

A PERSPECTIVE ON BHIMIREDDY NARSIMHA REDDY'S ROLE IN TELANGANA ARMED STRUGGLE (1946-51)

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Abstract

Comrade Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy was a freedom fighter and a leader of the Telangana Rebellion, fighting for the liberation of the Telangana region of Hyderabad State from the oppressive rule of the Nizam. He belonged to Suryapet district of today's Telangana. B.N.Reddy, as he was known, fought the Razakars during the Nizam's rule for six years by being underground. He escaped 10 attempts on his life, prominent among them being an attack against him, his wife and infant son by the Razakars near Mahbubabad in Warangal district. Narsimha Reddy broke the army cordon while exchanging fire and escaped. He also carried out struggles against feudal oppression and bonded labour. Renowned across Telangana with his simple name of BN, he is none other than Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy. Those were the days during which the poor people of Telangana suffered inexplicable exploitation at the hand of the Landlords and toiled as slaves without an iota of freedom He thought that socialism was the ultimate system for the safety of mankind. With the entry into armed struggle he fought against the Nizam's rule and in a free society he aspired to provide food, shelter, employment for the poor people of Telangana.

Keywords: *Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy's role in Telangana Armed Struggle*

Introduction

Telangana Armed Struggle was a historical and a major struggle for land, food and liberation launched by the Telangana people. Prominent among the leaders who have steered the movement from the beginning were Puchalapalli Sundarayya, Devulapally Venkateshwar Rao, Chandra Rajeshwar Rao, Maddukuru Chandra Sekhar Rao, Makineni Basava Punnaiah and Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy.

Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy, the son of Telangana soil, was more popularly known as BN, and the very name resembles the red flag – the symbol of rebellion - that flutters in the air. The peasants of Telangana also took part in the armed struggle and the movement intensified like the swell of the sea. When Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy took-up arms to join the armed struggle, it sent shivers down the spines of the enemies. His was an untiring effort in steering guerrilla forces during the building-up of the movement. Revolution is in his nature, and he had never relaxed nor did he compromise on the struggle. The six feet tall BN not only had a great physical stature, but also possessed a great influential personality.

The Vandemataram Movement was launched when Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy was a student studying 8th class. Prominent leaders of the Vandemataram Movement gathered regularly, held meeting and gave speeches about the importance of freedom struggle. Listening to these speeches, BN was attracted towards the movement. In 1941-42 students were gathered to publicise the Vandemataram Movement and speakers talked about

atrocities of the Nizam and need for a struggle against his tyranny.

In those days, Arya Samaj conducted programmes regularly at Nalgonda. Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy used to frequently attend these programmes. During these programmes, the valiant struggles and sacrifices of the brave Indians who fought against the Mughal emperors were narrated. Those stories had a profound influence on Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy. He completed his 8th class while attending such political and sociological programmes.

In 1942-43, the Communist Party, especially its leader Chandra Rajeshwara Rao, tried to set-up the party's units in all the districts of Telangana. He came to this area in 1938 introduced himself and then joined the struggle spear headed by the Jamin Raitu Sanghama against the Zamindar of Munagala province. Munagala Paragana, which was adjacent to Suryapet Taluq was a part of Indian union. Assuming a pseudonym of Subba Reddy, he joined Reddy Hostel and later met Devulapalli Venkateshwara Rao at Suryapet and Chirravuri Laxmi Narasaiah at Khammam.

During his stay at the Reddy Hostel, Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy influenced Raavi Narayana Reddy, Devulapalli Venkateshwara Rao, Sarvadevabhatla Ramanadham, Chirravuri Laxmi Narasaiah, Baddham Yella Reddy, Arutla Ramachandra Reddy, A.Guruva Reddy and other youth into joining the Communist Party.

Childhood and Education

Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy was the first born child of Bhimoreddy Chokkamma and Rami Reddy and was born

on March 15 in 1922 to at Karvirala Kothagudem village in Tungaturthy Mandal of Nalgonda. He has a younger brother, Kushalava Reddy and three sisters namely Sashirekha, Mallu Swarajyam, Saraswathamma.

