



Komaram Bheem Adivasi Libarater in the Nizam Telangana

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Abstract:

Komaram Bheem is a great adivasi and tribal leader of the country in post-independence India. As he was no less of a martyr in the adivasi struggle for autonomy, his reorganisation has been mostly limited within the boundaries of Telangana. His history is erased from history texts, just like many adivasi histories. A part from it, very few know that 'Jal Jangal, Jameen' the popular slogan of adivasi movement, was the first given by Komaram Bheem in his moment against Nizams, who argued that complete rights on all the resources of forest should be given to Adivasis.

Key words: struggle, autonomy, economic system, adivasi liberator

Introduction

A statue of the martyr Komaram Bheem was installed on the retaining wall of the tank. Long live his memory in the hearts of the Telangana Adivasi people who is a fighter and liberator of the state suppression and upper caste zamindars and patels exploitation. In the annals of the moolavasi and adivasi peoples in India right from the beginning they have been leading their liberation movement for the natural rights like Jal Jangal and Jameen and also fighting for the protecting their human and civil rights. Komaram Bheem's contemporary adivasi liberator Birsa Munda and many other legendary heroes in the Indian history.

Traditionally, the tribal people followed their customary law and there was no foreign power over them except the tribal chief. There are mostly peace loving people and existence of abundant natural resources did not necessitate any regulatory measures. This situation changed in the last two hundred years

with the penetration of state power into these areas. Prior to that neither the tribals of A.P. nor their lands were of interest to outsiders.

Today the tribal areas are rich, whereas the tribals are poor and here lives the catch. Nearly 5 lakh tribal families living in scheduled villages of the state would have together today been the proud owners of 18,48,209,30 acres (average household land holding of 3.69 acres (Approx.)), but today more than 48% of this land is cultivated by the non-tribals. In some districts like Khammam, Adilabad and Warangal more than 50% of the land in the scheduled villages is held by the non-tribals.

The issue of land alienation in the tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh, particularly in the Telangana region, has to be studied keeping in view the state policy. The character of the state policy from the colonial period reflects the non-tribal interests that operate within the socio-economic system. The legislative process initiated by the colonial state in this



regard resulted in the attribution of judicial nature to lands. Explaining the overall effects of the colonialism over the land structure, bhawani sen opines, "prior to the advent of the British the soil". Sen makes it clear that it is only after the British conquest of India that land had become a commodity, though there were a few exceptions. Land otherwise was inalienable and continued to be under the control of the original tiller. The conversion of land into a commodity was a late- phenomenon in the tribal areas, as capital could not penetrate till the Britishers had forced an entry into these areas and found the land to be cultivated commonly chief who was the nominal owner of the land.

However the casual relationship between the interest of capital penetration and the commoditisation of land must be understood in order to study land policy in the tribal areas. These interests, as analysed by R.S. Rao may be brought under three main heads; extension of market connections, demand for raw material, and strengthening of state power. It is in the background these three types of capital, which penetrated in to the Deccan tribal system, that state towards that land problems was formulated and which were analysed in the chapter. The tribal population in Telangana area were almost unexposed to the outside world during the nizam's in the early part of 18th century. The state activity, which was confined to the plains, where it could bring in a few changes, could not penetrate into the tribal territory because successive govts., including the early nizams, did not interfere in the affairs of the tribals. As soon as the Britishers established their conquest over the circar district of nizam's territory, they started organising

the land survey and settlement operations in Andhra around the period 1800-50. By extending military support to the nizams, the Britishers had their own intention finding and exploiting raw materials, while searching for new markets and trade centres in the region.

Hence the Telangana tribal areas underwent qualitative structural changes, and the Britishers further extended their operations in these areas in pursuit of raw materials. This was helped by the establishment of railway lines from Hyderabad to Palnadu for mining operations in 1844, which was extended to Vijayawada in 1899. By this the Britishers availed themselves of the raw material transportation while at the same time providing a link between Madras and Bombay, the two major colonial trade centres. This was made much easier with the opening up of the Chandrapur- Balharshah railway line in 1959 which connected the Adilabad forest areas to the outside world. All these efforts had been carried out with the active involvement of the colonial capital which, in turn, served its purpose of linking the market centres of Delhi and central India to south India.

