

**THE FREEDOM MOVEMENT: GANDHI'S ASSOCIATES IN TUMKUR DISTRICT****Smt. Manjula M.L, Dr. Chikkanna**

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The Indian independence movement, while influential across various states, had a notable impact in Karnataka, particularly in Tumkur district. Leaders of the Indian National Congress, including Tilak and Gandhiji, significantly influenced the region. After assuming leadership of the Congress, Gandhiji presided over the Belgaum session in 1924. The Tumkur Congress Committee, established in 1921, played a crucial role in the movement. Local youth, women, workers, farmers, and common people actively participated in the struggle for independence. Gandhiji visited Tumkur twice, on July 14, 1927, and January 4, 1930, during which he promoted his speeches and constructive programs. His visits deeply impacted Tumkur's youth and Congress workers, who adopted his methods and ideologies. Prominent leaders in the district, such as K. Rangaiyangar, T. Subrahmanya, Neelkantha Rao, D. S. Mallappa, and K. Narayanshetty, were profoundly influenced by Gandhiji, maintaining continuous contact with him and embracing his principles throughout their lives.

**Keywords:** Comrades, Followers, Gandhian, Non-violence.

Tumakuru, a prominent district headquarters situated in Karnataka State, holds great significance due to its involvement in the Indian Freedom movement. The people and youth of Tumakuru responded actively to the national movements. Not only men, but women, youth, and the general populace participated in these endeavors. The Indian National Congress, under the leadership of National heroes like Balagangadhar Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi, resonated deeply with the people of Tumakuru, who responded enthusiastically to their calls for action. During the periods of the Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience and the Quit India Movement, the youth of the district, filled with zeal, took part in meetings, processions, boycotts, picketing and the burning of foreign goods.

After Gandhi's visit to Tumakuru on July 14, 1927, and January 4, 1930, the people of the district began to see participation in the freedom struggle as an essential duty, akin to their daily responsibilities. When Gandhi advocated for the use of Khadi, the boycott of foreign goods, upliftment of the Harijans, temperance and the promotion of Hindi during his tours of the district, the youth left their professions to engage in and promote these constructive activities.

The historical association with Gandhi can be observed through documented interactions. From as early as 1915, Gandhi visited Karnataka and various other places, establishing connections with Congress workers and freedom fighters who embraced the spirit of the independence movement. Gandhi's travels across not only Karnataka but the entire country brought him into contact with many leaders and activists who became his close companions in the struggle. Several leaders from Tumkur district were among those who were in contact with him.

Anti-British struggles resonated in South India just as they did in North India. Leaders like Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan waged comprehensive resistance against the British. However, Karnataka came under British control in 1799, and by 1881, Mysore was restored to princely rule. During this period, Tumkur district remained relatively quiet, as Mysore province did not experience direct British rule like other parts of India. The British exercised control indirectly.

In the north, the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 marked the beginning of the nationalist fervor. In Mysore province, the Maharaja established the Representative Assembly in 1881 and the Legislative Council in 1907, allowing senior leaders to share their experiences. By 1918, some youth from Tumkur district participated in the Prajamitra Mandali and the Legislative Council. Among them, D.S. Mallappa of Tiptur was the first to become a member of the Legislative Council. He founded the Prajapaksha (People's Party) in the district, organizing its sessions in Channapatna and Tumkur. The influence of the freedom fighters' movements began to spread.

When Tilak passed away in 1920, memorial meetings were held at the city's theater in Tumkur, and these gatherings left a profound impact on the district's people and youth. This marked the beginning of the association of Tumkur's people with the national Congress leaders. S.S. Setlur, then Chairman of the Bangalore Municipality, and district leaders like Subrahmanya of Talakere and K. Rangaiyengar participated in the event and delivered speeches, further inspiring the local populace.

After the 1920 Nagpur Congress session, branches of the Provincial Congress were established at the district and local levels. The Tumkur Congress Committee was one such committee formed in 1921 when several Congress committees began to emerge across the state. The founding president of this committee was Sri Rangaiyengar, with B.C. Nanjundaiah and Talakere Subrahmanya among the key participants.