He spent his childhood at his maternal grandparents home at Aravapally Ramannagudem village of Nalgonda district. His family owned a small property in his native village. His father Bhimireddy Rami Reddy was a leader of the small landholders and for this reason; he earned the wrath of the wealthy Doras within the village. Following the foot-steps of his father, B.N.Reddy too had affection towards the poorer sections of the society and like his maternal grandparents, led a simple life.

Those were the days when the Telangana region did not have proper educational facilities unlike the Andhra region. As a result, the children of Telangana region were taught only slokas and poems. B.N.Reddy was a student of Palla Rajanna and from him he learnt the slokas in *Amarakosam* which had a profound influence on him and changed his mind to work for the poor people. B.N.Reddy sang the poems and slokas with a mellifluous voice which attracted people towards him. In those days, it was a tradition to carry out discussions about the problem of the poor over a glass of toddy (palm wine); B.N.Reddy and used to convey the solutions to the problems in the context of poems. Once a cultural programme was arranged in his neighbouring village and B.N.Reddy participated in the competition of poetry recitation. With his great command over Telugu language, he won the competition over a Brahmin scholar.

As there were no schools in his village B.N.Reddy had to go to Suryapet for studying fourth class. As it was under the Nizam's rule, no school had Telugu language and the medium of instruction was Urdu. Left with no alternative, B.N.Reddy had to learn in the Urdu medium like other students. After his primary education in Suryapet, he went to Nalgonda for secondary education. When in class eighth, his father Rami Reddy expired putting a break in his education. As the elder son of the family, he had to shoulder the responsibility of the family and for the survival of the family, started agriculture. As B.N.Reddy was much interested in studying, his grandfather encouraged him to continue his higher studies. With the support of his grandfather, he shifted to Hyderabad.

Though he had shifted to Hyderabad he did not have any financial assistance from his family members. But he was determined to continue his studies by staying in Reddy Hostel, located in Hyderabad. The hostel offered

free food and bed the poor students studying in Hyderabad. He met Raja Bahadur Venkatram Reddy, the Chairman of the hostel, explained his position and sought accommodation in the hostel. Raja Bahadur has advised B.N.Reddy to join the Military and continue his education but B.N.Reddy was not interested. Once again he tried with the help of the house master and with the recommendation of Kothwal, and lot of convincing, Raja Bahadur agreed to accommodate B.N.Reddy in the hostel at last.

In those days there was a facility to continue two classes at a time, B.N.Reddy joined in 9 and 10 classes at a time. He worked hard and prepared for exams but just before the examinations he had to face many hurdles and the Head Master Dharushapa refused to give hall ticket to him saying "*Kya Exam Detha? Tumhara Halath Dekhatho Avara Maloom Hotha hai? Chalo Chalo* (What exam will you write? You look like vagabond, Get going)". After great persuasion, he obtained the hall-ticket, wrote the exams and finally passed the public examinations in second division.

After the completion of his secondary education, he had to again face financial and family problems forcing him to return to agriculture. With the help of his *Paleru* he started cultivating a variety of crops in his small landholdings. In the early days he did not have much knowledge on agriculture but later on he gained good experience and he alone used to plough the land and yield the crop and earned good name as farmer. As he had come across several hurdles in cultivation, he learnt the requirement that a farmer has in cultivation, and he fought for the fulfilment of these requirements.

