

Peasant unrest during ‘Marathwada Mukti Sangram’

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Abstract: In this research paper focus is emphasized on the role of peasant movement in the Indian freedom struggle. It is tried to explore the contribution of peasants in the Marathwada freedom struggle or Marathwada *mukti sangram* or in other words Hyderabad freedom struggle in the nationalist movement of India. Through different case studies and archival sources assessment of the situation of peasantry and their problems is done. It is also tried to be inquired as how the peasants of the Marathwada region contributed to the freedom struggle of Marathwada? Through source analysis it is further inquired to know the peasant’s involvement in the freedom struggle from 1940 to 1948 through Marathwada Mukti Sangram. Farmers and workers have contributed to the Marathwada liberation struggle in the Marathwada region. These issues are illuminated through this research paper.

Keywords: *Hyderabad, Marathwada Mukti Sangram, Nationalism, Satyagraha Movement, Peasant.*

Introduction: ‘Marathwada’ was a part of Hyderabad States. Marathwada was also an additionally administered revenue division during the nineteenth century in the Hyderabad state. ‘Marathwada’ has long history of political, sociological, and cultural heritage since the ancient times, it had been notable that ‘Asmak’ Pradesh and it had been connected to nearest Dakshinapatha.¹ During ancient times the flourishing state of this region is evident in its cultural and historical monuments heritage which provides information through the cave and temple relics. Various dynasties on this region and their regime, is evident in their art, architecture, sculpture, and cultural relics. Maharashtra as well as Marathwada has long historical background of Bhakti Movement and progressive thoughts.² In medieval times Marathwada experiences great contribution and cultural revolution under saint Tukaram, saint Dynaneshwar, saint Namdeva, saint Janabai. Later with coming of Mughals we come across several different aspects of significance which changed the entire discourse of

¹ Sircar D. C., () *Studies in Geography of Ancient and Medieval India*, P.154.

²Kate, P. V. (1987), *Marathwada under the Nizams, 1724-1948*, Mittal Publications, P. 4

Marathwada as a region. The transition which we will look into this paper will largely explore the various aspects of the times when 'Asafjahi dynasty' dominated on the Marathwada.³ There were seven Nizams who ruled on Hyderabad as well as Marathwada. Marathwada was under the regime of Asafzahi dynasty since the seventeenth century and remained so until the 1949 A. D. This time span amounts to close to 250 years. Asafzai dynasty came to an 'The End' by the Police Action on seventeenth September 1948 A.D. by Union Government Home Minister Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The Last Nizam Osman Ali Khan also called Mīr Usmān Alī Khan, he was born on 6th April, 1886 A.D., Hyderabad, India and died on 24th February, 1967, Hyderabad Nizam (ruler) of Hyderabad princely state republic of India within the amount 1911 A.D. -1948 A.D.. He was constitutional president till 1956. He was also one of the richest men in the world, he dominated over a state equal to the scale of Italy. He was supporter of Razakars and Majlis Ittehad al- Muslmin (MIM). Non-Muslims and hindu people felt uncomfortable owing to domination and exploitation within the Marathwada region of the Nizam's state of Hyderabad. Aurangabad, Parbhani, Nanded, Osmanabad, Latur these were the five districts coming under the Marathwada division which were dominated by Nizam rulers.⁴

In the Hyderabad freedom struggle Swami Ramananda Teerth had great role to play and he was the one who built a connection between a regional struggle with the nationalist movement. Under the leadership of Swami Ramananda Tirth farmers gathered to indicate their unrest against Nizam within the Marathwada. However, the sole leadership of farmers protest was not limited to Hindu Swami Ramananda Tirth, rather, the true spirit and soul of the Marathwada freedom struggle were the visible and invisible people who all struggled for the Marathwada. 17th September, 1948 A.D. Marathwada became free from Nizam's rule. In the new political scenario a further movement evolved which was inclusion of Marathwada in the newly emerged Marathi linguistic based state of Maharashtra which led to 'Sanyukta Maharashtra Movement' lead by 'Marathi speaking people'. Due to this language based state movement on 1st May, 1960 birth of state of Maharashtra took place where Marathwada became its integral part. In the present research paper 'Peasant unrest in "Marathwada Mukti Sangram"' main theme of the research analysis is to interpret the peasant mobilization within the Marathwada region. In the Hyderabad freedom struggle several organizations were affiliated to peasants and working class. Within the period of the Nizam his administrators often from Hyderabad targeted negatively and in oppressive manner the farmers of Marathwada. Those farmers who supported the Marathwada *mukti sangram* and fought themselves to free themselves from the Nizam's domination. In these struggles many of these farmers were severely targeted by the *razakaar* and Nizam's espionage system. Protests and struggle of peasants of the Marathwada mukti sangram was essence of all movements. When India got independence from British it was several movements within India which made India of today took shape, the Nizam's Hyderabad state could become part of India, because peasants worked hard to make it part of Republic of India, this research paper looks into that one episode which brought peasantry of Marathwada as part of the nationalistic struggle. Consequently, as the part of new India, could the peasants get what they fought for? Given the peasants of Marathwada are one of

