

The Role of Hosadurga Taluk in The Forest Satyagraha

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Abstract: This article examines the significant role played by Hosadurga Taluk in India's struggle for independence, focusing on its participation in the Forest Satyagraha. Mahatma Gandhi's principles of non-violent resistance, known as Satyagraha, formed the foundation of this struggle. Hosadurga Taluk, situated in the Chitradurga district, emerged as an unlikely but vital center for the freedom movement. The article highlights the dedicated participation of Hosadurga's residents, primarily farmers and traders, who faced imprisonment and hardships in their pursuit of freedom. It underscores the impact of the Forest Satyagraha, which involved refusing to pay revenue, promoting Swadeshi goods, and tree felling as forms of protest. The Hosadurga Taluk Congress Committee played a crucial role in coordinating these efforts, despite legislative attempts to suppress their activities. In essence, this article illuminates the remarkable contributions of Hosadurga Taluk to India's struggle for independence, showcasing how this rural region became a symbol of unwavering dedication to the cause of freedom against British colonial rule.

Keywords: Congress Committee, struggle for independence, Forest Satyagraha, Swadeshi goods, freedom against, etc

INTRODUCTION

During India's struggle for independence, Mahatma Gandhi introduced the concept of Satyagraha, a form of non-violent resistance, which played a pivotal role in various movements for freedom such as the non-cooperation movement, salt satyagraha, picketing, boycotts, and hartals. One remarkable facet of this struggle was the Forest Satyagraha, which occurred at different times and in different regions of the country. This article sheds light on the Forest Satyagraha that unfolded in Hosadurga taluk.

Perception of Satyagraha:

Satyagraha, pioneered by Mohandas Gandhi, is a principle of non-violent agitation against injustice. This concept later influenced figures like Martin Luther King Jr. and James Satwell during the United States Civil Rights Movement and resonated with numerous social justice movements worldwide. Those who practice Satyagraha are known as

Satyagrahis. Gandhi envisioned Satyagraha not only as a tactic for intense political struggles but also as a universal solution to combat injustice and harm. He established the Sabarmati Ashram to teach Satyagraha based on the following principles:

1. Ahimsa (Non-violence)
2. Truth
3. Bhakti (Devotion)
4. Respect

He expounded on how Satyagraha should be applied in the freedom struggle and embraced by every Indian citizen.

Forest Satyagraha Across India:

Starting from 1917, Satyagraha movements took root in various parts of the country under Gandhiji's leadership. Notable instances include:

- The Champaran Satyagraha in Bihar in 1917.
- The Forest Satyagraha in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, in 1921.
- Forest Satyagraha in Betul district, Madhya Pradesh, in 1930.
- The Forest Satyagraha in Sangli and Bilashi villages, Maharashtra, in 1930.
- The Forest Satyagraha in Gattasilli, Chhattisgarh, in 1930.

These diverse forms of Forest Satyagraha took place in various Indian states, all part of the broader effort led by Gandhiji to drive the British out of India through non-violent resistance and Satyagraha movements. Historical accounts highlight the widespread participation of people from all corners of the country in India's struggle for freedom. The role of Hosadurga taluk in the Chitradurga district holds particular significance in this struggle. When the British colonized India, the fight for freedom resonated across the nation, including the Mysore State. Chitradurga, despite being part of the Mysore State, did not initially experience the same level of resistance against British rule as other regions. This was partly due to its geographical distance from Mysore and Bangalore, which were the major political centers in Karnataka at the time.

Additionally, Mahatma Gandhi initially discouraged organized resistance in princely states. However, around 1920, Chitradurga also became politically engaged with British-controlled Karnataka. Movements advocating for freedom sprouted throughout the district, persisting until India gained independence in 1947. During these years, individuals from Hosadurga taluk selflessly set aside personal ambitions and actively participated in the freedom movement. Their dedication and fearlessness in the face of British oppression were remarkable. Many were imprisoned for their unwavering commitment to the cause of India's freedom. Mahatma Gandhi served as a profound source of inspiration for the majority of farmers and traders who primarily relied on agriculture for their livelihoods. The civil disobedience movement, initiated in the 1930s, gained tremendous momentum nationwide and had a particularly profound impact on the residents of Hosadurga taluk. Drawing inspiration from this movement, they continued to strengthen their resolve in the fight for freedom.

Hosadurga's Historical Background:

The term "Durga" signifies a place or area that is often inaccessible and challenging to reach. In ancient times, chieftains and rulers felt the necessity to construct their palaces and strongholds in secure locations. This strategic placement was primarily driven by the looming threat of enemy attacks, necessitating the construction of fortified structures and bolstering military defenses. Kautilya, the renowned minister of the Mauryan Empire, included forts as one of the seven vital components of the empire in his Arthashastra. Among these forts, there were Giridurga, located on hilltops, Jaladurga, situated near water bodies, and Vanadurga, concealed within forests. Hosadurga Taluk, in its historical context, is a place that resonates with politics, valor, adventure, and the spirit of freedom. Its history is rich with stories of individuals who fiercely resisted oppression, from the rule of Sirumanrupala, who governed Budihal Sime, to the British colonial regime. The region of Hosadurga witnessed an eruption of the power of struggle for freedom.