Entry into the Armed Struggle

When Bhimireddy Narsimha Reddy was studying 8th class, the Vandemataram Movement was launched across the country and was in swing, and he plunged into the movement. During 1940-41 Nizam collected information about the people participating in the movement. Around the same time, the World War II was at its peak with Hitler attacking the Soviet Union. At the national level Vandemataram Movement and World War at the international level have influenced the people's political thought. It was at this juncture that B.N.Reddy entered into the politics. At the same time, the people in the Nizam's Dominion were fed up with his tyrannical rule. The people neither had liberty nor could they live in peace. Violence and extortion by the Landlords was rampant. Those seeking food were brutally repressed and those seeking liberty had to face violent actions. The revolutionary in

B.N.Reddy mobilized students and started to revolt against Nizam's rule and he was successful in that movement. Some people who could not with stand the insult meted out to Telugu language simultaneously started the language and cultural struggle. The "Andhra Jana Kendra Sangham" which was formed for the purpose of language and cultural restoration has transformed into "Andhra Maha Sabha". With the start of AMS, the scope of struggle widened.

B.N.Reddy's father was also a revolutionary activist who fought against the landlords and Doras in the villages. To save the poor farmers he had participated in several struggles and agitations in favour of the poor. The neighbouring villagers had discussed with B.N.Reddy about the role that was played by his father against the landlords. This inspired him to lead the armed struggle. The miseries suffered by the poor labourers working without food under the landlords and the several incidents of such ill-fed fainting have all influenced B.N.Reddy into entering the Armed Struggle movement and fight against the hungry and untouchables in the society.

Nizam's Rule and Anarchy

Before entering into the details of Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy's plunge into Telangana struggle, it would be appropriate to place the geographical, demographical and historical perspective of the region to refer to the origins of the struggle first.

According to the census of 1940 the area was 82,698 Square miles. Population was 1,61,94,313 with Hindus being more than 1.40 lakhs. In other words, per every hundred people there were eighty eight Hindus, while the Muslim population was eleven out of hundred. Others were one per hundred. The income of the province was 20 crores sixty two lakhs twenty eight thousand. Ninety percent of people lived on agriculture only. In the entire province there were twenty one thousand six hundred ninety seven villages. Villages with population below five hundred were 12,601, those with 1000 were 5,439 villages and the villages with population of 5000 were 3,657. The province is landlocked and has no sea coast. Based on the languages spoken, the province can be divided into Andhra, Maharashtra and Karnataka regions. In total population 80 lakhs people were Telugu speaking, 40 lakhs people were Marathi speaking and 20 lakh people were Kannada speaking and the remaining 20 lakhs people were Hindi, Tamil or Urdu speaking ones.

The land in the entire province was divided as Paigahs, *Jagirs*, *Sarf-e-khas*, and *Dewani*. The properties of relatives and the people concerned to Nawab would be treated as "*Paigah*" The Nawabs with Paigahs were

independent in internal administration. The interference of Nizam government in Paigah Nawabs is almost nil. There were Samasthans at Gachala, Vanaparthy, Amarachintha, Papannapet and Shorapuram. Jagirs are also approximately same, but with a little change. If necessary the Nizam government can interfere into the internal administration and the Nawab had the right to admonish the Jagirdars. *Sarf-e-khas* lands were the other important ones. The extent was 8,109 Square miles. The income from this was more than 2 crores. (The rupee in those days was silver. Old Tula means 14 grams, which gives us an approximation of the value of rupee). The *Sarf-e-khas* lands were treated as Nawab's own property. The property which was under the government would be treated as *Dewani*. The income which would be come from *Dewani* would be used for the protection of the state and for the development programmes. For the purpose of maintaining law and order and looking after the people welfare, government would give the Nizam 50 lakhs as normal practice and 25 lakhs per year for his children.

The entire expenditure of the Nizam Nawab was met from government treasury as miscellaneous expenditure. The Nizam state which we know was in the ancient past ruled by Andhra, Chalukya, Satavahana, Rasthrakuta, and Yadava dynasties in a people pleasing way and the emperors were highly famed. *Asaf Jahi Nizam-ul-Mulk* was appointed as Subedar by Aurangazeb as he was the emperor's most reliable person and his most believed soldier from the southern region. After being the Subedar for some time, *Nizam-ul-Mulk* declared himself as Nawab with the support of neighbouring provinces that were under his. According to some historical proofs, he was given a fright by the Marathas, Gadwal King Someshwar Rao, and Papannapet King Sadashiva Rao who attacked his sovereignty. To protect himself from such threats, the Nizam Nawab has taken patronage of the British. He paid for the maintenance of the British military regiments and for giving security he used to pay brokerage in the form of money.

