



ANDHRA KESARI TANGUTURI PRAKASAM PANTULU – A STUDY

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Abstract

“Andhra Kesari” translates to Lion of Andhra, while “Prakasam” means the shining one. True to these titles, Prakasam Pantulu embodied courage, brilliance, and an indomitable spirit. A born warrior with an unwavering will, his life was marked by heroic sacrifice and ceaseless dedication to the nation. It is a matter of pride to remember and honour the remarkable contributions of this great leader to India’s freedom struggle.

Key Words: Andhra Kesari, courage, freedom fighter

Sri Tanguturi Prakasam Pantulu was born in 1872, during the great famine of the year Dhatu. Although the exact date of birth is unknown, the year is well-established. He was the third child of Gopalakrishnayya and Subbamma, belonging to the village of Valluru, situated between Ongole and Tangutur. As a child, Prakasam was energetic and mischievous, excelling in local games like marbles and tops. He kept himself physically strong, often boxing with friends or exercising with enthusiasm.

In 1884, when he was twelve, Prakasam lost his father. His mother single-handedly supported the family by running an inn. That same year, he joined school in Ongole, and continued to display the same lively temperament. Several incidents during this phase shaped his future. He developed a keen interest in theatre and often played female roles due to his suitability for the stage. One small incident, however, changed his life drastically his fascination with a pleader who lived opposite his house. The pleader’s long coat and dignified appearance inspired young Prakasam to pursue law, dreaming of similar status and respect.

His academic journey included study at Rajahmundry for matriculation, which he initially failed but later cleared privately. He married his niece, Hanumayamma, in 1890 and went on to study at the Arts College in Rajahmundry. After completing his F.A. in 1891, he joined Madras Law College in 1892. He began legal practice as a second-grade pleader in Rajahmundry, achieving great success and quickly gaining a reputation as a bold and uncompromising advocate. Political involvement soon followed through municipal work, where he became known as a formidable and persistent figure.

Desiring higher qualifications, Prakasam travelled to England, taking a solemn vow to his mother to abstain from meat, alcohol, and women. Despite ridicule from fellow students, he strictly upheld his promise. He completed his bar studies in 1906 and toured Europe before returning to India.

Starting his career as a barrister in Madras in 1907, he overcame heavy debt and earned immense respect in his profession. As editor of Law Times, he fearlessly defended the rights of barristers against colonial judicial autocracy. His rise was built on self-confidence, fearlessness, and relentless effort.

In 1921, he made a momentous decision he abandoned a lucrative practice yielding seven thousand rupees a month, inspired by Gandhiji and the National Movement. With support from leaders like Rajagopalachari and Nageswara Rao, he launched the nationalist journal Swarajya to promote Congress ideology. The paper later expanded into Telugu and Tamil editions, gaining wide influence.

During the Civil Disobedience Movement and anti-Simon Commission protests, Prakasam earned the title “Andhra Kesari.” When police shot a young protester named Parthasarathi during an anti-Simon rally in Madras, Prakasam boldly confronted armed officers, baring his chest and challenging them to fire at him. His fearless act electrified the masses, who hailed him as the Lion of Andhra.

Prakasam faced personal loss in 1933 with the death of his wife. He later served as Revenue Minister in the 1937 Madras government led by Rajagopalachari. After imprisonment during the Quit India Movement, he became Chief Minister of Madras in 1946. Though his ministry lasted only eleven months, it marked an important phase in regional politics.



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After Independence, Prakasam broke with Congress due to ideological differences and joined hands with Prof. N.G. Ranga to form the KisanMazdoor Party. This later merged into the Praja Socialist Party. His long-cherished dream was the formation of a separate Andhra state. In 1953, he became the first Chief Minister of the new Andhra State. During his tenure, major developments like Sri Venkateswara University and the Krishna river road-cum-regulator bridge were initiated. He was re-elected from Ongole in the 1955 elections.

His final dream, Visalandhra, was realized in 1956 with the creation of Andhra Pradesh. Having seen the fulfilment of every cause he fought for, Prakasam spent his final days with a sense of accomplishment. He passed away on 29 May 1957 in Hyderabad, marking the end of a historic era.

Conclusion

For nearly forty years, PrakasamPantulu remained a towering figure in Andhra and Indian politics. Fearless, energetic, and committed to public service, he never let criticism or adversity deter him. His life was a testament to sacrifice devoting comfort, wealth, and even personal safety to the nation's cause. His motto, "Be and make," inspired countless people, and his leadership instilled courage in the hearts of millions. As long as sacrifice is honoured, Prakasam's legacy will remain immortal. He embodied a rare combination of self-confidence, discipline, service, strength, and unwavering patriotism qualities that make "Andhra Kesari" an enduring inspiration.

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