
ROLE OF DHARMA BIKSHAM IN TELANGANA ARMED STRUGGLE

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ABSTRACT: *This paper highlights the Bommagani Dharma Biksham and his role in Telangana Armed Struggle, who was a dynamic communist leader, devoted his entire life for the sake of Telangana, he is not only a political activist, but also a great leader. The methodology applied to the research is historical in nature with a strong emphasis on primary as well as secondary and contemporary sources available to the date in the field. The main objective of the paper is to highlights Dharma Biksham and his role in the Communist Movement against feudal aristocracy of Nizam rule in Telangana. He was an active member of Andhra Mahasabha, played a vital role in successfully converting the Andhra Mahasabha into a communist front organization and relentlessly carried out the struggle against feudalism, Jagirdari system as well as the oppressive rule of the Nizam. He is the renowned freedom fighter during Telangana peasantry arm struggle at the time of Nizam regime. He was well known trade unionist and President of All India Toddy Tappers and workers Federation. It developed under the leadership of the Communist Party and Andhra Mahasabha into a powerful armed people's struggle for land and liberation, against feudal exploitation and against the hated Nizam's rule.*

Key Words: *Dharma Biksham, Telangana Armed Struggle, Andhra Mahasaba, Nizam, Communist Movement, Aristocracy etc.*

Introduction: Cathelin Guha observed that nearly seventy seven Agrarian Movements or Revolts were reported in Indian society. Telangana people's armed struggle is one of them. Telangana districts were under the control of Hyderabad Nizam. During this period the State of telangana were subjected to untold sufferings at the hands of the oppressive rulers. But the leaders like Ravi Narayana Reddy, Puchalapally Sundarayya, Bommagani Dharma Biksham were started anti-federal movement against the autocratic Government. The environment under which Bommannagari Dhrama Biksham was born and brought up had a tremendous impact on his revolutionary, intellectual and ideological formulations. He was not only studied Marxism, but also put into practice

his convictions. At crucial times he played a pivotal role particularly on the question of withdrawal of the armed struggle and thus making a crucial ideological dent in the Indian Communist Movement, which continues to provide a source of inspiration to the Communists.

Early life of Dharma Biksham: Dhrama Biksham was born in Suryapet in Nalgonda district of Telangana on 15th February, 1922. Gopamma (mother) and Muthilingam (father) were the parents of Dhrama Biksham (15th February 1922-26th March 2011). They belong to toddy tappers community. He was a good orator in Telugu, Urdu, English and Hindi. Dhrama Biksham worked as journalist during Indian freedom struggle contributed to Meezan, Rayyat, and Golconda newspapers.

Dharma Biksham attracted to the communist ideology during his school days, and he joined Communist Party of India in 1942. As a student leader, he boycotted the silver jubilee celebrations of the Nizam's coronation conducted by school head master. As a student, he runs a student's hostel in Suryapet successfully, which was a training centre for students to inculcate patriotism and also to fight against the social evils. After India independence, the Communist Party of India led armed struggles against a series of local monarchs that were reluctant to give up their power particularly in Telangana, Tripura, and Kerala. Dharma Biksham was an active member in rebellion that took place in Telangana, against the Nizam of Hyderabad. He was imprisoned for more than five years. He was an active member of Andhra Mahasabha; he led several processions on behalf of farmers from Nalgonda district on foot. He runs an Arjun Pustaka Bhandar, a secret library, for promoting and distributing prohibited revolutionary literature. Dharma Biksham was attracted towards Gandhian policy and developed interest in struggle against Zamindari atrocities in Krishna district. On the other side he developed love towards communist policies and the repercussions in Soviet Russia. "*Arjuna Bhandagaram*" has become not only as a centre for books, but also as a centre for political and literary discussions. It was improved as a leftist literature Centre and used to meet frequently by intellectuals like Devulapalli Venkateshwar Rao, T.Subba Rao and Raghavender Rao.

