

# Desoddharaka: The Life, Entrepreneurship, and Philanthropy of Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao (1867–1938)

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## Abstract:

This article is a life-history of Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao (1867–1938), a pivotal architect of modern Telugu socio-political identity. Overcoming early financial hurdles, he established the Amrutanjan Depot in 1908, which funded his nationalist and philanthropic campaigns. He strategically deployed print media, founding Andhra Patrika (1908) and Bharati (1924), to consolidate Telugu sub-nationalism. The study traces his political trajectory from the Home Rule League to leadership in the Andhra Congress Committee, including imprisonment during the Salt Satyagraha and Civil Disobedience Movement. Beyond politics, he supported marginalized communities through land distribution, inclusive schools, and anti-caste literature. Ultimately, Nageswara Rao, recognized as Desoddharaka and Viswadata, synthesized entrepreneurial acumen and political mobilization to shape the modern Andhra public sphere.

**Keywords:** Freedom movement in Andhra, Telugu sub-nationalism, Indigenous entrepreneurship, Print culture.

## Introduction:

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries marked a significant phase of socio-cultural transformation in the Telugu-speaking regions of the Madras Presidency. This period witnessed the emergence of new forms of public engagement shaped by the interaction of colonial modernity, anti-colonial nationalism, and the growth of indigenous entrepreneurship. Social reform movements, expanding educational opportunities, and the proliferation of print culture contributed to the creation of a vibrant intellectual and political environment. Within this changing milieu, regional leaders played a crucial role in mobilizing public opinion, fostering linguistic identity, and linking regional aspirations with the broader Indian national movement.

One of the most prominent figures to emerge from this context was Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao (1867–1938), widely remembered by his contemporaries with honorific titles such as Desoddharaka (uplifter of the nation) and Viswadata (universal benefactor). Nageswara Rao occupies a distinctive place in the history of modern Andhra for his multifaceted contributions as an entrepreneur, journalist, nationalist leader, and philanthropist. Overcoming early financial difficulties, he achieved commercial success through the establishment of the Amrutanjan enterprise, which later became the financial foundation for many of his nationalist and philanthropic initiatives. More importantly, he recognized the transformative power of print media and founded influential publications such as Andhra Patrika and Bharati. Through

these platforms he disseminated modern ideas, encouraged literary production, and helped articulate a shared sense of Telugu identity.

Beyond journalism, Nageswara Rao actively participated in the Indian nationalist movement. His involvement in the Home Rule League, the Andhra Congress Committee, and the Gandhian mass movements reflected his commitment to political mobilization and national freedom. At the same time, he devoted considerable resources to philanthropic and social initiatives, including the promotion of education, the encouragement of literature and theatre, and efforts aimed at addressing social inequalities, particularly those affecting marginalized communities.

This article examines the life and contributions of Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao to understand how entrepreneurship, print activism, and political engagement together shaped the emerging Andhra public sphere. By situating his activities within the broader processes of regional awakening and nationalist politics, the study highlights the important role played by individuals like Nageswara Rao in forging a modern Telugu identity while simultaneously contributing to the larger struggle for Indian independence

### **Early Life:**

Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao was born on May 1, 1867 in Yalakarru village of Gudivada Taluk, Krishna district. His father was Butchaiah Pantulu and his mother was Shyamalamba. They belonged to Aradhya sect, a traditional Shaivite Brahmin family. Nageswara Rao was the elder son in his family. There is a story woven around his birth that Butchaiah Pantulu did not have children for sometime even after he married Shyamalamba, his second wife and Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao born only after Shyamalamba stayed at Srisailem, a famous saivite pilgrimage centre in South India, and performed a vratam for a period of 45 days-mandalam (Potluri, 2006: 17). Accordingly Kasinadhuni was actually named as Nagalingam reflecting the name of Lord Siva but later he renamed himself as Nageswara Rao. He had two sisters and a brother after him namely Bhramaramba, Subbamma and Sambasiva Rao respectively. Bhramaramba was married to Sivalenka Subrahmanyam of Pesaramili agraharam near Kautaram village of present day Krishna District. Their son was Sivalenka Sambhu Prasad to whom Kasinadhuni married his daughter and who took over the charge of running the Andhra Patrika after Kasinadhuni. Sivalenka Radha Krishna was the son of Sivalenka Sambhu Prasad. Though Kasinadhuni's family had thirty acres of land, annual income from it was too low to sustain their family. Therefore, he had to face financial hurdles right from his birth.

