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## REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVIST BHOOPATHI VARALAKSHMI

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**Abstract:** Mrs. Boopathi Varalakshmi is the revolutionary activist of Srikakulam Tribal movement. She was participated in this movement as independently. She faced many hurdles during the movement. She lost everything in the movement but she still feels a zeal for the spirit of the movement. Her dedication and belief towards the principles she believed can never be denied and the strength of her commitment can be seen clearly in the way she stood for whatever she believed in. her life is full of sacrifices. It's very impressive and inspirational for us.

**Keywords:** Revolution, Activist, Movement, Tribes, Sacrifice.

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**Introduction:** The life of Mrs. Boopathi Varalakshmi is an instance of what could happen to the women with progressive thoughts who wish to lead an independent life and be involved in radical movements. Her intention was to fight for the ideals of justice and equality in society, but in the process of fighting for these social goals she lost her place in her own family. In her pursuit to fight against the odds in the society, she had to abandon her family life and social life and became isolated. Though she lost everyone and everything in her dedication to fight against the inequality in the society, her spirit to fight for progressive causes had never died. Though she lost everything in the movement, she still feels a zeal for the spirit of the movement. Her dedication and belief towards the principles she believed can never be denied and the strength of her commitment can be seen clearly in the way she stood for whatever she believed in.

**Objectives:**

- To know about life of Bupathi Varalakshmi.
- To reviewed about Srikakulam Tribal movement.
- To study about role of varalakshmi in Srikakulam Tribal Movement.
- To study about varalakshmi why do not focused as front line leader.

**Methodology:** This study depends on secondary and primary data also. This data gathered from secondary source like books, unpublished theses and court judgment copy. And also primary source gathered from interview of Varalakshmi, Choudari Tejeswara rao and Choudari Sampooramma (prominent leaders of Srikakulam tribal movement). Mainly this is the case study method.

**Historical background of Srikakulam Tribal Movement (1958-75):** The Srikakulam region was under typical feudalism. The lands of the tribes in the agency areas were under the land lords' control. The wages for rural agriculture laborers and tribes was very low. The conditions of life were harsh and the poor had to struggle for even bare necessities like

drinking water. Additionally the Land lords, Moneylenders, Traders, Bureaucrats, forest officers and Political persons- usually from similar class background- harassed the poor and treated them cruelly. Around 1957 the educated middle class youth specially some of the teachers of the region namely Mr.Vempatapu Satyam, Mr. Adibatla Kailasam, Mr. Subbarao Panigrahi, Mr. Tamada Ganapathi, Mr. Panchadi Krishna Murty, Mr. Chowdari Tejeswara Rao, Mr. Biragi Naidu, Mr. Govinda Rao, Mr. Nagabushanam Patnaik, Mr. Kaanu Sanyal, initiated campaigns for changing the situations. This gradually emerged into a long drawn movement, now referred to as the Srikakulam Tribal Movement in its later phase as nuxalite Movement. Struggles and agitations got underway in the rural and agency areas. The poor agriculture labor of rural areas and the tribe's folk of agency areas launched many struggles against the oppression and exploitation by the rich land lords and business classer. Analysts divided the movement into three phases. (There is controversy regarding the exact periodisation of the different phases of the movement.)<sup>1)</sup> The phase of the struggle from 1957-67 was in the nature of social and economic reforms against feudal landlords following a strategy of show of strength through methods such as seizure of crops, occupation of banjar lands, organizing strikes and struggles for reoccupation of their alienated lands and raising of wage rates. <sup>2)</sup> The phase of the struggle from 1968-69 saw its transformation to something akin to communist revolutions with the particularistic features of armed struggle, guerilla warfare and annihilation program. <sup>3)</sup> From this juncture it is noted as part of Nuxalite movement under the leadership of people's war Group The phase of struggle from 1969-71 was an armed revolt with the specific use of violence and meeting the armed military and Para-military force with armed guerilla warfare. Mr. Siva Rami Reddy and Mrs. Venkata Rtnam have reported on the struggle of the

agricultural workers during the period from 1968-73 (Sivarami Reddy P.4, Venkata Ratnam, P. 178).