³ Rode Somnath, 'MarathwadyachaItihas (1960)' Aurangabad, Vidya Books Pub.,2011, Pp.166-168 (Marathi)

⁴ Potdar Vasant (2012) *Hyderabad Swatantrya Sangram*, Latur, Vidya Publication,(Marathi) P.15.

the most drought affected communities of India, with highest rates of agrarian indebtedness and farmers suicides in India.

What are major issues?

- What were Nizam government policies and administration system for farmers and agriculture.
- Nizam's land revenue in the Marathwada as well as how the feudal lords relations with the peasants in the Marathwada.
- Evaluation of status of agricultural education among peasants, peasant community.
- Lack of irrigation sources and consequent drought conditions in the Marathwada region.

What were the Reasons of Peasant Unrest in Marathwada?

Peasant unrest in Marathwada is conjoined with so many reasons, but some of common reason were the land revenue rates and land revenue system. There were land revenue collectors who belonged to Hindu and Muslims both communities and were part of the administration. However, in last two decades when Nizam realized the possibilities of his dethroning and loss of Nizam state in the post-colonial India, then he shifted his policies and most of the posts of the land revenue administration were given to the muslim *paigadars* or land revenue officers. He also chose only Muslims officials in the major offices as head of the administrator. The state of Hyderabad came not heavy-handed administration who were predominantly staunch radical Muslims. This shift towards the polarized system of administration created unrest and mistrust among the subjects and the Hindu administrators and elite and middle class of the society in the Hyderabad state. With exclusion of hindu people from administrative positions of responsibility, they could not feel as part of the state and eventually become suspicious also about their well-being in the Hyderabad state. Nizam on several instances had also removed Hindu officer from his central administration and appointed his trusted Muslim people. This system of governance where all the responsible and affluent positions were governed and steered by the radical muslims and vast majority of population of Nizam's Hyderabad state which was Hindu was now reduced as revenue paying populations. The changed administrative divide was more like the dual system of Nizam and his administrators. This apathy in system of governance gradually provoked the subject population to seek resolve among themselves. The various hierarchy of the village and agrarian system evolved its own protests and methods of resistance against the oppressive rule the *Balutedari*, *Alutedari*, *Patil* and *Kulkarni*, *Deshmukh* and *Jagirdar* evolved their own new policies of revenue collections with *Ijara*, *Inam*, *Peshkar*. The latter categories of taxes and levy '*Ijara*, *Inam*, *Peshkar*' were new taxes in the Marathwada region which were collected by the revenue administrators from the hindu families. These duality within the elites of the hindu and muslim families of the Hyderabad state against the peasants created a cultural and economic crisis leading peasant to seek solutions in the Indian freedom struggle where Indian National Congress had assured about a judicious land revenue and land tenancy reforms after the independence of India. As an impact on the peasant started to participate in the nationalist movement with a hope for a futuristic justice for their own plight and receiving their own rights.⁵ Thus, the peasants and subjects of Hyderabad state inclusive

⁵ R. Jayram, *Administrative system under the Nizams (1853-1953)*, Bangalore, Ultra publication, 1998, P.32

of Marathwada began to resist the ruler i.e. the Hyderabad's Nizam and landlords and later on the revenue officer of the region of Marathwada.

