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## ROLE OF MUSLIMS DURING THE QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT IN RAYALASEEMA

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### Abstract

The Quit India Movement was the next major milestone after the Salt Satyagraha in the history of Indian independence struggle. It was a civil disobedience movement launched in August 1942 with Gandhiji's call for immediate dependence. It is also known as the Bharat Chodo Andholan or the August Kranthi.

This historical movement played out in the backdrop of World War II. The British government entered India in the war unilaterally and without consultation with the Indian people. This angered Indians terribly. In March 1942, faced with an increasingly dissatisfied sub-continent, only reluctantly participating in the war, the British government sent a delegation to India under Sir Stafford Cripps, in what came to be known as the Cripps Mission.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the mission was to negotiate with the Indian National Congress a deal to obtain total co-operation during the war, in return of progressive devolution and distribution of power from the crown and the Viceroy to elected Indian legislature.

**Key Words:** Quit India Movement, Rayalaseema Muslims, Cripps Mission, Kurnool Circular, Kadapa, Ananthapuram, Chittoor, Tirupati, Hindu-Muslim Unity Meeting.

### Intorduction

The failure of the Cripps Mission, rising prices and war time shortages and the Japanese threat forced the Congress to take active steps to compel the British for accepting the Indian demand for Independence. The Congress was unhappy with Cripps proposal, because the retention of defence in the hands of the British and the promise to transfer power appear illusory. So, Mahatma Gandhi described the Cripps proposal as "Post Dated Cheque".<sup>2</sup> The proposals also appear that the unity of India will be at stake because of Pakistan demand and the promise to Indian Princely states to stay out of the Indian union. The proposals will greatly hamper the whole national movement. It also appears that the ambition of Indians to obtain some form of self- government from the British appears remote. The Indian National Congress leaders' fears were not cleared and there was no assurance on the demand of independence. So, the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress rejected the proposals of Sir Stafford Cripps.

The other parties also rejected the Cripps proposals because, the Muslim League felt that there was no categorical assurance about the creation of Pakistan as envisaged at Lahore Resolution in 1940. The Hindu Maha Sabha opposed to the proposals because the unity of the country will be threatened to divide. The Sikhs feared that Punjab may be divided on religious lines and may become minorities. Ambedkar feared that the harijans may be placed at the mercy of caste Hindus.<sup>3</sup> The proposals relating to the Interim Government also appears to be vague. Cripps also made it clear that the "National Government" is nothing but the expansion of the Viceroy's Executive Council and not more than that. The British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill was reluctant even to transfer limited power to the Indians. So, all the political parties rejected the proposals. Hence, Cripps proposals were withdrawn by Churchill and recalled Cripps on 11 April 1942.

The failure of the Cripps Mission, rising prices and war time shortages and the Japanese threat forced the Congress to take active steps to compel the British for accepting the Indian demand for Independence. The All India Congress Committee met at Bombay on 8th August 1942 and passed the famous 'Quit India Resolution.<sup>4</sup> After the resolution was passed, Gandhiji, in his speech said "There is a manthra, a short one, that I give you. You imprint it in your heart and let every breath of your give an expression to it. The manthra is "Do or Die" we shall either be free or die in the attempt". "Quit India" and "Do or Die" became the battle cries of the Indian people during the Quit India Movement.

The British, already alarmed by the advance of the Japanese army to the India/Burma border, responded the next day by imprisoning Gandhi at the Aga Khan Palace in Pune. All the members of the Congress Party's National Leadership were



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arrested and imprisoned at the Ahmednagar Fort. Due to the arrest of major leaders, a young and till then relatively unknown Aruna Asaf Ali presided over the AICC session on August 9, and hoisted the flag. Later, the Congress party was banned. These actions only created sympathy for the cause among the population. Inspired by Gandhiji's "Do or Die" speech, the common masses eagerly jumped into the movement, despite lack of direct leadership. Large-scale protests and demonstrations were held all over the country. Workers remained absent and strikes were called. Not all the demonstrations were peaceful.

The British swiftly responded with mass detentions. According to official estimates more than 60,000 people were arrested, 18,000 detained without trial, 940 killed, and 1,630 injured through police or military firing during the last five months of 1942. A total of over 100,000 arrests were made nationwide, mass fines were levied, and demonstrators were subjected to public flogging. Hundreds of resisters and innocent people were killed by police and army fire. Many national leaders went underground and continued their struggle by broadcasting messages over clandestine radio stations, distributing pamphlets, and establishing parallel governments. The British sense of crisis was strong enough that a battleship was specifically set aside to take Gandhi and the Congress leaders out of India, possibly to South Africa or Yemen, but such a step was ultimately not taken, out of fear of intensifying the revolt. An underground guerilla forces were also organized to sabotage the British.

