducted by the peasants asserting their rights of ownership on the land. A few days before 15\textsuperscript{th} August 1947 the jagirdar goondas from Khammam town raided the village. But the people overwhelmed them and seized their fire arms. During the Razakar days, repeated attacks were made on this village. People resisted them all and retained their possession of land. Even after the Indian Union’s ‘police Action’, the peasants did not give up the land, and were able ultimately to get ownership of title deeds (patta) under the Hyderabad Tenancy Act. Similarly, against the Aswaraopet Zamindar, the party roused the peasants as well as the koya tribal people, to put an end to his illegal exactions, forced labour etc.

The anti-feudal struggle, especially the struggle against the Jannareddy family conducted in Suryapet taluq, had its own impact on Manukota area, where many landlords belonging to that family held large tracts of lands. So here sangham and the guerilla squads took up the issue vigourously. With the increase of enemy raids, the squads and the people took up the programme of destruction of camps in order to arrest these raids and put the enemy on the run. The Arutla camp (Ibrahimpatnam zone) which was in a grove was raided by the squad from three sides and Killed three. Next morning, the camp was vacated. Deshmukh Chelama Reddy who used the
military and had become a menace to the whole area was killed by the people and the guerillas. Later, in another raid on the camp by the guerillas, on 1\textsuperscript{st} Dec 1949, the commander was killed and four modern arms captured. The camp was located in zamindar Krishna Rao’s bungalow. People got enthused that the guerilla squads were capable of raiding military camps and seizing weapons. The sepoys who surrendered and gave up arms were allowed to go away without being harmed. The camp was wound up. The Maisapet (Adilabad) Deshmukhs bungalow was raided. He was considered a good hunter. His 200 bags of paddy were distributed to the people.

The Andhra Maha Sabha was well established among the people of Karimnagar district even before the movement against the Nizam–Razakar regime had started. During 1947-48 Andhra maha Sabha workers, under the leadership of the communist party, organized themselves into guerilla squads and fought against the terror regime among the people, the hatred mounted.

The communist party ultimately sent a few organizers and three guerilla squads to extend the movement in the Karimnagar – Adilabad area, the peasants and the agricultural labourers received them with tremendous enthusiasm, and started confiscating the grain and properties of the hated landlords, and destroying their fortress bungalows.

The people seized food grains, gold, silver and other goods from the houses of big landlords, Narsing Rao of Ernapalli, Chinna Narsing Rao of Timmapuram in
Siricilla taluq, Itakula Narsing Rao of Rudrangi, Venkata Rao & Kesava Rao of Govindaram, Potaram Maktedar, Ramachandra Rao of Nukalamarri in Jagityal taluq. In all these places, it had been a regular practice for the people and the squads to raze to the ground the stone gadis of these landlords to prevent them from being used as police camps. One of the notable actions of the people was against Dharmaram Chokka Rao, the most notorious of all the zamindars of Jagityal for his rapacious exploitation of over 40 villages and hamlets around Bhimavaram. The guerilla squads mobilised people from over 20 villages and raided his massive gadi. 300 bags of food grains, 40 mounds of silver articles and four cartloads of brassware and other articles worth one lakh were confiscated and distributed. The gadi was razed to the ground.\(^40\)

The domination and power of the doras was destroyed in many villages of Warangal and Nalgonda districts. The establishment of people’s rule in village, opposing and breaking away from the established power of the state was perhaps not uncommon in history. But in Telangana the establishment of people’s power in a wide area comprising at least two districts after overthrowing the established authority in a prolonged armed struggle was a significantly different occurrence. Such a people’s power survived for about three to four years assuming the functions of the state.

The village governments trained the peasants for mass revolt engendering in them a spirit of violence and defiance of authority. The trained armed squads replaced the earlier untrained gutapala sanghams of early 1946 making them militarily fit. The
squads, which were well organized at village level turned out to be the embodiment of people’s military power. In Kupenakunta village, the money collected by the Patel was seized by the people’s court and given back to the people on 3rd march 1947. In Rajugudem village, peoples militia was formed which occupied the fort of the banjardar along with sixteen puttis of paddy on 6th march, 1947.

