



RESILIENCE AND RESISTANCE: THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST SYSTEMIC VIOLENCE DURING NIZAM'S RULE

Dr. Gugulothu Ramesh Babu

Research Scholar, Department of History & Tourism Management, Kakatiya University, Warangal.

Abstract

This study delves into the harrowing experiences of women during the Nizam's rule in 1946-47, focusing on the widespread sexual violence inflicted by the Nizam's police and military forces in Telangana. It examines the silence of the Indian press and the government during these atrocities and highlights the resilience and resistance of women, who fought back against this brutality. Additionally, the study explores the critical role women played in guerrilla warfare and secret operations, showcasing their unwavering commitment to the struggle. Through a detailed narrative of their bravery, this research underscores the enduring strength of women in the face of systemic oppression.

Keywords: *Telangana Armed Struggle, Role of the Women in Struggle, Resilience and Resistance.*

Introduction

The period of the Nizam's rule in Telangana, particularly during 1946-47, is marked by widespread violence and oppression, especially against women. The Nizam's police and military forces perpetrated brutal sexual assaults on women in various villages, leading to a nationwide outcry. However, the atrocities committed by these forces, and later by the Indian army under Congress rule, remained largely unreported in the mainstream press, controlled by the government. This silence, juxtaposed with the relentless resistance of women who defended themselves and their communities, reveals a dark chapter in India's history. This study aims to explore the depth of these atrocities, the response of the women involved, and their significant role in the guerrilla warfare that followed.

Profiles of Women Comrades in Guerrilla Warfare and Secret Operations

Women played a crucial role in the struggle, both in their villages and within guerrilla squads and secret offices. Despite their significant contributions, the Party admitted only a few women to the forest areas and guerrilla squads. Nonetheless, many women comrades held various important positions in both political and military roles across forest and plain regions.

Comrade Swarajyam

Sister of Comrade B. Narasimhareddy, Swarajyam was active from 1945, initially engaging with the Andhra Mahasabha and the Communist movement as a young girl. A charismatic speaker, she played a leading role in organizing both women and men during the struggle. She was a dedicated whole-time functionary during the Nizam-Razakar period and continued her work in the Godavari Forest region for three years. As a zonal organizer and area committee member, she led the Gundala center Koya people's resistance. Despite coming from a landlord family, Swarajyam demonstrated exceptional initiative and was a prominent leader in the Nalgonda district. Her husband, Comrade V. Narasimha Reddy, was a member of the Andhra Pradesh State Committee.

Comrade Ramulamma

Hailing from Cherkupalli (Nalgonda), Ramulamma joined the Party with her husband in 1946. Although her husband left the Party in 1948, she remained committed. During the anti-Nizam struggle,



she contributed by stitching red flags for the guerrilla squads and underwent military training. She skillfully acted as a courier during Congress military raids and was promoted due to her efficiency. Despite being arrested and deceived, Ramulamma continued her work post-release, married Comrade Adi Reddy, a guerrilla commander, and actively participated in political and mass activities.

Rangamma

An active guerrilla squad member and political leader, Rangamma operated in the Nallamala (Krishna) forest region. After the struggle, she married Comrade Narayana of Penchikaldinne, a leading comrade in Huzurnagar.

Tirupatamma

The wife of Chintalapalem auxiliary cell secretary, Tirupatamma was arrested with Ramulamma but later released. She faced difficulties finding shelter but eventually joined the squads after avoiding attempts to deceive her. Despite challenges, she managed to join and serve the squad effectively.

Savitramma

Recruited by the Huzurnagar zone committee, Savitramma came from a poor peasant family. She overcame personal hardships and was jailed twice during the Indian army's entry. After escaping her husband's place, she reconnected with the squads and was recruited. Known for her dedication and meticulous work, she faced intense torture without revealing secrets.

Narasamma:

At 20, Narasamma joined the squads in 1950 and became a Party member in April 1951. With strong initiative, she carried out her assigned tasks effectively, earning respect and confidence. She made significant observations about the struggle, critiquing mistakes and advocating for better cadre training and support.

Koya Women

In the Godavari Forest area, many Koya women joined the guerrilla squads.

Among them were Nagamma, Papakka, Lachhakka, Ramakka, Pullakka, Badrakka, Adivamma, and Narayanamma.

Venkatamma: A young Koya girl who, after being saved by the squad during a military raid, joined the squad, learned to shoot, and participated in several actions. She rose to second-in-command and married Jagannatham, overcoming tribal suspicions.

Lachakka: Sister of Comrades Bhallu and Ramu Lambadi, Lachakka was arrested and tortured but escaped to the Party headquarters. She excelled as a courier and organizer, marrying squad commander Veeraswamy.

Papakka-Tirupatayya: A Koya couple is known for their scouting skills and ability to blend with plains people. They served as forward scouts in the Godavari region and participated in numerous military actions.

Padigapati Nagamma: A poor peasant who supported the squad by providing food. She was captured, raped, tortured, and killed but never revealed any secrets.



Budemma: A Koya girl in charge of a women's supply squad. Despite being trapped, raped, and tortured, she maintained secrecy and was killed.

Koya Lachhakka: Deputy leader of a guerrilla squad, Lachhakka died fighting the enemy after being unable to escape due to a thorny branch catching her hair.

In addition to the forest and village roles, women comrades worked in towns as part of secret "dens," managing tasks such as copying documents and running ammunition. Their vigilance and prompt actions helped prevent widespread damage during raids.

Conclusion

The struggle of women during the Nizam's rule in Telangana is a testament to their resilience and courage in the face of systemic violence. Despite the brutal rapes and atrocities committed by the Nizam's forces and later by the Indian army, these women not only survived but actively resisted their oppressors. Their involvement in guerrilla warfare and secret operations highlights their crucial role in the broader struggle for justice and freedom. This research sheds light on the often-overlooked contributions of these women, honouring their legacy and acknowledging the profound impact they had on the fight against tyranny. Their story is a powerful reminder of the strength and determination of women in the face of unimaginable adversity.

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