In Andhra the Provincial Congress Committee had issued a circular popularly known as the "Kurnool Circular" even in advance of the Bombay A.I.C.C. Session. This circular was drafted by Kala Venkata Rao on 29th July, 1942 and was sent for the approval of the Congress Working Committee through Dr. Pattabhi Sitha Ramaiah, a member of the Working Committee. Originally the Andhra leaders thought that the fight should not begin until and unless Gandhiji were to give the signal for the commencement of the struggle. It clearly stated that 'immediately after Mahatmaji gives the order, the Civil Disobedience Movement must be begun and the German "blitz kreig" pattern must be followed.' It also laid stress on the spirit of non-violence and insisted that no established law should be violated in contravention of the first rule. But the sudden arrest of the leaders all over the country upset the non-violent nature of the struggle envisaged in the programme. The Kurnool Circular envisaged a programme of defying prohibitory orders, lawyers to give up practice, students to leave colleges, picketing salt and foreign trade and industry, Cutting of communications, cutting of spathe of the toddy yielding trees, travelling without tickets, pulling chains to stop trains and blow up bridges so that communications might be disrupted and the movement of the Army Personnel retarded; the cutting of telegraph and telephone wires, non-payment of taxes excepting municipal taxes, picketing of recruitment office, and hoisting of national flags on all Government buildings as a sign of independence. It also expected the Indian businessmen in particular to withdraw their deposits from the banks, to demand only Rupee payment and not to deposit fresh amount in the banks so that there would be a drain on the British Economy. All sections of the people, including non-Congressmen, were asked to join in the struggle. The instructions were to carry on the struggle till the finish. Do or Die was the slogan. The rule that one should wear 'khaddhar' and spin khadhi was also given up so that a real mass movement could be created.

But the sudden removal of the leaders at all levels of India, provincial, district, taluq and firka-left the country without any experienced and responsible men to guide the popular movement.

As part of the Quit India Movement in Andhra, the students of the Tenali Taluq High School and the Bharath Tutorial College, Tenali, convened a meeting on the night of the 11th August 1942, and they decided to boycott the schools in the town and to see that a complete Harthal on the 12th August 1942 was observed by the closer of shops, hotels and other business concerns. On the same day the Congress workers and students observe the Harthal in Tenali. In Chirala 500 students took part who closed the Court and afterwards they raided the Office of the Sub-Registrar and the Sales Tax Officer. These students also went to the Railway station and set fire to the station building after cutting of the telephone and signal wires. The damaged caused to the Chirala railway station was about a lakh of rupees. On the 13th of August, a crowd of 2,000 gathered at the Gandhi Park. The police followed them and suddenly opened fire on them without any provocation, on account of which two people died while several were wounded. As a result the Guntur Bar Association passed a resolution condemning the action of the authorities. Educational institutions were closed down for a week. Palakonda Railway station was also attacked and the goods shed were completely gutted. Several other stations like Akiveedu, Athhili, Ongole,



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Nidubrolu, Dendhuluru, Undi, etc. suffered the same fate. The Non-Co- Operators also tampered with railway tracks in order to derail trains at Uppuluru, Panapakam and Srikalahasthi. Telegraph and telephone wires were cut off in as many as 1,500 places in Andhra. Police stations also became targets of attack. On the 17th August a crowd at Palakol smashed the quarters of the Sub-Inspector and the Police Constable. At Akiveedu about 100 people gathered and overpowered two constables and after seizing their muskets and lathis, burnt down the records at the police station. At Bheemavaram Gokaraju Venkatapathi Raju hoisted a Congress flag on the Collector's Office.<sup>8</sup>

The records in the Office were burnt. As a result, the police opened fire on them and in the firing four people died. At Pentapadu, people held a condolence meeting on the 17th August, then later they set fire to the Pentapadu post office. During this period a large number of college and high school students abstained from classes like Bhimavaram, Tenali, Guntur, Kakinada, Eluru, Ananthapuram, Madhanapalli, Nellore, Chittoor, Penugonda, Hindupur, Tirupati and Vijayanagaram.

The people of Rayalaseema took active part in the Quit India Movement so as to fall in line with the national main stream. All important Congressmen were arrested from Kurnool, Kadapa, Chittoor and Anantapur and prohibitory orders were imposed on processions and public meetings. Yet protest meetings and processions in defiance of the prohibitory orders were held in different parts of Rayalaseema.

