



Voice of the Subaltern Poet: Contribution of Suddala Hanumanthu in Telangana Peoples' Movement

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Abstract

The present paper critically analyse the songs and political philosophy of Suddala Hanumanthu. He is one of the important subaltern poets in Telangana who played an imperative role in mobilization of the masses through his songs in Telangana Peoples' Movement (1946-51). We could see the songs of The martyrs of Telangana and their struggles in the songs of Suddala Hanumanthu. His songs reflected in order to counter hegemonic nature of Nizam's rule in the present state of Telangana. This region is a prominent source of the subaltern/people poets whose songs acted as a weapon of the mass resistance to fight against 'Deshmuk' and Razakars who were the mainly responsible for all the atrocities under the Nizams rule of Hyderabad State. Many studies have neglected at the life and voice of the subaltern poet in history. However some studies have reflected on this line. But there is no critical analysis and appreciation of the subaltern poets in history. Apart from this fact this study will analyse the songs and struggles of Suddala Hanumanthu in the Telangana Movement. By finding his involvement and contribution in the history of Telangana the present paper argues how his songs played as the weapon of the masses to create an alternative discourse in countering feudalistic nature of Nizam's rule in Telangana.

Keywords: Telangana, Subaltern, People Songs, Suddala Hanumanthu.

Introduction

The elite history or 'history from above' talks about the great achievements of the ruling classes. History from Below began as a reaction against the traditional histories. The people's history is mostly concerned with the actions and feelings of marginalized sections that are neglected by the traditional historians. The perspectives and approaches of history have become problematic in contemporary days. In view of these Postmodernism has become an important tool to find out the gaps and problems in its tasks of evaluation of historical writing. In the wake of the social epistemological space created by the postmodernist discourse, there has been an essential change in the perspectives of historical writings.

This perspective questions the existing positions variously. In the case of Telangana people movement the role of subalterns has been neglected in the erstwhile state of Andhra Pradesh and even Telangana mainstream society. The present study produces people's literature which was created by subaltern poet, Suddala Hanumanthu in the Telangana Peoples' Movement (1946-1951).

Back ground of the Study

The Telangana People's Movement (1946-1951) was one of the most potent and radical struggles in the history of modern India. Since 1946 growing out of tyrannical and hegemonic socio-economic conditions of the region in the region of Telanagana, the struggle by the people of Telangana tried to resist the feudal government vibrantly^{1,2}. It was a remarkable struggle which was

characterized by the radical egalitarian politics and participation of all sections of the peasantry. The violence employed by the state was met by a popular resistance, which for time, employing guerrilla war tactics and all manners of weapons, was able to carve out a political space in which a revolutionary society began to be created.

The present Telangana state was under the rule of Nizam's government before 1947. The Nizam's government consisted of three regions of the previous Andhra Pradesh state, along with five districts of Maharashtra region and three districts of Karnataka region. People were exploited and suppressed by the feudal rule of the Nizam. People of Telangana waged inexorable people struggles against feudal tyranny of Razakara under Nizam's government. The Telangana people's movement is a famous episode in the history of India.

In the cultural dimension of the struggle, the folk art forms and popular songs played an important role in the process of peoples' mobilization towards movement. For historical reasons, the Telangana rural society remained without significant educational facilities. There were few schools, and most of these imparted education in Urdu³. Because of this, as well as the socio-economic conditions, the mass of Telangana rural population remained illiterate. In such society the folk art forms plays an important role in shaping popular consciousness. Several poets produced a large number of peoples' songs which contributed in many ways to the making of a new radical consciousness among the people of Telangana. As Mao said², "To defeat the enemy we must rely primarily on the army with

guns. But this army alone is not enough; we must also have a cultural army, which is absolutely indispensable for uniting our own ranks and defeating the enemy” In the Telangana Peoples’ Movement also, the political strategies and circumstances required the deployment of a cultural army. Various forms of cultural practices which drew inspiration from the culture of the region were effectively utilized to mobilize and maintain support for the movement, and in the process contributed significantly to the construction of a subaltern ideology.