Dharma Biksham and his Role in Telangana Armed Struggle: Telangana Armed Struggle (1946-1951) was very powerful armed people's struggle for land and liberation, against feudal exploitation and against the hated Nizam's rule. The revolt started in 1946 against the oppressive feudal lords and quickly spread to the Warangal and Bidar districts in around 4000 villages. Peasant farmers and labourers revolted against local feudal landlords (Jagirdars and Deshmukhs), who were ruling the villages known as samsthans. These samsthans were ruled mostly by Reddys and Velama, known as doralu. They ruled over the communities in the village and managed the tax collections (revenues) and owned almost all the land in that area. The peoples were started movement against such

exploitation. Nearly one-third of the Telangana area was participated. The Nizam's officials, the hated landlords had to quit the villages, leaving the panch committees to carry on people administration. Not only Vetti (begar), illegal exactions, land evictions, usurious loans, torturing and dishonoring by corrupt officials and village oppressors were put an end to, waste lands and surplus lands of the landlords, to the extent of a million acres along with the necessary cattle and agricultural implements were distributed to the rural poor; fair wages for agricultural labourers were enforced and grain distributed. People used to say that for the first time in their lives, they could have two full meals a day. Regular guerrilla squads and village defense squads were organized; the Nizam police, army and the village oppressors were confined to big camps. The whole Nizam's state and hit society were shaken to their roots. The movement was spreading to more and more areas, to the whole of Telangana and beyond. It was at this juncture that the Indian Government decided to intervene, to send its own army on the plea of curbing Razakar violence on the people and making the Nizam accede to the Indian Union.

Dhrama biksham was also participated in Telangana armed struggle and several social movements. He was frequently participated in the land issues and farmers related problems. He also visited Harijana and Dalitwadas for taught education in the light of oil lamps. He also distributed slate pencils to develop the writing skills. He awakens the people about the political changes and makes them dynamic. He was very diplomatic and discipline student in his school days. Dharma Biksham was trained students as patriots, freedom fighters and protesters of Nizam's rule. He took help from Arya Samaj members for collecting money to establish a student hostel for implementing his ideas. He also arranged several meetings with prominent personalities for donations. Some people donated Rs.116/-. He also visited several villages with his friends for more money with Davindi Prabhakar Reddy, Amangallu Narsimha Reddy, Chirumarthi Sudhakar Reddy in the villages of Birohaln, Maripeda, Chinnagudur, Pindiprolu, Subledu, and Bachodan in Mahabubabad Taluq for fifteen days in bullock cart. They collected Rs.3,000/-. A committee was constituted as Dharma Biksham as an organizer. Gavva Murahari Reddy as Secretary, Gavva Amrutha Reddy, Kodati Venkateshwar Rao, Uppu Venkanna and Nakirikanti Ramalingam were elected as Committee members. Dharma Biksham was the responsibility of Hostel Warden. The hostel was started in the house of Gudipati Nagaratnamma near Alankar theatre. It was decided to collect fees depending on their financial status and one fourth of the hostellers were given free accommodation. The hostel was started with 6 members, and the short span of time its members were increased to 15. It was named "Reddy Hostel" with the inspiration of Hyderabad Reddy Hostel.

The students were habituated social awareness and problems of the society. Dhrama Biksham was a role model of the students and had good affection with students. He also used to arouse patriotism by relations Hitler's role in Second World War and heroic struggle of the people of Soviet Union in establishing Social equality in their nation. In addition he mentally prepared them to how we should protect ourselves if enemies attack us. This way Dhrama Biksham has acquainted the students with political dynamism even in their period of education. He encouraged dropout students to join in the schools. For that he spoke to the parents of the children and convinced them easily. Hence many of Dhrama Biksham's students are in top positions in different sectors. For instance, Damidi Venudhar Reddy who has settled well as an eminent Doctor in America in 1958.

In this way Dhrama Biksham has made them develop the practice of "we should do our daily closes ourselves." He also uses to say that a person should be honored not by his economic status, but by his good deeds. He was very bold, and straightforward. Dhrama Biksham influenced Tudi Gopal Reddy, Tudi Narayan Reddy and I.A.S. Ayyar and Telangana armed revolutionary hero's Pasunuri Venkat Reddy, Mandati Prabhakar Reddy, Mandati Sudhakar Reddy, Vidyasagar Reddy and so many others. He was thus a social reformer, and provided educational opportunities to many people, but his life was simple and living in small hut, he don't have sufficient cloths in his body, for instance, Mallu Srujana Reddy and his friends have given him two shirts and bed sheets. This shows his social status and simple life. Dhrama Biksham organized political training camps and invited experts like Alwar Swamy, Ch.Hanumantha Rao, Dr.Paranjape, Burgula Narsinga Rao etc. This was the first time that camps of this kind are organized in telangana districts. Hostel students have been trained as heroic fighters for freedom for Telangana and Telugu race. The bloody sacrifices of Dhrama Biksham's brother Pasunuri Venkata Reddy have sanctified for Telangana. Suryapet hostel has become a nucleus for Indian Freedom Struggle.

