

Arya Samaj Movement in Bidar District (1875-1948)

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Abstract

Arya samaj movement had been got a very unique importance and become nerve point of political and anti social elements in Bidar district. The workers and volunteers of samaj were most active as compare to Raichur and Gulbarga districts and took lead in the region. Samaj was fought against razakars with the national congress. It initiated many constructive works like, medicine, education, exercise, draught remedies, fodder and ganji centres etc., with the freedom movement.

KEYWORDS: Border camps, Unification, Activists

Introduction

The Arya Samaj activities began in the district as early as 1924 in which year Samaj branch was opened at Udgir. By 1930 Arya Samaj activities were launched in Bidar. Bansilal and Shamalal two great leaders and brothers rendered yeomen service in organizing the samaj activities in the district, they traveled all over the district and propagated samaj ideals and created awareness among the people.

In the beginning the Bidar Arya Samaj had two types of workers viz., 1 Members and 2 Assistants. The first category members were fully devoted workers who followed samaj rules and regulations viz., wearing of sacred thread (Janivar), belief in the vedic rituals, performing Havan-Kunda etc. The second category workers were assistance who were not expected to follow meticulously the rules and rituals of samaj. They were supporters of samaj activities.

As such we can mention here some names of supporters of Arya Samaj in Udgir. Inspired by the ideals of Arya Samaj, the following persons, viz., Prabhu Rao Udgir, Sri Sangramappa, Virabhadrapa Kappikeri, Guralingappa Swami, Virabhadrapa Ambegargi and others sent their active support to Samaj activities in Udgir. Prabhu Rao was advocate and he lent legal assistance to poor Hindus at no cost. He sincerely worked for samaj for eight years from 1926 to 1934. Libraries and schools were opened by the efforts of these members.

To mobilize the youths, Udgir Samaj started libraries and physical training centres. It also directed its efforts to mobilize village folk around Udgir area. The samaj organized Rama Navami and the Krishna Jayanti functions on a large scale with great pomp and pleasure. 'Shivaratri' occasion was specially arranged for three days. As usual Dasara and Diwali festivals were celebrated with great enthusiasm. In all these festivals and celebrations large number of people used to take part. By these activities Udgir Arya Samaj desired to maintain the Hindu unity and integrity.

The Bidar district Arya Samaj launched a good number of constructive activities with a variety of programmes in the district. Surprisingly there was a tremendous response from the people to the samaj programmes and activities.

All the workers used to meet weekly and discuss about socio-religious activities in the district. Discourses on 'Satyarth Prakash' Bible of Samaj, were regularly held experts delivered speeches. The period between 1920 and 1942 was significant one because the Arya Samaj achieved a considerable success in implementing its socio-religious programmes in the district. Bansilal, Shamlal and Karibasappa of Chitguppa offered a memorable service to the samaj on all fronts and because of their self-less, devoted and dedicated service, the Bidar Arya Samaj became not only popular but also strong. The samaj launched a good number of constructive programmes for the common masses in the district during this period.

Movement Against Conversions:

The Bidar Arya Samaj very wisely tackled the serious problem of conversions of poor Hindus to other religious folds such as Islam and Christianity.

In Bidar district it was a regular feature of Hindus converting into Islam and Christianity, we can mention here some of the factors for such conversions. Poverty, illiteracy, caste-distinctions among Hindus, untouchability and many other factors were responsible for conversions. On the other land the preachers of Islam and Christianity offered a number of privileges and facilities for the downtrodden of the Hindu society, free education, shelter, food, medicine and increative jobs were some of the attractions for the neglected people of Hindu society. On certain occasions forcible conversions also took place.

Christian missionaries also had their role in attracting the village illiterate Hindus to their fold. Here we can mention one example, Dr. Shantappa Dongaon took interest in converting the poor Hindus to Christianity. He himself being a lingayat converted to Christianity and started missionary activities. So the untouchables in the district went to Christian fold.

The prevailing situation in the district was a challenge to Bidar Arya Samaj. So the workers accepted it and launched a movement in the district to prevent conversions of Hindus to other faiths.

The very first programme was to uplift the Dalits and untouchables in the district samaj workers preached and encouraged the inter caste marriage among the Hindus. We can quote a popular example of such marriage of Sri Shankardev, a Dalit youth leader with daughter of Saraf family of Bidar. Shankar later became member of the Hyderabad state Assembly. He also had the privilege to become minister in the Hyderabad state Cabinet and he also became M. P. representing Bidar. Bansilal a great leader offered his daughter to the lingayat family of Udgir. D. R. Dasaji Vaidya was one of the popular leaders in Bidar area and he put an example of breaking the age old Hindu conceptions of marriage performed the marriage of his daughter and son according to the Arya Samaj rules regulation and rituals. So this was how the Arya Samaj leaders and workers made their efforts to educate the Hindus and to remove social destructions among the Hindus.