Relevance of People’s Songs

In the Telangana Movement one of the most powerful manifestations of people’s culture was people’s songs or people’s poetry. The following discussion gives an understanding about the concepts of the people’s poetry and people’s songs. The word poetry is normally applied to the specific forms of elite literary production with refined grammatical and material rules. The term, ‘People’s poetry’ might, therefore, seem to be a contradiction. The implication in this study is however that even the subordinate sections of society can and do have a poetry, which arises in their everyday lives. Even the songs, which are orally produced and transmitted, can justifiably be called people’s poetry. Such poetry may not conform to the common idea of poetry. But drawing as it does, upon the rich texture of the common people’s life and the rhythms of spoken dialects and borrowing the idiom of the people People’s poetry can legitimately be called poetry.

Secondly, people’s songs or folk songs emanate most often from the work of the people, and their rhythms’, therefore, are determined by the rhythms of the different kinds of work⁴. But folk songs are not only work songs, they embrace the entire range of experience of the ordinary people, and while entertaining, instruct the people and integrate them into an ideological system. According to N.Gopi, “*The primary feature of the people’s poet is that he tries to identify and recognize the social problems and to focus on them in his poetry by paying full attention towards the society*”, and that “*the greatness of the people’s poets lay in giving solutions to the problems of society in their poetry, besides criticizing them*”⁵. It has been correctly pointed out that popular literature is not only a necessary adjunct of any movement, but even more, it is movement that produces a particular literature, so much so that even an illiterate can become a poet, even if only in an oral tradition.

The terms ‘popular’ and ‘folk’ are used interchangeably, but scholars have sometimes distinguished the two. Richard M. Dorson for example has seen that folk culture has conservative and popular culture as normative⁶. John Fiske, contrasting folk culture and popular culture has argued that the latter is made out of industrially produced and distributed commodities⁷. The suggestion here seems to be that popular culture is a modern phenomenon while folk culture is seen to be ‘traditional’.

Another distinction is made by Siva Narayan Kabiraj who has suggested that popular literature was neither folk nor elite but in between the two having its own identity⁸. Popular culture is sometimes interpreted as referring to an inferior kind of work or work that deliberately set out to win favour. For the understanding of suddala Hanumanthu’s role in the Telangana Movement, define popular culture as a culture that is being made by the people for themselves. This process may draw upon a pre-existing folk culture or tradition but invariably must transmit it into something new which would articulate the radical aspirations of the people. That is, it is being argued, that popular culture is the culture of the people, people being seen as the subordinate and exploited elements in the society.

Brief Biography of Suddala Hanumantu

Nalgonda district was the focal point of the Telangana Peoples’ Movement. The district was the source of revolutionary leaders and people poets such as Bheem Reddy Narasimha Reddy, Devulapalli Venkateswara Rao, Ravi Narayana Reddy, and Yadagiri etc. It was in this social and cultural context that Suddala Hanumantu was born in Paladugu village in Nalgonda district in 1907. His father Buchi Ramulu was an Ayurvedic doctor. He used to give medicine to all the villagers, and even landlords used to come to him for treatment. Because of this, Buchi Ramulu's family was relatively well-off. Therefore, Suddala Hanumantu was, we could say, from a middle class family. Some times Buchi Ramulu used to perform ‘Black Magic’ that was curing the people who had been suffering from otherwise incurable diseases. Suddala Hanumantu was skeptical about the value of this ‘magic’. When he asked his father about it, Buchi Ramulu said that “Even I do not believe in this. But the villagers feel happy when I do that. So, for their satisfaction I am doing ‘Black magic’ along with regular treatment”⁹. While it might appear to be deliberate mislead of the villagers, to Hanumanthu it indicated that it was better to relieve people from fear through their own belief system.