### **Early Education:**

Nageswara Rao got his early education from a street school run by Nidumolu Kantaiah in their village. Here he learnt and fostered special interest in Telugu and Sanskrit. His mother had a desire on Kasinadhuni that he should take English education and settle in government job as a Tahsildar. But his father was of the view to train him in Sanskrit literature and make him another erudite scholar in Sanskrit under his own supervision. These differences between his father and mother on what kind of education that their son was to take hereafter were settled in favour of his mother. Butchaiah Pantulu compromised with his wife and joined Kasinadhuni in Hindu High School at Machilipatnam for high schooling. His cousin was also joined in this school along with him and Shyamalamba was kept at Machilipatnam to take care Kasinadhuni and his cousin while Butchaiah Pantulu used to visit them (Devulapalli, 1988:5). Kasinadhuni also have studied at Guntur (Andhra Patrika: Nov 8, 1934). He studied there in the Christian College during the years 1886-7 and then he moved on to Madras and joined in Madras Christian College (Rayasam, 1933).

**Early Interests:**

Kasinadhuni had many friends while he was studying at Hindu High School at Machilipatnam. Notable among them were Varanasi Rambrahmam and Bhagavatula Subrahmanyam. All of them had special interest in Hindu literature. It was said that Kasinadhuni was fond of reading books such as Raghuvamsamu, Hitopadesamu, and Meghasamdesamu during his stay at Machilipatnam. Besides that Varanasi Rambrahmam and Kasinadhuni used to attend the purana sravanamu delivered by Betapudi Prakasam, a Telugu teacher of Hindu High School.

Another field to which Kasinadhuni was very much fascinated during his school age and that, probably, formed basis for his activities for the development of theatre arts in the Telugu speaking region was dramas. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Dharmada Drama Company used to perform dramas across villages in the Telugu speaking region. Their dramas attracted many particularly the youth from the region and Devarasu Venkata Subbarao and Balakrishna established Jubilee Theatre at Machilipatnam in 1880s(Konda, 1966:22-24). Here several Sanskrit and English dramas were translated into Telugu and were performed. Mogaligidda used to perform dramas in it in Hindi which were directed by Nadella Purushottama Kavi. The dramas played by Eemani Lakshmana Rao received appreciation by Bipan Chandra Pal (Devulapalli, 1988:6-7).

Kasinadhuni also performed several women roles in different Telugu plays during his student life. In Hariscandra play, Ivaturi Nagabhushanam played the protagonists role and Kasinadhuni played the role of Chandramati. In another play, Srikrishna Tulabharamu, he and his friend Malladi Subbarao played the roles of Rukmini and Satyabhama respectively. But his father did not like his son to perform in plays. He expressed it many times to his son. Kasinadhuni's interest in it was such that he continued to perform in plays even it was not liked by his father. Once in 1885, Kasinadhuni went to Jaggayyapet in Krishna district to perform a play. Before its beginning, he came to know that his father's condition was so serious. As all was set to start the drama, he gave his performance and retired to home only after the play was over. He faced a bitter experience when he went home from his father, who lied on death bed, and showed no interest for his son to have last sight of him. It was said that then onwards, Kasinadhuni stopped performing in dramas but he continued to patronize them throughout his life(Potluri,2006:19).

The second half of the nineteenth century was also the period when the westernizing social reform movement of Kandukuri Viresalingam was sweeping many minds of the youth in the Telugu speaking region. Many youngsters such as Nyapati Subbarao, Konda Venkatappayya, Tanguturi Prakasam, Unnava Lakshminarayana, Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao, Bhogaraju Pattabhi Sitaramayya, etc... embraced Kandukuri's project of social reform movement.

Varanasi Rambrahmam, one of the friends of Kasinadhuni during his school age, joined with Viresalingam's social reform project. He used to bring several books of social reform and also subscribed Vivekavardhini, a journal run by Viresalingam. Gradually, Kasinadhuni was introduced to Viresalingam's social reform and modernist project by his friend who used to give him Vivekavardhini and books pertaining to social reform. But interestingly there is no evidence to suggest that Kasinadhuni had directly participated in the social reform project of Kandukuri Viresalingam.

**College Education:**

Kasinadhuni obtained his matriculation in 1885, the year when his father died. Even after his father's death, his mother did not stop his higher studies and took to bear the burden of their family until his higher education was over. Thus, Kasinadhuni went Madras and joined in Madras Christian College for pursuing

B.A. Here he met with Konda Venkatappayya who was also a student of B A and maintained good friendship with him which continued throughout his rest of life. During his college days at Madras, Kasinadhuni stayed in a hostel attached to the college he was studying for a rent of eleven rupees for month. His mother used to send him this money.

Miller was the principal of Madras Christian College where Kasinadhuni was studying. Once he went on leave to his home country-Scotland- and Cooper was appointed as in-charge principal. During this time, Loid, a professor in the college, made comments while teaching to a junior F A class on Hindu religion that “it would be better if you all worship my shoes instead of worshipping icons in your religion”. This statement hurt the feelings of many Hindu students of the class. After this incident, the students of the college gathered at a Kapaleswara Swamy temple nearby to their college to discuss their future plan of action against the comments made by the professor and decided to go for indefinite strike until the professor ask for excuse. This students' protest was led by Konda Venkatappayya and Sedimbi Hanumanta Rao(Konda,1966:71-2).

