

# IN DEFENCE OF CIVIL RIGHTS



## A TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF DR. RAMANADHAM

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PEOPLE'S UNION FOR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS  
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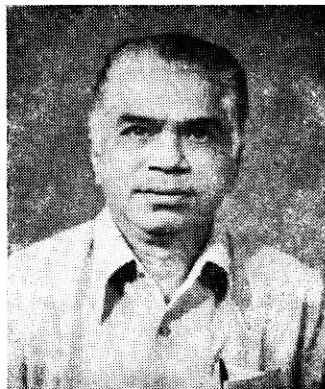
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# IN DEFENCE OF CIVIL RIGHTS



*Dr. A. Ramanadham*

*(1933—1985)*

*Vice President, Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee*

**Killed in his clinic by  
Andhra Pradesh Police  
on 3rd September 1985**

A Tribute to the Memory of  
Dr. A. Ramanadham

Contemporary India presents a disturbing situation to anyone who is concerned with democratic rights. In the past few years these are increasingly being subverted by the state and by private groups indulging in communal violence and terrorism. The fear, anger, and concern caused by private violence has given the state wide public sanction to put into operation many measures, legislative and administrative which violate the spirit of the Constitution. Among the latest such is the ordinance permitting the government, if it so chooses, not to place reports of Enquiry Commissions before the Parliament, thus denying the right to information to the highest legislative body in our country, and thereby to the press and the general public. In the face of rising private violence by communalists, people are apt to ignore, if not welcome, the assuming of wide-ranging arbitrary powers by the state. Such assuming of unchecked powers is dangerous to the democratic system in our country.

This democratic system was not born out of a paper Constitution. It represents a system of values evolved through a long and tortuous struggle of our people. The safeguards guaranteed by the Constitution are only the institutional reflection of these values, beliefs and rights. And the struggles which brought the Constitution into being occurred not only in the distant past but are taking place now in present day India. Struggles by ordinary people, for the ordinary things of life, are being waged in different corners of the country.

The movement of civil liberties and democratic rights has grown to become a chronicler of these struggles. But more than that, it has consciously sought to intervene in defence of the rights of the people through the existing democratic institutions. The movement has widened its functions within the framework of constitutional safeguards in the last ten years and reflects the growing strength of democratic consciousness. In the process it became a threat to the rulers and their attempt to obscure the gradual erosion of the democratic foundations of society.

In response the state has launched a systematic campaign to malign the civil rights movement. For instance, two civil rights organisations which brought out a joint report on the November 1984 massacre in Delhi are being accused of receiving foreign funds, while an Andhra civil rights

organisation which has been highlighting encounter deaths in the state, is being accused of receiving arms from Punjab terrorists. The campaign is also designed to blur the distinction between civil rights organisations and the different groups or persons whose human and civil rights they are defending. They are accused of abetting and even participating in lawlessness. But this orchestrated campaign has not deterred the civil rights organisations from continuing their work, nor has it affected their credibility. Hence the resort to physical assault and violence by the state on members of civil rights organisations.

As we approach the first anniversary of his death, which civil rights organisations all over the country are commemorating as Civil Rights Day we present a brief biographical account of Dr. Ramanadham, Vice-President of Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee (APCLC). If his life is an illustration of a modest, unassuming but persevering involvement in the struggle for democratic rights, his assassination at the hands of the police indicates the extraordinary lengths to which the state is willing to go to suppress the movement.

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On the evening of Sept. 2, 1985, Sub-Inspector Yadagiri Reddy was shot dead by unidentified assailants, believed to be naxalites, at Kazipet railway station, Warangal. Next morning his body was carried in a funeral procession in which a number of armed policemen participated. The procession was led by the district Superintendent and the Deputy Inspector General of Police. As the procession was passing through Jaya Prakash Narayan Road, a section of the processionists broke into the clinic of Dr. Ramanadham. They ransacked the clinic and assaulted the waiting patients and the compounder. They then went into the neighbouring shop, Kalpana Optical, where they found Dr. Ramanadham and shot him dead at point blank range. Immediately after, a neighbouring doctor took him to Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Hospital, about two kilometers away. Soon after he was declared dead. Thus ended a life which began fifty-three years ago in Mustikuntla village.