Notably, Hanumanthu’s father Buchi Ramulu was also a stage artist. He played roles like *Harischandra*, *Garudachala*, and *Devana*. Hanumanthu’s grandfather, Krishnamurthi was also a folk artist. He had performed *Harikathas*. Hanumanthu's paternal uncles were also actors. They used to perform street plays. Hanumanthu used to go along with them for various stage programmes. Thus the popular stage was virtually a play ground for him ever since his childhood. Since his early age Hanumanthu had good grasping and memory power that helped him to imitate the popular folk artists in the village¹⁰. He used to sing, dance and act like them. He also mimicked the voices of birds and animals. As his father observed his skills, he sent Hanumanthu to join the ‘*Anjanidas Nataka Company*’ at Atmakuru in Nalgonda district of Telangana. This Nataka Company recognized him as a dexterous actor. Hanumanthu went along with Anjanidas Nataka Company for two years and played in many dramas such as *Gayopakyanam*, *Keechakavada*, and *Mahamantri Yugandar*. Sometimes he used to play women

characters like the role of Sudeshna in 'Keechakavada'. Other important roles he portrayed included that of Kousika in *Gayopakyanam*. When he was just 15 years old he joined in the drama company. While traveling with the troupe, and perhaps because his interest in the classics was stimulated by his acting career, Hanumanthu learnt to read and write. Voraciously, he read *Satakas*, political and historical books such as *Arva Chanakya*, *Shaiahan*, *Viiavanaqara Pahanam* etc. Due to circumstances of the surroundings and his talent ability, he had learnt to play many instruments such as the Tambura, Burras, Dappu, flute, Harmonium, and the Tabala. He had learned instruction of the instruments from village singers and professional artists.

Early Political Ideology of Suddala Hanumanthu

Subsequently he went to Hyderabad and got an opportunity to join in the State Botanical Department as a clerk. Then he had visited places like Madras, Allahabad, and Aurangabad etc. During this time he was attracted to the 'Arya Samaj'. In order to counter the Islamic conversion movement the Arya Samaj was started in Hyderabad. In fact Arya Samaj came from North India. This is a reformation movement in the Hindu religion. The Arya Samajists do not believe in the word 'Hindu'. They thought that the word Hindu represents the meaning as 'slave'. Therefore, they preferred to call Hindus as Aryans. They thought that the religion had been polluted by the Muslim kings and the colonial rulers¹¹. Because of this, Dayananda Saraswathi gave the call "Go back to the Vedas". In Hyderabad, Pandit Vinayak Rao Vidyalankar was the leader of Arya Samaj activities in Nizam's period. Landlords and other rich Hindus supported this. So in one way it encouraged feudalism. But it acted as a militant organization which protested against Nizam's policies on religion.

In the initial career of Suddala Hanumanthu he had actively participated in the activities of Arya Samaj such as *Shudhi Vrat*, speeches and prayers. He too wrote several songs on the Arya Samaj which were published in a book called, '*Yadardha Bajanamala*'. He maintained good relations with leaders of Arya Samaj like Pandit Vinayakarao Vidyalankar, Rudra Dev etc. During those days only he married one dalit woman called Manemma¹². He resigned his post when one of his higher authorities insulted him after knowing that he belonged to the Arya Samaj. In 1943, he went to Warangal along with his wife and started educating Dalits. Due to the rigid observation of the caste system in those days his wife could not mingle with his family members. Like Hanumanthu she could not participate in social as well as political activities. She pressurized Hanumanthu to go back to Hyderabad. As Hanumanthu refused bluntly she went back to Hyderabad and settled with another man. This incident influenced Hanumanthu. He wrote in his autobiography and stated as "My ideal marriage failed like that..." This needs to study further carefully to understand a dalit women's position in his village and family society. We could

easily memorize that incident in estimating dominant ideology of caste system in his village.