Dhrama Biksham was invited the Mayor of Hyderabad Raja Bahadur Venkat Ram Reddy for the anniversary of the hostel. Youth, students, intellectuals and all kinds of people have participated in the meeting. Mayor in his speech has remarked that 'This Hostel is not only a place of students is trained as role models, and brings pride and honor to the notion. He said about Dhrama Biksham that 'on the one hand he seeks donations and on the other hand he generously donates funds for society with this title, Biksham has become Dhrama Biksham.' It is not his mother or father who named him Dhrama Biksham. It is the people who affectionately accorded him the title of *Dharma Biksham* for the devoted service to the people. Dhrama Biksham has started a mess in Nalgonda and he has continued political programs in the district.

Dharma Biksham has started for *Chilukuru Andhra Maha Sabha* with 100 volunteers. They went in villages by bullock carts and given slogans like Andhra Maha Sabha Jai. They proceeded by giving messages in every village about heroic acts of the red army and Stalin. There are many volunteers were joined in the course of time. This mass marathon has reached Bethavolu near Chilukuru. There prominent farm leader Gopal Rao lead an agitation of farmers. Their mass marathon has added a great enthusiasm to the farmers. In Chilukuru was made to ride and chariot and the procession continued by singing songs and raising slogans. Members belonging to Commando Association have participated in this marathon and inspired the volunteers. In this Maha Sabha, Ravi Narayan Reddy has explained about the need of beginning of socialist institution and autocratic rule of Nizam. Along with Dharma Biksham Devireddy Linga Reddy, Ponugoti Sitarama Rao, Vediti Narsimha Reddy, Vediti Ram Mohan Reddy, Uppanuthala Purushotham Reddy, Damidi Prabhakar Reddy, Mandati Sudhakar Reddy, Mandati Prabhakar Reddy, Kanya Reddy, Goli Veeraiah, Kandi Banda Rangaiah and other have participated in the event. Chilukuru Andhra Maha Sabha has changed the shape thoughts and methods of agitation.

Dharma Biksham and his volunteers of Andhra Maha Sabha and students have visited the villages and gave awareness about wage labour, because the wage labours are high, but they are getting low wages. They proceeded walking 40 kilometers and participated in several canvassing programs successfully. Twelfth Andhra Maha Sabha was held at Khammam in 1945 with 40,000 of people. A soviet stall was arranged by Dharma Biksham in the meeting. Maqdam Moinuddin, Raj Bahdur, Alamkundu Meer, Kaloji Narayana Rao and others were joined under the leadership of Dharma Biksham to lead the movement against atrocities of the businessmen and landlords. The movement started from Suryapet and extended to Balem, Chandupetla, Namavaram, old Suryapet, Kodur, Kommala, Khammampadu, Vallobapuram and Durajpally villages. Fake records in the hands of the village officers were torched. This movement has taken extreme steps when it reached Jangaon, Nalgonda, Huzurnagar and Miryalguda Taluqs.

The people belonging to *Erukula* community in the Nalgonda areas were depended on the forest products. But the local police were demanded to show their identity. There was a rule that they should wear a pipe around their waist containing the identity card. If they do not possess the pipe, cases were booked, money was demanded. Moreover police were demanded to arrange meals with chicken. Dharma Biksham got this information and he visited in Suryapet where Erukula population lived. Dharma Biksham has submitted a memorandum to the Superintendent of Police. The Superintendent of Police immediately called the police and village officers and abolished the

rule of wearing a pipe around the waist of the *Erukalas*. He also ordered and not to demand anything from the *Erukalas*. This measure has brought unexpected joy to the *Erukalas*. Nizam rulers could not tolerate Dharma Biksham. The Nizam government considered that his living is dangerous to their existence. When people were worshipping on one side, the government has declared him as a rebel. Under the leadership of Dharma Biksham, Devulapally Raghavender Rao, Avula Lachiah, and Chakilam Thirumal Rao, were protested against the Nizam rule and British Government. Cases were field on arrested many times. After these incidents, Police camps were permanently present in the Suryapet.

First Communist Party was started in Suryapet of Nalgonda district. The eukula community and others were joined in Dharma Biksham Communist Party and in Andhra Maha Sabha. Students, Mill Workers Unions and Hamali Societies were joined in the party. Schedule caste and schedule tribes were strong in Communist party. They always touched and meet with Dharma Biksham. He took shelter in the house of a Mason Samuel, because Police used to keep an eye on Dharma Biksham. So he used to visit villages in nights only. Students and Hamalis used to have meetings in secret places. They send latest information to Dharma Biksham, because he was gone underground life. Vattasu Muthaiah, a harijan youth worked as his Commander. He was a town Committee Member and well trained in the party. Dharma Biksham went to attend District Committee Meeting at Kadaparthi. He sent organizers from Suryapet Centre to Janagaon Centre. Katkur Ram Chandra Reddy those days took up the responsibilities of Suryapet Office.