In 1922, Sri Rangaiyengar participated in the annual session of the Indian National Congress held in Gaya. During this period, young leaders in the district initiated campaigns aligned with Congress principles, including Satyagraha, Non-Cooperation, the Swadeshi movement, and the boycott of British goods. In the same year, a hall was constructed in Madhugiri in memory of Tilak, named the Tilak Sabha Bhavan. In 1924, the 39th annual session of the Congress was held in Belgaum, where district Congress leaders such as K. Rangaiyengar and Talakere Subrahmanya participated. They closely observed and were deeply influenced by Gandhi's leadership. This encounter brought a new impetus to the freedom movement in the district. Gandhi's leadership of the Indian National Congress and the anti-

British movements significantly impacted regions like North Karnataka, Tumkur district, and South Karnataka. District leaders such as K. Rangaiyengar, Neelakanth Rao,

Talakere Subrahmanya, D.S. Mallappa, and M.V. Ramarao, after attending the Congress's national sessions, initiated freedom struggles in the district following Gandhi's principles, kindling the flame of independence. \*<sup>1</sup>

On July 14, 1927, Gandhi visited Tumkur with a group of 16 people, including Kasturba Gandhi, Gangadhar Rao, Mahadev Desai, Manibehn Patel, Devdas, and Mridula Sarabhai. Thousands of people from the Tumkur area gathered to see Gandhi on that day. Sri Rangaiyengar, who was the president of the Tumkur District Congress session, also served as the president of the reception committee and along with the then District Collector, welcomed Gandhi. On that day, three meetings were held in Tumkur.

Since most of the youth leaders were involved in the Khadi promotion tour at the time, they were dressed in Khadi garments. Gandhi's principles such as simple living, the use of Khadi, truth, non-violence, and non-cooperation had a significant impact on the youth of Tumkur district. Among the district's leaders, Sri Rangaiyengar was one of Gandhi's earliest companions. In 1921, alongside S.S. Setlur, he played a key role in establishing the Congress presence in Tumkur. In 1922, after attending the annual Congress session in Gaya, he was deeply influenced by Gandhi's speeches and meetings.

At the Belgaum Congress Session of 1924, [he] participated alongside B.C. Nanjundaiah, Talekere Subrahmanya, and Neelakantharao. They actively engaged in the session in collaboration with Gangadhar Rao Deshpande. During the session, [he] embarked on a Khadi promotion tour as part of Gandhi's constructive programs. He emphasized the importance of maintaining cleanliness in villages, ensuring access to clean drinking water, and establishing goshalas to provide milk as easily as water. He urged municipal authorities to take steps to improve public health, advocated for the cessation of alcohol consumption and beef eating, and encouraged people to engage in productive work. He also promoted the spinning wheel, urging everyone to adopt Khadi. The citizens of Tumkur contributed ₹2,250, while students and teachers donated ₹250, and the Society for Animal Protection offered ₹200 towards cow protection, all of which were presented to Gandhi. \*<sup>2</sup>

The influence of Mahatma Gandhi's constructive programs on leaders like D.S. Mallappa, K. Rangaiyengar, M.V. Ramarao, Talekere Subrahmanya, Neelakantharao, and B.C. Nanjundaiah. Under Gandhi's inspiration and simplicity, these individuals not only engaged in the freedom struggle but also actively promoted his constructive programs, particularly Khadi, which they adopted from that time onward. They participated in the sessions of the Indian National Congress, organized campaigns in their districts according to the resolutions passed there, and ignited the flame of freedom.

On July 14, 1927, Gandhi visited Madhugiri, where he emphasized the use of Khadi in his public speeches. The local population offered him a donation of ₹1,000, while in Koratagere, the people contributed ₹100. Inspired by Gandhi's speech in Madhugiri, Nanjundarao, Rathanga Pani, and Narasingarao from Pavagada taluk established a Congress

committee. As its president, Nanjundarao led efforts in Pavagada taluk to start spinning and weaving with spindles and charkhas. The boycott of foreign goods spread across all the taluks of Tumkur. In Pavagada, Y.N. Hosakote organized a foreign goods burning event, where E.S. Venkatesh Gupta, symbolically removing the foreign coat he was wearing, threw it into the fire. He publicly pledged never to wear foreign goods again and adhered to Gandhi's path for the rest of his life.

Gandhian Talekere Subrahmanya effectively led prohibition and Khadi promotion programs in the district. In Tumkur city, he initiated a prohibition movement to combat the rising incidents of public drunkenness and disorderly behavior at a toddy shop located at the beginning of the road leading to the market square. The sale of toddy and the accompanying indecent behavior were prevalent and the movement succeeded in curbing these activities. On the seventh day of the movement, the police arrested Talekere Subrahmanya. This movement lasted for 13 days and he and his associates were released only after the toddy sale was stopped. Similarly, at Yallapur on the Madhugiri road, activists successfully picketed in front of a toddy shop, halting the sale.

Neelakantha Rao was also deeply influenced by Gandhi's Khadi promotion. On October 2, 1927, he opened a Khadi Bhandar in Tumkur city, which became a center for nationalist activities and freedom fighters. As the Congress Committee Secretary, he traveled throughout the district promoting Khadi. Inspired by him, freedom fighter K.N. Rangappa opened a Khadi Bhandar in Tiptur in 1930, which was inaugurated by Gangadhara Rao Deshpande.