These aspects of colonial capital, specially its "raw material bias," have been described by Arun Bose. The interdiction of the forest conservancy operations in 1920's and 1930's made retention of land a problem for the tribals in general, and the gonds in particular in the context of Adilabad. And they began to feel the lack of permanent path rights. Meanwhile the consolidation of colonial interests in tribal areas also facilitated the nizam state to get more revenue, strengthen its base, promote a set of native non-tribal landed classes in



these areas. A nexus was formed between this landed class, the nizam state and Britishers as the opening up of these areas for exploitation benefited all the parties though in different ways. The activities of the colonial as well as the native nizam state, introduced many important changes in A.P. tribal areas. Large areas of tribal lands were brought under settled cultivation, infiltration of trading classes as well as absentee land lords took place into these areas; efforts were made to search for raw materials by the colonial interest in conclusion with the native state power which resulted in the establishment of the sigareni collieries. There was remarkable growth of communication and transportation facilities through which the immigration of non-tribal and non-cultivating peasant classes increased. All these changes hastened the polarisation and emergence of a clear-cut exploitative class consisting of absentee landlords, and traders like shaukars or kamatees, who brought in cultivating middle class peasantry from the plains. These sections of the population were accompanied by their non-tribal service caste poor peasant and agricultural labourers. These conditions resulted in the concentration of properties and resources, a decline in the ratio of tribal land ownership, and transformation of land into a commodity which led to the alienation of the original tillers.

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the popular slogan of adivasi movement, was the first given by Komaram Bheem in his movement against nizams, who argued that complete rights on all the resources of forest should be given to Adivasis.

Komaram Bheem belonged to Gond (koitur) community and was born in Sankepalli of Adilabad district, Telangana, in 1900. Adilabad district is located in north, making a border with the state of Maharashtra. The region was predominantly populated by Gonds, and was under the sovereignty of Gond Kingdom of Chanda (Chandapur) and Ballarpur. Bheem's childhood was spent without any exposure to the outside world. He did not have any formal education, and he grew up seeing and experiencing the plights of his people. As Mythathi Arun Kumar in his book narrates, Bheem grew up listening to stories of exploitation of Gond and Kolam adivasi by Jangalaat police, businessmen, and zamindars. In order to survive, Bheem kept moving from one place to other trying to protect himself from exploitation of businessmen and extortion of officials. Crops produced after podu farming, were taken away by Nizam officials, Jangalaats arguing that the land was theirs. They'd fingers of adivasi children, accusing them of illegally cutting down trees. Tax were collected forcefully, otherwise false cases were registered. After being left with nothing in hand from farming, people had started moving out of their villages. In such a situation, his father was killed by forest officials for asserting adivasi's rights. Bheem was agitated by the murder of his father and after his father's death, his family moved from Sankepalli to Sardapur."

In the month of 1940, one day Patwari Laxman Rao, Nizam Pattadar Siddique Saab



came along with 10 people and started abusing and harassing gonds to pay the taxes, at the time of harvesting. Gonds resisting and in this tussle siddique saab died in the hands of komaram Bheem. He ran away after the incident with his friend Kondak from sartapur to chanda(chandapur) by walk. One printing press owner named vitoba helped and took them along with him from railway station. Vitoba was running a magazine against English and nizam at that time. Bheem learnt English, Hindi, Urdu during his stay with vitoba. After a while, vitoba was arrested by police and press was shut down. From there, Bheem went to Assam to work in tea plantation with person he met at marchiryal railway station. He worked there for four and half years, where he also protested against plantation owners for the rights of workers in tea plantation and was also arrested during this struggle. After four days, Bheem managed to escape from jail. From Assam railway station, he got into a goods train and reached Ballarshah. While he was in assam, he had hear about allure sitaramaraju, who was leading the adivasi struggles in forest. He remembered struggles of Ramji gond who had fought against Nizam's atrocities. After returning he started planning and organizing future struggle of Adivasis."

The present Telangana state was once part of nizams rule of Hyderabad state. It was ruled by Nawabs of asifjahi dynasty which was later included into Indian union in 1948. During Nizam's time unbearable taxes were imposed and exploitation and atrocities of local zamindars were rampant on adivasi masses. In the background of on-going atrocities, Bheem launched massive agitations against nizam government, and started guerrilla warfare against

their army. Making jodeghat the centre of his activities, Bheem continued his guerrilla war form 1928 to 1940.

After return, he moved to kakanghat with his mother and brother somu. He worked for lacchu patel, who was head of devadham village. Lacchu also to care of Bheems marriage with som Bai. Bheem helped lacchu settle his land litigation with asifabad ameensaab. This incident made him popular in surrounding villages. After some time Bheem went with his family members to bhabejhari and cleared the land for cultivation. Patwari janglaat chowkidars again came at the tie of harvesting, they harassed and threatened them to leave the place, arguing it's their (Nizam govt..)land. Bheem as decided to meet nizam to discuss the atrocities on adivasis and demand justice, but he could not get the appointment to meet nawab. He returned to jodeghat without losing hope, and realised that revolution against the rule was only solution left to their problem. He mobilised adivasi youth and common people form twelve gondu kolam gudems-jodeghat, Patnapur, Bhabjhari, Thokennavada, Chelbardi, Shivguda, Bhimangundi, Kallegaon, Ankusapur, Narsapur, Koshaguda, linepatter; and formed a guerrilla army with them to protest for the land rights. He Proposed a plan to declare themselves as independent gond Kingdome(Bheem's demand for a separate gond state was the first in the series of demands for autonomous gondwana state for gonds).

