
**Guddappa Harijan of Hanagal Taluk,
Bombay Karnataka's Silent Revolution of Harijanodhara
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ABSTRACT:

Gandhiji's Harijanodhara (upliftment of the untouchables) movement played a crucial role in India's freedom struggle, as he believed that true independence was impossible without eradicating untouchability. Inspired by Gandhiji's call, many reformers and freedom fighters in Karnataka, particularly in Haveri district, actively participated in this social revolution. Couples like Mrs. Nagamma Patil and Veerana-gowda of Kachavi village, supported by leaders such as K.F. Patil, T.R. Nesvi, Hallikeri Guddeppa, Sanguru Kariappa, and Menasinal Thim-managoudru, advanced the cause through institutions like Mahila Vidya Peetha, Hubballi. Local leaders including Nyamati Veerabhadrappa and Betageri Ramanna also led community initiatives to abolish caste discrimination. Significantly, Guddanagouda Neelanagouda Patil (Harijan) of Akkialuru village emerged as a symbol of Gandhian ideals, dedicating his life to the upliftment of his community. His lifelong struggle, continuing until his passing in 2018, exemplifies the spirit of Gandhiji's Harijan movement in Karnataka's freedom and social reform efforts.

KEYWORDS:

Gandhiji, Harijanodhara, Haveri district, untouchability, social reform, Karnataka freedom movement.

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Background to the struggle:

Guddanagouda, born in a poor Harijan family in Vasan (now Akkialur Vaasa) of Haveri district, studied till 3rd standard while herding cattle. Due to poverty, he left his education and made a living by working in agriculture. Guddanagouda had a courageous, strong body and was a talker who attracted people to him, so his friend Kotryya Shastri once time arranged for him to meet Sindanur Siddappa, who was known in the freedom movement of that time. However, that meeting did not last long. Once again, Sindanur Siddappa and Kotryya Shastri came to Vasan, their village and said, “You are a talker and an intelligent person. Why don’t you join us in the movement? There is no one like you in your community.” Guddanagouda, who was herding cattle and working in agriculture, jumped into the movement. The elders of the village do not deny the question whether they were motivated by the words of the elders of upper class in the society of the time or whether they also took steps with a national idea. The important thing is that those elders said that they would take steps for the good of our community, just as Gandhiji said, for the good of your community, and that I too, need to take a step towards the movement because many problems of my community can be solved in Gandhiji’s anti-untouchability movement. Their words about the need to take a step towards the movement clearly show why their struggle should not be for the solution of the problems of their community.

The main activists who joined the movement were – Kariyappa Sanguru, Akki Mallappa, Kotryya Shastri Hiremath, Kadappa’s son Pakkirappa, Basavanyappa Chakrasali, Sangayya Hiremath, his main leader Sindanur Siddappa and others.

Important deeds done in the freedom movement:

The important deeds done by Guddanagouda after joining the freedom struggle were– Burning the Kummuru Chavadi. Swimming in the Honkan river at night and setting fire to the Honkan bungalow. Looting the burnt documents kept by the sleepers in Haveri. Making a bomb in the Sunakalla Bidaria field of Kusuguru Basamma and filling it in a sack of rice, the bomb exploded and severely injured Sangaru Kariappa’s hand. When he was taken to the Davangere hospital, the doctors heard him speaking in English that it was a bomb explosion. Kariyappa (who spoke Hindi and English) came out and told us that he had witnessed an incident where the people who had pitched a tent in front of us had cut off his

hand by throwing a rag. When Mailara Mahadevappa Thirukappa Madiwalara and Veeraiah Hiremath Hosarithi were shot by the police in the Hosaritti case, they were taken to Haveri and shot. Those who took them to the hospital will not forget the help they received on that occasion.

Those who helped during the struggle:

Thirukappa Patil, brother of K.F. Patil of Kakol, arranged meals in his garden many times. The reason we used to go there often was because there was a well there, which was convenient for bathing, and we also believed that we would get food. That belief never failed. In Muthalli, Eerappa Poojara's house used to arrange meals for many nights and many activists. Basappa of Biyathanala used to come to where we were and give us food. In Sunakalla Bidari, Kusuguru Basamma used to give us bread to the corn field where we were.

Thus, Guddanagouda never forgets to remember those who helped us in various ways during the movement.

Imprisonment:

The police came to know about the struggle in various places and arrested us in the first week of 1942. We did not say how much they would go to arrest our leaders, so they proudly say that only four of us were imprisoned for months in Haveri and Dharwad jails.

Harijanoddhar works:

Harijanoddhar was Gandhiji's main objective. And many of his followers in the country were involved in this dream work. While many people in Haveri district were busy with the work, Guddanagouda himself was ready to allow his community to live like ordinary people, avoiding the hardships and social humiliations they experienced.

There was no access to temples; there was no water in wells and wells. There was no food even in meetings and ceremonies, and his community was just being criticized even when they had done nothing wrong, which made him feel very hurt. As a solution to all this, Gandhiji's words of Harijanoddhar made Guddanagouda decide that he must give his community a respectable life, and he took up that work, says Guddappa.