Young freedom fighters from the district participated in Gandhi's organized Salt Satyagraha movement. During the Ankola Salt Satyagraha on the coastal region, T.L. Sanganna, T.S. Channappa, Puttaiah, Vajram Shetty, and others took part. Talekere Subrahmanya sent his close associates Venkaramaiah and L. Krishnamurthy to the march. After joining Gandhi in Dandi and receiving beatings from the police, they returned to Tumkur. Talekere Subrahmanya intensified the Salt Satyagraha movement in the district and, after being imprisoned, was released under the Gandhi-Irwin Pact. Upon his return, he infused the spirit of struggle among the people of the district.

Talekere Subrahmanya, K. Narayanashetti and others were instrumental in raising awareness of Gandhi's movements in Tumkur district. On January 4, 1934, as part of his fourth Harijan upliftment tour, Gandhi visited Tumkur. The reception committee was chaired by Talekere Subrahmanya and K. Narayanashetti, who collected ₹1,000 from local leaders for the Harijan upliftment fund. Gandhi arrived in Tumkur from Hindupur at 2:30 PM. Talekere Subrahmanya was bustling with excitement, and knowing that Gandhi preferred raw peanuts and goat's milk, he sourced goat milk from a nearby village. Since there was no proper container at home, he cleaned the glass dome of an electric lamp to serve the milk. After resting for 15 minutes, Gandhi delivered a speech from a 30-foot-wide platform in the high school ground, addressing a large gathering. He described the Harijan upliftment program as part of the Congress's constructive agenda. The ground was filled with people, and the Tumkur citizens presented ₹1,000 to Gandhi for the Harijan upliftment fund. During the event, Talekere

Subrahmanya received commendation for detailing the district's Congress activities. The people were filled with joy after hearing Gandhi's speech and seeing him in person.

The call for Gandhi's constructive programs was met with continuous activism in Tumkur district. After Gandhi's influence, various constructive programs were carried forward. In March 1938, Tumkur's activists participated in the Shivapura Flag Satyagraha organized by the Mysore Congress political party. In 1945, a Hindi Promotion Committee was established in Tumkur to support Gandhi's campaign for Hindi, with B.C. Nanjundaiah serving as its president. Other district leaders actively promoted Hindi through sustained efforts.

On August 9, 1942, the All India Congress Committee session was held in Bombay, where Gandhi issued a final call for the Quit India Movement against the British. Gandhi, Nehru, Abdul Kalam Azad and other leaders were arrested. On August 12, Mysore Congress President K.T. Bashyam, Azad, S. Nijalingappa, N.C. Timmareddy and Talekere Subrahmanya returned to Bangalore from Bombay. They were immediately arrested at the Yeshwanthpur Railway Station. Inspired by Gandhi's speech and the Quit India Movement, Talekere Subrahmanya was filled with determination.

In Tumkur, Gandhi's "Do or Die" call led to a surge in anti-British activities. These included hoisting flags on government buildings, picketing in front of liquor shops, organizing meetings and processions, and cutting railway telegraph wires. In August and September, students, workers, and women from all the taluks in the district participated in the movement. On August 9, meetings and processions began in Tumkur, followed by a hartal on August 10. To suppress the movement, the police resorted to arrests, lathi charges, firing, and other repressive measures. Nevertheless, workers held a meeting in Tumkur Municipal Garden, engaging in actions like ticketless travel, blocking roads, destroying supply goods, and breaking milk cans. Anti-British activities were most prevalent in Madhugiri, Tumkur and Tiptur. The government imposed prohibitory orders from August 13 to September 10, banning meetings, processions and flag hoisting. Despite this, violent acts continued, including the burning of train compartments by a group led by Somaygowda in Tiptur. They were arrested and punished without seeking forgiveness. Students traveled ticketless on trains and destroyed liquor shops. On August 15, public processions took place with students, employees, workers and women chanting slogans like "British, Quit India" and "Long live Gandhi!" On August 17, three separate processions were held in Tumkur on the same day. Under the leadership of Sheshamma Subrahmanya, women held a separate procession with 250 participants. Leaders Srikanthappa and Neelakantharao addressed the gatherings. In Koratagere, on August 18, under the leadership of S.R. Veerashettar and R. Channigaramaiah, a tricolor flag was hoisted at the taluk office and a picketing campaign against liquor shops was successfully conducted. Every taluk in the district witnessed violent activities against the government, which continued until December 15, when the movement eventually subsided.\*<sup>3</sup>

During the freedom struggle, district freedom fighters such as T.K. Nanjundarao, T. K. Jerappa, Talakere Subrahmanya, B. Malimariyappa, Taregowda, and others actively participated in anti-British movements, notably the Shivapura Flag Satyagraha and the Vidurashwatha tragedy. Under the leadership of K.C. Reddy, the President of the Mysore

Congress, they fought for the establishment of a responsible government in the Mysore princely state. To propagate the movement, K.C. Reddy organized three groups, one of which included Talakere Subrahmanya, who toured the districts of Kolar, Chitradurga, and Tumkur as a district representative. The 'Mysore Chalo' movement was launched on September 1st across the princely state. In Madhugiri under the leadership of Malimariyappa and K. Henjerappa, the movement gained momentum. Flag hoisting on taluk offices, picketing, destruction of liquor shops, and public meetings and processions were actively carried out in Chikkanayakanahalli, Sira, Pavagada, Koratagere, and Tumkur. Slogans like " Arcot Boycott," "Tambu Chatti – Chatta katti," "Gandhi ki jai" and "Malimariyappa's Procession" resonated during these processions.