Cooper took a stand in favour of the professor and when the issue came to him for solving he did not take any decision favouring the students' demand. Therefore, the students intensified their agitation which lasted for ten days. The problem went to the extent of the intervention of political leaders of Madras. P. Anandacaryulu, a Congress leader, intervened in the issue and ended the problem. After some time, Konda Venkatappayya and ten other students who participated in the strike were served with notices to pay fine of 10/- or otherwise they would be disallowed to the final exams. Konda Venkatappayya paid the fine as he did not like to lose his valuable academic career. The college management went a step further and suspended Konda Venkatappayya from the college attached hostel for unknown reasons. But what was suspected by the students that his active participation and leading in front the protest against the professor might have been the reason for his suspension from the college hostel. This action by the college management drove many of the Telugu students to boycott their hostels. All those boycotted took Tambi Chetti's house for rent. Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao was one among those students who boycotted their hostels in protest against suspension of Konda Venkatappayya and joined Tambu Chetti's house for rent (Konda,1966:73-4&79). His attachment with Tambu Chetti's house during his college days might be one of the reasons for buying this house while he was shifting the headquarters of Andhra Patrika from Bombay to Madras in 1914.

About his experience with Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao during their stay at Tambu Chetti street at Madras, A P Pathro said that Kasinadhuni was his senior at Madras Christian College; that he used to show concern for the poor students from the Telugu speaking region and help them in the way he could; that they anticipated Kasinadhuni would reach heights in his life as they saw in him a good patriot and the qualities such as ability to become a entrepreneur (Andhra Patrika: Sep 16, 1929).

### **Marriage:**

While Kasinadhuni was studying at Madras, there was a famous businessman from the Telugu speaking region by name Rental Venkata Subbarao. He was a versatile entrepreneur who had worked as lawyer in the Madras High Court as well. He run so many businesses and established Victoria Depot at Madras for doing business in Medicine. He had a sister who died sometime after her marriage. Ramayamma was her daughter and she was taken care by Rental Venkata Subbarao after her mother's death.

Before coming to Madras, Rental Venkata Subbarao had worked as principal of a Missionary School in Guntur. Konda Venkatappayya was his student there and they had good relations with each other. Their

relation was such that both of them used to visit one other's house. When Konda Venkatappayya came to Madras for his higher studies, he used go to his house and sometimes Kasinadhuni also accompanied him (Konda, 1966:29).

Rentala Subbarao saw Kasinadhuni with Konda Venkatappayya and impressed with his behaviour. After sometime, he shared his view with Nageswara Rao and proposed him to marry his niece, Ramayamma. But the problem for their marriage was that Kasinadhuni belonged to Aradhya sect of Brahmins where as Ramayamma to Niyogi sect of Brahmin. At the end, Kasinadhuni took decision in favour of marrying Ramayamma. It seems Kasinadhuni anticipated opposition to his marriage with Ramayamma from his relatives therefore he did not invite anyone of them for it. Even his mother did not attend his marriage. Whether she did not like his marriage with the one of other sect or she had any other problems like ill are not clearly known. The marriage was held among the students and friends of Kasinadhuni at the house of Rentala Subbarao in Tiruvalikkeni in 1890(Konda,1966:79).

What is interesting to know about Kasinadhuni's marriage that whether he married the one of a sect other than his due to his rational and reform mentality that had been dominant among the English educated youth of that time or he did so only to learn business techniques by getting in association with Rentala Subbarao who had already created himself a space in entrepreneurship. It is difficult to ascertain what would have been his reason between these two. But what could be understand is that he put in practise the social reform even though he did not directly take up any reform activities pertaining to the social reform project of Kandukuri Viresalingam and used his relationship with Rentala Subbarao to develop certain skills in the entrepreneurship which helped him developing his own career in the subsequent period.

### **Search for Career:**

Apart from his marriage another happening in the life of Kasinadhuni in the year 1890 is that his final year B A exams. He failed in the exam and could not successfully finish his graduation. Though he tried even later to finish it but he could not. Therefore, he left it without trying further.

There was possibility to do a government job even one did not finish graduation in those days. But unlike his contemporary English educated students, Kasinadhuni did not search for any government job after leaving his studies. He stayed in the house of Rentala Subbarao and taken part in the work of the Victoria Depot, an ayurvedic medicine industry and a book publishing house too. During his stay with Victoria Depot all that he could learn was management skills if not making medicine. But very soon Kasinadhuni had to leave Rentalal's house as there arose differences between them. Rental Subbarao prompted Kasinadhuni to study law and earn money where as Kasinadhuni did not like to pursue law. He wanted to do some business and earn money to get rid of his family's debts(Rayasam:1933). Therefore, he left to his village.

