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TELUGU LITERATURE, HISTORY & CULTURE-A PERSPECTIVE

తెలుగు సాహిత్యం : చరిత్ర & సంస్కృతి - సమాలోచన

## ◆◆ Certificate ◆◆

This is to certify that Sri/Mrs/Ms./Dr./Prof. Nasreen Shahedi, Sec in History of

KVR Govt College for Women(A) Kurnool. has participated as Keynote Speaker /

Chairperson / Resource Person / Paper Presenter and has Presented a paper entitled "The Role of the Telugu

Press in Freedom Movement" in the Two Day International Seminar on "Telugu Literature, History &

Culture - A Perspective" held at KVR Govt. College for Women (A) Kurnool on 26th & 27th February 2020.

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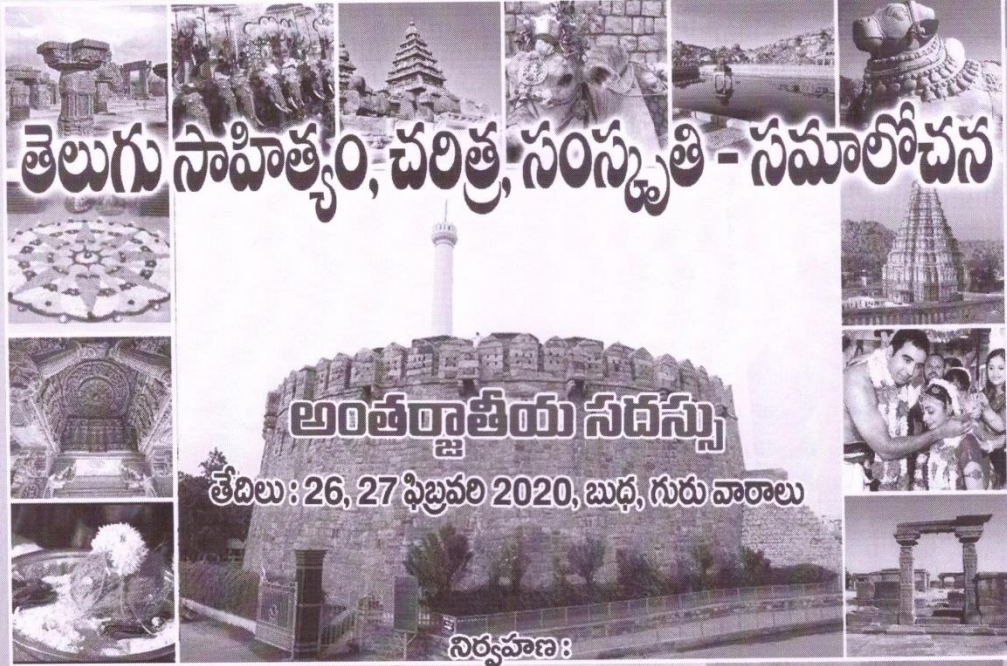


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### ENGLISH ARTICLES

225. Dalit Literature and Dalit Literary Movements	- Jammanna Akepogu	942
226. Historical Element Role in Telugu Literary	- B. Varalakshmi	951
227. Significance and Value of Traditional Accounts in the late Vijayanagara Telugu Literature	- Dr. D. Maddilety	963
228. Critical Appraisal of Movement Literature in Telugu	- Dr. M. Indira Santhi	966
229. Mirja Ghalib- A Dominant Lion of Urdu Poetry	- M. Vijaya Bharathi	975
230. History of Language and Culture in Kanyasulkam	- Dr. Malreddy Naganna	982
231. Strategies of Non-Formal Education and Progressive Literacy for Women in Andhra – An Overview	- Dr. Penukonda Jyothi	988
232. Historical Sketch of Women Struggle for Education in India : An Overview	- Dr. Repalli Ramudu	995
233. Phases of History in Telugu literature	- Haseena Bi	1003
234. A Feminist Movements in Telugu Novels - A review on Volga's Swechcha.	- Kandula Savithri	1011
235. Historical Perspective of different Parameters and Paradigms of Indian Women	- M. Jayalakshmi	1019
236. The Role of the Telugu Press in the Freedom	- Nasreen Shahedi	1027
237. Portrayal of Dalit experience in literary works	- S.J. Ravi Prakash & - Dr. M. Sambaiah	1035
238. Feminism in Globalization Scenario	- S. Sony - P. Subbarajamma & - S. Suneetha Rose	1040
239. Emergence of Dalit Movement in Telugu Literature	- Dr. M. Farida Begum	1045
240. Impact of Russian Revolution on Andhra	- Smt Angam Jayalakshmi	1047
241. Sanskrit and Dravidian languages Historical	- Dr. N. Uma Maheswari	1055