When the Telangana struggle began, Mir Osman Ali Khan, the seventh in the lineage of the Nizam dynasty was ruling the state. He was given the honorary *Bahadur* (G.C.S.I.O.B.S) by the British. His intense dislike of the Hindu community is evident in his intention to declare the dominionas Muslim province and the following poetic expression of his "Bandhina khas hiwa sunke nidhaye thakbhir" "Jaljala Ahigaya riphaye Junnarphebhi" ("Kalma Islam community, first principle was by that sound itself the sound of a shell would be stopped. The earth quake was

covered on community symbols of Hindu and the Jandhyam which Hindu's wear"). The independence struggle finally came to fruition with the British relinquishing their sovereignty over the country. The tall claim that the 'sun never sets on the British Empire' has finally come to a nought. They left the country, but not before extracting the revenge of dividing the nation into two. On 03-06-1947 the British government declared that that the provinces can take their own decisions about their independent existence. Taking cue from this declaration, the Nizam through a *Firman* dated 12th June 1947 declared independence of his dominion. The emergence of independent India on 15th August 1947 brought in its wake loss of property, lives, robbery, and rapes were reported in countless numbers. Many people were rendered homeless destitutes. Jinnah, the main person responsible for all these happenings was, however, not satisfied with the formation of Pakistan. He supported the declaration of independence of Hyderabad by the Nizam.

Hyderabad was then an independent and a major province. A programme aired on Pakistani Radio broadcast special speeches encouraging the Nizam. The political wisdom of the British was not satisfied with the division of India into two, but it wanted to break the country down into some more pieces. On 30 July 1948 the Prime Minister of British in his address at the House of Commons expressed his fierce desire to support independence of Hyderabad State. He justified his argument stating that Switzerland, Austria and Czechoslovakia have been maintaining their independent state, notwithstanding being landlocked. That's why the capacity of independence of Hyderabad is not at all a question, he declared. With such support the Nizam himself encouraged the birth of an unruly power – the *Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen*. The Congress party was opposed to the Nizam's idea of remaining an independent state and asserted that since majority of the people wanted to be part of the Indian Union, allowing the State's independent status is not implementable. The Nizam unleashed a giant demon in the form of Kasim Razvi, whom the Hindus felt to be an alternate name of death itself. He innovated new ways of torture; women were brutally raped and properties were annexed. He would, however, be very respectful to the chiefs, and Zamindars who were favourites of the Nizam. There was no control on Razvi's acts and the helpless people bore his atrocities under the grit of their teeth.

These cruel and torturous activities of Kasim Razvi and his goons were the main reason for the emergence of the Communist revolution. The oppression and extortion

caused by the *Razakars* of *Kasim Razvi* cannot be described. It was the Hindu Maha Sabha that stood in support of the people with courage. The members responded in equal force – an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. The villagers and the people stood by the Communists. Ending the Nizam's Nizam authoritarian rule, though was the primary objective of the Communists, they wanted to eradicate inequality in the society, the village head system, landlord system and also uprooting drudgery of the poor farmers. It was for all these reasons that the people gave good support and sang paeans to them. In these combats, Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy stood like a hero.

Kotapadu Incident (attack with burning haystacks)

Kotapadu village is in Suryapet Taluq of Nalgonda district. During the hot summer of 1947, the Communist Party leadership led a guerrilla attack on the Nizam's Razakar militia.

