

Telangana Vythalikudu

Suravaram Prathap Reddy

Suravaram Prathap Reddy popularly known as “Telangana Vythalikudu (Torch Bearer)” was a Freedom Fighter, Social Historian, Writer, Poet, Scholar, Social Reformer, Lawyer, Journalist, Editor and Founder of various Socio-Cultural & Educational Organisations.

At a time when Telugu language, culture and identity, especially in the Nizam / Telangana region was fast disappearing, SPR took it upon himself to revive and rejuvenate it. He struggled relentlessly in this mission of the renaissance of Telugu Language, Literature, Education, Social Development and Journalism during challenging times of Nizam’s Rule.

His very name epitomises the struggle to bring about social awareness and social reforms in the Telangana region during his times. He was a strong proponent of women’s education, eradication of caste-system, allowing entry for all into temples, abolishing child marriages, encouraging widow remarriage etc.

Amidst great difficulties and the displeasure of the Nizam, he started the first Telugu newspaper – Golakonda Patrika – as he felt that a newspaper was the most effective and efficient means to reach out to the people at large. His incisive and sometimes rebellious writings in “Golakonda Patrika” had instilled a fighting spirit in the hearts of the Telangana people.

As an editor, as an avid researcher, as a promoter of several institutions, as a writer with good sense and as a leading light of the Visalandhra Movement, his work was highly lauded.

Suravarm Prathap Reddy was a man of erudite scholarship and yet unpretentious and unostentatious. He authored more than 40 Books. Prominent among them being Andhrula Sanghika Charitra (which one him the first-ever Kendra Sahitya Academy Award for Telugu), Ramayana Viseshalu, Hinduvula Pandugalu, Haindava Dharmaveerulu etc.

He was a scholar in Telugu, Sanskrit, Urdu, Persian, Kannada & English languages with BA and BL degrees from The Presidency College, Madras.

He was elected as an MLA from Wanaparthy (Mahbubnagar) in the first Assembly in 1952. Tragically, at a relatively young age of 57, he passed away, leaving a lasting legacy and impact.

For all his achievements and the lasting benefits it provided to the Telugu people in general, his statue was installed on Tank Bund Road (Hussain Sagar Lake) in Hyderabad, during the erstwhile undivided Andhra Pradesh, along with the doyens who contributed to the region over the last many centuries.

There are several biographies written of him and the quotations in literature from his books even to this day are a testimony to his genius. His books are prescribed for Civil Services examinations. His life story is part of the School and College syllabus.

At various times he has been honoured with statues in Mahbubnagar, Wanaparthy, Gadwal, Itikyalapadu. His name has been adopted for the Telecom Building in Secunderabad, a main road in Hyderabad, a Post Graduate College, the Press Club in Hyderabad etc. The Telugu University is now proposed to be named after him.

Early Career, Freedom Movements & Contribution to the Education Field:

He was born on 28th May 1896 at Boravelli Village in the present Jogulamba Gadwal District of the Telangana state. His mother was Smt. S. Rangamma and father was Sri S. Narayana Reddy.

After his return from Madras, he started his career as a Lawyer for which he has no inclination. Then he happened to meet Sri Raja Bahaddur Venkata Rama Reddy - the Kothwal (Police Commissioner of Hyderabad State) who identified the abundant skills of Suravaram Prathap Reddy and appointed him as the Joint Secretary of "RBVR Reddy Hostel". This Hostel was started by the Kothwal in the Year 1918 for the benefit of poor students who come to Hyderabad from different places.

During his stint at Reddy Hostel between 1925 and 1932, Suravaram Prathap Reddy had ensured this becomes the best hostel in every aspect. The Library at this Hostel, later named after Suravaram Prathap Reddy, is one of the best in the city.

Suravaram Prathap Reddy requested the greats like Dr.S.Radha Krishnan, Sir.C.R.Reddy, Davvuri Rami Reddy, Panuganti, Kashinadh & others during their visits to motivate the students with their inspirational speeches. The students were inspired and actively participated in the Indian Freedom Struggle and revolution against the Nizam Rule.

The "RBVR Reddy Hostel" became the centre for important and secret meetings related to Freedom Movement and the revolt against Nizam Rule. The British Government and Nizam were not happy with these activities at the hostel & students' participation, instituted an enquiry, held Suravaram Prathap Reddy responsible and compelled him to quit the Reddy Hostel.

