

The Role of Rebbapragada Mandeswara Sarma in Andhra Freedom Movement

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Abstract

Great people's histories are reflections of their eras and are also the histories of modern society. One could consider the history of Congress to be the history of modern India. Under the Congress's leadership, India awoke to independence after decades of dullness and lethargy. Writing biographies of notable individuals is beneficial when writing a society's history. Finding the true driving reasons and outcomes of historical events, as well as putting the past in the proper context, can be greatly aided by studying a leader's personality. Writing one's own autobiography is the fashion of the current period, yet every nation's literature has great people's biographies that extol their virtues. Writing a biography requires a combination of personal interest, careful examination of the subject matter and facts, avoiding exaggeration, and taking a novel approach to creating a new document with the assistance of other sources. The present study is about the life and achievements of Mandeswara Sarma who worked in different fields. It is an attempt to bring a full picture of his multi-faceted activities.

Key word: *The life and achievements of Mandeswara Sarma*

I. INTRODUCTION

Great people's histories are reflections of their eras and are also the histories of modern society. One could consider the history of Congress to be the history of modern India. Under the Congress's leadership, India awoke to independence after decades of dullness and lethargy. One of the biggest mass movements in world history, the Congress spearheaded a nonviolent effort for more than 65 years, making it significant in human history. In 1757, India lost her independence and came under the control of the East India Company. Two years later, in 1858, the British monarchy took control of India. Political foreign domination, according to B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, emasculated the country by eradicating any creativity and initiative and encouraging an attitude of subservience and abasement. However, without the support of English education, social reformers, and religious leaders, the enormous work of "All-round reconstruction and renovation" could not have been completed. In India, a new layer of intelligentsia developed as a result of English education.

Social reformers began their beneficial work to change society in the 19th century. Education from the West introduced concepts such as democracy and nationalism to India. India was fortunate to have spiritual and social reformers like Vivekananda, Raja Rammohan Roy, Dayananda Saraswathi, and Ramakrishna Paramahansa as mentors during her time of national crisis. Kandukuri Veeresalingam, a fervent supporter of social reform in Andhra Pradesh, taught the Andhras the fundamentals of social reform. Having been born into a Brahmin family, he made remarkable efforts to promote social awareness. Veeresalingam is the best Andhra of the modern era, according to C.R. Reddy. He was unmatched not only in the Andhra region but also in the Tamil regions of the Madras Presidency. As a result, the Andhra region pioneered social change early on.

In Andhra, political awareness had spread by 1905. Nationalism began to affect the populace. The neighbourhoods surrounding Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, and Nellore were especially alive with the new energy. The success of their agriculture allowed the locals to raise the general literacy rate. The inhabitants had access to resources in towns like Guntur, Rajahmundry, Machilipatnam, and Coconada that could meet their professional and literate demands. The Telugu literary renaissance, education, and nationalism started in the Circars, which were more developed culturally and economically than other Andhra district, under the guidance of Brahmins. Bengal has passed on the national education torch to Andhra thanks to Bipin Chandra Paul. Most of Veeresalingam's changes were implemented in Rajahmundry. There were indications that the residents of this seaside village were early Nationalist movement supporters with fervour.

Mandeswara Sarma began his professional life as a social reformer, helpful public servant, and leader of the peasantry after attending Rajahmundry town's educational institutions. In addition, he promoted tribal

upliftment and rose to prominence in the West Godavari District's political scene. Mandeswara Sarma joined the National movement after quitting his studies. As a social reformer by belief and a political agitator by trade, he championed Ryots' cause against the British Government's policies and the Zamindars' persecution. He campaigned against the introduction of the ability concept by the government in place of the responsibility principle, the Godavari, the Krishna land revenue settlement, and the increase of land rent. In opposition to the increase in land rent, Mandeswara Sarma founded the Andhra Land League, which was modelled after Bardoli. He supported the Ryots of Dharmavaram in their lawsuits against the zamindar against rent augmentation because he was a Ryot in one village and the son of a Zamindari manager in another. He founded the Zamin Ryot Association in 1929 and is credited as being the founder of the Zamin Ryot Movement in Andhra. Together with Dandu Narayana Raju, he founded Ryotangavidyalam in Tanuku.

Under T. Prakasam's direction, the Andhra Provincial Congress Committee established a committee to investigate the elimination of zamindari. Mandeswara Sarma, who served as the subcommittee's secretary, draughted a resolution banning zamindari, which went down in peasant resistance history as a significant document. Mandeswara Sarma was detained at Nagpur jail for six months after taking part in the Nagpur Flag Satyagraha. In order to provide Congress Pracharaka Samithi volunteers with training in politics, economics, and satyagraha, he founded "Pracharaka Vidyalayam." He participated in the civil disobedience campaign and spent a year in the Rajahmundry and Cuddalore prisons. He took an active part in the triple boycott, which included boycotting foreign apparel, universities, and government buildings.