Mir Osman Ali Khan's administration was largely dependent for its main income from the land revenue. The stability and wellbeing of the economy depended on devising proper machinery for its collection of revenue and taxes through various landholders. Land revenue was collected by an antiquated method which was fraught with countless of its disadvantages to the cultivators. These pernicious systems were known as revenue farming. Under the revenue farming system; 'it became the responsibility of the contractor to collect the land revenue. Not only land revenue but also other taxes on non-muslim subjects of the state. Taxes like as 'Kalali'(Excise) 'Muhtarifa'(Occupation tax), 'Baghat'(Garden Produce) 'Sar Darakhati'(Tax on Trees) 'Amrai'(Mango Fruit Tree) 'Kata' (Tax on Cutting or reaping) and ' Haq Naibana'(Naib's fees) Three Contractor acquired this privilege after paying a fixed amount mentioned in the contract deed. Besides these amounts, the contractors paid 'Nazardasti'(Cash presented by Hand), 'Sayar' (The customs or transit duties) and ' Buzhai Iduzzuha'(Goats for the 'Bakrid' Festival).⁶ Other than these truckload of taxes, peasant subjects were also on beck and call of the master revenue collector of the region. 'The revenue farmer was instructed in his agreement 'that he must bring together all the farmer and new *rayat* (farmers) give the assurance of fair treatment bring the taluka into a flourishing condition pay to the *rayat* all to which they were entitled and remit the government the annual payments as they became due.'⁷

Activities in Marathwada Mukti Sangram from 1940-1948: Peasants and leaders of All India Congress Committee worked for Marathwada freedom struggle for people. Peasants wanted to free themselves from the Princely state of Hyderabad, so that following program of action and planning was made by the committee, where the successful participation from the peasants of Marathwada was experiences in the movement from the Marathwada region.

Peasants' participation in Nationalist Movements: Maharashtra Parishad 1st June 1937 was first conference of peasants from Partur taluka in the Parbhani District under the leadership of Maharaja Kishan Prasad who was the prime minister in the Nizam State. He was *Jagirdar* from a well-known family of rural Marathwada. He was polyglot and spoke fluently the three language of Deccan and so could communicate well with people of his region and understood their agony in their own languages of Deccani, Marathi and Telugu. During the Maharashtra Parishad he shared with peasants their grievances and assured them of resolve. Nizam objected on the Maharashtra Parishad which was held in Partur but Maharaja Kishan Prasad remained decisive in his resolve and took the conference in the Partur under his steering leadership, the media coverage of this conference was comprehensively published in the "Nizam vijay" News Paper.⁸

Second Maharashtra 'Parishad' Conference was held in the Latur in June, 1938 and Adv. Shree Bhaskarrao Vakil was its host and chairman of this *Parishad* (conference) was Shrinivas Sharma. The resolution of this conference was to develop network of peasants in the Marathwada region and to integrate them with the nationalist peasant or 'Kisan

⁶ Ibid. P. 32

⁷ Ibid. P. 32

⁸ Patil Shivajirao Nilangekar, *Political Awareness Mobilization and Changes*, Aurangabad, Educational Pub., 2013, Pp.36-37

Sabha'. The Third Maharashtra Parishad conference was held at Umari village in Nanded district. This conference was held on 29-31 May 1941 it was very important to the works of Maharashtra Parishad in Marathwada region. Before this conference in 1941, under the leadership of noted nationalist leaders of Marathwada the resolve to establish 'State Congress of Marathwada' was initiated. To which Nizam retaliated and proposed a ban and on 'State Congress of Marathwada' in to its immediate effect also took under custody and later to jail all the leaders who were involved in the satyagraha movements of this Congress wing spread all over Marathwada and Hyderabad State. Thus, prominent leaders of Marathwada *per se* Govind Bhai Shroff, A. K. Waghmare and other leaders of State Congress were sent to the Hyderabad Jail. In protest to the Nizam's oppression and arrest of leaders in the Umari congress peasants and workers from all over Marathwada gathered in huge numbers to mark their strong support and solidarity to State Congress and unity peasants leader.⁹ Fourth Maharashtra Parishad was organised on 1st, 2nd and 3rd June 1943 and its organizer was A. K. Waghmare, and Chairperson was Adv. Shridhar Vaman Naik. Peasant leader Shamrao Yellwatkar in this conference stated the objectives of the conference and discussed about the problems of peasants and solutions. The conference was significant because it laid the ground plan for the amelioration of the status of the peasantry in the post-colonial India and Marathwada. Some of the proposed resolutions for peasant upliftment were as follows:

- 1) Lavey – Daily needs and discussion on the production and supply. Mass mobilization of the Peasants in the Marathi society, workers, Students, Traders, and Businessman etc.,
- Establishment of new agricultural university and colleges in the Marathwada region.