## The Role of the Telugu Press in the Freedom Movement

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### Introduction :

Napoleon the great, who shook the whole of Europe by his military might and lightning conquests, is reported to have remarked that "four hostile newspapers were more to be feared than a thousand bayonets." Writing about the role of newspapers in the American Revolution, David Ramsay made the significant observation that "the pen and press had a merit equal to that of the sword" in establishing American Independence. From the 18th century onwards the newspapers exerted a vital influence on the course of events in Europe, one such momentous event being the French Revolution Lord Macaulay, described the press as the "Fourth Estate of the Realm". Understood in its spirit rather than in its letter the familiar saying, 'the pen is mightier than the sword, proves profoundly meaningful indeed.

The present undertaking is concerned with studying in some detail the part played by the Telugu periodicals and newspapers in India's nation-wide and protracted struggle for freedom from British colonial rule, which forms a momentous phase of her recent history. The two decades from 1885, the year of the founding of the Indian National Congress, witnessed the gradual consolidation of the forces of nationalism in India. The growth of the press in India as a force in the political, social and economic life during this period was in line with the traditions of the British press in England. Although political issues figured in the Telugu periodicals of

the day, they were not the focus of attention. The credit of being the first Telugu political news weekly goes to Andhra Prakasika, which was started in 1885 with A. Parthasarathy Naidu of Madras as its editor. Naidu was a staunch Congressman. Like Lokamanya Tilak, whom he followed, he was a fearless critic of the government. The paper boldly criticised the policies of the government, pointed out the lapses in administration, exposed corruption in the police and other departments and brought to light the atrocities of the soldiers. It waged many legal battles for justice and fair play. It had a good circulation and served the people for 45 years unbroken".

Gautami, the first Telugu daily paper of Rajahmundry started in 1908 by Sripada Krishnamurthy Sastri, criticised the British policies. Referring to an advertisement which wanted a Mussalman clerk for an acting post in the Chief Office of the Inspector General of Police, Madras, it comments that such an advertisement proceeding from such a high official of the government whose duty was to suppress all racial differences, would not only create prejudices between one race and another but also induce people to entertain doubts regarding the just the close of the 19th century saw a spurt of Telugu newspapers from various districts, some advocating social reforms, while others vehemently pleading for popularising simple Telugu, as a vehicle for conveying the new ideas and thoughts surging in the minds of men.

Thus Journalism in Telugu which had a humble beginning in 1885 had developed into a powerful instrument during the National Movement in India and played a vital role in India's Freedom Movement. As narrated about some of the Telugu Journals were started with the specific intention of propagating the spirit of nationalism among its readers. While some of the editors and proprietors used their journal for the propagation of nationalist spirit, some of the leaders in the nationalist movement became the founders and editors of new journals to propagate nationalist message.

The first session of the Indian National Congress was held at Bombay from December 1885. The first session of the Indian National Congress was closely related to the development of the Indian press because the founders and editors of some of the leading newspapers of the country were also prominent among the founders of the national political organisation.