The samaj also evinced keen interest in getting the converted people back to Hindu fold by way of 'Shuddhi' following samaj rituals. As a result many men and women came back to Hindu faith due to the sincere efforts of Arya Samaj and many Dalits became the active workers of Arya Samaj in the district.

Arya Samaj also gave equal importance to women education in the district.

In 1900 Arya Samaj women

wing was established. Its endeavour was to remove illiteracy and blind belief among women. The literacy percentage of women in the district was very low. Brahmin family girls of Hallikhed stepped into Arya Samaj Schools. Later other women went to kangdi Gurukul for higher education.

The Bidar Arya Samaj also took interest in other social problems of Hindu society like widow remarriage prevention of child marriage dowry and sati custom. We have already seen that Keshav Rao Koratkar and his worthy son Sri Vinayak Rao Vidyalkar and others got passed the widow status bill in the legislative council of Hyderabad and secured the legal status for widows in the state. Arya Samaj through awakening and education direct its efforts to prevent child marriage and sati-custom.

The Bidar Arya Samaj also took steps to take care of health problems of poor Hindus in the district. Free hospitals were opened in the region. At Udgir one such hospital-cum-school for Dalits was opened and Shamlal was mainly responsible for opening of such centre for Dalits. Arya Samaj advocates offered free legal assistance to the poor Hindus. This was now Arya Samaj stood as custodian of Hindus and earned a creditable name in the district between 1930 and 1942.

Movement for Civil and Religious Liberties:

Way back in 1929-30 Arya Samaj started such movement in the district. During this period a typical religious fervour took place through the state. A Muslim by name Siddiq Dindar was key figure to create such religious tension in the state. He declared himself to be the incarnation of Channabasaveshwara. He is said to have published a book by name "Channabasaveshwar Sarvare Alam" in which he condemned the Hindu incarnations like Rama and Krishna. So this was the reason why the Hindus in the region felt up-set and started a stubborn movement against the false and illogical preaching of Siddiq. The Bidar Arya Samaj was not a silent spectator great revolutionaries like Bansilal and Shamlal and others took active part in the state level agitation representing Bidar region and fought for justice experts like Ramachandra Dehlavi and others had a meaningful dialogue with Muslim leaders who were convinced that Dindar's preaching are baseless. As a result the book written by Dindar was banned by the state government. This was a great victory for Arya Samaj.

On 21-5-1933 the Hallikhed Arya Samaj had arranged to celebrate its annual function. But the local police officials did not allow the samaj to conduct its function on the reason that it was not a religious function. The same was allowed later after much opposition from the samaj workers. However, the Nagar Kirtana was not permitted.

From 1935 onwards the attitude of Nizam government became very stiff against the Arya Samaj activities. All civil liberties were curbed. The samaj had to seek prior permission even for birth and death anniversaries of prominent leaders of Arya Samaj. At the same time in 1935 the Bidar Collector displayed his anti samaj attitude. He is said to have desecrated Arya Samaj Mandir and Havan Kund at Nilanga. This was too much for Bidar Samaj workers who at the time displayed a stiff resistance to the arranged attitude of Bidar Collector.

The state level workers too supported Bidar samaj agitation at Nilanga. The agitation of Arya Samaj workers was so strong and effective that the police secretary of the state ordered Bidar Collector to get Arya Samaj Mandir and Havan Kund constructed at his own cost. This was another saga of success for Bidar Arya Samaj. Very next year in 1936 another tragic event occurred in Manik-nagar of Bidar district. The Samaj

workers as usual had commenced their Nagar Kirtan and preaching activities. Some fanatics purposely picked up quarrel with samaj workers. The police officials appeared on the scene only to help fanatics and on the other hand the police teased the samaj workers. Bansilal and Shamlal and Pandit Narendra Saksena opposed the police attitude. But they were arrested by the police. Shamlal and Bapuprasad were injured. We can mention here another interesting example pertaining to police atrocities. At Manik Nagar of Bidar district a Hindu marriage programme was fixed. But the police sub-inspector of Humnabad issued orders to stop Hindu marriage at Manik Nagar on the occasion of Muharram.