They have done a lot for the Harijans, such as: Devaragudda, Basapur and Adur Here in the temple function, food was offered to the Dalits in large quantities, but they were not given food. Although the

GuddanGowda repeatedly asked the Patila of the village to give food to the Dalits, they did not respond. In anger, he put his hand on the rice basket saying, "Jai Bholo Bharat Mataki Jai." Then many upper castes beat him up, while some others abused him with bad words. When the police and officials heard this news, they came to the village and started arresting the upper class. The village Patilas came to the Gudanaganowdas and said, "I will make sure that this does not happen again." They decided to protect themselves from these police and officials. The fact that they sent the authorities and the police out of the village with the intention of keeping everyone safe is a testament to the priority they gave to the peace of the villagers.

Gandhiji asked for Akkialuru:

When Sindura Siddappa Gandhiji decided to invite the Mahatma to Akkialuru, since not everyone in the village cooperated, people were called from Bommanahalli and they were made to throw stones in the ground of the village Kannada school.

As soon as Gandhiji arrived in Akkialuru, he immediately went down to the Harijan's grove. When he heard this, he even started collecting garbage from the Harijan's grove, but we refused. Later, he gathered the village leaders and asked the Harijans to fill the water tank in Akkialuru, as the Dalits were not allowed to touch the water. Gandhiji himself stood in front of the grove and asked them to fill the water tank, and he proudly says that he did that. Gandhiji's action made us even stronger. He recalls the time when Gandhiji patted my back and said, "Achcha, Achcha" before leaving.

Shadaguppi case:

Dalits were not allowed to draw water in this village. When Gudnanagouda came to know about this, he stood up and called the official cars and the police to allow the Dalits to draw water.

Entering the temple and performing puja:

I, who was working so much for the Dalits, wondered why I should not enter the temple and perform puja. So, I entered the temples in Devaragudda, Basapura, Adoor and Akkialur and also performed puja to the gods myself. By doing this, I have set an example for our Dalits and I have filled water in wells and wells where Dalits are not allowed in many places.

After Independence:

After Independence, when Rachaiah was the Minister for Social Welfare, he became the President of the State-level SC and SP Committee while Guddappa became the Vice-President. And about meeting once a month and formulating plans for the development of the exploited classes, he was the president of the Dharwad District Harijan Samiti during the administration of Kengalla Hanumantharaya, and recalls the description of the work of Harijan development during that period. No matter which government comes later, Guddappa has fought and is still fighting to provide plots, houses and other facilities to the Harijans and the Dalits.

He has served as a member of the Vasana Panchayat for 12 consecutive years since 1961. He has worked as a member of the Akkialur Farmers' Development Society and has built a local organization. On 8.3.1961, a government organization was registered for the downtrodden, and as a result of its dissolution, 169 acres of land was made a special land and that land was distributed to the downtrodden by his organization.

Guddanagouda, who fought for the development of so many Harijans, has not acquired the house and land that he claims to have, which shows that he is a true Gandhian and is not selfish. Guddanagouda, who is a philanthropist, gets angry when he sees the current politics, politics and the money-hungry youth, and the social problems of the Dalits have reduced, but society is upset when it sees the corruption in the country. They are worried that another fight may be needed to end this corruption, seeing its darkness.

Patil became:

If they are Dalits and ask why this Patil is called, they tell the story of their family – a girl named Lakshmibai was a Devadasi and her daughter Durgasani was also a Devadasi. While this Durgasani was doing her daily work of cleaning the temple and collecting garbage, once the village Patila was captivated by her beauty and liked her, then Durgasani wanted to marry her and name the son or daughter born to him as your Patilaki. And if he agreed to marry her, he would marry her. When that Patila agreed, they had a son. As promised, the Patila gave the son the name Patil and the property, and the Guddan Gowdas proudly claim that they belong to that lineage.

Overall, the role that an ordinary Dalit youth, who was a cattle

herder and farmer, joined the freedom struggle, and the role he played in providing justice for his oppressed Dalits through his struggle is memorable. His struggle against untouchability and all the problems that were happening and are happening to his community, without considering his family, and his work for the upliftment of the Harijans in Hanagalli, his efforts in providing justice to his community by being in state-level committees, and the ways he followed for that are truly exemplary.

References:

1. Date: 10/10/2014 Details of the meeting at the residence of Shri Guddanagouda Neelanagouda Patil (Harijan) of Akkialur.
2. Statement of Paramanna Harkangi, an activist from Negalu, Haveri Taluk
3. Statement of Devendrappa Vibhuti Harkangi, an activist from Negalu, Haveri Taluk
4. Statement given by Meenappa Halli, an activist from Ranebennur Taluk.
5. Statement given by Bharamagouda Marigowda, an activist from Menasinala, Ranebennur Taluk.
6. Statement given by Shivappa Navathi, an activist from Tumminakatti, Ranebennur Taluk.

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