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Mustikuntla is a village in Mahira taluq, Khammam district that separates the Telengana from the Andhra region. In the thirties the village had a small population of about three hundred, subsisting on cultivation of dry and barren land. But now the village has become prosperous thanks to canal irrigation and even has a high school.

It was in this village that Dr. Ramanadham was born on Oct. 16 1933, third son of Anatarama Rao and Rajyalaxmi. The family had about 30 acres of dry jowar land. Ramanadham was the first person in the family to insist on higher education and had to struggle his way to become a doctor.

He completed his primary education in the village and did his secondary school in nearby Khammam. Despite family opposition he went to C. R. Reddy College, Eluru for his intermediate, and then to the famous Nizam College, Hyderabad, for his B.Sc. degree. During his Nizam College days he became part of a group of students who were peripherally associated with the All Hyderabad Students Union. The house of Dr. Balachandra Paranjpaye, well-known veteran of the Telengana struggle, was the center for all young men in those days. Dr. Paranjpaye remained a source of guidance to Ramanadham all his life.

After his B.Sc. he did a number of irregular jobs for more than a year, which included teaching and a job as a medical representative. Around this time he also got married. Then he got admission in M.B.B.S. in the newly established Gandhi Medical College, Hyderabad. Financially, these were his bad days, having to live on the limited amount sent by his reluctant father. But he kept alive his interest in social activities and became general secretary of the student union. After completing his house surgeonship he joined osmania Medical college for his Diploma in Child Health. It was during this period that he became a student of the famous left wing intellectual, Dr. Rajagopalan. Both were to work together, twenty years later, in the APCLC. Throughout his student career he remained on the periphery of the student movement. In fact, later on too he never became part of any organised political group.

After completing his studies he joined government service. First he taught in Kakatiya Medical College and worked in Mahatama Gandhi

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Memorial Hospital where he was to die later. Then for over four years he worked in the listless primary health centers at Chityala, Vangara and Husnabad in the Warangal and Khammam districts. Primary health centers then and now are private clinics for those who wield social power in the village and not clinics for the people. Invariably Ramanadham could not adjust himself to work in this kind of framework. Husnabad became his last job.

Husnabad, a taluq center, is a big village with around a population of 10,000. Its Health Center serves a number of the neighbouring villages. The earlier doctors and compounders had established a routine pattern of corruption. They did not attend the center, but used the medicines and equipment of the center to run their own private clinics. When Ramanadham took charge, he put an end to this practice. This earned him the wrath of the compounder, the Block Development Officer, and the Samiti President who all used to share the booty. But Ramanadham struggled against these forces and became a very popular doctor. Eventually things came to a head when he was asked to issue a death certificate for an unidentified young girl in the house of the Samiti President. The doctor refused. And soon after, he resigned from government service.

He set up his own children's clinic on Jayaprakash Narayan Road, Warangal, in 1968. He was the first pediatrician in the town and soon became very popular. It was from this period that he consciously engaged himself in social activities outside his profession.

In the early seventies, before the APCLC was formed, he became a kind of supportive center for a number of people involved in a variety of problems and issues. He helped his friends run a monthly that became a well known non-commercial journal in Telegu, Srjana. In fact, be it a writers organisation wanting to hold its first meeting in Warangal or a young couple facing family opposition to their marriage every one sought his help and received it. In a dramatic incident he rescued a young girl and conducted her marriage. The girl's parents were influential people, with powerful connections. In the midst of the marriage function, the police arrived and arrested the bridegroom and his friends, on charges of abduction. Eventually the girl won her battle in court.

In early 1974, along with another well-known doctor of Warangal, Dr. Amjad Ali Khan, he became a founder member of APCLC in Warangal. Around the same time, he also organised a polyclinic in Warangal. When emergency was declared in 1975, all activities ceased. The General Secretary of the APCLC, advocate Prattipati Venkateswarlu was among the first to be arrested. Ramanadham was also arrested, which led to the closure of the people's clinic, virtually the only democratic activity in the town at that time. He was taken to the illegal camp maintained by the police at Pakala reserve forest.