"Chustarenduku vudharabetti champaka dumargulanu" gaddi mopu madhyalo endu mirapakaya basta petti nippantinchi ("What are you watching? Kill the cruel fellows by burning the haystacks with a bag of dried chillies in them!). These were the words uttered by an old woman in desperation alerting Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy, bringing into him a sense of consciousness and urging him to initiate action. The utterance was like a ray of light in the darkness reminding him to follow the call of duty. It was around 2 pm and the guerrilla force under Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy's leadership was engaged for the past five hours in a combat with Nizam's Razakar Military. In fact, it was the first time that he is engaged in guerrilla warfare. He was in a dilemma and could not decide on the stand to take; they were facing an enemy armed with modern weapons and stationed in three buildings, while his force has only country-made guns. The Razakars were repelling BN's forces from reaching the buildings. With no way left, BN was lost in deep thought, when the utterances of the old woman brought the people around and BN into action. The people brought hundreds of stacks of hay, placed them around the buildings and lighted them afire. The Razakars, until then holed-up in the buildings started experiencing the immense heat generated and they left the ground floor to occupy the top floor of the building and continue their attack. With the support of people the guerrilla force entered into the building and cleared the first protection series. The enemy forces attacking from the first floor now have a new problem to face the fire bombs. Big bundles of hay on fire are now shot with arrows and the fire started spreading in the top floor.

The people seething with rage for the atrocities of the Razakars, started attacking the building from the rear-side. By then, the bags of chillies and tamarind started burning there by suffocating the enemies. Left with no alternative, they came down on their knees seeking pardon and protection for their lives. They have already dropped their rifles and surrendered to the leaders begging to save their lives. The people were in no mood to relent as they had suffered immensely at the hands of these very Razakars. BN and his forces stopped the rampaging people from assaulting the surrendered Razakars. The commander of the Razakars went down on his knees and while requesting BN for protection, suddenly snatched BN's gun and aimed it at him. A fierce fight between BN and the commander ensued and finally the former shot the commander down.

With the death of the commander, the eight-hour long fight ended. It was 10.00 in the night. BN and his group took hold of the fortress that the enemy was in possession till then. The people thronged the place amid whistles and sloganeering "Communist party Zindabad! Destroy the Nizam government, Andhra Maha Sabha Zindabad". The members of the guerrilla force took possession of the weapons that the Razakars were using till then. It was a sea of over-joyed people even at late hour. People sang and danced with great happiness, as those from the neighbouring villages started congregating at the place. The woman who had urged BN into action was a resident of the neighbouring Ravi padu village.

Political History of Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy

In 1951, the guerrillas who were in combat gradually started surrendering their weapons; the legal party of Communists from Bombay under the leadership of Daange, Ajay Ghosh and Raavi Narayana Reddy has announced the withdrawal of party from the struggle. Whatever may be the reasons they have shown, throughout the state the environment of elections has influenced the party to prepare the leadership for the General Elections of 1952 under the name of People's Democratic Front. The leaders like Raavi Narayana Reddy, Baddam Yella Reddy and many candidates under their leadership have entered into the election contest. But the leaders like Devulapalli Venkateshwara Rao, Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy, and Rajeshwara Rao who had direct relationship with struggle continued the armed struggle and helped spreading the importance of struggle, supporting their victories. They resisted the false propaganda by the government and the destructive

propaganda of some leaders of the political party who were criticizing the history of armed struggle.

Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy was the leader of Telangana Armed Struggle. He was not only a revolutionary leader but was also elected twice for the Assembly and won thrice as a Parliament member from Miryalguda Constituency.

