Support to Hyderabad Satyagraha by Government and People of The Central Provinces and Berar

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Introduction
The Hyderabad Satyagraha was one of important issues that the first Congress Ministry of the Central Provinces and Berar had to face during its short tenure. The supporters of Hyderabad Satyagraha from outside Hyderabad used Berar as springboard, and used common border between the territories of Hyderabad State and Berar to send volunteers across to Hyderabad State. Although the Congress Ministry did stop the people from crossing the border and refused to give any information to Hyderabad administration regarding Jatthas (groups) of supporters who intended to go across the border, they did not support the Satyagraha openly. The Satyagraha was launched by the Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha as a protest against persecution of Hindus by the Nizam Government of Hyderabad. The Arya Samajists had the evidence of forcible conversion of Hindus to Islam, imposition of Urdu on Hindu students and neglect of Hindu shrines and accused the Nizam of adopting anti-Hindu policy. The Arya Samaj tried to limit the agitation to religious and cultural issues, and avoided giving it a political or communal colour.

The first Congress Ministry of the Central Provinces and Berar was formed in 1937 with Dr. N. B. Khare as the Prime Minister. After about one year of formation of the Ministry, Dr. N. B. Khare was forced to give up his post and he was replaced by Pt. Ravi Shankar Shukla. During the time of Hyderabad Satyagraha Pt. Ravi Shankar Shukla was the Prime Minister of CP and Berar. Although the Indian National Congress and the Congress Ministry did not participate in the Satyagraha, some Congressmen including Dr. N.B. Khare supported the movement openly in their individual capacity.

Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha started their work jointly. It was agreed that that Hindu Mahasabha would primarily supply volunteers and Arya Samaj would finance the movement. While the Ministry headed by Ravi Shankar Shukla was sympathetic to the Satyagraha of the Arya Samaj which they believed to be purely religious and cultural, they did not support Satyagraha by Hindu Sabha which the Ministry believed to be purely political. The Ministry of the Central Provinces and Berar protested to the Government of India against the atrocities by the Nizam of Hyderabad inflicted on Arya Samaj Satyagrahis. The object of the Satyagraha was to secure religious and cultural liberty for the Hindus who constituted 86 per cent of total population of Hyderabad State. There were several instances of denial of this liberty. The Council of Ministers urged the paramount power to intervene speedily before the situation deteriorated further and developed perhaps into civil war between Hindus and Muslims in Hyderabad State, if not elsewhere. The Central Provinces and Berar Government was afraid that the Satyagraha in Hyderabad might have serious repercussions in the province, particularly Berar.

The support for Hyderabad Satyagraha in the Central Provinces and Berar started in October 1938. P. M. Bapat of Pune spoke at meetings held at several places in the province. He announced the start of Satyagraha from November 1, 1938 with a view to achieve freedom of press, and freedom of observance of Hindu religious rights in Hyderabad. In its annual session held at Nagpur in October 1938, Hindu Mahasabha passed resolutions in support of the Satyagraha. This was followed by a “formal declaration of war” against the Hyderabad state. It was decided to send batches of volunteers to Hyderabad.

The Congress had attempted to establish Hyderabad State Congress in the territory of the Nizam. Hyderabad administration imposed a ban on September 7, 1938 on formation of Congress in the State. This ban was resisted by the Congress and they started civil disobedience of the State Laws. This Congress movement continued along with Satyagraha by the Arya Samaj. However, by December 12, 1938, the Congress suspended its agitation on advice from Mahatma Gandhi because the movement by the Congress had become indistinguishable with Hyderabad Satyagraha that had assumed communal character to some extent.
Dr. Khare came out openly in favour of Hyderabad Satyagraha. He criticized the government for inaction and contributed to the fund raised by Mahasabha and congratulated his old friend and Mahasabha leader Dr. Paranjape for leading the first batch to Hyderabad. Vice chancellor Kedar admitted to his colleges about 200 students who had been expelled from Osmania University for singing Vande Mataram.