Pakala is a wild life sanctuary where two bungalows meant for tourists were turned into police camps during the emergency. A number of young people arrested during the emergency were detained here and tortured. Among them was the sole eye-witness to the Girapalli encounters in which four young men were shot dead in cold blood by the police. Dr. Ramanadham, who was a fellow detainee of the eyewitness, was to be of crucial assistance to the Tarkunde Committee which brought out its famous report on these encounters after the emergency. He was shifted after three weeks detention at the Pakala camp to Warangal Central Prison, which serves as the main prison for five north-western districts of Telengana.

After the lifting of emergency, the central government appointed the Shah Commission of Enquiry which managed to submit its report, although no action was taken on it. But anyone who has gone through the reports of the Commission can see that the largest number of crucial affidavits to the Commission from Andhra came from the Warangal region. Again, the aborted Bhargava Commission, which was appointed to enquire into encounter killings in Andhra, was helped by the mobilisation of crucial witnesses. In both instances, Dr. Ramanadham played an unobtrusive but significant role.

In November 1977, a tidal wave hit Divi Seems in the Krishna district on the east coast. It led to hundreds of villages being marooned and to the death of thousands of people. Ramana tham and his team was the first team of doctors to enter the inundated areas, before any government organisations or voluntary agencies. Later the team came back, raised funds, medicines and material necessities and went back to the flood affected areas and held a mobile medical camp for a month.

In late 1979, the junior doctors in Warangal along with their colleagues in the rest of the state went on a strike for over seventy days.

The government attempted to suppress the strike at one level by repression and at another level by generating a mass hysteria against the striking doctors. Dr. Ramanadham took the initiative and organised a people's clinic opposite to the government hospital with the help of the doctors on strike. The clinic became a center for both the medical service and the strike. The ramshackle pandal outside the hospital became so popular that poor people requested the doctors to continue the clinic even after the eventual withdrawal of the strike.

In an unusual incident, Dr. Ramanadham assisted a Brahmin widow whose husband had been the priest of a temple. After his death the widow managed the temple. But the trustees ejected her, presumably because of the land value of the temple, on the ground that a woman cannot be a priest. APCLC Warangal, under Ramanadham, took up her case and eventually won the battle for her and also set a precedent.

What earned him the wrath of the Warangal police was systematic efforts by the APCLC to expose the lawlessness of the police. Hundreds of illegal arrests, torture, setting up of armed police camps in villages and colleges alike have become routine in past years. Since 1983 at least 12 people were killed in either police lock-up or in so-called encounters. In Warangal district, the APCLC investigated each of these instances, and brought police violence to the notice of the public. In a number of cases it provided legal help to the victims of police harassment. It challenged the constitutional validity of the armed camps in the colleges and villages of Warangal. As the APCLC stepped up its campaign, it has become a fetter on the arbitrary behaviour of the Warangal police establishment.

Initially the police began with a systematic campaign that APCLC was an extremist front organisation. APCLC's own diversified activities notwithstanding, it was projected as an organisation that is working in the interests of extremists. Later, APCLC activists began to be implicated in false cases. In 1984, two of the activists were implicated in a case of obstructing police from discharging their duty. The case was later dismissed.

In January 1985, Dr. Ramanadham was arrested along with Dr. K. Balagopal and K. Seetarama Rao. They were charged with, among other things, distributing arms to the extremists. The doctor was released on bail a week later. While he was in police lock-up, in a telling

incident, the policeman who had arrested him brought his child for treatment to the doctor. The incident indicates the extent to which he had become popular, even among the policemen of Warangal.

Dr. Ramanadham's social awareness helped him to understand the social origins of the diseases of his patients. He did not confine himself to giving medicines but tried to spread a scientific outlook. It was in this process that he wrote the famous book "Medical Guide" (in Telugu) which was addressed to the people and not to the health workers. The book became very popular. A second edition came out within an year and now, after his death, a third edition has been printed. Even after establishing himself as a popular doctor, his interests in studies remained. He took part in different seminars and meetings of the profession. A few weeks before his death he participated in a conference held at Nizam Orthopedics Institute. This professionalism was to remain with him till the very end. In the last twenty minutes of his life enroute to the hospital, he kept discussing with the young doctor, who took him in his car, the diagnosis of his injuries and suggesting treatment.