The British arrived in India under the guise of trade but soon became acutely aware of the nation's wealth and strategic importance. Recognizing the historical significance of the land they had taken over, they subjected Indians to oppression and persecution.

Faced with the relentless and impatient Indians revolting against their rule, they resolved to resist this resistance and aimed to drive the British out. Under the inspirational leadership of figures like Gandhiji, the flames of the freedom movement blazed across the entire nation. People boldly demonstrated non-cooperation and obstructed British rule, with the movement gaining momentum even in Hosadurga taluk. Many agitators in this region willingly sacrificed their personal lives, leaving behind their homes, families, and jobs to fight for the country's independence. Some lost their livelihoods, while others made the ultimate sacrifice, giving their lives for the cause. The movement against British rule in this taluk took various forms, from the Swadeshi movement in 1934 to the civil disobedience movement in 1939. Activities ranged from burning Sendivana, blocking trains, closing schools, looting post offices, to hoisting the Swadeshi flag.

During the Forest Satyagraha of 1939, the Hosadurga region experienced widespread support for the movement against British rule. Thousands of people rallied behind this struggle, ultimately contributing to the nation's independence. Many individuals paid the ultimate price for freedom, with some being shot by the British, and hundreds more imprisoned. Even today, the Hosadurga area cherishes the memory of these patriots who participated in the struggle and endured hardships, and their spirit serves as a reminder of every Indian's duty and loyalty to the nation.

Hosadurga Taluk Congress Committee:

The Hosadurga Congress Committee was officially established on May 1, 1937, marking a significant moment in the history of the region's political activism. However, the journey of the committee was not without its challenges. In 1937, the colonial government attempted to thwart the committee's activities through various legislative acts aimed at curbing their meetings and events. On May 16, 1937, a pivotal event occurred when N.S. Hardikar and other prominent leaders visited Doddasiddavanahalli in the Chitradurga district. During this visit, they addressed a gathering of farmers, further igniting their spirit and determination to fight for their rights and independence. In 1939, a series of farmers' conferences were organized across Hosadurga taluk. In the first week of April that year, a notable farmers' conference took place under the leadership of S.

Nijalingappa. These conferences were inaugurated by K.C. Reddy in 1939 and saw the participation of more than 2,000 people in Hosadurga. During these gatherings, K.C. Reddy urged the farmers to participate in various programs, including the boycott of foreign goods, refusal to pay taxes, and engagement in the Forest Satyagraha, which involved the cutting down of trees and attacks on post offices, among other actions.

The government responded by opposing these farmers' conferences and imposed Section 144 to restrict public gatherings. Despite the obstacles, a courageous group of individuals led by S. Nijalingappa, N.S. Chandra, Bellary siddamma, Vasudeva Rao, H.R.E. Jari Bhupalappa, Changayya Naidu Ballalasangam, Chikkayagatti Parameshwaraiah, Alampalli Nanjunda Shetty, Kuberappa, A.T. Bheemanna, H.C. Kalachar, Kalasetappa Hosadurga, Mudalagiriappa Veerachar Marabagatta, Hanji Siddappa, Bommarajappa, D.B. Thimmanna, A.G. Srinivasaiah, K.N. Neelashakar Shetty Belagur, D.C. Krishnappa, Neergund, K. Venkataramaiah, B.N. Narasimha Reddy, D. Ramayya, H. Kittappa Bagur, Ningappa, Anivala, Pandiperamayya, Ramayya, Srirampur, Basappa, Hebballi, Mahadevaiah, Gangadharshetty Hosadurga, Puttaiah, Naganahalli, and others took a bold step. They journeyed to Turuvanur and initiated the Forest Satyagraha, disregarding the oppressive legislative acts. Nijalingappa, in particular, was sentenced to one-and-a-half years in prison for his role in tree felling during this protest. In Hosadurga taluka, the people engaged in various acts of resistance, including the unauthorized collection of grass and wood from non-reserved government forests, as well as other activities such as grazing cattle. These acts of defiance and resilience played a crucial role in the region's pursuit of independence and their commitment to social and political change.