Leaders such as V.N. Choudhury (Madhugiri), Annapoornamma, Gauramma, Bhagyamma (Chikkanayakanahalli), B.N. Ramegowda, Siddappa (Shira), R.R. Aradhy (district-level), and Y.N. Hosakote (Pavagada village) spearheaded public meetings and movements. On September 5th, T.R. Channappa led a flag hoisting at Koratagere, and on September 14th, activists hoisted the flag at the Tumkur Taluk office. The police resorted to firing to disperse the activists, resulting in the martyrdom of Nanjava and Ramachandra, a high school student and the son of Goruru Ramaswamy Iyengar, who succumbed to the bullets. Similarly, the shooting of Ramaswamy in Mysore intensified the struggle in the Tumkur district against the Mysore princely state. These events galvanized the district's populace and freedom fighters to participate more fervently in the movement. Students abandoned their schools and colleges to join the cause. In Madhugiri, under the leadership of Satyarayana Shetty, Ajjegowda, Arelingaiah, and Haadrulu Nanjundappa, the police used lathi charges and opened fire under the pretext of controlling the crowds, resulting in the martyrdom of Haadrulu Nanjundappa. The seriousness of the movement escalated.

Talakere Subrahmanya organized the activists and took on leadership responsibilities in the movement. Several leaders were arrested. On October 7th, the Maharaja expressed his willingness to form a responsible government. On October 9th, the detained activists were released, and the movement was withdrawn everywhere. On October 24th, they reached Madhugiri town, where the crowd of activists swelled, leading to the arrest of the remaining leaders. In almost all taluks, the Maharaja handed over power to K.C. Reddy. Thus, the 42-day-long struggle for a responsible government culminated successfully.\*<sup>4</sup>

In the Tumakuru district, the anti-British movement was initially influenced by the ideas of Bal Gangadhar Tilak through the Indian National Congress. After 1920, the youth of the district began participating in Congress sessions, and a Congress committee was established in Tumakuru. This led the youth to connect with Mahatma Gandhi. Between 1924 and 1934, through meetings, speeches, and direct interactions with Gandhi, the methods of the movement began to take root among the people of Tumakuru. Inspired by Gandhi's visits, local freedom fighters continuously pursued non-cooperation, truth, non-violence, Satyagraha, and strikes. They embraced and implemented Gandhi's constructive programs, promoting them widely and responding immediately to his calls for action.

Although Gandhi was occasionally physically present in the district, his influence was a vital force in the daily activities of the freedom fighters. His spirit of resistance had a profound impact on students. For instance, when a call was made from Bengaluru for students to work toward Gandhi's release, a ninth-grade student from Madhugiri High School named B.K. Pattanashetti, along with a group of four others, set out with the slogan "Free Gandhi." His parents gave him ₹200 and a Congress flag as they sent him off. However, the group was soon arrested by British officials and handed over to the police. The authorities, moved by the boy's determination, offered to drop the charges and arrange his return home with ₹500 if he wrote a letter of apology. When Pattanashetti refused, he was sent to Yerawada Jail. The fact that a student from Tumakuru gained recognition by participating in a movement outside the state was a matter of great pride for the region.\*<sup>5</sup>

On July 14, 1927, after addressing a public meeting, Gandhi visited the settlement of Adi Karnataka community at Kothithopu. He spoke to the residents, urging them to abstain from consuming beef, bidi (hand-rolled cigarettes) and alcohol and to lead a clean and disciplined life. Gandhi also visited the vocational training school in the settlement, where the superintendent, moved by Gandhi's presence, arranged overnight for sewing machines and materials to provide all the students with khadi clothes. One of the young students at the time, H.M. Gangadharaiah, who later became the founder of Siddhartha University, was deeply influenced by Gandhi. Inspired by seeing Gandhi eat a simple meal of ragi rotti (finger millet flatbread) while sitting beside him, Gangadharaiah wore khadi for the rest of his life and later played a significant role in the freedom movement. He also established the Siddhartha School, which evolved into today's Siddhartha University, marking his contribution to the educational development of the people in Tumakuru. He remained a lifelong follower of Gandhian principles and an associate of Gandhi's mission.

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#### Foot notes:

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