The Agriculturists, Teachers, Advocates, Students, Railway Gangman, Marine Engineer, Businessmen, Doctors, Press Compositor, Weavers, Inspector, Department of Agriculture, Gold Smith, Sub-Jail Contractor, Tailors, Weaving Teacher, Harmonist, Social Worker, Medical practitioner, Compounder, Cooleys, Fisherman, Village Karanams, Electrical Contractor, Bus conductor, Secretary, Town Congress Committee, Pracharak, Bharath Scout Samaj, Village Munsiff, Poet and Author, Sub-Editor "Swarajya", Painter, Black Smith, Devoted Gandhian, Pleader, Manager of an Assurance Company, Manager of a Private Motor Service Company, Organiser of "Sri Sadhana" Paper, Armed Reserved Police Constable, Washerman, Journalists, Patriot, Rural Medical Practitioner, Document Writer, Newspaper Distributor, etc. were the sections of the people participated in the Quit India Movement in Rayalaseema.

On 13th August 1942, Sri Tanguturi Prakasham, a member of All Indi Congress Committee was arrested at Kadapa railway station.

During the Quit India Movement train derailments were also occurred in Rayalaseema. Sri Kala Hasthi Derailment Case and Panapakam Railway Case occurred in 1942.

On 21st October, "an objectionable" pamphlet was found affixed to the wall of the Tahsildar's room at Hindupur. On the same day, three persons were arrested at Chittoor on suspicion for writing slogans on walls which were highly objectionable to the Government. Twelve persons were convicted by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Markapur, under rule 35 (sabotage) of the Defence of India Rules and sentenced to various punishments. One individual was arrested at Pattikonda and charge-sheeted for distributing pamphlets in highly inflammable language. On 29th October, a boy, aged 12 years went to the Police Station at Dhone and began distributing manuscript pamphlets in Telugu which were in highly "inflammable language". He was arrested. H. Narasing Rao at Vijayawada while going on tour for raising funds and materials for the movement was arrested.

The Students also went on agitation against the British. The students of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam's High School, Tirupati, Ceded District College, Municipal High School, Training School, Anantapur, London Mission School, Gooty, District Board School, Chittoor, Proddutur High School, Hindupur and Dharmavaram, Board Middle School, Madakasira, Tadipathri, Kurnool Students, Rajampeta Students participating in the Quit India Movement.

Removal of letter boxes at Thondur Chavidi, Pulivendula Taluk, Panyam in Kurnool District, Madanapalle and Palamaneru in Chittoor District. The volunteers by resorting to the removal of post boxes wanted to sabotage the postal system of the British in India.



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Railway stations, Police stations and post offices were also attacked and many of them were set on fire. On 11th August 1942, stone boulders were found on the railway line between Guntakal and Maddikera at mile 236/3. S. Venkataramayya Chetty was arrested in this connection. On the night of 15th August, sections of rail were removed at two places near Guntakal.

### Hindu –Muslim Unity Meeting

On 18th August, there was a meeting of about 400 people at Rayadurg. On 20 August, one person was arrested at Chittoor for violating the prohibitory orders in force in the district. At the Theosophical College at Madanapalle, a meeting was organised by Akhil Ali, Secretary, Saraswatha Sangham. It was presided over by P. Balakrishna Murthy, of the Chittoor District National War Front. Those who attended the meeting were N. Krishna Murthy, Honnurappa, Muni Venkatappa and others. All the speakers stressed the need for Hindu-Muslim unity in order to achieve the goal of independence for Indians.<sup>9</sup> On 21st August, 1942, a meeting was organised at Koilakuntla, Kurnool District. It was presided over by B. Anki Reddy. Gurunadha Sharma, Pulla Reddy and others spoke on the occasion. They condoled the death of Mahadeva Desai.<sup>10</sup>

### Role of Muslims during the Quit India Movement in Rayalaseema

From Anantapur district Mohammad Saheb was enraged and enthusiastically participated in the Quit India Movement. As a result, he was arrested at Anantapur on 7th September 1942. But on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the Freedom Movement, he was awarded Tamrapatra (Copper Plaque) in recognition of his services to the country.<sup>11</sup>

From Kurnool District, Mullah Akbar Ali resident of Namakal village of Alur taluq was inspired by L. Sitarami Reddy who was a village Congress leader. Then he joined the Congress Party at the age of 18 years. He interned for eight months from 8-9- 1942 in the Alipuram Camp Jail during the Quit India Movement. From his early days Mullah Akbar Ali enthusiastically participated in the common people and thus responded to the National cause by the call of Mahatma Gandhi. Akbar Ali and Sitarami Reddy toured extensively the villages of Kurnool District and informed the people about the atrocities committed by the Britishers. They requested the people not to pay taxes either on Salt or for tapping toddy. He usually addressed the people at various places and encouraged farmers to till the government banjar lands at Namakal, Timmapur, Nagardona, Kundurthy. M. Akbar Ali and Sitarami Reddy went to Adoni to defy the Government orders on Salt tax. Thus, he was one of the South Indian Muslims who knew Mohammad Ali Jinnah personally.