Indirectly the peasant and peasant leaders work in the political mobilization of the Marathwada. In 1936 Faizpur Session of Indian National Congress, for first time in the history of Indian National Congress, a nationwide Congress session was held in a village of Bombay Presidency in close vicinity of the Marathwada. As a result, number of peasant from Marathwada participated in the session. In the Faizpur session of INC several resolutions were taken to improve the peasant status in India. One among the leading question which was raised was the inclusion of peasants and workers in all levels of Congress activities. Also, development of policies to integrate and improve the status of peasants' populations in British and dominions of British India. The resolutions of Faizpur session had their immediate impacts in the peasant movement of Marathwada and the peasantry affected by the programs of State Congress of Marathwada and other movements which were working for the freedom struggle in the Marathwada region. Peasants of the Hyderabad state's border area villages were affected by the freedom movement in the united province in 1942 and they actively participated in the *Bharat Chhodo: Quit India Movement* movement and on call of Mahatma Gandhi several peasants did the satyagraha in their own regions in Marathwada.

Peasants' participation in the State Congress Action Committee: In 1938 on beacon of Mahatma Gandhi responsibility of '*Individual Satyagraha*' in the Hyderabad state was given to the Swami Ramananda Teerth and Harishchandra Heda, along with Gyankumari Heda and Digambar Bindu they took the individual satyagraha movement among the

⁹ Ibid. p. 36

peasants of Marathwada. Arya Samaj, Hindu Mahasabha, Maharashtra Parishad, Andra Mahasabha, Praja Mandal, etc. thus evolved networks with the peasants and workers of Marathwada within the Princely state these organization works lead to the uniting and mobilizing of the peasants and workers in the village and town levels. People believed in Satyagraha, and its example of civil disobedience. Therefore, during the Individual Satyagraha, *Jangal Satyagraha* was first of its kind which shone in the first phase of the Peoples struggle in the Marathwada. The Jangal satyagraha connected the peasantry of Hyderabad with the cross-border peasantry of Central provinces and Bombay Presidency.

Role of Libraries, Vyayamshala or Akhada: Libraries provide the Local Languages Newspapers (vernacular Language) spread the awareness of freedom movements and new thoughts of worldwide into all over the Marathwada through these Libraries. Library collection of New books which will be helpful to growing the national integration. Libraries made knowledgeable leaders and tactics of freedom fighters. So it was most useful location to the spreading national education in the society. Libraries have done national work knowledgeable minds of Activist People.

Akhada means is there Body Building or Gym. There will be gave physical education to self defense to the National Movement Activist. Akhada provide knowledge to freedom fighters self-defense from Razakar or Nizams police. It is the most important works held in the Akhada to provide young and Active leaders to the movement. Young bodybuilder called as "*Pailwan*". What were the activities in the Akhada? *Spinning Stick (Lathi/Lath)*, *Throwing Bhala*, *Throwing Gola*, *Baldanda*, *up lift Musali*. Various type exercises, Kusti (Wrestling), Suiting, attacking on enemies etc., Most of Akhada were in the Hanuman Temple or in the Deshmukhs wada. Peoples paid amount to Akhada. Sometime protesting Activist people national program in the village or town Razakar raid on the spot at that time this people very helpful they attacked on the Razakar and sent to heaven.¹⁰ But later 1947 in second phase Arya Samaj Communist thinkers changed the policies of the Satyagraha it was Forest or Jungal Satyagraha, Mass Mobilization to the Ban or Strike, Zenda Satyagraha, Armed Satyagraha to fight with nonviolence in the Movement by Gandhian' view in the Marathwada region.

Role of the National Educational Institute: Peasants in the Marathwada had adopted the Nationalist agenda of Bal Gangadhar Tilak with his '*Chaturstuti*' programs i.e. 1) "National Education, 2) Self-government, 3) Swadeshi, 4) Use of Khadi cotton (Material)." The essential roles of the academic establishments and inculcating values of these four programs were initiated by the teachers and students. Majority of these *Chaturstuti* volunteers who followed these ideals of B.G. Tilak were from rural and agrarian background with a major following from Marathwada region as well. The major institutional works such as mission of freedom struggle involved as program of Action Committee of '*Chaturstuti*': 'Swarajya, Swadeshi and National Education were organised through '**Bahishkar**'. The branches of these '**Bahishkar**' were developed as institutions in Marathwada region as well. Its main centers were in Ambajogai- Mominabad(Now known as Beed) Yogeshwari Rastriya School in Parbhani, Nutan College and Saraswati Bhuwan in Aurangabad etc. These branches of Bahishkar eere Educational institutions opened for students of Marathwada, and peasants, workers, local officers paid money and grains, grocery to these institution as well to the wards staying in their hostels. From Aurangabad,