As he was the elder son of his family, Kasinadhuni had to take the responsibility of marriage of his younger sister and brother. He was indebted further after he had done their marriages. Therefore Kasinadhuni went to Bombay first in 1892 and to Calcutta in 1894 to come off his debts. He joined in an ayurvedic medicine shop at Calcutta(Potluri, 2006:23). Then only he published the book titled Kerala Samudrika Svara Jyotishya Sastramu. But due to insufficient propagation since lack of money, the book could not widely spread. Very soon he was forced back to his village by his ill-health. He went to Madras in 1896 stayed there for two years and again he went to Bombay in 1898 to try his luck once again. This time his fortune favoured him(Vijnana Sarvasvam, 1961).

Kasinadhuni joined in William and Co, a medicine shop, in Bombay at a salary of 100 rupees for month.

The company had its business in medicine and book publishing as well. It seems Kasinadhuni was very much impressed with this business. But his family members particularly his mother did not like his son to stay miles away from them and asked her son-in-law to search for a job for Kasinadhuni in a nearby area. Thus, a job offer as a tutor in a zamindari with a salary of thirty rupees for month had been taken to the notice of Kasinadhuni. His reply to this proposal is interesting and shows his vision.

It may be good to stay around our relatives. I have been struggling in the path of achieving my ambition for nine years. I don't know when God will help me to reach my destination. But I am determined to face any hurdles until my dream comes true. If I win in my attempt I may be fortunate, if I lose, I may be one among thousands of people who are leading their life purposeless. I have been working in an office though it doesn't suit my nature, as I don't have any other option. I will leave it if I get an opportunity.

Presently I am getting one hundred rupees for month and fifty rupees may be increased over it from the next year. In addition to that I am getting around fifty rupees from the medicines that I prepared and the books that I published. I wish to develop this business only but I don't have sufficient money to do so. Therefore it kept on postponing.

I can't agree with your proposal of doing tutorship at a meagre amount. I have a lot of hope in my life. I strongly believe that I will make my dream true at sometime in future. If I agree to work there I have to leave all hopes of my dreams. Moreover, working for an individual is always a tough task. The zamindar with whom I should work there may be good but I may not satisfy him. I feel it very tough to develop by staying among the illiterates... No other place can best suit me to do what I wanted other than Bombay (Gorrepati,1962:41-42).

### **Establishment of Amrutanjan Depot:**

There are two different views on the beginning of his own business by Kasinadhuni at Bombay. One view is that he left his job in William and Co. and started his own business and prepared Amrutanjan. The other view is that William and Co. Company, in which Kasinadhuni had worked, was owned by a European. Its owner was very much impressed with the work of Kasinadhuni and handed over his business to him while he was permanently leaving for his home country.

Though Kasinadhuni did not learn making medicines while he was working with RENTALA Subbarao, he had got experience in medicines from his work at Calcutta and Bombay. Alongside such experience he extensively referred to the ayurvedic books and at the end he prepared Amrutanjan in 1899.

Amrutanjan is a pain balm that could be used for all kinds of pains. Business in this product had the potentiality to fetch profit in bulk as those were the days where there were less number of medicine shops and doctors at the peoples' disposal. But at the beginning, it had to compete with other pain balms which had been in use such as Henry Tailamu, Oriental Balm etc. However within a decade, it became very popular. A study of the process of Amrutanjan becoming popular may reveal the business techniques of Kasinadhuni. He opted for advertisements for popularising his product.

When he prepared Amrutanjan, at first, Kasinadhuni did not have money to promote his product. He took loan of five hundred rupees from a shahukar in Bombay and went to Calcutta for promotion his product. But his efforts went in vain. Again, he tried in Calcutta by taking one thousand rupees from the same barrower. This time he could achieve success and very soon the business developed and became profitable. It transformed into Amrutanjan Depot in 1908.

When Kasinadhuni was financially well settled, he took his mother to Bombay to stay with them. But his mother could not adapt Bombay's climate and left to their village very soon. After some time she got ill.

Kasinadhuni tried all that he can to save his mother and provided all kinds of medical aid. But she died in 1902.