Andhra Maha Sabha and Suddala Hanumanthu

Along with upsetting disturbance in his family life as it mentioned above, Suddala Hanumanthu went through two experiences at that time that were to be turning points in his life. The first occurred in his village. As he himself described it, "A government officer came to our village and ordered an old man called Mukkella Papayya to carry his luggage. He had been suffering with fever. But the officer cruelly beat him. That incident developed hatred in me against Nizams rule and feudal oppression"¹⁰. Hanumanthu had been observing since childhood the exploitation and ill-treatment of the poor by the rich. But this incident transformed him perhaps from a mere passive observer into an active intervener in public affairs. The second turning point was that when he heard the speech of Ravi Narayana Reddy, the Chairman of the Andhra Maha Sabha which was held in Bhuvanagiri in 1944. The Andhra Maha Sabha played seminal role in the Telangana Movement People's Movement (1946-51). It grew out of meeting held in 1921 at Hyderabad to discuss the Nizam's oppression and ill-treatment towards activists of the Andhra Maha Sabha. For this meeting people from all the places of Nizam's state attended. After the Telangana Movement started, the Andhra Maha Sabha joined hands with the Communist Party of India (CPI) and both came to be identified as the "*Sangham*". Thus, this began as an educational and cultural organization turned into a powerful political organization. The speech of Ravi Narayana Reddy radically altered Hanumanthu's political vision, and inspired him to adopt a more socially conscious perspective. With this he bid a farewell to the Arya Samaj and started taking part in Andhra Maha Sabha activities¹⁰.

During this period, as he was getting involved in the movement that he married another lady, Janakamma of Suddala village in Nalgonda district. From then onwards he settled in Suddala village, and became known as Suddala Hanumanthu. He learned the methods of land survey and resisted the illegal land holdings of landlords. He established a village organisation in that village. He used to read '*Prajashakti*' newspaper which was smuggled from the Andhra region. *Prajashakti* is a Telugu newspaper and it is published in Andhra Pradesh under Communist Party of India (Marxist).

Popular Songs and Ideology of Suddala Hanumanthu

Due to oppression of the landlords and the Razakars compelled him to widen the area of the struggle to include the development of cultural weapons. Hanumanthu, like many others who joined the movement, began to receive training in the use of weapons. He was in fact put in charge of the so called *Gutapala Sangam* of Suddala village, a self defense unit armed with sticks. He also received rifle training, and learnt the use of other weapons like

swords. But, he realized, he would be more effective with a song rather than a speech. Suddala Hanumanthu began, therefore, to compose songs for the movement. This was particularly useful, because the songs that were in vogue were those which had been composed in the Andhra region, and were therefore alien to the Telangana people. Suddala Hanumanthu, rooted in the culture of Telangana, and its performing and folk arts, was able to produce songs which were more easily accessible to the people in the movement. In these songs, he reflected the people's life styles and local problems. Due to this his name echoed in Nalgonda district. Soon, his cultural troupe became as famous as the armed *dalams* which were waging a war against the landlords and the Razakars. The Razakars were a private military organized by Qasim Razvi who supports the rule of Nizams Government in Hyderabad State. To counter the Razakars, people of Telangana under the leadership of Swami Ramanand Tirtha formed the Andhra *Hindu Mahasabha* which sought integration of the state with rest of India. Razakars were responsible for the killing, rape, and brutal murder of many people in the Telangana.

The popular people's poet Yadagiri who was known with the song of "*Bandenaka Bandi Katti...*" belonged to Suddala Hanumanthu's troop¹². Through his songs and various other folk forms, Suddala Hanumanthu created cultural weapons of great power. Reaching out to the various sections of rural Telangana at that time when they were in ferment, Hanumanthu helped to raise their political consciousness, and in significant ways kept alive their militancy.