In a sense his involvement with his profession helped the civil rights movement which in turn made him a better doctor. He was a doctor not only to rickshaw pullers, hawkers, and slum-dwellers but also to the policemen and their children. A few days before his death, an SI who was leaving the town on promotion came to him and gave him sweets by way of farewell. The SI is believed to have said that for Warangal police he is not only a civil rights activist but also a doctor. Ramanadham accepted the sweets with the confidence in human relationships which he had built over sixteen years of service to his patients and to the people of Warangal. Evidently the policeman who killed him did not share such values.

But perhaps his patients, people for whose lives he had fought and whose rights he had defended shared them. That is why on Sept. 4, defying Section 144 and undeterred by the presence of armed police, they came in their thousands and paid their respects to the man who fought for them. His life and death will remain a defiant celebration of human values and a never ending source of inspiration for the democratic movement.

## AFTERMATH

The news of Dr. Ramanadham's death reached Delhi on the morning of Sept. 4, 1985. Two prominent Delhi dailies carried a report, filed by a national news agency, that Dr. Ramanadham, Vice-President of the APCLC was killed by "extremists" in his clinic on the previous day. In fact no correspondents of this news agency, which does not have a Warangal office, were present in Warangal on Sept. 3rd. The report was filed from Hyderabad, within two hours of the incident. All other state-level and local dailies carried reports by their Warangal correspondents saying that the doctor was killed by armed policemen accompanying the dead body of S.I. Yadagiri Reddy

Next day, The Superintendent of Police, Warangal, contradicted the local news paper accounts and stated that Dr. Ramanadham ~~was~~ ~~somehow became part of the police procession~~ was possibly killed by some extremists. When eye-witness newsmen pointed out that uniformed policemen were seen entering Dr. Ramanadham's clinic, he stated that they had gone to the rescue of the doctor. On the same day, Vasant Nageswarara Rao, Home Minister, made a statement on the incident in response to a notice under rule 329, tabled by 23 members in the state assembly. The Home minister maintained that the suggestion that the police were behind the incident was "baseless". He added that the incident took place long after the funeral procession of armed police had left the place. He also indicated the involvement of extremist factions in the murder. Meanwhile APCLC had released its own report on the incident.

The post-mortem report, quoted by the APCLC, states that the death was caused by a service revolver fired at point blank range. On that basis and other corroborative evidence APCLC demanded the immediate suspension of the senior police officials and ordering of a judicial enquiry. The government refused to hold a judicial enquiry. Instead a CB CID enquiry was ordered. A few weeks later the government suddenly discovered that two policemen were guilty of dereliction of duty. They had let their service revolvers be stolen from them two months prior to the incident! Presumably, the stolen revolvers were to be

traced to the "extremists" who somehow became part of an armed police procession and killed the doctor without anyone ever noticing it.

Meanwhile police claimed to have identified the six people who were involved in the Yadagiri Reddy murder case. The case itself was brought under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1985 which came into effect in Andhra Pradesh from August, 1985. This was the first and the only murder case so far under the Act in the state. Two of the accused, Nageswara Rao and Ramakrishna, were killed in a so called encounter in April this year. The other accused include Dr. K. Balagopal, General Secretary, APCLC, who was let out on bail and Dr. P. Varavara Rao, General Secretary of the Revolutionary Writers Association, who is still in jail.

Eventually the CB CID enquiry did take place. An SP who was till recently in the Andhra Police was deputed for the enquiry. He visited Warangal in late October for 3 days and submitted the report to the government. It has not been released to the public or even to the assembly so far. But we understand that the report came to the conclusion that the "assailants remain unidentified".

## VIOLATION OF DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS IN ANDHRA

1. KILLINGS (January 1985 - April 1986)	Number	Totals
<b>Encounters</b>		
Political Activists	35	
Peasant Sympathisers	5	
Mistaken Identity	1	
<b>Total :</b>		41
<b>Custodial Deaths</b>		
Political Activists	2	
Peasants	2	
Petty Thieves	5	
Small Self-employed People	5	
Others	6	
<b>Total :</b>		20
<b>Police Firings</b>		
Individual Incidents	5	
On Mass Gatherings	3	
<b>Total :</b>		8
<b>Other Killings</b>		
by Excise Officials	5	
by Forest Officials	1	
<b>Total :</b>		6
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		75

### 1.1 Description of the dead

Wholetime Political Activists	36
Sympathisers and other Activists	6
Non-Political People	32
<b>Total :</b>	75