The border between Berar and Hyderabad became sensitive as volunteers and supporters gathered on Berar side to push the volunteers to Hyderabad and the forces of Hyderabad were deployed to guard the border. The border remained sensitive for several months as batch after batch of volunteers were sent to Hyderabad from Berar. The volunteers were not only from this province but also from many other places in the country. By January 1939, Hindu Mahasabha had enrolled 250 volunteers at Nagpur and had collected about Rs. 4000 to finance the Satyagraha movement. It was reported that 3 persons from Akola proposed to proceed to Hyderabad State.

Hindu Mahasabha observed the Hyderabad day on January 22, 1939 at Nagpur, Wardha, Akola, Yeotmal, Khampaon, Wun, Balaghat, Khandwa, Hoshangabad and Itarsi. The Government of His Exalted Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad was condemned for the disabilities of Hindus in the State. There was rumour of possible riot in Nagpur on this day. The District Magistrate took prompt action to contradict the rumour. The Hindus were persuaded to drop the idea of taking out a procession. The day passed off without any untoward incident.

The government could not support the Satyagraha openly. But it indirectly extended support by not taking any action to stop the Satygrahis from crowding on the border areas and crossing the border. The Governor of the province Sir Francis Wyle was worried that strong public support in the province for the Satyagraha would force the Government to start open support. He admitted that Hindu grievances were genuine, but could not afford to antagonize the Hyderabad administration. With strong expectation of a war in Europe, the Nizam’s friendliness was of great importance to the British Indian government. The Home Minister D. P. Mishra appealed to the British government to uphold “its reputation as a civilized government” by ensuring peace in the premier Indian state. The Speaker of the Provincial Assembly Ghanshyam Gupta was President of the All India Aryan League and an Arya Samajist. He discussed the Hyderabad issue with the Governor and decided to meet the Viceroy also. But Governor successfully prevented this meeting from taking place.

By end of March 1939 four batches of volunteers had been sent to Hyderabad in support of the Satyagraha. A Satyagraha camp was established at Pusad.

Further batches of Satyagrahis were sent in April 1939. One of the batches was led by Bhaiyaji Dani, a pleader from Umreth. The batch was taken throughout the town in a procession before they proceeded towards Hyderabad. Now volunteers had started coming from outside the province also. Batches of volunteers came from Multan, Ajmer and Mathura, and they stopped at Khamgaon on their way to Hyderabad. Meetings were held in Khamgaon to welcome these volunteers. This led to counter demonstrations by the Muslims. The Satyagraha camp at Pusad received volunteers, sent them across the border, and organized meetings and prabhat pheris.

The volunteers in support of Hyderabad Satyagraha continued to pass through several towns of the province on their way to Pusad. Batches of supporters passed through Jabalpur, Sougar, Hoshangabad and Nimar districts. Volunteers continued to arrive from outside the province in May 1939. There were volunteers from the Punjab, the United Provinces and Calcutta and they passed through Nagpur, Jabalpur, Itarsi, Saugar, Khandwa. They were given warm welcome by the Arya Samajists. Pusad and Umarkhed were main centers from where Satyagrahis crossed the border. On May 5, 1939 as many as 534 volunteers crossed the Penganga River near Malegaon into the territory of Hyderabad. A large crowd assembled at the place to witness the cross over and arrest of volunteers across the border. There were numerous meetings to welcome the volunteers. In these meetings allegations were made regarding ill-treatment of Satyagrahis in Hyderabad jails. Resolutions were passed requesting His Excellency the Viceroy to appoint a commission for examining these allegations. In view of the onset of the monsoon in near future the Satyagraha Camp was shifted to Chanda and Basim.

The flow of volunteers and support for Hyderabad Satyagraha continued until the agitation was called off by in August 1939 by the Hindu Mahasabha and the International Aryan League. They were satisfied on the whole with the reforms announced by the
References


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[10] Fortnightly Report for the Central Provinces and Berar for the First Half of January 1939; NAI HPD F. No. 18/1/39 Yr. 1939


[16] Fortnightly Report for the Central Provinces and Berar for the Second Half of April 1939; NAI HPD F. No. 18/4/39 Yr. 1939

[17] Fortnightly Report for the Central Provinces and Berar for the First Half of May 1939; NAI HPD F. No. 18/5/39 Yr. 1939

[18] Fortnightly Report for the Central Provinces and Berar for the Second Half of May 1939; NAI HPD F. No. 18/5/39 Yr. 1939