A PORTRAIT OF KOMARAM BHEEM

With the sound of Tudum, Ragal was hoisted for initiating the moment. Gonds revolt started by attacking Babujhari and



jodeghat land lords. Nizam govt. was frightened after getting to know about this uprising and sent asifabad collector to negotiate with komaram Bheem and assured that they will be given land Pattas and additional land will be given to komaram Bheem himself to rule. But Bheem denied their proposal and argued that his struggle is for justice and nizam has to release those people who have been arrested and false charges, at the same time leave their place and asserted his demand for self-rule.

War had begun with the sounds of Tudam Tuta. Gond advises with utmost passion and enthusiasm, protected their land Bheem's speech encouraged them to participate in the struggle for land, food and freedom. People have decided to fight until their last breath for protecting their future. During this time, Bheem raised slogan of- "JAL JANGAL ZAMEEN". Nizam sarkar did not listen to the demands of Bheem and gonds operation continued, while nizam sarkar started conspiring to kill Bheem Thasildar Abdul Sattar led this cruel conspiracy and sent captain Aliraja brands along with 300 army men to Babhejhari and jodeghat hills. Nizam sarkar failed to capture him and his army. So they bribed kurdu Patel, who became informant for nizam sarkar and provided information about Bheem's army.

Based on this information, on September 1, 1940 early in the morning women in jodeghat had spotted armed policemen surrounding their village as they came looking for Komaram Bheem. It was their years since Bheem had been leading a rebellion on the question of rights of tribal people to pastures and the lands being tilled by them in the forests. Bheem, who was camping at

Jodeghat with a handful of his warriors were instantly up and got ready by arming themselves. Most of the rebels could manage to get hold of axes, sickles and bamboo sticks. Asifabad Thalukadhar Abdulsarfar, a personification of the nizam's tyranny tried to get Bheem to surrender through emissaries. After refusal for the 3rd time by Bheem to submit himself, Sarfar ordered to open fire. That tribal rebels could do nothing but went down fighting. "As many as fifteen warriors besides Bheem attained martyrdom. The incident plunged the tribal into gloom on that full moon day" the late Maru master and Bhadu master, the close aides of Bheem, used to say whenever they wound up their narrative of the incident. Not many, however, got to see the martyrs as the bodies were burnt unceremoniously. That was a full moon night, when hundreds of his followers armed themselves with bows, arrows, and spears and launched an assault against the police. Bheem and his followers fought with bravery and lost his life in the battle field after suffering fatal injuries. (i) Assuming that Bheem knew the traditional spells they feared he could come back to life. Therefore they shot him until his body became like a sieve and unrecognizable. They burned his body at the instant and left only when they were assured that he is known more. A Gond star has fallen on that day of Ashauja Porunima. The place that echoed with the sounds of tudum, wept in the jodeghat hills. All Gond villages cried and the place drowned in the sorrow. The entire forest resounded with slogans like komaram Bheem Amar Rahe, Bheem dada Amar Rahe.

Many existing historical accounts (ii) about komaram Bheem claim that komaram Bheem was a nationalist



“vanvasi”(Hindu) leader who fought against the nizam govt.. These narrative argue that Bheem resentment against nizam was because of Islamic operation on Hindus and destruction of Hindu culture. When gond advises are not even Hindus, how does Bheem became a Hindu icon leading the battle against Islamist “oppression? Which part of Bheem history suggest that he endorsed to Hindu religion or fought for Hindu rights? Gond people history provide us as an entirely different story. it suggests that these claims are mere propaganda to associate bheem into Hindu nationalist discourse by manipulating history. Bheem moment against nizam was solely born out of denial of basic adivasi rights overland, recourse and demand for autonomy. In his people imagination he was only seeking to liberate his people from Dikus (outsiders) and was fighting for justice and self-rule.

In the light of decades long adivasi struggle for Patta rights, komaram Bheem’s contribution remains significant- he exemplifies a revolutionary icon for all adivasi moments and also remains us of the forgotten promises of nation and state towards the adivasi. Komaram bheem holds utmost respectful position among Gond adivasi community and is consider as a deity (pen). Gonds observe Bheem’s death anniversary every year on Aswayuja Pournami and this day, an event is organized at jodeghat to commemorate his life and struggle. After long struggle, 72 years after his death, in 2012 komaram bheem statue installed at Tank bond Hyderabad. Komaram bheem will forever remain as a leader and icon for age long adivasi struggle of “Jal Jangal Jameen”.

Komaram bheem has become a deity gond people and has become an icon for Telangana liberation moment. Its name literally disappeared onto the history and most people in the state were not aware of him and his sacrifice. His death anniversary is celebrated in the district of Adilabad in jodeghat near their home by naxalite militants and alleged that the govt.. As down the activity. With the increase of passions in the region of Telangana, memory has been revived Komaram Bheem and his statue was recently erected in the retaining wall of the tank in Hyderabad.

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