The Telugu press became a powerful weapon in the hands of the intelligentsia and was the most effective exponent of popular grievances during this period. The writings in the nationalist Telugu papers were responsible for popularising the VandeMataram movement in the Presidency. Swaraj, Krishna Patrika, Andhra Chandrika, Bala Bharati, Andhra Kesari, Desamata, Desabhimani and such prominent Telugu papers played an important role in preparing the minds of the people in favour of the national movement.

The press, especially Telugu press, ably supplemented nationalist literature in contributing to the growth of political consciousness among the people. Most of the newspapers

were crusaders against the foreign domination of the country. It was their mission to educate the people politically. They carried the doctrines of the great political thinkers of the West to the people. Such progressive ideas as liberty, democracy, self-government and nationalism were discussed and examined in their columns. They also criticised the misdeeds of the Government and exposed its wrong policies. They made the people conscious of their right to freedom, and fearlessly advocated popular causes.

#### **Telugu Press and VandeMataram Movement :**

The partition of Bengal was a turning point in the history of Bengal and it cause reverberations throughout India. An agitation of unprecedented magnitude spread throughout Bengal demanding the reunification of Bengal provinces. The agitators used the weapons of boycott of foreign goods and promotion of and Swadeshi goods. The boycott of everything foreign naturally required the revival of indigenous industries to meet the demands of the people and it gave the impetus to the manufacture of Swadeshi goods. During the time of VandeMataram movement, Krishna Patrika, Swaraj, Andhra Kesari, Akasvani Desabhimani and Swarnalekha supported the swadeshi movement with great zeal and strongly advocated the boycott of foreign goods. Those papers considered swadeshi spirit as the panacea for all the existing evils in the country. They appealed to people to ignore the defects in the native goods and use them out of love for the country. People were asked to consider foreign goods as poisonous.

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Suryodaya Prakasika in an article to encourage the Swadeshi Movement on the regeneration of country manufacturers said that in former times many people in India earned their livelihood by their manufactures. The introduction of European goods into India dealt a death blow to the indigenous industries.

Krishna Patrika stressed the need to send deserving students to foreign lands by contributing money so that they could learn better techniques of manufacture .S.R. Mallady VenkataSubbarao, S.Ramarao, G. Janaki ramayya, Alapathi Gopala Rao and D.S. Rao were sent to Japan to learn the technique of the manufacture of home made goods. The same journal wrote that the English destroyed native arts and taught servitude. It further wrote "knowledge has dawned on the country and the people are awakened and Swadeshi movement has flourished. It is certain that foreign trade will decline". The Telugu papers suggested not only the boycott of foreign cloth but also of foreign titles, schools, courts, legislative councils and even the Anglo-Indian newspapers. When the Madras Provincial Congress of 1908, which was dominated by the moderates, did not pass the boycott resolution, the

nationalist Telugu papers criticised the congress for its cowardice and supported boycott. Telugu newspapers underwent a change after Pal's visit. They wrote more boldly and freely on the meaning and significance of Vandemataram, on Swaraj and Swadeshi, boycott and national education.

#### **Krishna Patrika wrote :**

"The respect and the hospitality with which the people entertained him and the eagerness with which they listened to his speeches are not signs of a temporary rise of feeling but convey a special meaning underlying them all. They are the indications of a desire for independence and a longing for changes, lurking in the hearts of the people. The new spirit teaches a lesson to the westerners, who have a mania for extension of dominions and who wield terrible swords. The lesson will be taught not by arms, not by war, but by a bloodless sacrifice. " The provincial conference which met at Kurnool under the presidentship of P.R. SundaraAiyar, a leading advocate of Madras, had the same unlively character about it. Krishna Patrika referred to the president's address and said that his statement that the East India Company was from the beginning working hard for the welfare of the country was contrary to facts.