## 1.2 The Course of Law

	Killings	Action against Officials		Enquires	CBCID	Court Interventions	
		Suspension	Transfer			High Court	Supreme Court
Encounters	41	1	0	0	0	0	10
Custodial Deaths	20	1	3	3	0	1	0
Police Firings	8	0	1	0	1	0	0
Other Killings	6	0	0	0	0	0	0

(Note : The Supreme Court case concerning 10 encounter killings is now dismissed)

## 1.3 The Legislature and the Press

	Killings	No. of incidents raised in the Assembly	Reports in the Press		
			Original Reports	Secondary Reports	Not Reported
Encounters	41	0	10	31	0
Custodial Deaths	20	6	15	4	1
Police Firings	8	4	6	2	0
Other Killings	6	1	3	3	0
Total :	75	11	34	40	1

(Note : Secondary reports in most cases are press hand-outs of Police Department while in a few cases they include reports by APCLC. The sole unreported incident in the press relates to the death of a tribal girl in East Godavari)

**Table 2: TERRORISTS : Persons arrested under the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1985**

**2.1 : District wise break-up\***

District	No. of persons arrested.
Vishakhapatnam	3
Guntur	17
Warangal	20
Hyderabad	6
Khammam	11
Nalgonda	1
Nizamabad	106
Total	164

\* Likely to be underestimates

**2.2. Who Are The Terrorists?**

Lecturers	4
Teachers	6
Students	20
Labourers	7
Trade Union activists	5
Peasants	80
Govt. Employees	2
Whole time political activists	5
Alleged arms dealers	3
Others	32
Total	164

### 3. Assault on Women:\*

1. Sатtemma	Samudralingapuram Karimnagar	Raped by S.I. in her own house (13.1.85)
2. Padma	Jammikunta, Karimnagar	Raped by a homeguard (6.8.85)
3. Safiabano	Chatinaka. Hyderabad	Raped by two policemen (31.8.85)
4. Mangamma	Achambeta Mehabubnagar.	Raped by C.I. in his house.
5. Venkatakka	Kotturu, Karimnagar.	Raped in police lockup
6. Laxmi	Jayagiri, Warangal	Raped and given roller treatment
7. —	Lotugadda, East Godavari	14year old tribal girl died due to gang rape by the police
8. —	Lakkavaram, Vishakapatnam	Two tribal women raped by the special armed police of APSP.
9. —	Panasapalli, East Godavari.	One tribal woman gang raped by policemen led by C.I.
10. —	Annavaram, East Godavari.	One tribal woman raped by special armed police of APSP.

### 3.1 Molestation and other forms of sexual assault.\*

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Sulochana (18)   | Nagarjunasagar,<br>Guntur.   | Stripped and beaten up by the S.I. for refusing to sleep with him.(4.3.85).  |
| 2. Allagadda<br>Laxmi   | Gummalapuram,<br>Karimnagar.   | Stripped and paraded in village.   |
| 3. —  | Rekulapalli,<br>Kaimnagar.   | Four Women, wives of activists were assaulted by the armed police in a mid--night raid on the village                  |
| 4. —  | Gollakishanpalli,<br>Warangal.   | 11 women, along with four men, were stripped and made to walk around the statue of Mahatma Gandhi.                     |
| 5. —  | Laxmipuram,<br>Karimnagar.   | Women of the village were stripped and forced to play 'Batukamma' & a folk dance, in front of Panchayat Samiti Office. |
| 6. Gangamma (19)  | Kinaparthi<br>East Godavari.   | Detained illegally and tortured for two months.  |
| 7. —  | Vijaywada  | Four women were tonsured in the police lock up (3.2.85)  |
| 8. Swarna (19)  | Hyderabad  | Radical Student arrested by police, tortured for three weeks. (Nov 85).  |
| 9. N. Sujata (19)   | Warangal   | Stripped and beaten up in police custody. (Oct, '85).  |
| 10. Names of the Villages from which mass rape was reported : | Joturu,<br>Lakkavaram, Annavaram —(Chintapallitaluq, Vishakhapatnam)<br>Jaldam, S. Pydipala (Pattipadu taluq-East Godavari). |  |

\* Underestimates for understandable reasons.