Impact of Forest Satyagraha:

Inspired by the leadership of Gandhiji and other freedom fighters, the momentum of the freedom struggle spread across the country, with individuals boldly expressing their non-cooperation and resistance against British rule. This fervor also extended to Hosadurga taluk, where many of the agitators exhibited remarkable dedication to the cause. These freedom fighters often sacrificed their homes, families, and employment in their commitment to the country's independence. Some

faced job loss, while others made the ultimate sacrifice by laying down their lives. The movement against the British in this taluk took on various forms, including active participation in the Swadeshi movement that began in 1934. The civil disobedience movement of 1939 further solidified the region's resolve to resist British rule. Activities ranged from burning Sendivan, blocking railroads, shutting down schools, looting post offices, to engaging in mass actions like looting sandi shops and hoisting the Swadeshi flag. The house of Alampalli Siddappa Shettar in Hosadurga served as a central hub for these agitators, who were continually encouraged by the people. The fervor that enveloped Hosadurga taluk mirrored events taking place across the state in 1934. During 1934-1939, Naganahalli Govinda was sentenced to three years of rigorous imprisonment and fined Rs 500. The house of Alampalli Siddappa Shettar became a focal point for the freedom struggle, drawing in individuals like Chowdappa Begur, Narasimha Reddy, Paramaiah Naganahalli, Mudalagiriappa, Veerachar of Marabatta, Venkata Rao Belagur, Shivanna Naganahalli, Hanumanthappa Hayat Khan, and others. The guidance of elders from other taluks within the district played a crucial role.

The salient features of the Forest Satyagraha included:

1. Cutting of toddy trees and sandal trees.
2. Refusal to pay revenue to the British Government.
3. Embracing the use of Swadeshi goods.
4. Engaging in tree felling as a form of protest.
5. Advocating for the prohibition of alcohol.
6. Banning the consumption of ganja.
7. Disallowing the unloading of firewood.

In their quest for freedom, these freedom fighters endured the hardships inflicted by British batons, boots, and whips. They faced the loss of homes, livelihoods, legal professions, and positions of responsibility. Importantly, the freedom movement transcended distinctions of caste, gender, religion, and region, uniting people under a common cause. National leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dadabhai Naoroji, Rabindranath Tagore, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, and many others provided guidance and inspiration to the movement. The Hosadurga Taluk Congress Committee was established on November 3, 1937, with Narasimha Shetty as the president and T.H. Dasappa and D.S.

Thimmappa as secretaries. This committee, along with Yankanna treasurer Nagesh Shetty and 12 other members, played a significant role in coordinating the freedom movement's activities. On November 18, 1937, H.K. Veerannagowda addressed a public meeting in Hosadurga town at the committee's invitation. Despite the imposition of Section 144 by the local amaldar magistrate to prevent the gathering, Veerannagowda spoke passionately about the importance of Congress membership and the idea that the government is the servant of the people. He emphasized the need for farmers to understand this principle and actively participate in the struggle for freedom.

Personal Introductions:

1. D.C. Krishnappa Marabagatta:

D.C. Krishnappa Marabagatta, during his schooling at Bagur Middle School in 1937-38, was deeply influenced by his teacher, Ramachandra Rao, who shared stories of patriots and the national movement, instilling in him a sense of devotion to the cause of freedom. His political mentor was Kotrenanjappa of Dogganala, and he was inspired by speeches from leaders like Dr. Hardekar and K.T. Bashyam. In 1939, he left school to participate in the Forest Satyagraha in Rangapura, and although he was arrested during the satyagraha while going to Noolenurs, he was released due to his young age. D.C. Krishnappa was among prominent satyagrahis of the time and actively participated in various activities, including forest satyagraha, tree cutting, and cattle grazing in Amritmahal Kaval, as well as facing water scarcity in places like Kadigere and Devapura.

2. Narasimha Reddy Bagur:

Narasimha Reddy Bagur, while studying in middle school in 1936-1937, was inspired by the patriotic ideas shared by Kotrenanjappa of Dogganal in his village. This inspiration led him to leave school and join Kotrenanjappa in his campaign for serving the country. In 1938-1939, Narasimha Reddy actively participated in a forest satyagraha camp at Rangapura in Holalkere taluk. He stayed in the camp alongside individuals like K. Venkataramaiah, Karadigowdappa, and Kakasi Govindappa from his village. During this time, they cut down echala trees and later, around 300 trees in Vaderahalli near Ramagiri. The Holalkere police arrested 20 people, including Narasimha Reddy, who was sentenced to three years in jail and fined Rs 2500. He was held in

various jails like Bangalore, Shivamogga, and Thirthahalli, ultimately being released on September 8, 1940.

CONCLUSION

These individuals, along with many others in rural India, played a crucial role in the fight for India's freedom, showcasing the indomitable spirit that arose from villages across the nation. It is worth noting that the entire country of India, with its predominantly rural character, witnessed the emergence and development of such fighting spirits from numerous villages. Similarly, Hosadurga taluk in Chitradurga district contributed significantly to the national pride by initiating a remarkable struggle against British colonial rule, leaving behind an inspiring history of their relentless pursuit of freedom.

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