Basavakalyan right from the beginning was a strong centre of Arya Samaj activities. It was a popular centre of inspiration. It enjoyed a Jagir position under Nizam. Basavakalyan Nawab was a staunch supporter of Nizam. He foted innocent Hindus. Looting, burning the Hindu property was his regular activity. He imprisoned the poor Hindus without assigning any reason. He took delightful interest in molesting Hindu women and conversions.

Under such circumstances the Arya Samaj commenced its activities in Basavakalyana Ganpat Shastri who was a follower of Arya Samaj and a famous advocate, rendered a great service to the Hindu community. He offered free legal service to poor Hindus. Preachers and leaders from out side came to Basavakalyan and created awareness among the masses Sri Udaya Bhanu and Gopal Sastry opened samaj library at Basavakalyan in 1932. Ganapat Shastri was attacked at Gulbarga by police officials. He was serious by injured and lost his memory. He had many associates. Gopal Dev, Mohan Singh, Dr. Waman Rao and his wife Saraladevi served samaj with devotion. Viswahanath was the youth leader and advice worker of Arya Samaj. On 6-4-1939 the fanatics of Basavakalyan pulled down the 'OM' flag on Arya Samaj Mandir on the ground that the mandir was not a registered one. About this event Arya Samaj put stiff resistance and informed the state police officials who accepted that the event was unjust. But the 'OM' flag was not hoisted. Gunjoti was a popular centre of Arya samaj activities. Vedaprakash of this place was a very sincere and dedicated worker. He had tremendous interest in social and religious activities. On many occasions he fought for justice against atrocities. He was very well trained in handling arms and weapons for self protection.

In Gunjoti there was one anti social element by name Chote Khan who used to tease the young girls and women. The activities of Chote Khan were not palatable for Vedaprakash. On many occasions Vedaprakash opposed Chotekhan's activities. This made the fanatics upset and they made plan to finish Vedaprakash who was a handle in their activities. Vedaprakash was attacked by the fanatics and threatened him to embrace Islam to save his life. But the brave and young Vedaprakash refused to accept Islam. So the fanatics killed him brutally in 1937 at Gunjoti. Vedaprakash became the first martyar in the Bidar district and this tragic incident stirred the minds of samaj workers all over the state. The criminals were arrested by the police and later they were released without any punishment.

After this tragic incident, Arya Pratinidhi Sabha of Hyderabad deputed Sri Shivachandaji to study in detail and report to the central body. Accordingly Shivachandraji and another great leader Bansilal together visited 16 places and collected information. They met the State Director General of Police and other officials in the state. In addition, they also collected information from the common masses. The investigation

report submitted by Shivachandraji clearly mentioned that Vedaprakash was forced to accept Islam by the fanatics and on refusal to do so by Vedaprakash, he was killed brutally by the fanatics. His dead body was thrown into the house of Arya Samaj Mantri.

In the same year one Mahadev of Ambalaga of Bidar district was done to death. He was a very sincere preacher and a devoted worker of samaj. In 1938 another murder incident took place at Basavakalyan. Dharmaprakash was one young and brae worker of Arya Samaj. He could not tolerate the activities of Nawab of Basavakalyan. So he trained the youths to operate the arms and sight for justice. He created a new environment in the Basavakalyan region. He was the teacher of Jai Hanuman physical education centre at Basavakalyan. So the fanatics felt up set and planned to finish him. One day Dharmaprakash was going to his residence in the night from Aryasamaj Mandir. At that time a group of fanatics attacked Dharmaprakash with weapons. And the brave young worker fought single handed but he finally succumbed to the serious injures. So he became the second martyar in the Bidar region.

In 1938 yet another unhappy event occurred. This time the great inspirer and leader Shamlal became the victim. As usual the samaj workers used to celebrate Dasara festival at Udgir with a great pleasure unfortunately on this occasion there was a big communal riot. The police officials held responsible the samaj workers for the communal riots. Udgir Arya Samaj workers under the celebrated leadership of Shamlal put up a stiff resistance to the police attitude. Shamlal with his 20 associates was arrested and kept in Bidar jail. He died on 17th December 1938 in Bidar jail due to administration of poison with medicine. Thus, Shamlal, a dynamic personality who contributed a big deal to the development of Arya Samaj in the state and in the Bidar, Gulbarga and Udgir region, became the third martyor in the district.