¹⁰ Fadke, Y. D. (1960) *Nineteenth Century Maharashtra*, Vol.V, Pune, Shri Vidya, (Marathi), P.19

Mominabad, Parbhani, Nanded, Latur, Osmanabad, etc. Educational Institutions and Libraries played role of great importance and they also worked in opposing the domination of Urdu medium education system of Nizam in the Marathwada Mukti Sangram.¹¹

Border camps in Hyderabad: Peasants participated in the border camps that were the one apart from the State Congress of Marathwada. As it was disallowed and difficult for peasants to have armed camps in Hyderabad within the Borders of Marathwada. Some of the significant peasant training camps were organised by the peasant leaders in the border areas of Central Provinces and Bombay Presidency of the Hyderabad State. Among them the significant camps were of; Manmad camp for Aurangabad District, Ahmadnagar camp for Beed District, Washim camp for Parbhani District, and Shembal Pimpri, Umarkhed camp for Nanded District. All these camps were organised on border of Hyderabad State. Peasants and workers actively joined these camps for training and skills empowerment so to contribute in the freedom struggle. On 15th August, 1947 British left India with India becoming a sovereign nation. But the people of Hyderabad state and especially Marathwada region who so actively participated in the nationalist movement remained subjects to the Nizam of Hyderabad. They infact, had to initiate an explicit “*Sashatra Kranti*” or revolutionary agitation against Nizam in princely state of Hyderabad. After 1947, people especially peasants and workers of Marathwada region started attacking on the government offices and police stations, railways, banks etc. Communication and transportation stopped in the Hyderabad. These events took attention of the central ministry and leaders in the Government of India in Delhi. They saw the matters of the peoples within the Marathwada in the geographical region taking uncontrollable situation. As a result to pacify this unrest against the Nizam’s rule Police Action was brought in the Hyderabad State.¹²

Police Action: People requested to democratic and republic state of India to take an action in Hyderabad. It is most important episode in the post independent India to be remembered in history of the Hyderabad freedom struggle. Primeminister of India Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru and Home Minister and External Affairs Minister Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel took the “*Police Action*” with its operational name as “*Operation Polo*” within the Hyderabad. Whereafter, Marathwada was freed from Nizam’s rule and in the later thirteen months after 1949 a mass struggle took place in Hyderabad where a lot of people self-immolated themselves to seek freedom from Nizam’s rule. Many peasants and workers gave their life for the Hyderabad state to be freed from old regime authoritarian monarchical rule of Nizam and formation of democratic state in Hyderabad. Later, Marathwada which was part of Hyderabad state came to be included in the state of Maharashtra, with effort of Sanyukta Maharashtra Movement, which was dream of many people and significant leaders like; Senapati Bapat, S. M. Joshi, Acharya Atre, Communist. A. S. Dange, Bhai Udhavrav Patil etc. They worked their whole life to make State of Maharashtra. With long arduous struggle movement for a marathi linguistic state got its fruition and Marathwada became its integral part. Finally peoples struggle build up Sanyukta Maharashtra, so that, we celebrate Maharashtra day on 1st May since 1960 year.

¹¹ Patil Shivajirav Nilangekar (2013) *Political Awareness Mobilization and Changes*, Aurangabad, Educational Pub (Marathi) P.50

¹² Fadke, Y. D. (1960) *Op. cit*, P.30 and *District Gazetteer of Nanded*, P.200

Conclusion: “The Peasant unrest in the Marathwada Mukti Sangram” important and indisputable influence beyond the boundaries of the state and can be said to have provided the impetus for similar movements by the farmers on non-party lines. Even minor details of the peasant movements in Marathwada became inspiration to various agrarian movements all over Indian sub-continent. The current research, describes a wide variety of conflicts, covers different categories of agricultural population and is based intrinsic analysis of case study-based farmers issues. In the former province of Hyderabad of Indian, which was perhaps the largest, most complex, and most systematically dependent on an old regime functionality of land and governance. Through this research paper I tried to contribute to bring into context some of the aspect which brought '*kranti*' i.e., revolution from the '*kisan*' i.e. farmers of Marathwada division of the erstwhile Hyderabad province.

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