Women have played an important role in all the three phases of these struggles. Many women came forward and learnt stick fights<sup>1(Karra samu in local dialect)</sup>, and how to take part in guerilla operations. They climbed hills by foot and addressed public meetings in villages. Many of them were arrested and sent to jail several times. They sacrificed their comfortable life for these struggles and even gave away their jewelry as contributions to the Srikakulam tribal movement. The following describes about some of the women who fought in these struggles valiantly. All these women served as leaders in various struggles. They with other local activists decided to form a women's wing of the Srikakulam tribal movement. So throughout 1965-66, they arranged in several villages exclusive meetings for women. They mobilized and gathered women in large numbers for these meetings. Finally in 1966 they conducted a conference at Boddapadu in which they formed the Women's Wing of the tribal movement. In this, Mrs. Chowdari Sampooramma, Mrs. Chapara Kamalamama, Mrs. Duppala Savitri, Mrs. Saraswathi, Mrs. Panchadi Nirmala, Mrs. Paramma and Mrs. Digumarthi Kamalamama participated and took leadership. Mrs. Panchadi Nirmala, Mrs. Chowdari Sampooramma, Mrs. Ramanamma, Mrs. Jayamma, Mrs. Paramma, Mrs. Saraswathi and Mrs. Chandrama donated their jewelry for this movement ( Sivarami Reddy P. 94)

In 1968 in Boddapadu village ten women underwent guerilla training on equal basis with men. In 1968 Panchadi Nirmala got insulted by landlord Mr. Kamesh for which all women fought against Mr. Kamesh who belonged to the big land lord family of Boddapadu area. He was very arrogant, exploited poor people and sexually harassed the poor women (Sivarami Reddy P.376)

She was born in a small farmer's family and was married to her maternal uncle. Her political career started at her in-laws house. She was inspired by the Srikakulam Tribal Movement so intensely that she gave up her family for this movement. She had to face many problems after joining the movement.

**Childhood and Education:** Mrs. Bhoopathi Varalakshmi was born in Ganasari village of Bhamini Mandal of Srikakulam district. Her parents Mrs. Ammanamma and Mr. Lachanna were farmers who belong to one of the locally dominant peasant caste called 'Toorpu Kapu'. The Bhamini mandal has a mixed culture due to the presence of tribal population and their rustic way of living can be observed clearly. The area was highly influenced by

the Srikakulam Tribal Movement. She studied till Class-III in Ganasari village and could not continue her education due to Child Marriage and left her parents house at an early age.

**Marital Life:** Mrs. Bhoopathi Varalakshmi got married when she was just seven years old, to her maternal uncle Mr. Apparao. Even after marriage, she continued to stay in Ganasari village as her husband belonged to the same village. He belonged to a small farmer's family. He was associated with the members of Srikakulam Tribal Movement he was a sympathizer and supporter. She was introduced to the Tribal Movement and its leaders and activists by her husband. Later she participated in various struggles organized by the Tribals. Her husband who initially introduced her to the Tribal Movement and its leaders and activists did not like his wife being active in such movements. Consequently he broke up with her and married another woman. He also disassociated himself from the movement. By the time they got separated, they already had a daughter. Mrs. Varalakshmi brought up her daughter single handedly facing many financial and social problems. She managed to educate her till class X and got her married to a Registered Medical Practitioner.

**Political Career:** Mrs. Varalakshmi's native Village Ganasari was intensely influenced by the Tribal Movement. Her husband Mr. B.Apparao was a sympathizer of the movement. The leaders of the Tribal Movement used to take shelter in their house. Mrs. Bhoopathi Varalakshmi was responsible for cooking for them. During this process, listening to the various issues spoken by the leaders and activists, she got inspired by the Movement. She read many books and articles related to various aspects of Communist theory, stories on the struggles of Telangana Peasant Movement, Characteristics of Russian Soviet Revolution etc. The study of such literature made her socially conscious. Her commitment to the cause of tribal upliftment was so sincere that she considered her family and her personal health as secondary issues. As already mentioned her husband broke up with her due to her involvement in the movement.