The village sangams, established their hold over a large number of villages. After the emergence of the Andhra Maha Sabha and squads as well organized coherent bodies, the sanghams seized the opportunities of leading and developing the movements to the level of forming village committees. The grama rajya committees asserted its political authority by trying the people’s or sanghams enemies publicly. The committees warned them, socially boycotted them, imposed fines and confiscated properties depending upon the nature of their crime. The landlords could do nothing in such a situation except to submit to the power of the committees. K. Joga Rao, a landlord, accepted the verdict of the people’s court and paid 150 bags of grain and Rs. 4000/- extracted from kisans, to the village committees as compensation for the excesses committed. The deshmukhs of Uppalencha, Janakipuram paid Rs. 10,000 & Rs. 30,000 as compensation for the crimes committed because of the village panchayat verdict. The people of Addagudur village marched to the gadi of deshmukh Venkata Reddy when he refused to pay the fine of Rs. 7,000 imposed by the ‘people’s court’ and ‘confiscated’ not only 120 bags of grain from his go-down but also took charge of all his property leaving only “what was required for his livelihood”. The peasants took over the standing crops in the fields of Dupelli deshmukh, Kothapalli deshmukh, watandar of Pallepadu and jagirdar of Kurellapadu. In some villages the
deshmukhs, who had been watching the developments struck a compromise with the village sanghams and squads. The vetti labourers and poor cultivators were dominant in the sanghams set up in 1945 & 1946. In Mahboobabad taluq, only lands of big landlords have been distributed. In Warangal area, comprising Warangal, Jangaon, Medak, Peddapalli about 4000 to 5000 acres of land was distributed.

The lands seized in the villages were primarily of the jagirdars, banjardars and the watandars have been distributed.

### LANDLORDS WHO'S LANDS WERE SEIZED BY THE PEOPLE / PEASANTS

#### JANGAON TALUQ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Landlord</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lachamakapalli</td>
<td>Pusukuri Raghava Rao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghanpur</td>
<td>Ranga Reddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pochampalli</td>
<td>Tirumala Reddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramannagudem</td>
<td>Pusukuri Narsimha Rao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rangla</td>
<td>Venkatarami Reddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avtarpur</td>
<td>Pakatati Gopal Reddy</td>
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#### NALGONDA TALUQ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Landlord</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dugoad</td>
<td>Alenepalli venkatarama Rao &amp; Pattabhi Rama Rao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wuthur</td>
<td>Pulijala Rama Rao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Munugoad</td>
<td>Ramakrishna Reddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherukupalli</td>
<td>Gaddam Narasimha Reddy</td>
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### BHONGIR TALUQ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Landlord</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dupelli</td>
<td>Venkata Ram Reddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kollapur</td>
<td>Yadagiri Rao &amp; Venkateswara Rao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matur &amp; Appareddipally</td>
<td>Ranganaikamma</td>
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</tbody>
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### KHAMMAM TALUQ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinna Mandava</td>
<td>Parcha Srinivas Rao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vallabhi</td>
<td>Amba Raja Rama Rao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagiligonda</td>
<td>Lakshma Reddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chegomma</td>
<td>Ramsyam Raghava Reddy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### MADHIRA TALUQ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Landlord</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Garlavodu</td>
<td>Kaluri Appa Rao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ammapalem</td>
<td>Kaluri Rajeswara Rao</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### MAHBUBABAD TALUQ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mandiloor</td>
<td>Nokal Narayan Reddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rampur</td>
<td>Ravala Lakshma Reddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chelamcherla</td>
<td>Marapa Gopaiah &amp; Raghava Reddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okal</td>
<td>Pattaisetti Buchaiah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pannampalli, Boipahad</td>
<td>Gandra Narayana Rao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somaram</td>
<td>Landur Narsimha Reddy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### WARANGAL TALUQ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Landlord</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vadla Konda</td>
<td>Kandur Narsimha Reddy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opagal</td>
<td>Marimini Kishen Rao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamdepalli</td>
<td>Lakshmi Narasimha Rao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lohita</td>
<td>Ranga Raj Sekhar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the above cited village struggles the peasants came forward and seized their lands. The lands in the Kadavendi village were distributed to the original occupants. The vetti people of the village belonging to untouchable Golla, Kuruma, Chakali, Mangali and Goundla castes were given about 300 acres of poramboku and 720 acres of bancharai lands. The lands on which no body had a claim were given to the landless.

Till now I have covered all the important factors which deal with the peasants, landlords and the enmity between them; the cruelties and atrocities perpetrated on the peasants by the deshmukhs and landlords; the formation of sanghams and squads. How these helped the peasants and the people of the village. How the squads and guerillas had raided the gadis and confiscated the properties of the jagirdars. The communist party and its role were shown clearly.
REFERENCES


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