### **Establishment of Print-Media:**

The period after Kandukuri Viresalingam had been suggested by many of the contemporaries as the period of Kasinadhuni (Kolavennu, 1938). Many thought that Kasinadhuni deserve to be called as the father of the Telugu identity formation. But Kasinadhuni did not like to be called so as he thought Kandukuri Viresalingam deserve the said title and he was not. Therefore, Unnava Lakshminarayana, a famous social reformer and political leader from Guntur, suggested that Kasinadhuni could be considered as the mother of the process of the identity formation in the Telugu speaking region (Nori, Andhra Patrika Annual, 1967-68). The reason why many of Kasinadhuni's contemporaries tried to fit him with titles such as father/mother of Telugu identity formation was his efforts in establishing and developing print-media in such a way to communicate the new/modern ideas to the people of the region and as a platform for the new researches that would help on the one hand for the formation community identity and on the other hand for the building up of self-confidence among the community- a process of extending the boundaries as well as the depth of the Telugu identity. In other words, Kasinadhuni had taken up a project of educating or spreading knowledge among the Telugus and making them aware of ongoing developments at different levels and fields. In this regard he writes that:

There is nothing equal to the knowledge in the Universe. Those who are entangled in superstitions can never get salvation. And those who could break their shackles of ignorance may become the fathers of nation. Viresalingam is a pioneer for us in many aspects (Andhra Patrika Annual, 1933).

For this purpose he had chosen print-media. He used five mediums in executing his strategy- 1) Andhra Patrika Weekly, 2) Andhra Patrika Samvatsaradi Samchika, (annual edition) 3) Andhra Patrika Daily, 4) Bharati , a monthly and 5) Andhra Grandhamala. As soon as his business in Amrutanjan had become stable and earning profit, Kasinadhuni decided to launch the Andhra Patrika Weekly. It was started publishing on September 9, 1908, from Bombay.

Apart from weekly, Kasinadhuni started publishing annual journal from 1910 namely Andhra Patrika Samvatsaradi Samchika, to be released on Ugadi, the Telugu new year. It contains more than two hundred pages. The content of the edition is divided into several blocs such as politics, society, literature, drama, stories, dance, history, Philosophy, agriculture, medicine, astrology, music etc. Thus, it is a collection of essays in different fields written by experts in their respective fields. In addition to the essays, there is introduction written by Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao and photos of prominent leaders of national and regional importance.

The Andhra Patrika Daily had been started publishing from April 1, 1914. When it started publishing, Kasinadhuni thought of changing its centre from Bombay to either Madras or Vijayawada. He showed his wise here before changing the headquarters. He asked for the readers' opinion on the following questions ((Nori, Andhra Patrika Annual, 1967-68):

1. Is there any opportunity to start a Telugu daily?
2. What would be right place to publish a Telugu daily?
3. What would be the reasonable amount for annual or monthly subscription?
4. What are the plans to develop a daily in Telugu?

Finally, Kasinadhuni chose Madras to establish head office for the Andhra Patrika daily. After sometime he bought Tambu Chetti building for publishing it. He also started a monthly journal namely Bharati. It

was started publishing from January 1924 and it was purely intended for the literature and arts. He used to contribute review of happenings over the month at the end of each edition. Alongside publishing newspapers and journals Kasinadhuni also took up publishing books. He established Andhra Grandhamala in 1926 and published around thirty two books to which he contributed introductions. One among them was two volumes of Andhra Vijnana Sarvasvamu of Komarraju Lakshmana Rao. Personally he wrote two books. One was Andhra Vajmaya Suchika. It is a catalogue of published and unpublished Telugu books till 1924. The other was the Bhagavad-Gita. It is his interpretation of the Gita which he wrote during his jail life in 1930.

### **Political Career:**

Many important political happenings took place in the year 1916. Congress-League pact, reunion of the Moderates and Extremists of the Indian National Congress and the beginning of the Home Rule League Movement by Annie Besant in the Madras Presidency region and by Balagangadar Tilak in the Bombay Presidency region. The Home Rule League was active in the Telugu speaking region. It was led in the Ceded districts by Ranganatha Modaliyar, Gutti Kesava Pillai, Sivasankaram Pillai, Hatti Sivarao, Hatti Sankara Rao, Dora Swamy Ayyangar, Partha Sarathi Ayyangar, Raja Ramarayanam, and Bollina Muniswami Naidu. In the Circar districts, the movement was led by Konda Venkatappayya, Unnava Lakshminarayana, Bhogaraju Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Gollapudi Sitaramasastri, Mutnuri Krishna Rao, Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao, Mocherla Ramachandra Rao, Kurma Venkata Reddi Naidu, Nyapati Subbarao, Chilakamarti Lakshminarasimham, Bulusu Samba Murthy, Bhupatiraju Venkatapati Raju, Chintalapati Narasimha Raju, and Pusapati Venkatapati Raju etc... in their respective areas. Kasinadhuni started his political career with the Home Rule League Movement. He participated in the movement in the Madras region along with Gadde Rangayya Naidu (Ayyadevara, 2006:103). When Annie Besant was arrested and kept in jail for her participation in the Home Rule League Movement, S Subrahmanya Ayyar, a staunch follower of Besant addressed a letter to Wilson, the then President of United States of America and exemplified the pitiful condition of the Indians under the British colonial rule. Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao and Konda Venkatappayya were among those who undersigned the letter (Konda, 1966: 205).