In support Rythu Sangham Arutla Laxmi Narsimha Reddy, Bheemreddy Narsimha Reddy, Katkuri Ram Chandra Reddy and Yadagiri Ravula went to make enquiry into the oppression of the landlords in the Nalgonda district areas. All the regional scenes like a battle ground. During this period, the farmers of Ramavaram were attacked and taxes were collected under the leadership of Dharma Biksham. Youth, Hamlies and volunteers have participated in the movement. Amiruddin, Nizamuddin and Mahbub Ali were called Khalsadars in Kasimpet, Thirumalagiri and Gumpula areas and they used to exercise superiority over the people. Similarly Karanam Lords have exercised power at Vallabapuram, Immampeta and Dharmapuram, and Suryapet. Devulapally Raghavender Rao, Chakilam Thirumal Rao, Subba Rao, Bommagani Venkataiah, Katkuri Ramkrishna Reddy, Ramana Reddy, Narayan Reddy and others have carried out struggles with Dharma Biksham. Similar movements were organized with the support of local leaders. As result, tenancy rights were got. Pasunuri Venkat Reddy used to stay with Dharma Biksham and supervise the activities of the workers

Dharma Biksham's own town Suryapet Laxmi kantha Rao was the head of 60-70 villages. Along with the Police authorities he also wears police uniform and ride on horses and to exercise his authority in the villages. He used to cultivate lands with a share. Dharma Biksham continued struggles against landlords in the villages of Ravipadu, Kotapadu, Burkacherla, Chandupatla and Athamalem as centers of their struggles. Dharma Biksham had co-ordinated all activities from the Party District Centre at Suryapet. There was a secret meeting at Kapireddygudem along with Pasnuru Venkat Reddy, Sita Rama Rao, Sanjeeva Reddy, and Ramana Reddy, this information was leaked to Nizam police. Nearly 300 armed police took positions in the bushes. This news spread like wildfire to the surrounding villages through the followers. The police planned to fire Dharma Biksham. But finally he was arrested and was kept in Suryapet Jail for a long time. Dharma Biksham has tolerated all the tortures including hanging upside down and thrashing during the Telangana Freedom struggle.

After release, Dharma Biksham again continues underground life. Durajupally hills and Tekumatla regions and Suryapet District Centre were the centers of political struggles. The first Communist cell was arranged in Suryapet of Nalgonda district in 1943. Arjuna Pusthak Bhandagar became Communist Party Centre. B.B.Gudem teacher and party sympathizer D.Subba Rao, Devulapally Raghavender Rao and Dharma Biksham have laid foundation for the party. In the words of Dharma Biksham Soviet Union's heroic struggles were their victories. The people of Nalgonda have constructed a first cell in Nalgonda inspired by the struggles against imperialism in India.

After independence he became a veteran leader of the Communist Party of India, was a member of the 10th Lok Sabha, and 11th Lok Sabha of India. He was also elected to Assembly thrice. He represented the Nalgonda constituency of Andhra Pradesh both in the Parliament of India and Legislative Assembly of Andhra Pradesh from Communist Party of India (CPI). He also represented Hyderabad State Assembly from Suryapet constituency. His victories in the elections are historical. In 1952, first general elections to Hyderabad State Assembly, he got the highest majority. In 1957, he elected to from Nakrekal constituency and in 1962, elected from Nalgonda to Andhra Pradesh Assembly. Dharma Bhiksham achieved a rare feat of hat trick victories from three different constituencies consecutively. Also, he is one of the very few, who got elected to two state assemblies, i.e., Hyderabad State (1952), Andhra Pradesh (1957 & 1962). He was elected as a Member of Parliament of India (MP) twice, in 1991 and 1996, to represent Nalgonda parliamentary constituency in the 10th and 11th Lok Sabha. In 1991, he was the only M.P. representing CPI from South India. In 1996 he won the election by defeating 480 contestants with a margin well above

76,000 votes. Dharma Bhiksham was a trade unionist. During the construction of Nagarjuna Sagar project, he organised workers and labour hailing from different areas involved and organised historical strike with one lakh workers for their better livelihood. He also organised trade unions for several unorganised workers such as hotel workers etc.; He is well known for upliftment of toddy tappers community. Thus Dharma Biksham played a multidimensional role in several developmental activities for Telanagana society.

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