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OOYYLALAWADA NARASIMHA REDDY: THE REBELLION AGAINST THE BRITISH SUPREMACY IN RAYALASEEMA

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Narasimha Reddy was the grandson (daughter's son) of Chenchumalla Jayaram Reddy, the Zamindar of Nossam. He was later adopted by his grandfather Jayaram Reddy, since he had no male child and became the successor for the Nossam Samsthan. Pedda Malla Reddy, father of Narasimha Reddy was the jagirdar of Ooyalawada. They were getting revenue of 30,000 rupees annually. The English took away this jaghir and fixed a raverji of 70 rupees per month.¹ Narasimha Reddy ruled over 46 villages in Caddapah, Kurnool, Ananatapur and Bellary mandals. He had constructed fort in Roopanagudi, Ooyalawada, Uppalur, Gulladurthi, Giddalur etc., the ruins of these forts can be seen even now.

Ooyalawada Narasimha Reddy was famous for his bravery. Jayarami reddy group and Budda Vengal reddy of the Krishna Reddy group were equally famous for philanthropy. Hence forth, the groups were renamed as Ooyalawada Narasimha Reddy group and Budda Vengal Reddy group.²

Narasimha Reddy group were worshippers of lord Vishnu. Krishna Reddy group were worshippers of lord Shiva. Narasimha Reddy was not only a warrior but also a lover of fine arts. In his kingdom there was a poet names "Obalacharyulu". The poetic works of this man are not widely known but the loose poems written by him are found in the Chatu Padya Mani Manjari of Veturi Prabhakara Shastri. It is said that a poet named Krishtipati Venkata Subbaiah went to the place of Narasimha Reddy. When Narasimha Reddy honored him and prayed him to recite his poetry he recited a poem in Telugu on snuff. Immediately Obalachayulu recited a poem in Sanskrit which exhibited more talent than the former.

Narasimha Reddy was also known for his service to his fellowmen. He personally heard the problems and solved them. He made a useful footpath from Giddalur to Donakonda, which was widely used by the people for their day to day business. Narasimha Reddy being the grandson in the male line to the Ooyalawada Zamindar and also grandson on his mother's side to the Nossam Zamindar, finding his circumstances so reduced and having a large family to support as marginally shown became discontented.³

Narasimha Reddy-The Leader

The Bhatta-Vriti inamdars, the Kattubadi inamdars, and the other inamdars had truned against British policy as above, and hence they had decided to agitate. They searched for an able leader and they found in the young Ooyalawada Narasimha Reddy all the leadership qualities required. Narasimha Reddy admitted before the special commissioner that he had to remain with the kattubadis on the latter's insistence. Even otherwise most of the principal kattubadis were related to Narasimha Reddy and as they belonged to the cultivating class, they were also related to many of the heads of the villages and principal ryots. Moreover, he had some hereditary influences on the kattubadis because they had received their land grants from his ancestors.⁴ Narasimha Reddy had a goods following among not only reddy community, but from all other castes and tribes also, because of his leadership qualities, generous nature, pity for the poor, helping the needy and many more superior qualifications. The various castes and tribes that participated in Narasimha Reddy revolt are given.

Narasimha Reddy Revolt-specific Causes

The specific causes for the revolt of Narasimha Reddy against the British government are manifold. Frequent changes in the office and selfishness of the office:

The frequency of changes in the office of the collector in the district for 10 to12 years before the revolt is one of the main reasons for the dissatisfaction and the revolt. With regards to this a letter form W.A.D. Inglis, special commissioner at Caddapah, to the officiating secretary to government reads as follows: "With regard to the remote causes of the outbreak, I think that the frequent changes in the office of the collector in this district within the last 10 to 12 years, have undoubtedly tended in a great measure to produce the state of affairs, which ended in a open rebellion. For many years, a prejudice seems to have very generally prevailed against the district, owning probably to the heat of the climate of the town of Caddapah during a portion of the year, the vast extent of the district, and the arduous nature of the duty., the want of compensating circumstances, such as the society and means of recreation obtainable in other districts, and in consequence Caddapah came to be viewed both by collectors and acting collectors merely as stepping stone to an appointment in a more favourite locality".⁵ The English official himself admitted that due to the changes in the office of the collectors



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or other were not able to concrete on the needs of the people and that they in the interest of getting transferred to other places, because of the climate conditions which they were not accustomed to, thought of pre text to pose false allegations against local chieftains and the circumstances. Narasimha Reddy, knowing this had naturally become furious against the trend of the officers.