The social and political vision of Suddala Hanumanthu is projected in many of his songs. It comes through more clearly in the song entitled '*Pratina*' (oath). Expressing the hope that the people's government will be established, the song goes on to declare that:

*"We will remove the caste and communal feeling and develop integrity. We will fight for independence we are ready to sacrifice our lives to overthrow the Nizam. We will stop the Jagirdari system which was a Moghal system. We will develop panchayati system and this is our promise that we will fight for people's government"*¹². The rhythm of this song, which begins "*Praja Prabhutvam, Praja Prabhutvam, Praja Prabhutvam Sadhistam...*" is virtually identical to Sri Sri's famous work, *Maha Prasthanam's* poem which begins "*Maroprapamcham... Maroprapamcham Maropramcham...*". The *Maha Prasthanam* is popular collected poems of Srirangam Srinivasarao. He is popularly known as Sri Sri. This text is considered as revolutionary poems in the history Indian Literature. This work is written during 1930 and 1940. It was published in 1950. It created a sense of revolutionary ideology among the poets in India. The meaning of *Maha Prasthanam* is *The Great Journey to a New World*. Sri Sri himself reported by said that he derived his inspiration from traditional hymn *Baja Govindam*¹³. It is possible that Hanumanthu may also have drawn his song directly for the *Baja Govindam*. But of course it is more likely

that Sri Sri's poem which had virtually become an important political text for the Andhra Communists was the model, which inspired Hanumanthu. The powerful political message in Sri Sri's poem with its utopian vision and its musical rhythms were responsible for its great popularity among radicals. The involvement of Andhra Communists in Telangana movement meant also that there was a diffusion of cultural ideas and practices from Andhra to Telangana. In any case the library and literary movements of the 1940s would have acted as a cultural channel for the follow into Telangana of radical literature like Sri Sri's *Maha Prasthanam* poem which was published in *Jwala Journal* in 1935. It is also guide likely that "*Maroprapamcham*" in particular was sung at political gatherings. It was not surprising; therefore, that Suddala should have adopted this style for his song. There may be an implication in the above argument that cultural ferment in Telangana was mainly caused by influences from the Andhra region. This would of course be wrong, since what was happening in Telangana was primarily a product of changes occurring in Telangana Society and Culture. While there were no doubt visible cultural influences from Andhra as in the above case, these were interacting with a powerful local culture.

While, Hanumanthu's '*Pratina*' outlined his vision of what the future would be like, in many of his other poems Hanumanthu described the oppression and exploitation which he witnessed around him. For instance, his troubled perception of the exploitative and cruel system of forced bonded labour called *vetti* inspired him to write the song "*Vettichakiri Vidhanam*". In this song he appears to be merely describing the system of *vetti*. The *chakali* (washermen) has to wake up early and clean the lord's house. He has to wash their cloths and pound the grain. He has to prepare ghee, chicken and mutton for dinners. He has to run household tasks for the lord. The *Mangali* (barber) must shave the people of lord's house. He has to massage the lords. He has to see that the Lanterns are filled with oil and prepare beds for the landlord and his family. The village potter must make pots for the lord. He has to make water ready for baths in the lord's house. He has to bring the fire wood from forests, and play the '*Dappu*' instrument to tell the time. The '*Baruvontulu*' (people who carry luggage from one place to another) must carry the luggage of the lord and his officers.

Although the song appears to be a mere description, in its very repetition of the daily life of those trapped into the exploitation of *vetti*, it is a powerful means of arousing anger, not only of those who were previously not aware of the evils of the system, but also of those who were themselves performing the tasks.

In the song '*Vyavasayakuli*' (Agricultural labour), He addresses the agricultural labourer who struggles hard day and night to survive¹²:

*In sun and rain you toil endlessly only to fill the granaries of the dora and not your own stomach!
Day and night you toil but you haven't enough to eat!!*

You have no time for wife and child! For all your time are the doras!!
You have no house! You have no land!!
You dont know your wage! You dont know if you can work tomorrow!!
You go to lift water! Your wife goes to transplant!!
What about the children in the frail hut by the tank when the storm breaks?
With all hope you till the banjar land! But the dora's cunning steals it from you!!
And all your labour is in vain
For land! For food!
For a just return for your labour! For ending the robbery of the dora!!
Rytu, unite and struggle...!!!

This song conclusion with a call for unity among the agricultural labourers and for a struggle to end landlordism with the associated idea of land to the tiller makes it a powerful political song.