Thousands of students from this hostel have emerged successful over the last 102 Years and even today, it's one of the reputed educational organizations helping poor students.

In the later years, Suravaram Prathap Reddy played an important role in the establishment of Andhra Vidyalayam (1944), presently known as AV School & College. Over the Years this Institute has grown and now offers degree & PG courses. This PG College is named after Suravaram Prathap Reddy.

Suravaram Prathap Reddy lead the Grandhalaya Udyamamu (Library Movement) from the forefront and helped in the establishment of several libraries in Hyderabad & other places of Telangana. Vemana Library at Nampally, Bala Saraswathi Library at Gowliguda, Gunavardhaka Library at Shalibanda and Library at Alampur are a few of them.

He helped in the publication of number of books including a collection of palm leaf manuscripts and secured at Sri Krishnadevarayandhra Nilayam (now Sri Krishnadevaraya Telugu Nilayam). His large collection of books in the later years were donated to Hyderabad Central University Library for the benefit of Telugu students, Research Scholars and others. He came to the rescue of several educational Institutions that faced closure. He canvassed for the women's education and their participation in literary activities.

Journalist, Editor and Founder of Golakonda Patrika:

While being at the helm at Reddy Hostel, Suravaram Prathap Reddy has also started “Golakonda Patrika”, A bi-weekly that made its maiden appearance on Monday, 10th May, 1926. He stated the twin aims of the paper thus:

- To Serve the Telugu Language
- To serve the upliftment of Telugu people irrespective of their religion and caste.

He was distressed by the sad plight & lack of literacy among Telugu People. His fear turned into a nightmare after witnessing the slow degradation of Telugu due to the dominance of Urdu.

It is only appropriate to briefly recollect the plight of Telugu language in the then Hyderabad State. The Telugu speaking people comprised more than 80% of the total population, yet there was no Telugu medium school setup by the government, nor did the government encourage private attempts. The attitude of the government towards Telugu was rather hostile, than of support. All the official transactions were performed in Urdu only. There was no freedom of speech.

Telugu people developed a false notion that speaking Urdu was a sign of being educated and elite. Many carried an Urdu newspaper - which they couldn't read! Wearing the Nawabi attire had become fashion of the day.

In the Nizam rule, Telugu people were living without political, social and cultural awareness. They didn't have any source to know what's happening around them, ignored their mother tongue, culture, traditions, festivals and were living in total confusion. People were discriminated and faced lot of harassment and injustice.

In such circumstances, Suravaram Prathap Reddy strongly believed that a Newspaper is the only mode to enlighten people and for the upliftment of the society. He then consulted Sri Raja Bahaddur Venkata Rama Reddy, who arranged to finance and also to get the required approvals. The Nizam and British residency initially rejected Suravaram Prathap Reddy's application to start the newspaper. Later, after being kept pending for 6 months, it got approved with the intervention of Sri Raja Bahaddur.

In those days there were not many writers in Telugu, nor journalists. Suravaram Prathap Reddy encouraged many to become writers and Journalists. In those times, there was no one for content writing, proof reading, designing & editing etc. Suravaram Prathap Reddy single-handedly did all these in the initial days. He used different Pen names like Chitra Gupta, Bhava Kavi, Verri Vengalappa, Yugapathi, Simha and many more to publish his own articles for creating interest among the readers. He published about 1500 editorials and articles in a span of 2 decades.

To encourage women writers, Suravaram Prathap Reddy used the Pen name Simha and published in “Golakonda Patrika” an article “Streelaku sampoorana swecha midhya vadamu” (Freedom for women is a myth). Many women were upset reading that article and sent in very strong and caustic replies, which were published in the paper.

“Golakonda Patrika” played a vital role in the Social and Cultural renaissance movement in Telangana during 1920-1948 period that defied the Nizam autocracy and worked for the liberation of the Telugu people of Telangana from the horrible feudal cum monarchical dictatorship of those days. For Suravaram Prathap Reddy, the main aim and objective of Golakonda Patrika was to create awareness and enlighten people in the erstwhile rule of Nizam.