The Congress leaders from the Telugu speaking region sought from the central leadership a separate Congress unit for the region as a token of its acceptance to the Andhra Movement. Their wish was granted and the Andhra Congress Committee was established in the year 1917. On January 20, 1918, elections were held for electing the stake holders of the Andhra Congress Committee in Madapati Venkateswara Rao Edward Town Hall, Bezawada (Vijayawada). Nyapati Subbarao was elected as the President and Konda Venkatappayya was elected as the General Secretary in the elections. Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao, Parthasarathi Ayyangar and Sivasankaram Pillai were elected as the Joint Secretaries (Mamidipudi, 1966:469). Ever since then Kasinadhuni held some or other position the Andhra Congress Committee until his last breath. He was the president for the years 1924, 29, 30, 34 and rest of the time he was the Treasurer of the Congress. He was elected as the member of A I C C (All India Congress Committee) for the first time in a meeting of Andhra Committee held at Rajahmundry on October 15, 1920. From then on, he had been the member of A I C C for twelve years (Rajagopalarao, 2004:5).

During the Non-Cooperation Movement, several movements happened as a part of the mainstream movement in the Telugu speaking region. Notable among them were Pullari Satyagraha of Palnadu in which Unnava Lakshminarayana and Madabhusi Vedantam Narasimhacharyulu were arrested, the Chirala-Perala Movement led by Duggirala Gopala Krishnayya was against the decision to convert Chirala as a

Municipality and Pedanandipadu no-tax campaign. The no-tax campaign at Pedanandipadu Firca is important because it happened before Gandhi sought to test the technique at Bardoli. The movement here was led by Parvataneni Virayya Chowdary and the people participated in it with more enthusiasm. They stopped paying taxes and the village officials were unable to collect taxes from the Firca even to meet their salaries. Rutherford was appointed as the special officer to suppress the movement here and a large army was kept in the Firca for this purpose. It seems there were differences among the leadership of the region about conducting the no-tax campaign and on the peoples' capacity to bear the suppressive methods of the colonial government. Therefore, the Andhra Congress Committee constituted a three member committee in January 1922 to study the situation at Firca and suggest proper action to be taken (Mamidipudi, 1969:47). Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao was one of the three-member committee and the other two were Tanguturi Prakasam and Dandu Narayana Raju (Konda, 1966:297).

The committee went across the villages of Pedanandipadu Firca, noticed the success of one of the three-members report to stop the movement so as to give relief to the people of the Firca who had been suffering from the harsh measures taken by the government for suppressing the movement. Following the report the Andhra Congress Committee decided to stop the movement (Tanguturi, 2009:170).

After the annual session of Congress at Gaya in 1922, the All India Congress Committee meeting was held on January 1, 1923 and it was decided 1. to collect 25,00,000 rupees for Tilak Swaraj Fund by the end of April 1923, 2. to conduct the non-cooperation with 50,000 volunteers across India as long as Gandhi was in jail (Tanguturi, 2009:193). Following this resolution, efforts were started by the Congress leadership in Andhra to collect funds for the Tilak Swaraj Fund. Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao, Tanguturi Prakasam, Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao, Gadicherla Harisarvottama Rao and Duvvuri Subbama toured across Ganjam, Visakhapatnam, Godavari, Krishna and Guntur districts for collecting funds for the Tilak Swaraj Fund (Andhra Patrika, 1923).

The Khadi branch of A I C C, toured in Andhra region in June and July of 1922 and identified that the region was next only to Punjab in the production of Khadi. It gave report that the Khadi programme received a good support in the region and recommended to grant 10,00,000 rupees for developing the programme further in the region. After a few days the Andhra Congress Committee met at Rajahmundry and decided to separate the Khadi programme from mainstream political programme of the Congress and to constitute a separate board for it. Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao was elected as its president (Mamidipudi, 1969:60).

The Andhra Mahasabha was held at Anantapuram on November 27, 1927. It was presided over by Dandu Narayana Raju. A resolution was moved by Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao in this conference to boycott the Simon Commission on the grounds that people of India were looking for self-rule and any committees intended for reforms alone would not be accepted anymore. He gave a call to all the parties to coalesce for boycotting the Simon Commission. He also made it clear that the colonial government had to realize that the days of believing their sweet promises had gone. The resolution was seconded by Parasurama Rao and was unanimously adopted by the Andhra Congress Committee (Mamidipudi, 1965 :433-34).