Hanumanthu was well aware of the need to use symbols in his songs which would be immediately meaningful to his audiences. For example is one song 'Ramabanam', Hanumanthu compares the agricultural labourers to Rama's arrows and thus he argues they can first even against kings to establish, their people's government. Comparing village officials to these whose leader was the Deshmukh. The song exhorts the 'Rytu' not to lose the opportunity but to join the struggle and fight for the victory. An interesting aspect of this song is the specific revolutionary message addressed to women. Asking women to remember other brave women like those in Suryapet and Malla Reddy Gudem and to rise up like their brothers, seize weapons and like Kali figures to attack the enemy. The descriptive songs of Hanumanthu performed two very useful functions. One was that they made people aware of the social situation in which they were located. And the other was that by focusing attention upon certain aspects of that social situation of song reinforced the emerging militant consciousness of the people. His song on the Sangam was thus not only a description but was also an attempt to project and emphasis its role.

In "Sangam Vachindiro Rytanna..." song he focused on the positive aspects of the 'Sangam' to attract a following for it. The song describes how the Sangam created fear amongst the feudal lords and Razakars. The forced labour was also gradually disappearing. It fought against the unlawful land holdings of landlords. It encouraged night schools and women's organizations which were called Mahila Sanghams. It protested against the evils of caste, religion, the British and feudalism which were seen as causes for the oppressive conditions of the people of Telangana. The song concludes with the declaration that the Sangam will definitely bring a new age for the people of Telangana and calling people to participate actively in Sangam's activities. Similarly his description of the Guerrilla war waged by the Telangana peasants, in one of his Golla Suddulu was at

once a record of typical guerrilla activities, an instruction manual and a call for action. It is entitled, *Sayuda Poratam Golla Suddulu*¹². This song gave lot of information about the various armed Dalams. The messenger Dalams bring the information which was sent by secret Dalams to the central committee and bring back the orders and advises to the regional committees. The catering Dalams supply food for the armed forces. The armed Dalams sometimes follow guerrilla methods like hiding in trees and hills and launching sudden attacks on Razakars. Fighting with rocks, digging big holes on the road and covering up with some material so that the enemy may fall into the hole and the armed Dalams could then set fire to them. Sometimes they keep chilly bombs which were called Udara bombs near the enemy's place. The song goes on to list the various Sangams which participated in the war, like peasants associations, Kuli Sanghas, women's association, children's association, Youth association and Panchayats.

He has composed another song, 'Ranabheri Mogindhi' in 1944. In this song he narrated the ill-treatment of the people by the Nizam and his henchmen, and how the people are being oppressed by the Rajakars. He stated in the following song that:

The war bell has rung!
oh! Man comes forward!!
We feed the Nizam, but he sent Rajakars on us!
They are burning the villagers!!
Looting them and raping women before their husbands!
Thrusting nails into fingers! !
They sent thousands of people into jails. And kept police camps in villages!!
Why fear! Fight without delay!!
Women must be Rudrmambas! Men must be Balachandras!!

In this song again, as in *Vyavasaya Coolie* (agricultural peasant), we find Hanumanthu consciously addressing women, asking them to emulate the Heroic Kakatiya Rani Rudrama Devi. It needs to be said, however, that the entire song is addressed to men. It is only in one line that women are also given a call to action, reflecting perhaps the dominant tendencies within the movement, in which the leaders while recognizing the importance of women did not always give them total equality. As already noted, Suddala Hanumanthu recognized the power of symbols. One of the most powerful symbols during the Telangana movement was the red flag. In a song on the flag, Hanumanthu brilliantly describes how the flag, flying high everywhere, stands as a symbol for the peasant and the worker and the millions who are oppressed. He has stated that:

"Red flag is the symbol for the proletariats. It cures the chains of slavery. It stops the fascist methods of Nizam. It inspires the people who are seeking freedom. It encourages the fraternity among all working class people in the world". This song has a particular intensity because Hanumanthu was inspired to write it after having been beaten by Chudamma, the wife of the landlord of Suddala Village, for hoisting the flag.