#### **Home Rule Movement :**

The Lucknow session of the Congress was important since the two groups within the Congress had now been united again. world war I brokeout in 1914. In the Lucknow pact the Congress entered into an agreement with the Muslim League. Tilak, who had been released, was now a changed man. He felt that the Home Rule would be a first step towards the attain-

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gained an impetus in the country. The Khilafat problem and the Hunter Committee's report had created new conditions in India. The people had in the British Parliament had been shattered after their 'shameless defence of the most inhuman acts of General Dyer'. Therefore, the papers said, the people now meant to help themselves by resorting to the policy of non-cooperation.

Andhra Patrika from Madras and Krishna Patrika from Machilipatnam, wrote strongly in favour of Gandhi's programme in its entirety, including the boycott of councils. They paid a high tribute to him and his methods and exhorted the people to follow his footsteps. They warmly appreciated 'the righteous principle of non-violence underlying it, and the spiritual power which formed the very soul of it, 'and commended it for the acceptance of the public.

Venkatesapatrika of Chittoor contrasted the Martial Law regime in Egypt and in India, and observed that "though there were many deaths in Egypt there were no massacres, instances of crawling, making people drink urine, and the outraging of women as in Jallianwalla Bagh".

Hitakarini was opposed to its application in regard to schools and taxes. Striking a different note Darbar of Guntur, Godavari Patrika of Rajahmundry and Nellore Patrika of Nellore disapproved the non-cooperation movement, observing that the boycott of legislative councils was fraught with very grave danger to the country's cause.

Nellore Patrika advised the Mussalmans of India to exercise self control and carry on constitutional agitation with redoubled vigour till a reversal or modification of the peace terms was

obtained. Panchanana of Sompeta and the Hitavadi of Masulipatnam also declared themselves against non-cooperation.

The Telugu press usually followed the trend of political thought in India, as shaped by the Indian National Congress, through the press, the platform, memorials and deputations, had failed to exercise the desired influence on the rulers. Andhra Patrika, Krishna Patrika, Hitakarini and Desabhimani took the lead and almost all the other Telugu papers followed in their wake, in impressing these ideals upon the attention of the public. A section of the Telugu press carried on a relentless campaign for Purna Swaraj or complete independence for the country right from 1925.

The nationalist Telugu papers vigorously and eloquently campaigned for the boycott of the Commission. Papers like Congress, Satyagrahi, Andhra Patrika and Krishna Patrika were in the forefront of this campaign. Satyagrahi under the heading "Duty" wrote: "The Simon

Commission should have the same fate as the Milner Commission of Egypt. With unity we must practise boycott. To enforce complete boycott is the duty of the Congress". Andhra Patrika consistently and effectively appealed to the people to boycott the Commission.

### **Salt Satyagraha and Civil Disobedience Movement :**

The Lahore Congress session (1930) gave the call for "Purana Swaraj" and launched the civil Disobedience movement. It was also decided to celebrate 26th January, 1930 as the day of First Indian Independence. Gandhi started the Dandi march to break the Salt laws. There was an upsurge of enthusiasm every-

where. The Andhra Congress Committee appointed Konda Venkatappaiah as the dictator of the whole of Andhra, while each district had its own dictator assisted by a war council.

The nationalist Telugu press generally described the Salt Satyagraha as 'peaceful war' and the volunteers who participated in it are "peaceful soldiers", fighting a national war against the foreign government. These papers made an impact on the people during the Salt Satyagraha too, as before. Till the press ordinances were issued in 1930, the nationalist papers carried on much publicity for the movement and appealed to people to participate in it.

Wide publicity was given in the Telugu press to the entire programme of Salt satyagraha, the centres of civil disobedience and to the overwhelming number of volunteers pouring in from different places to participate in it. Zamindari Ryot published regular reports of the Mahatma's march to Dandi. Desabhandhu commented that Gandhi's march was observed from Heaven by Maharshis like Vyasa, poets like Kalidasa, emperors like Asoka, heroes like Sivaji and holy women like Savitri.