The government took a decision for increasing 3% land tax in the Krishna, Godavari districts in the year 1928. It was decided to go against the hike of land revenue in the annual meeting of Andhra Congress Committee held at Durgavilas, Vijayawada, and a committee was constituted for leading the campaign with Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao, Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Tanguturi Prakasam as its members (Mamidipudi, 1965:441).

All party meeting was held on November 17 and 18, 1928 at Nandhyala. The meeting was presided over

by Annie Besant. Kasinadhuni was the envoy of Andhra Congress as he was then the Secretary of Andhra Congress Committee (Mamidipudi, 1965:446). He led the Salt Satyagraha at Madras (Andhra Patrika, Apr 12, 1930) and was sent to Tiruchinapalli jail on April 21, 1930, for six months (Andhra Patrika, Apr 23, 1930). Again, he was sent to Vellore jail in January 16, 1932 for his participation in the Civil Disobedience Movement. It was on the second time he went to jail, he wrote his interpretation of the Bhagavad-Gita. In 1934 elections for Central Legislature, he was the Indian National Congress candidate for Krishna district and won with huge majority (Andhra Patrika, Nov 20, 1934).

#### **Activities in the Andhra Mahasabha/Movement:**

Apart from State Congress Committee, Kasinadhuni also actively partook in the activities of the Andhra Mahasabha right from its beginning. He had been elected to some or other position until his death. He was the president of the special Andhra Mahasabha held at Guntur on August 17, 1918, to discuss the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms. Until a few months before Kasinadhuni's death, he was the treasurer of the Andhra Mahasabha. As he had been ill for a year before his death, Kasinadhuni was replaced with Bhogaraju Pattabhi Sitaramayya as the treasurer in a meeting held on December 16, 1937 (Andhra Patrika, Dec 17, 1937).

There were a good number of Telugu people residing outside the Andhra region. One such region was Burma. Considerable work for the development of Telugu language and literature among Telugus living in Burma had been done and they were running a primary school for learning Telugu. They organised the first Andhra Mahasabha of Rangoon in 1929. It was held on November 23, 1929 (Andhra Patrika) and Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao was the president of the conference.

The famous 'Sri Bagh Pact' known as "Gentlemen Agreement" to discuss on the differences among the leaders of the Ceded districts and the Circar Districts was held on October 11, 1937 in Madras. Sri Bagh was the house of Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao. He bought it from Justice Sundara Ramayya in auction for 75,000 rupees in the year 1930 and it was Malla Pragada Subba Rao, brother-in-law of Kasinadhuni prompted him to buy it. There was a good amount of free place around this house when Kasinadhuni bought it. He kept the area required and sold out the rest. Those who built houses in the sold-out area named it as 'Nageswara Puram' (Devulapalli, 1988:28).

#### **Work for Lower Castes:**

Kasinadhuni undertook the development of his own village where he established a national school in his village in 1911 which was named after his mother. It was looked after by his younger brother and it was upgraded as upper-primary school in 1926. New buildings were constructed for the school in 1930. The lower caste people were also allowed entry to this school from its beginning. He managed a hospital in his village under his brother's supervision to provide service to people at free of cost for thirty years. In addition to that, he bought two acres of land in his village, constructed houses and distributed among houseless lower caste people (Rajagopala Rao, 2004:12-13). He also published many books promulgating caste reform and annihilation of untouchability such as Niruddha Bharatamu of Manginapudi Venkatasarma, Antaranitanamu, Nandanaru Yatra, Gandhi Mahatmuni Harijana Yatra, Malapalli by Unnava Lakshminarayana etc. and contributed introductions to them. He was the first elected president of the Andhra branch of Harijan Sevak Sangh started in 1932. Being its president for the Andhra region, he toured across several villages in the region and propagated the goals of the Harijan Movement, a figment of Gandhi after the Civil Disobedience Movement (Andhra Patrika, Jan 25, 1933).

### **Construction of Durga Vilas and Durga Kalamandiram:**

When the Indian National Congress working committee met at Vijayawada during the Non-Cooperation Movement, there was a lot of problem for accommodation. Therefore Kasinadhuni decided that there should be a building for him to accommodate leaders visiting Vijayawada for meetings and all. In 1922, an old house of Challapalli Zamindar came for sale. Kasinadhuni bought it for 20,000 rupees, demolished it and constructed a new house in its place with an expenditure of 70,000 rupees. The new building was named as “Durga Vilas” by Chellapilla Venkata Sastri. It came in to use from 1927. About constructing this house, Kasinadhuni said that “Bezawada (Vijayawada) has been a place of our residence since our forefathers. They left the place as they could not get agrahara here. Now I could get an opportunity to reside in Vijayawada due to Kanakadurga's (a residing deity of Vijayawada) grace. I believe that She will protect me all the time” (Devulapalli, 1988:26). It had become popular as 'Andhra guest-house' for leaders of different cadre. Sometimes it was used as a function hall for marriages at free of cost.