Another incident which similarly provoked Suddala Hanumantu to compose a song also occurred in Suddala village. The Party had created defensive units in villages, called *Gutapala Sangam* because they were armed with sticks (*gutapas*). Hanumantu led the *Gutapala sangam* of Suddala. Once as it was meeting in the village Razakars attacked. Rallying to the battle cry of an old woman who shouted “*vey vey debbaku debba*” (return every blow with a blow), Hanumanthu and other villagers beat back the Rajakars. This incident inspired Hanumanthu to compose a song which began “*vey vey debbaku debba*”. He has brilliantly composed with a unique kind of rhythm, the song is an exhortation to the people to meet violence with violence, and the very sounds of the words seem to be inspirations for meeting the violence of the state with revolutionary violence.

Some times Hanumanthu addressed the landlords in his songs though the purpose of course, was more to inform the peasant about how the landlords were oppressing them. One such written in 1946 reads thus²⁰.

*Oh rich men! Oh landlords!!
Why dont you open your eyes! Why dont you stop your
oppression!! ?
Why dont you reach out to the millions in jails! Why dont you stop
your oppression!! ?
You got the military on your side! To fire upon the innocent
people!!
How kind you are, you landlords! You dont like freedom!!
You'd rather worship the Whiteman! You will never cease to say
achha!!
You can't stop the people's movement! Did you hear! ?
You have to give your mind and money for the liberation of the
motherland!
You must support the revolution otherwise we will crush your
arrogance of wealth!*

One of the surprising features about Suddala Hanumanthu's songs is that evident tendency to use words and phrases more characteristic of elite poetry than of people's poetry. Although the dialect of the people is used extensively, there are more literary phrases than one may expect in songs primarily intended for the people. This may have been partly due to the literary reading of Hanumanthu, and his use some times of elite poetic styles. However, when he wanted to, Hanumanthu could construct a song which is cast in words which are truly of the people. For example, in the song entitled “*Palletoori Pillagada....*”, Hanumanthu with great sensitivity and simplicity describes the life and troubles of a village boy.

The poor village boys generally guard the cattle of the feudal lord, and thus have no real childhood. Addressing one such, Hanumanthu asks:

*How long ago was it that you left your mother's breast! ?
You still have the tender flush on your cheeks!!*

*How long have you been working! You have no clothes to wear!!
You have no food to eat! But you are the king of the lord's cattle
yard!!*

The song goes on to describe with the same gentle irony, which is, therefore, all the more powerful, and the travails of the cowherd boy. “*You have to face the creatures and other dangers in forest while you are guarding the cattle. All for a handful of rice. And you get beaten by the overseer for everything. . . .Why are you feeling so sad to see the lord's children who are studying in schools....*” Then the song suddenly switches from its subtle mode to a political conclusion, and dramatically asks, “*Are you seeking to see the red flag, the flag of the poor, flying high on the Red Fort ? Are you seeking to see the end of the landlords?*”

As a multi talented personality Suddala Hanumanthu did not confine himself only to the writing of songs, and molded various other folk forms of Telanagana to the revolutionary purpose. Drawing upon his long experience on the folk stage, Hanumanthu adapted forms like ‘*Bahurupas*’ of the villages. He composed *Latkorusab*, *Gollasuddulu*, *Danda Ganam*, *Pakeeru Patalu* etc. In his *Latkorusab* art form he discussed the land problem, Nizam's feudal oppression, and the Indian Union's intervention into Nizam region and criticized¹⁴. In his *Pakeeru Patalu*, Hanumanthu used some Urdu words like *Allakenam*, *Bhai-Bhai* etc. In this *Pakeeru Pata* he compared the Nizam to Hitler. He depicted the cruel deeds of Nizam and heroic activities and incidents of Telangana movement.

Another form that he adapted was the song of the snake charmers. They sing “*Digu Digu Naganna*” song with ‘*Nagaswaram*’ instrument. Hanumanthu himself acted as a snake charmer and sang like them, in his song focusing on the atrocities of the Nizam. It reveals “*there is an end for you (Nizam), you have to come down*”.