Mrs. Boopathi Varalakshmi's intention behind joining the movement was to eradicate poverty and illiteracy in the villages. By the time she became active in the movement she was pregnant. Her pregnancy did not stop her from enthusiastically participating in various movement related activities because of the passionate commitment she had towards the movement. After separating from her husband, she joined the guerilla team of the Srikakulam Tribal Movement in 1967. She participated at various village level meetings like at

Boddapadu, Neelakantapuram and other villages. She played an active role in mobilizing women for this movement. She faced many hurdles during the movement. At one point of time she thought of aborting the growing fetus for the sake of the movement; but the fellow activists opposed such a step. So she changed her decision. She stayed at Ganganna Doravalasa, a tribal hamlet with the movement's Health Team which was composed of three persons trained in first aid and 5-7 members who were disabled due to injuries and conditions of ill health. She faced many problems due to the lack of proper food and medication. In one instance during the pregnancy she had to climb up the hills to escape from the police. This affected her health. Even in such conditions, her spirit to fight for equality circumstances.

The Central Reserve Police party conducted a raid at 11 AM on 11.8.1969 on a communist strong hold in the Kuttam hills of Ganganna Dravalasa for the apprehension of wanted Naxalites. A group of Naxalites attacked the police party on Ganganna Dhoravalasa hills and opened fire with guns and threw country bombs. According to the court reports, when the police retaliated, they could apprehend three important Naxalites namely Mr. Vempatapu Santhamma (alias Gunnamma), Mrs. Bhoopathi Varalakshmi along with Mr. Pondara Laxmi Narayana who was the leader of the Dhalam of Rittapadu. (Veera Bhadrarao, P.20). This incident was narrated differently by B.Varalakshmi. The following is the gist of her recounting of the event. On the early morning of 11<sup>th</sup> August 1969 the health team received the news of the arrival of the police. The entire members of the team except Mrs. Gunnamma and Mrs. Bhoopathi Varalakshmi ran away. Mrs. Gunnamma remained with Mrs. Bhoopathi Varalakshmi. The police found them. The police harassed them to reveal the place where the other members of their group were. Mrs. Bhoopathi Varalakshmi showed the place where their weapons were. The Divisional Superintendent of Police (from here DSP) tried to test a bomb. The bomb suddenly exploded and the DSP died. But the police filed a fake case accusing Mrs. Bhoopathi Varalakshmi of killing the DSP. Later she was arrested and falsely accused by the police in the Cases of Malliveedu<sup>5</sup> and the death of Deputy Superintendent of Police. Consequently she was in police remand for three years. During Remand, she was shifted from

Pathapatnam sub jail to Rajahmundry Central Jail and then to Visakhapatnam Central Jail.

She delivered a baby girl in this prison (1970). The child was brought-up in the midst of activists and prisoners until she was three years old. Then Varalakshmi got a conditional bail. She then spent another three years with the help of sympathizers in clearing all the cases that were filed against her. By the time her daughter became six years old.

The movement had dissipated. She felt lonely and insecure as there was no one for her to introduce to her daughter as a family member or a well wisher. She found it much difficult when she came to know that some of her fellow activists were still in the prison and the remaining were missing (probably died in encounters) or relocated.

Her parents were not very supportive. She then claimed from her erstwhile husband a property settlement. He ultimately gave a house in Ganasara for their use. She resided there with her daughter. Later she started to work for an NGO and brought-up her daughter till she completed her Class-X and then got her married. She was able to overcome financial crisis. But she was harassed by police who assumed that she continued to have links with the activists/Naxalites. To escape from that problem and to establish a new identity, she accepted nomination as Watershed President and worked sincerely. Being in the post of Watershed President, she was able to mingle with the people around her and build the image of being in mainstream. To her, the Tribal Movement is now only a memory.

**Conclusion:** The life of Mrs. Boopathi Varalakshmi is an instance of what could happen to the women with progressive thoughts who wish to lead an independent life and be involved in radical movements. Her intention was to fight for the ideals of justice and equality in society, but in the process of fighting for these social goals she lost her place in her own family. In her pursuit to fight against the odds in the society, she had to abandon her family life and social life and became isolated. Though she lost everyone and everything in her dedication to fight against the inequality in the society, her spirit to fight for progressive causes had never died. Though she lost everything in the movement, she still feels a zeal for the spirit of the movement. Her dedication and belief towards the principles she believed can never be denied and the strength of her commitment can be seen clearly in the way she stood for whatever she believed in.

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