

## **BHAGYA REDDY VARMA: A PIONEER OF DALIT MOVEMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HYDERABAD**

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### **Abstract:**

*The caste system in India is very predominant and it is deep rooted. Dalit and Marginalized sections are the untouchables and they have segregated from the main stream society. Mahatma Jyothi Rao Phule has started fight against the caste system in India. In each state different Dalit leaders have emerged to fight against the caste system. The present paper explains about Bhagya Reddy Varma who was pioneer of Dalit movement in Hyderabad state. He basically fights against caste system and focused on eradication of social evils within the Dalit communities. To achieve this goal he established several organizations and worked with other caste Hindu organizations like Brahma samaj and Arya samaj. He believed that education is the only instrument to liberate the Dalits from the social discrimination and gives the emancipation and dignity of life.*

Key Words: Bhagya Reddy Varma, Dalit Movement, Organization, Caste, Hyderabad State.

### **Introduction:**

Bhagya Reddy Varma (1888-1939) was the pioneer of Dalit movement in Telangana region especially in Hyderabad. The real name of Bhagya Reddy Varma was Madari Bhagaiah and he was born and brought up in a poor Mala family in Hyderabad. His early life was connected with the caste Hindu people and influenced by the Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj, which battled for the advancement of the oppressed stations and battled against the differences in the general public. These affiliations invigorated him make his own philosophy to elevate Dalits in Telangana, particularly in Hyderabad. He has sacrificed his whole life for the development of Mala community in Hyderabad and his services was recognized by the Andhra Dalit leaders of Madras Presidency by making him a president of Adi-Andhra Provincial Conferences. He has always questioned the behavior of non-Dalits towards the Dalits. He has changed his name from Madari Bhagaiah to Bhagya Reddy Varma and the suffixes Reddy (indicates the rank of landed upper class) and Varma (Kshatriya) which challenged the non-Dalits by changing his name. The controversy has been occurred between Suravaram Pratapa Reddy, the editor of the Golkonda Patrika (which was a weekly News paper) and Bhagya Reddy Varma over using of the suffix 'Reddy'. The Pratapa Reddy raised a question that, 'if everyone call him as 'Reddy', then who the original Reddy's are? Bhagya Reddy has given the reply that, if a Mala use the suffix like 'Reddy' what will happen to the caste Hindu

people? (P.R Venkatswamy, 1955: 3).

The purpose of changing the name and using the suffixes to the names was to promulgate the casteless society. The Arya Samaj has given the suffix 'Varma' to Bhagya in the year CE 1913 for his dedicated service to his community (Yagati Chinnarao, 2013: 31). Bhagya Reddy Varma opined that, the Indian society was based on the caste system, the inequalities, discrimination was deep rooted in Indian society and the non- Dalits one who are the main source for the caste discrimination. So, he has started his first battle against non-Dalits, who were the supporter of caste discrimination in the society. To fulfill his desires of uplifting the community and to fight against the non-Dalit people he has resigned his job (wireman in the Central Electrical Department in Hyderabad) and joined in the '*Jeevaraksha Gnahana Pracharaka Mandali*' of Lalji Meghji (Yagati Chinnarao, 2013: 31-32). He has worked for some time in that organization to fight against the non-Dalits who are practicing the untouchability and also worked for demolish the social evils. He felt that, social evils are the main cause for separation of Dalits from the mainstream society. Normally, Dalits take the liquor and beef in all occasions and those are habituated to them and this liquor and beef eating made them lazy and unclean and those habits made them social segregation. Bhagya Reddy Varma he himself decided to start a new organization for the welfare of the community and started a new organization called 'Jaganmitra Mandali'. It is the first Dalit organization started by the Dalits in Telangana to work for the wellbeing of the community.

### **Significance of the Organizations:**

The social identity theories are clearly mentioned about the significance of organization for the upliftment of people. According to Michael A. Hogg and Deborah J. Terry (Michael A. Hogg and Deborah J. Terry, 2000: 121) 'the associations were vital to individuals and they inferred their personality through the associations which were inside organized and had the between bunch relations which were described by power, renown and status'.

Bhagya Reddy Varma has started his first organization 'Jaganmitra Mandali' (P.R. Venkatswamy, 1955: 3, K. Gangaiah, 2007: 935-36) in CE 1906 and this organization has started awakens his caste fellows towards the social consciousness by conducting *Harikatha* performances (*Harikatha* means medium of entertainment. It is very popular in Rural Telangana and Andhra. It means a story telling by a performer about a particular issue or religion or any theme). He always gives the social message while concluding the *Harikatha* performances to his community people. In his speech he highlights that 'the Dalits are the natives of this land and non-Dalit Aryans came from Central Asia for their livelihood'. He also expressed that most of the Dalits are illiterates and this