He first encountered the tribes of the Vizagapatam Agency when the Zamindari Abolition Enquiry Committee was conducting enquiries there. It was then that he saw firsthand the misery, ignorance, and exploitation of the tribespeople. Later, he started working on tribal advancement. In Madugole, he arranged the first "Girijana Sabha" in 1938. "Gothi" Nowkari was removed from the Vizagapatam agency due to his efforts. In 1941, Mandeswara Sarma founded the "Andhra Sramika Dharma Rajya Sabha," which served as the umbrella organisation for the creation of the "Hill-Tribe welfare Board," a distinct division dedicated to the welfare of tribes. He founded schools for the "Chaduvula Badulu" tribe. He organised training camps, supported adult education for the tribes, and fostered cottage industries. In addition to organising medical camps, he gave away homoeopathic medications to treat hill tribes and end malaria. Despite having all of his belongings seized by the British Government during the civil disobedience movement, he refused to submit to them. He bravely stood and entered the jail. He donated whatever he owned to the Girijans' well-being. Throughout his life, he never accepted any kind of authority or position. Brilliant writer, political theorist, journalist, and social reformer Mandeswara Sarma worked to end the terrible circumstances and sufferings of the tribes.

Writing biographies of notable individuals is beneficial when writing a society's history. Finding the true driving reasons and outcomes of historical events, as well as putting the past in the proper context, can be greatly aided by studying a leader's personality. Writing one's own autobiography is the fashion of the current period, yet every nation's literature has great people's biographies that extol their virtues. When creating a biography, one must consult official government papers rather than relying solely on literary works. Writing a biography requires a combination of personal interest, careful examination of the subject matter and facts, avoiding exaggeration, and taking a novel approach to creating a new document with the assistance of other sources. The present study is about the life and achievements of Mandeswara Sarma who worked in different fields. It is an attempt to bring a full picture of his multi-faceted activities.

EARLY LIFE AND INFLUENCE

In the last quarter of the Nineteenth century Andhradesa was on the threshold of modern Andhra Renaissance. An era of social reform was ushered in. There was also intense literary activity; Veeresalingam founded in 1878 a Telugu journal "Vivekavardhini". It marked the beginning of Telugu literary renaissance which led to social and political consciousness in Andhra. Rebbapragada Mandeswara Sarma was born on 6th November 1898 in Rajahmundry. His father was Venkataramayya, and his mother was Sitamma. He is the only son who survived out of eight children. Ramayya and Sitamma felt that the Lord Saneeswara angered with them and in order to avoid the anger of Lord Saneeswara they named him as Mandeswara. His father left Rajahmundry and constructed a house near Taluk Office at Kovvur. He had one younger sister called Vemuri Ammayamma.

Mandeswara Sarmas father was Estate manager of Dharmavaram, 15 kilometers away from Kovvur. The Zamindar at that time was Kanchumarthi Ramachandra Rao. The zamindar had no children, so he wanted to offer Venkataramayya his estate manager, the whole estate of Dharmavaram. But Venkataramayya refused his offer and suggested the adoption of a child so that Kanchumarthi clan would continue forever. Mandeswara Sarmas father was a rich man having four hundred acres of land and was one of the richest persons in

Rajahmundry. Their house was very big one with two stairs in Isukaveedhi in Rajahmundry. He had two big houses in Rajahmundry and two houses in Kovvur. He possessed mango gardens and agricultural lands in Korumamidi, Kovvur and Dharmavaram villages of West Godavari district.

Venkataramayya was a very pious man and he donated his lands to the temples of Sivalayam and Shankaramatam in Kovvur. He used to perform Mahasivarathri and Nrusimha Jayanthi every year and make Annasantarpana (Free meals) to poor people. Mandeswara Sarma's uncle Rebbapragada Papayya was a close associate of Kandukuri Veeresalingam. Mandeswara Sarma's father donated his lands to religious institutions and the poor people. He used to give donations to the poor couple who were going to marry. The same generosity, humanity, kindness in heart, was inherited by Mandeswara Sarma. From his childhood he paid much interest in religious activities and social reform. Mandeswara Sarma's mother Sitamma was a pious woman known for tenderness in her heart. It was the practice of his mother who made him read the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Vedas. Thus he was very much influenced by his parents.

The study of political leader calls for a study of his adolescence and adulthood, especially traumatic events or personality crisis that they have significantly influenced his subsequent behaviour. Therefore it is relevant to make a brief examination of Mandeswara Sarma's childhood and adolescence in order to explain how they influenced his subsequent behaviour. Rajahmundry is a big town situated on the left bank of the river Godavari which was founded by the Eastern Chalukyas. The town is a centre of both religious and cultural activities. Several poets and great scholars were patronized by Eastern Chalukyas such as Nannaya.