Udgir had a privilege to organize the Arya Samaj conference in 1942. Pandit Vinayak Rao was the president. The conference was held for two days on 12th and 13th of February 1942 and in this conference 26 resolutions were adopted. The Udgir conference was really significant one because it clearly declared that the state government announcement regarding reforms in the state has not been properly implemented. The terms and conditions of the reforms have been violated. The conference further warned that Arya Samaj would once again start agitation if remorurs were not properly implemented in the state. But as usual the Nizam government paid no need to the petition of Arya Samaj. In the same year at Aurad Shahjahani tragic events happened. Some fanatics attacked Hindu houses and shops and put ablaze to trum closing doors at Aurad-Shahjahani of Bidar district. One Arya Samaj worker who displayed his courage to prevent the event was killed. The news of tragic happenings in Bidar district reached ears of Gandhiji who felt un-happy and told to send Rs. 1,500/- to the distressed people. The Arya Samaj too collected funds to the tune of 2000 rupees for helping the sufferers. Leaders like Deshbandhu and his associates were arrested and sentenced to long term imprisonment.

Humnabad was also a strong and popular centre of Arya Samaj activities in the Bidar district. Shri Shivachandraji and Ramachandra Virappa and others were staunch followers of Arya Samaj. Shivachandraji had earned a great name even in the state level activities. The Arya Samaj workers of Humnabad and Maniknagar have created awareness among the people to sight for justice challenging the atrocities of fanatics. In 1942 a great tragic event occurred at Humanabad of Bidar district. It was on 3rd March

1942 the Arya Samaj had organized a peaceful procession the eve of Holi festival. And the first phase of the procession was peacefully conducted. But the local police officials were not happy as they wanted to happen something so that they could arrest the Arya Samaj leaders and workers. So the police inspired the samaj workers to conduct the procession once again.

The Samaj workers, being unable to realize the bad intention behind the police suggestions, once again conducted the procession. All of sudden a group of fanatics attacked the innocent workers with deadly weapons. Except few all the workers went away. Only handful of staunch workers offered a stiff resistance. In the mean time one samaj worker by name Pundalik Parit fired his gun on the fanatic group. He could not continue his battle for long time as he felt short of bullets and he too escaped. The fanatics began to search Pundalik Parit. At this juncture Sivachandraji and his associates met the fanatic group. So immediately the fanatics fired their guns and used their deadly weapons and killed four workers on the spot. We can mention here the names of four workers killed (1) Shivachandra Nellagi (2) Sri Laxman Rao (3) Ravaji Rao and (4) Narasimha Rao. In the year 1940 one more tragic event occurred in Bidar. The Nizam had banned the political activities in the state. So the Karnataka Parishad had organized its second session at Bidar. Janardhana Desai was the president. Many dignitaries including Swami Ramananda Tirth attended the conference. This is to be noted here that Channabasava Pattadevaru, Prabhu Rao Kambaliwale, Rangnath Rao Saigaonkar and others worked for the success of the conference. Brijpal Singh Thakur a famous Arya Samaj worker served as a volunteer in the conference. More than 10,000 persons attended the session.

Unfortunately some local fanatics started communal riots and put fire to a very busy commercial area 'Osmangunj' and 114 shops of Hindus were burnt. There was a heavy loss for Hindu merchants. On this occasion Brijpal Singh Thakur displayed extraordinary courage and controlled the situation and prevented further loss of property of Hindu merchants. Gandhiji came to know the tragic event occurred at Bidar and he felt very much upset and said, "After the Lanka Dahan, Bidar Dahan came". During this time one Sri Basavant Rao Shetkar was brutally murdered at Bidar. Chitguppa of Bidar district was a very strong centre where Arya Samaj activities began as early as 1926. The Samaj workers launched many activities and generated chivalrous spirit among the people. In 1933 Hakikat Rai and R. V. Bidap opened library at Chitguppa to mobilize youths.

Being a paiga unit under Nizam, Chitguppa has been the birth place of many brave workers of Arya Samaj. Bodke family of Chitguppa was fully dedicated to the samaj activities. Basavaraj Hudgi, Hakikat Rai, Vithal Rao Kukdal and others were prominent and active workers of samaj. In 1934 great leader and inspirer Pandit Bansilal had gone to take part in a religious function Karmanand and Shamlal were also with him. But the local police officials prevented Bansilal and others from attending the function under the pretext that he had no permission to take part in such activities in and around Chitguppa.

On the day of Vijaya Dashami, in 1937-38 the Arya Samaj had organized a peaceful procession of Goddess Bhavani from Hanuman temple to Bhavani Mandir. Unfortunately the local fanatics of Chitguppa attacked the procession near the tahasil office without any reason with deadly weapons and in the incident one Muslim was killed. On this occasion samaj workers and Hindus together offered a united resistance 18

persons were injured, about 100 workers were arrested, 40 were workers were sentenced to imprisonment.

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