illiteracy made them backwardness (R.K. Kshirsagar, 1994: 91-92). He was not satisfied with this organization, because he did not fulfilled his desires of doing for the community. In CE 1911 he has started another organization called 'Manya Sangam' which was a land mark organization started by him for the welfare of untouchables. But the aims and objectives of this organization is more or less similar to the previous organization 'Jaganmitra Mandali' (Thummapudi Bharathi, 2008: 53). Diwan Bahadur Papaiah was the first President of 'Manya Sangam' and Valtati Sesaiah, Jakkula Muthiah, Venkatram, Girkala Mallesham, Bandi Krishtaiah, Bandi Nityanandam and M.L. Audiah are the members of this organization (P.R. Venkatswamy, 1955: 4). Along with awareness camps through literature, lectures and *Hirakatha* performances, they also worked for the evacuation of specific social disasters like commitment of young ladies to the goddess as Devadasis, forfeiting fowls and creatures at the temple premises and child marriages. Manya Sangam under the leadership of Bhagya Reddy Varma has tried to change the lives of the Dalits (Samel H. Swapna, 2004: 82). He has continued his struggle against the social evils which are most prevalent in the society. He has struggled for the education to the Dalit children; he always condemned the child marriages; he did not allow the Dalit to serve the non-vegetarian food and liquor in the social gatherings of the community; abolished the Devadasi' system also known as 'Jogini' or 'Murali' or 'Basavi' custom in the community (Yagati Chinnarao, 2003: 150-151 ). To abolish these social evils he has started another organization called "Adi-Hindu Murali Nivarana Mandali". He has given the representation to the government that, Jogini system is more prevalent in the Dalit communities so, abolish the system (Yagati Chinnarao, 2013: 31).

#### **Adi-Hindu Social Service League:**

Bhagya Reddy Varma never stalled with one organization in his entire life. He has the inclination of setting up the singular associations and other Dalit pioneers followed him. In this process, Bhagya Reddy began another association called 'Adi-Hindu Social Service League' in CE 1921. He was inspired by the Adi-Andhra movement of Andhra, where he acted as a Chairman for the 2<sup>nd</sup> 'Provincial Adi-Andhra Mahajana Sabha' held in Gudivada. He renamed 'Manya Sangam' as 'Adi-Hindu Social Service League' and nominated Rao Sahib T.J. Papanna as its first president. The intension to establish the new organization was to give the new life to the Dalits. He as clearly mentioned that, without the help of Caste Hindu people, the services to the untouchables could not be possible (Samel H. Swapna, 2004: 96-97, P.R.Venkataswamy, 1955: 21, R.K. Kshirsagar, 1994: 73-74). He has contradictions with Arige Ramaswamy who was another Dalit leader from Hyderabad. Bhagya Reddy Varma argued that, the Dalits have developed in social, economic, cultural and political aspects by the soft and helping nature of the non-Dalit people. Arige

Ramaswamy encountered his argument and said that, Dalits have developed by their own selves and they have fight against the non-Dalits for their development. Bhagya Reddy Varma encouraged his caste people to join into the Brahma Samaj. He felt that it was one organization of Caste Hindu people who work for the welfare of the untouchables.

### **Aims and Objectives of the League:**

The leaders and members of the League have spread their activities to all parts of the city. They have organized this *Sabha* with the support of other caste Hindus people. (a) Dalits should use the prefixes like Adi-Hindu and Adi-Dravida which are recognized by the Madras Government and create the understanding between the Adi-Hindu; (b) The league should work for the eradication of the social evils and educate the Adi-Hindus to get develop in the aspects like social, moral, religious, economic and literary; (c) The Adi-Hindus should publish books and flyers in the name of ‘Ancient Indian Historical Literature Series’ for the future research work on Adi-Hindus and also should start their own newspapers; (d) The schools, *Bhajan Mandalas*, Scout Associations, hostels and reading rooms should began for the welfare of the Adi-Hindus; (e) For the achievement of the above said aims we should be co-operative with the all sections of the people (P.R.Venkataswamy, 1955: 39-40). He has fulfilled the aims and objectives of the league for the wellbeing of the community. He constructed a new ‘Adi-Hindu Hostel Building’ for poor Dalits who are unable to afford the money their children education and he collected money from the both Dalit and non-Dalit people for the welfare of the community (P.R.Venkataswamy, 1955: 41-42).

Adi-Hindu Social Service League was a landmark in the early phases of Dalit movement in Hyderabad. It has transformed the minds of both Dalit leaders and Dalit masses of the state. Bhagya Reddy Varma became one of the prominent and first Dalit leaders who fight for the emancipation of the Dalits in the society.

### **Conclusion:**

Bhagya Reddy Varma was the pioneer of Dalit movement in Telangana. He established the first organization called ‘Jaganmitra Mandali’ in Telangana for the welfare of the Dalits. Another landmark organization in the history of dalit movement was ‘Adi- Hindu Social Service League’ and it was the first organization which established with complete organization body with it aims and objectives. He was dedicated his life for the wellbeing of the Dalit and marginalized sections of the society. He organized meeting, lecturers, bajans and Harikathas to educate and create awareness in the Dalit people on different issues of life. He was an inspiration to many Dalit leaders to establish

organizations to fight against the caste system and to organize for their rights.

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