Mandeswara Sarma's family resided in Rajahmundry which stands forefront in the entire Andhra region particularly in social reform and educational facilities. The most powerful effect and enduring result of British rule in India is the intellectual development of the people on an entirely new line, and the consequent changes in their political, social, religious and economic outlook. Due to modern education Indian society was awakened from long isolated social life. The transformation in India in the Nineteenth century was due to the introduction of English education. The Education Dispatch of 1854, described as the Magna Carta of English education, formed a landmark in the history of education in Modern India. It attained a comprehensive plan which supplied the basis for the subsequent development of educational system in this country.

Sir Thomas Munro wished to establish in each Collectorate two principal schools. The first government school outside Madras city was founded at Rajahmundry in 1853. Thus the establishments of educational institutions were taken up by the East India Company in the Madras presidency. The Presidency gave freedom to the Collectors to follow their own policy in establishing schools. The Sub-Collector of Narsapur, George Noble Taylor started 'Rate Schools' in Godavari district. Kandukuri Veeresalingam and Chilakamarthi Lakshmi Narasimham Pantulu got their education in the Schools established by the Government of Madras Presidency. The Godavari district, especially Rajahmundry town got maximum benefit from the irrigation facilities, by the construction of anicut on Godavari at Dowlaiswaram, by Sir. Arthur Cotton and on the subsequent development in agriculture. Due to the establishment of government schools and college, the Rajahmundry became a centre for educational growth in the entire Godavari area.

In the Godavari district, education at the beginning of the Nineteenth century was mainly confined to the Prial school system. Rajahmundry was one of the first benefited by establishment of English Schools. Mr. Bayar, the Collector, of Godavari district established a school at Rajahmundry where English was taught. The educational development got momentum through the Madras Education Act of 1863 and the Local Fund Act of 1871 in Godavari District. The Brahmins were at the apex of this social hierarchy by the virtue of their high position in ritualistic hierarchy and monopoly of traditional learning. Most of the Telugu Brahmin leaders were intellectuals and individualists in politics. They made able leaders but were seldom good followers especially in state politics.

The story of Mandeswara Sarma was the history of resistance, strife, struggle, suffering and sacrifice for the cause of the liberation of his mother land. His primary and secondary education took place in Rajahmundry. He pursued his secondary education in the National school. When he was a student he was influenced by Pals visit to Rajahmundry during Vandemataram Movement. He was a brilliant student during his school days. At an early age he inculcated Nationalistic ideas. But he left the school when he was studying ninth form with the inspiration of Damerla Ramana Rao who was a senior student to him with the feelings of freedom. When he was in school days he started an open air reading room in the museum gardens, Rajahmundry in 1916. He used to collect books, news papers and pamphlets from his kith and kin and placed them in the reading room. As a student of National school, he founded "*Bharat Sevak Sangh*" along with his childhood friend Pusuluri Kodanda Ramayya to inculcate patriotic feelings among the students. It is an organization linked with social service.

Mandeswara Sarma's family moved to Kovvur in 1920 because of the sad demise of his elder brother. His elder brother died when their parents made arrangement to perform his marriage due to some sickness. As

also his elder sister called Sita Mani who died due to sickness in young age. These two incidents affected his parents very much. So they wanted to shift their family to Kovvur where a big house was constructed by his father near Taluk office. Mandeswara Sarma married Lakshmi Narasamma, daughter of Bodapati Rajanna native of Tuni. His father-in-law worked as Diwan of Bobbili Estate, when he got married Lakshmi Narasamma. His father-in-law, Rajanna also worked as Estate Manager and Diwan of the Estates of Darakota and Saluru. He was very sincere and hard working man. His father-in-law performed their marriage with great splendour and pomp. He gave him much gold and five acres of land as “Pasupu Kumkuma” during the marriage ceremony.

Mandeswara Sarma's wife, Lakshmi Narsamma was a very innocent woman. She simply followed the footsteps of her husband. She was very generous and helpful to the poor people. She equally treated the rich and poor. She equally treated her daughters and daughter-in-laws. She wore always Khaddar clothes. She worked as the President of Womens Association in Kovvur for several years. Even though Mandeswara Sarma was rich he led simple, austere, and humble life like a Rushi. He did not acquire any chairs, sofa sets to exhibit his richness, but had only carpets and country-made mats in his house.

The students of Sanskrit School and college in Kovvur were provided with free meals in his house. His house was just like a choultry and many people came and had food at their will, one quintal of paddy rice was being consumed in three days. Mandeswara Sarma had to forgo the benefits of higher education for the sake of service to the society and country. He was an intellectual who could analyze the problems of the day, in their true perspective and suggest ways and means for their solution. He was a brilliant writer and political thinker.

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