Suravaram Prathap Reddy had a dream of separate state for Telugu speaking people, "Vishalandhra". He was the first President of the renowned fighting organization of the people, the Nizam Andhra Mahasabha - held in 1930 at Jogipet. He relentlessly propagated the idea of unity of all Telugu people and was an ardent supporter of the concept and demand of Vishalandhra. His publications for "Telangana Andhrodhyamam" under the banner of Andhra Mahasabha (1930) contributed a lot for the formation of Andhra Pradesh, the dream he cherished but did not live to see it.

During his stewardship of "Golakonda Patrika" for over 2 decades, Suravaram Prathap Reddy largely succeeded in rousing the political awareness and social responsibility. "Golakonda Patrika" made its presence felt and its voice heard by the people and the government.

Social Historian, Writer & Poet:

Suravaram Prathap Reddy's profile is rich with Literary works that shows the purity and style of Telugu language. He was in constant consultation with various books of these languages including palm leaf manuscripts and touched almost all the branches of Telugu Literature as a Literary Critic, Poet, Short-Story Writer, Play Wright, Novelist, Biographer, Historian and Researcher. He has a style of his own characterised by its brevity, directness and completeness. His first few writings were in classical Telugu but later switched on to popular style, especially the Telangana Idiom.

Andhrula Sanghika Charitra:

In 1949 came his Magnum Opus that opened a new dimension to the history of Andhra. The book is about the history and culture of the Telugu People. Till then history was confined to stories of Kings, Queens and the Wars. Surveying old literature, he dealt with the history of the common people - about their lifestyle, eating habits, their attire, their customs, manners, literary and cultural interests, their entertainment and the like. It is the first book in the Telugu language to win "Kendra Sahitya Academy Puraskaram" in the year 1955, an Indian Government Award for Literature.

Incidentally, this book was prescribed from 1970 for IAS (Indian Administrative Services), IPS (Indian Police Services) and APCSC (Andhra Pradesh Civil Services Commission) examinations.

Hinduvula Pandugalu:

A criticism by the Nizam King that Hindus are not aware of the reasons for the celebration of festivals and consequent suggestions from Raja Bahaddur Venkata Rami Reddy garu to write an appropriate book made Suravaram Prathap Reddy take up this major work that gave a detailed explanation of 55 Hindu Festivals. This book was published in 1931 with a foreword by Dr.Sarvepally Radhakrishnan, the second President of India.

Golakonda Kavula Sanchika:

As a consequence of a casual remark from a poet of the British Andhra (present AP was part of Madras Presidency in the British rule), that there were no worthwhile poets in Telangana, Suravaram Prathap Reddy published in 1934, a compilation of 354 contemporary poets and 183 yester year poets to highlight the versatility and rich legacy of Telangana literature and poetry.

Haindava Dharmaveerulu:

This book was written as an analogy to the famous war in 480 BC in which a small band of 300 Spartan soldiers held back thousands of Persian soldiers for long at the Thermopylae pass in Greece. Suravaram Prathap Reddy in this book reminds us that not one, but hundreds of such wars took place in Hindusthan but the western historians didn't recognise them as was done in the case of Greek-Persian wars.

Ramayana Visheshalu:

In 1939, A critical analysis of "Valmiki Ramayanamu" from an historical point of view. He established that Ramayanam was written around 2500 B.C and it had spread to Greece and other countries by about 900 B.C and that Homer was influenced by Ramayanam when he wrote "Iliad" in 830 B.C. Suravaram Prathap Reddy also dealt with the social life of people, their food habits, attire, general conduct, caste system, conventional warfare and the like in the book.

Yuvajana Vignanam:

An informative manual suitable for the young and old alike, that introduces them to the world-at-large with topics such as: Moral Poems, Eras, Religions, Languages, History of Telugu Literature, Festivals, Geography, Health tips, Great People, Political Awareness, knowledge tips etc.

Moghalai Kathalu / Prathap Reddy Kathalu:

A collection of short stories which give a detail description of the political, socio-economical and cultural aspects during the Moghul and Nizam periods as experienced in day to day life.

Raja Bahaddur Venkatarama Reddygari Jeevitha Charitra:

This book is an authoritative account of the life and the distinguished career of the Raja Bahaddur, who was the first Hindu to be appointed Kothwal (The Commissioner of Police) of the then Hyderabad state, and who won the hearts of the people and the pleasure of the rulers alike.