In 1957, Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy was elected to the Legislative Assembly from Nagaram constituency of Nalgonda district and in 1967 he had successfully contested from Suryapet constituency. He was also elected as Member of Parliament in 1971, 1984 and 1991 from Miryalguda constituency to Lok Sabha. He tried to solve the problems of poor people in both the Lok Sabha and the Legislative Assembly. Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy has discussed in Parliament in 1971 itself to utilize the Godavari river water government has to construct dams and to develop backward areas of Telangana region. The role of Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy for laying foundation stone for Sriram Sagar Project Second Stage cannot be forgotten. B.N declared that he would breath his last only after drinking the Godavari water in Nalgonda district and also says that up to that time he will struggle against the government to bring the water of Godavari river water to Nalgonda district. He was the member of Cabinet Committee on National Water Resources and tried hard to discuss with the government and led the people in struggles to get the S.R.S.P second stage. He could finally succeed in 1996 in laying the foundation stone of the second stage of SRSP project. With this project nearly 4.40 lakhs of acres of land in Nalgonda, Warangal and Khammam districts have benefited. He stood firm on his ideologies and never set back or compromised. Because of this stance, this he lost many posts in the party and it is not an exaggeration. In United Communist Party he worked as Taluq Secretary of Suryapet. He was elected to Nagaram assembly constituency when he was in United Communist Party. In 1964 the Communist Party was divided and he joined the Communist Party of India (Marxist). He worked as President and national Vice President. He worked as a member of the screening committee for freedom fighters' financial benefits at Hyderabad.

B.N.Reddy was the first era communist who fought for social justice by gathering lakhs of people belonging to all castes at Suryapet of Nalgonda district. On 09-08-2005 He was awarded Great Freedom Fighter by Abdul Kalam. He was felicitated by state Home Minister Jana Reddy as *Dheenajana Bandhu* on 29-02-2008. B.N.Reddy was a good writer. He has good nature and reacts for poor

people and used to work for poor people. He came out from C.P.M in 1996. He would not compromise in his ideologies, so he could not adjust in the party and he came out from it. He did not leave the red flag which he believed, so he joined in his old colleague Maddikayala Omkar's Party M.C.P.I (U). The two leaders who were cheated by the party have stayed together till their death. B.N. has worked as central committee member of the party.

On 09-05-2008, Comrade Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy breathed his last. Leaders of different parties, singers, artists, fans, followers, colleagues and many people have attended the funeral. The government has conducted his last rites with official formalities.

Conclusion

Telangana Armed Struggle can be written in the history of Bharata Communist Party as a great struggle. To gain agricultural revolution and to eradicate the feudal system from its root and to topple the Nizam's cruel system and for people's rule, Telangana armed struggle was started by the Telangana farmers.

Afterward the end of the Armed Struggle, B.N. played major role in many incidents. In 1946 November the Nizam's Police attacked the Balmela village in Suryapet taluq assuming the presence of B.N, but killed Andhra Maha Sabha farmer member Mata Reddy with gun. At old Suryapet and Devaruppala where the B.N. was giving armed training, Nizam forces had attacked and killed one at Suryapet and two persons at Balemla. At that time B.N. went underground. He planned many attacks on the landlords, armed people to fight against those who were extorting work from the poor and forcibly collecting food grains and levies. Under his guidance and leadership many attacks on Razakars were launched at Kottapadu, Tungaturthy, Alair, Nomula, Ravulapenta, Kodakandla, Nuthula, Mamillagudem villages. At Balemla, Kodakandla, Thimmapet, Old Suryapet and other villages he gathered people and inspired them to attacks on Razakars, collected weapons from them and formed guerrilla forces. There was no other leader like BN from the Communist Party to personally participate and lead the Telangana Armed Struggle, although names like Puchalapalli Sundarayya, Makineni Basava Punnaiah and Chandra Rajeshwara Rao and others from Andhra area are mentioned. However, they did not hold the gun and entered the battlefield unlike BN.

Bhimoreddy Narsimha Reddy from his childhood has faced several problems like a common poor man. Though he was born in an upper caste community he had a lot of attachment with the poor people. During his school days he was fond of singing and that attracted him to work for

the poor people, mainly a book titled "Palleturi Peddalu" written by Comrade Lenin has shown much impact on B.N.Reddy. In the rural villages most of the people who had faced several problems in the day to day life have also had much impact on B.N to think about the poor who were lacking with food and shelter and the problems that were faced because of the landlords. He thought that socialism was the ultimate system for the safety of mankind. With the entry into armed struggle he fought against the Nizam's rule and in a free society he aspired to provide food, shelter, employment for the poor people of Telangana.

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