Important Events of Narasimha Reddy Revolt -Reactions of the British

Narasimha Reddy was the successor of one of the chiefs who had already willingly or unwillingly submitted to the English. The submission of a particular chief or a palegar of a palayam did not necessarily guarantee the loyalty and fidelity of his successors.⁶ The terms accepted by a palegar might not be acceptable to his successor and the paramount power had to win over the loyalty of the new palegar afresh, which might not be so easily forthcoming. Moreover, the privilege exercised by the supreme power in the matters of succession to a palayam and the right to recognize a palegar greatly helped in sowing the seeds of resistance, especially in case of Narasimha Reddy. Since he had some hereditary influence on the kattubadis, as they had received their land grants from his ancestors, he definitely enjoyed traditional loyalties from them.

Narasimha Reddy was driven by the situations created by the English policy towards the inam lands in addition to his own grievances. It is not a surprise to see that the resistance has received such a cooperation from the general people, the kattubadies, Brahmana, some of the fellow palegars, and country people and the villagers of the different social status including the potails. The Brahmanas, who had become hostile to the English because of the latter policy towards the bhatt-vritti inams, used their influences in the society and created better atmosphere for the resistance. It helped to a great extent in keeping the British intelligence at bay and people would never give correct report about the whereabouts of Narasimha Reddy and his associates.⁷ That was the respect and reputation Narasimha Reddy gained from the villagers, because, he was fighting for a noble cause.

Attended by some thirty men, Narasimha Reddy visited the villages, where he was received with unusual honors. Because of widespread discontent, the peasants to the number of many thousands flocked to his stand. Among them were the peons to the service of the Company, the kattubadis, and several of the Zamindars.⁸

Initially he had the company of about 30 kattubadis, but gradually the number went on increasing, who all accompanied him from village to village. He should send to the persons of influence in the Ceded districts as well as in Hyderabad and not only obtained their support but also of others through them. The prominent area from where he could muster sufficient support were the palegars/chiefs of Hyderabad, Kurnool, Owk, Basnaganapally and Annegundy. These areas not only provided him with materials support but he could also easily use them as escape routes as well as hideouts-in case of emergency. However, the largest support that he got was from Koilkuntla was so great that apart from the kattubadies, the people including Brahmins and the heads of the villagers were at his back. In this regard the factors, the genuine support and the fear were working. In any case, it had made things so difficult for the English government, before and during the course of resistance, that it was almost impossible for them to get any correct intelligence about his activities and whereabouts, which potail or kattubadis was with the English or against them was not easy to be judged.⁹ Owk Rajahs not only gave Narasimha Reddy their full support but also very actively participated in the revolt, in spite of some petty rivalry between the two.

While proceeding from Yerramala hills towards Nallamala hills with his followers ranging about 200 in number, Narasimha Reddy's movements were made known to the British officials by a Sawar. The party of Kurnool irregular Horse stationed at the village of Perisomula sent of Sawars to the nearest pots in assistance and in a short time the hill was surrounded by about 50 Sawars. Reddy was soon secured between 40 and 50 his men being killed and about 90 apprehended, several of whom were wounded, Narasimha Reddy was wounded in the leg by a ball not severely.

On 10th October 1846 Cochrane wrote another letter to the Agent to the Governor of Fort St.George, Kurnool, in which he informed that the village officer of Reddiwari Jambuladinne in the Loilkunta taluk has given an information that the village officer of patha Kunducoor in the Chagalamari taluk had aided and abetted certain of the followers of Narasimha Reddy by affording them shelter in their village for above three days.

Palegar Narasimha Reddy was awarded death sentence on 9th January 1847 charging him as rebel, murderer and plunderer and directed that he must be hanged to death. Narasimha Reddy was not a character to surrender before the British troops and accepted the punishment keeping in mind the dignity of palegars. He was of the opinion that the palegers of Rayalaseema should not be belittled. He also thought if one Narasimha Reddy got rid of thousands and lakhs of Narasimha Reddy would be rising to continue the rebel till the British leave India. The death sentence was executed on 22nd Feb 1847 near Koilakuntla, thus, putting an end to the physical presence of a great and able leader who sows the seed of the thought of liberty in the minds and hearts of his contemporary Indians.



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