Last Days of Suddala Hanumanthu

In all his activities, Suddala Hanumanthu's wife, Janakamma actively participated in the movement. Suddala Hanumanthu himself wrote in his diary that in his every activity his wife Smt. Janakamma's help and advice was there. She gave her voice for his song and her hand for his activity. She also went along with him wherever he traveled¹⁰.

When he became a very popular cultural figure in the Telanagna Peoples' Movement the government of the Nizam gave an order to shoot him at sight. He therefore virtually worked with a weapon in one hand and pen in another¹⁰. While he was thus continuing his work even at great risk to his life, he fell seriously ill, probably as a result of the bite of a poisonous insect in the jungle. The party ordered him to go underground. In 1947 he went underground with his wife, and later escaped to Bombay in camouflage along with his wife to get medical treatment for his health. In 1948 after the police action he came to Suddala village. Due to his knowledge of medicine he got the

R.M.P. degree in 1951. He supported his family with the earnings from his medical practice and with the help of his wife's proficiency in stitching.

In 1952 he was elected as the Deputy Sarpanch of Suddala village with the support of Communist Party. Even after the movement he trained students and others in giving cultural programmes. He has continued to write songs, but he felt unable to compose the kind of powerful songs as he had composed during the movement. One reason for this as he said that the Party itself did not continue to make use of his creative talents. However, he continued to write songs, reacting to contemporary events. For example in 1954, when a passenger train was passing the Yaswantapuram Bridge near Janagam, the bridge suddenly collapsed. Many people died in this accident. Hanumanthu visited the place and immediately he wrote a poem on this incident. He criticized petty politicians and vested interests who involved in separate Telangana movement.

In 1952 he wrote election songs for the Communist Party of India (C.P.I). His song "Palletoori pillagada..." was taken into the film 'Mabhoomi'. In 1952 even though the Congress Party asked him to join the party by offering 10,000 rupees and a piece of land, he refused to leave the C.P.I. In 1976 the Indian Government recognized him as a freedom fighter. In May 1981, even in his old age he was elected as village Sarpanch against Suddala Maktedar, with the support of the C.P.I. In 1981 he was felicitated in Mohan Rao pet High School as a people's poet. He wrote in his diary that this felicitation was a memorable one. He wrote 'Veera Telangana Sanghika Yakshaganam' by keeping Telangana armed struggle in back ground. He developed Golla Suddulu art form in Telangana. He died on October 10, 1982 due to disease of cancer.

Conclusion

The Telangana struggle was thus a fertile ground for the birth of a subaltern poets and wide range of new popular art forms and the adaptation of old forms to new purposes. In all these, subaltern poets and their songs played an important role in the movement. Secondly, famous religious songs and romantic lullabies were changed into people's songs which played a vital role in educating the masses. Subaltern poets such as Tirunagari Ramanjaneyulu, Yadagiri, Voyya Rajaram, and Sunkara Sastyanarayana, contributed many songs in the Telangana Peoples' Movement. As they were sung by the people and performed before them, these songs constructed and disseminated a subaltern's voice in the movement. These voices were drawn from the people of the region.

While recognizing the role played by the People's poets in the movement, especially Suddala Hanumanthu was obviously sensitive and critical observer of the world. Quite clearly it was

the Telangana movement, which sharpened his critical vision and turned him into subaltern poet committed to the idea of egalitarian transformation. The songs of Suddala Hanumanthu became a cultural weapon for the mobilization of the masses towards the Telangana Peoples' Movement. Thus Suddala Hanumanthu retained till the end a firm commitment to the egalitarian goal, and believed that poets and writers should contribute to the realization of that dream. It was this commitment perhaps that helped Suddala Hanumanthu to make, out of the cultural materials he knew so well, the powerful cultural weapons that played such an important role in the Telangana Peoples' Movement. It was also this commitment that helped Hanumanthu to sustain his revolutionary zeal through all the difficulties of the movement, and even after the ending of the struggle.

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