As has been observed, Kasinadhuni was very much interested in plays and dramas. There used to be Kannaya Naidu Drama Company in Madras. Once it was very famous and patronized well by the audience. But gradually the company went in financial deficiencies and came to sale by 1920's. Kasinadhuni bought the building material for 9,000 rupees as they were not ready sell their land. Many suggested Kasinadhuni to construct a theatre using that material at Madras. But he decided to construct it at Vijayawada and bought the land of Uyyuru Zamindar for 1,20,000 rupees. He started constructing a building for performing dramas and cinemas there and it was finished in the year 1929. It was named as “Durga Kala Mandiram” and was inaugurated by Vedurumudi Seshagiri Rao, a famous poet and artist. In the beginning the building was used to perform plays later it transformed to be a cinema hall. Kasinadhuni was the first to play a talky film in the region in Durga Kalamandiram. For this he brought required equipment from Calcutta. Alongside, playing plays and cinemas, the building was also used for conferences (Devulapalli, 1988:26-27).

### **“Desoddharaka”, “Viswadata”, and “Kalaprapurna”:**

As recognition to his role in different movements in Andhra he was conferred on the title Desoddharaka by the Andhra Mahasabha in 1924. The conference was held at Madras and it was presided over by Cattamanchi Ramalinga Reddy (C R Reddy) (Andhra Patrika, Oct 20, 1924). Gandhi toured in Andhra region in 1929 for propagation of Khadi programme (Andhra Patrika, April 11, 1929). He was impressed with the donations made by Kasinadhuni for running and development of several institutions in the Andhra region. He wrote in an article in the Young India that he hope Kasinadhuni to loot more from his business of Amrutanjan since he could certainly say most of the profit was again invested, in one way or the other, in the service of nation. He further said that “I secretly reproach that political leaders in Andhra are conferred on titles without discretion. But I feel that Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao deserve the title 'Desoddharaka' ” (Andhra Patrika Annual 1967-68).

On September 8, 1929, a conference was held at Durga Kalamandiram, Bezawada for felicitating the founders of the Andhra Patrika and the Krishna Patrika for the service they had been rendering to the development of the Andhra region. The conference was presided over by Cintalapati Narasimharaju (Andhra Patrika, Sept 9, 1929). Several leaders such as Dandu Narayana Raju, Nyapati Subbarao, K V R Sami Naidu, Mote Narayana Rao, Gadde Rangayya Naidu, Jagarlamudi Kuppuswamy Chowdary, Konda Venkatappayya, Duvvuri Subbamma, Pattabhi Sitaramayya etc. . . gave speeches and hailed the work had been done by the both the news papers in the region (Andhra Patrika, Sep 10, 1929).

Pattabhi Sitaramayya, while giving speech, said that “Gandhi hailed Kasinadhuni's philanthropic activities and his funding to many institutions in the region. . . he called him 'Viswadata'- universal provider- therefore let us all start calling Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao as “Viswadata” Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao” (Andhra Patrika, Sep 10, 1929).

In the Convocation of Andhra Viswa Kala Parishad – Andhra University- Visakhapatnam held on December 2, 1935, Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao was conferred on another title “Kalaprapurna” for his work in the development of literature and arts in the Andhra region. C R Reddy was then the Vice Chancellor of the university. Some of the citizens of Madras organised themselves into a society and sponsored a painting of Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao by Chavali Nageswara Rao to the university. Vikrama Deva Varma, Zamindar of Jayapur Princely State and the Pro-Chancellor of the university, unveiled the painting. But Kasinadhuni could not attend this function due to ill health. His health became worsened by 1937, suffered ill for one year and finally his life come to an end on April 11, 1938.

### Conclusion:

Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao's historical significance lies not only in his political and cultural contributions but also in his role as one of the key financial and institutional supporters of Telugu sub-nationalism. Moving beyond the conventional framework of elite nationalist politics, his life demonstrates how indigenous entrepreneurial capital could be mobilized to subvert colonial hegemony and actively foster regional consciousness. By transforming the profits of his commercial enterprise into platforms of public communication—most notably through newspapers, publishing initiatives, and cultural patronage—he helped create an informed and politically engaged Telugu public sphere. In doing so, he decentralised access to political discourse and catalysed the democratization of nationalist ideas across the region.

His career therefore suggests that the Andhra movement was not merely a linguistic or political agitation but also a socio-economic process sustained by networks of entrepreneurship, print culture, and philanthropy. Nageswara Rao's trajectory highlights the material foundations that enabled the articulation and consolidation of modern Telugu identity. Recognizing this dimension demands a broader historiographical perspective—one that foregrounds the indispensable role of indigenous enterprise and civic investment in shaping the regional awakening of early twentieth-century Andhra.

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