During his active career of 35 years, he has written more than 40 books in addition to the several editorials, forewords, and essays on varied topics. His other major works are Lipi Samskaranamulu, Nizamrashtra Palanam, Sanghoddharanam, Bhakta Tukaram, Ucchala Vishadamu, Grandhalayamulu, Pradhama Satwamulu, Telangana Andhrodhyamam, Hindhusthana Charitra, Raghavabhyudayamu, Krishnarjuna Samvadamu, and Suravaram Prathap Reddy Padhyalu.

The most remarkable aspect of his writings was the extensive research into each subject, which produced many hitherto unknown aspects. A characteristic style with specific ideas and straight forward narration of any essential subject were the natural assets of his writings.

Even during his student days at the Presidency College, Madras, Suravaram Prathap Reddy was contributing literary articles to weekly magazines such as "Matruseva", "Pinakini" and "Kala", the last one was edited by Sri PV.Rajamannar who later became the Chief Justice of Madras High court.

Social Reforms, Organizations and Movements:

Suravaram Prathap Reddy played a vital role in establishing several social and cultural organizations. He actively participated in several Movements. He encouraged widow re-marriages and opposed child marriages. He fought for the abolition of Devadasi traditions and untouchability. A few of the Organizations and Movements he constituted:

Andhra Jana Sangham (1922)
Andhra Mahasabha (1930)
Yadava Sangham
Goud Sangham
Vignana Vardhini Parishad (1941)
Andhra (now Telangana) Saraswatha Parishad (1943)
Andhra Vidyalayam (1944)
Balika Unnatha Patashala
Laxmana Raya Parishodhana Mandali
Sri Krishnadevaraya Andhra Basha Nilayamu
Hyderabad Ayurvedica Sanghamu.
Grandhalaya Udhyamamu
Andhrodhyamam
Harijanodhyamam
Mudiraj Sangham

Biographies of Suravaram Prathap Reddy

Book	Author
Suravaram Prathap Reddy-Jeevithamu-Sahityamu	Dr.Elluri Shiva Reddy
Suravaram Prathap Reddy-Jeevithamu-Rachanalu	Sri Muddasani Rami Reddy garu
Telugu Vaithalikudu-Suravaram Prathap Reddy	Prof.Mudiganti Sujatha Reddy
Telangana Telugu Vaithalikudu-Suravaram Prathap Reddy	Sri Gopi Krishna garu
A Monograph on the Life and Works-Suravaram Prathap Reddy	Prof.S.Lakshmana Murthy
Telugu Vaithalikudu-Suravaram Prathap Reddy	Dr.Ravi Bharathi
Suravaram-Telanganam	Sri Singireddy Niranjana Reddy garu

The Telugu Literary Organizations, Government and People have shown their gratitude towards him by:

- Installing his statue on Tank Bund among the statues of other greats.
- Statues at Mahabubnagar, Wanaparthi, Gadwal, Itikalapadu.
- Main Road in Himayathnagar, Hyderabad named after him.
- Journalists Club of Hyderabad is named after Suravaram Prathap Reddy.
- Libraries at Reddy Hostel and Itikayalapadu named after him.
- Telecom Bhavan at Secunderabad is named after Suravaram Prathap Reddy.
- Gold Medal given on his name at Osmania University every year for a Research Scholar.
- Several Annual Telugu Maha Sabhas named after him.
- Proposed to name Telangana Telugu University after Suravaram Prathap Reddy.

Fate snatched him away from us on 25th August, 1953, at the age of just 57 years! The literary world was shocked at his sudden demise and tributes poured in instantly. Typical among them was the one paid by his contemporary historian and researcher Sri Mallampalli Somasekhara Sarma. "Suravaram Prathap Reddy was a man of extraordinary intelligence and there was no field of literature that he did not plough. He was a critic among critics, poet among poets, scholar among scholars, politician among politicians, journalist among journalists, and a play-wright among play-wrights. Moreover, he was a patriot among patriots and a man of a kind heart. Rarely do we come across such a person. Friendship with him is one's privilege. His death is a great loss not only to Telangana but also to Visalandhra".

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