Another Muslim freedom fighter named Mahaboob Saheb native of Togerchedu in Nandyal Taluk of Kurnool district participated in the Quit India Movement along with Shamsheer Beig.<sup>12</sup> As he was influenced by Gandhiji he along with Nivarthi Venkata Subbaiah, Secretary of the District Congress Committee and also a member of All India Congress Committee led the Quit India Movement in Kurnool District. Consequently, he was involved in removing the fish plates of the railway line between Nandyal and Panyam railway station on 31st August 1942. As a result, he underwent Rigorous Imprisonment from 23-9-1942 to 21-04-1943 in the Alipuram Camp Jail. He celebrated Bhakrid in the jail during his imprisonment along with Andhra leaders like Bejawada Gopala Reddy and B.V. Subba Reddy, who were his prison mates. Being a true follower of Congress ideals, he did not fall a prey to the Muslim League to the enticement of the members of the Muslim League who invited him to come into the fold of Muslim League.

From Anantapur district K. Mahaboob Sahib a native of Kurumala, Kadiri Taluk actively participated in violent activities and set fire to the Forest Rest House at Kothakota during the Quit India Movement. He was associated with local Hindu leaders like T.P. Gangi Reddy, Subba Reddy, Rayappa and Subba Rao. He rendered good services to the Congress from his early days particularly at the age of 18 years he became a Congress member and propagated different programmes of Congress under the leadership of Ayya Samudra Nageswara Rao. In the year 1943 he was involved in setting fire to the forest guest house and was arrested by the Police and sent to jail for one year.

Mohammad Rasool Saheb, a native of Kasaram village in the Guntakal taluq of Anantapur district also took part in the Quit India Movement.<sup>13</sup> He was greatly inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's speeches during Gandhiji's tour in Rayalaseema in the



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years 1934 and 1935. Mahatma Gandhi and Babu Rajendra Prasad instilled in him a sense of patriotism and desire for freedom from the hands of Britishers. The prominent leaders of Rayalaseema like Kalluri Subba Rao, I. Sadasivan, Ramacharyulu greatly influenced Mohammed Rasool Sahib in the Kasaram village. As a result, he joined the Quit India Movement and took part in the violent activities like the removal of Railway track of Marmagoa – Machilipatnam line near Guntakal and damaged the Madras – Bombay trunk road. In fact he went underground for some time, but later he was sentenced for six months imprisonment.

Chittoor district was no exception for freedom movement as its Muslim population whole heartedly participated. P. Muradsha Sahib hailed from Madanapalle participated in the Quit India Movement. At the instance of Nuthi Radha Krishnaiah, P. Muradsha joined the national movement and served as the member of the taluq working committee. He was inspired by the Congress taluq working committee meeting of protest against the British Government at Madanapalle towards Quit India Movement. P. Muradsha Sahib received lathy blows by the Police for his involvement in the national struggle of Quit India Movement in 24th August 1942.14

Abdul Ali was born on 5 November 1919 at Chandragiri. His father was Shaik Rahimuddin. He studied upto 6th class. He worked as a Peon in a Zilla Parishat School. He enrolled himself in the Army. He was captured by the Japanese and imprisoned in Malaya. Later he joined the Indian National Army and fought against the British. He was captured in 1942 by the British and imprisoned at the Jigarkacha Camp Jail in West Bengal for over one year.

Mohammad Afjal was born on 15 September 1915 at Chandragiri. His father was Mohd. Abdul Majeed. He studied upto S.S.L.C. He joined the I.N.A. in September 1942. He fought against the British Allied Forces from Singapore and Burma battle fronts. He was captured and detained as a prisoner of war from 15-04-1945 to 03-05-1946 and another three months at Jigarkacha Camp Jail in West Bengal.

Mohammad Ibrahim completed his 7th class in Punganur. He joined in British Army at the age of 20, and trained in Bangalore. The British Army sent him for World War-II to Singapore to fight against Japan. Then, he joined the Indian National Army to fight against the British.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, Mahatma Gandhi's call of Quit India Movement has enormous effect which spread to the nook and corner of the country symbolizing that irrespective of age, education, profession, religion all joined together for the cause of freedom for the country. As a result of the call given by Mahatma Gandhi, people from all walks of like participated in the freedom struggle. Like Hindu, Sikhs, Christian, Muslim too took active part. In Rayalaseema Muslim leaders like Mohammad Saheb, Mullah Akbar Ali, Mahaboob Saheb, K. Mahaboob Saheb, Mohammad Rasool Saheb, P. Muradsha Sahib, Abdul Ali, Mohammad Afjal and Mohammad Ibrahim took active part in the Quit India Movement. Their fight for the cause of independence is noteworthy. It is important to note here that because of the sacrifices made by the lakhs of people who suffered in the hands of the British by serving jail sentences, hangings, firings and lathi charges, we are enjoying freedom.

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