Grihalakshmi, a women's journal, wrote that women should take as much interest in national matters as men do. It also pointed out that the revival of nationalism in India should start at home.

The year 1934 was an exceptionally calm year. The suspension of the civil disobedience movement by Gandhi, his withdrawal from the leadership of the National Congress, last but not least, the press legislation altogether took the wind out of the sails of militant journalism

and created a spirit of docility. The docility brought in its wake, a strong streak of pessimism. Among the revived political

journals, Srisadhana Patrika of Anantapur deserves special mention. Years of tribulation seemed to have considerably toned down its vehemance. It is noteworthy that almost all the newly started Telugu journals, with the exception of Satyavani of Anakapalli were non-political and were devoted to the promotion of light literature marked by wit and humour and intended to act as a welcome relief to the public.

### Quit India Movement :

By July 1942 Indian National Congress was convinced that the British government was not serious about coming to an honourable settlement about Indian problems and that it could not co-operate with the British in their war efforts. It however persuaded Gandhi to resume the leadership of the Congress and lead the people in the struggle for freedom. Even before the launching of the movement, many papers like Andhra Patrika had made it clear that there was no leader like Gandhi and that non-violence, advocated by him was the means to achieve independence.

Gandhi had already started writing in the Harijan suggesting "orderly and timely British withdrawal from India". This was in fact the fore-runner of the famous Quit-India resolution which was passed at Bombay by the All India Congress Committee on 8th August 1942.

Briefly stated, the items of the programme were defying prohibitory orders, picking salt, continuing openly to be members of unlawful associations, lawyers giving up practice, students to leave colleges, jurors and assessors not

to respond to summons, arranging labour strikes, picketing foreign concerns in trade and industry, pulling chains, to stop trains, travelling without tickets, cutting down toddy yielding trees, cutting telegraph and telephone wires, non-payment taxes excluding municipal taxes and picketing of troops.

Papers like Andhra Patrika, Krishna Patrika, Navasakti and Andhra Prabha (1937), spread nationalistic ideas to build up public opinion, in favour of the Quit India movement. During the time of the Second World War Prajamitra (Vijayawada), Swatantra (Madras) and Janawani strengthened the peasants' to ant feudal struggle. Sadhana and Akasavani( secret cyclostyled) from Anantapur propagated antiimperialist views. Prajasakti, Swatantra Bharat, Rahasyam, and Renadu, stimulated the people to make great efforts to make the British quit and thus free the motherland.

This period also saw the growth of the popular "paise" newspapers like Janmabhoomi, Navasakti, and Prajasakti, which were started to bring about awakening among the masses in general and the labour class in particular. Songs based on the socialist ideology, that people should awake and that they should all be equal sharers in the country's wealth were published.

Andhra Patrika published the inspiring speech delivered by Gandhi at A.I.C.C. session held in Bombay. The paper advocated that the 'Quit India' resolution to be accepted. Fur-

ther it reminded the people to follow strictly the policy of non-violence announced by Gandhiji during the Quit India Movement.

As soon as Gandhi, Azad and other members of the working committee were arrested. The Telugu papers, made a faithful report of this occurrence. In spite of the notice of the British government warning the editors and publishers of the papers reporting news of the agitation and publishing articles in favour of it, the Andhra Patrika continued to do so and criticised the government for issuing warnings. The paper reported from time to time the progress of the movement in the Andhra region and the meetings of protest held at various places.

Thus, the Telugu press facing serious hurdles from the government and its officials, continued its mission of liberating the country from the clutches of British rule. Though the tempo of the Quit India Movement was slackened by 1943 it was not totally abandoned till Gandhi practically called off the movement after his release from jail in May 1944. The Telugu press sustained the patriotic spirit of the people. With the Quit India Movement, it may be said that Indian freedom movement practically came to end. It is true that it took three more years to get an independence, but the British by this time realised that it was impossible for them to rule India any further. Hence, it started negotiation with Indian National Congress and paved the way for the Indian independence.

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