



# The Contribution Of Andhra Kesari Tanguturi Prakasam Panthulu To The Social Development Of Andhra

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## Abstract

This paper examines the multifaceted contribution of Andhra Kesari Tanguturi Prakasam Panthulu to the social development of Andhra. A distinguished lawyer, journalist, freedom fighter, parliamentarian, and administrator, Prakasam Panthulu left a lasting imprint on every sphere of public life he entered. His influence on the social fabric of Andhra was profound and unparalleled. Inspired by Gandhian constructive programmes, he initiated several pioneering reforms aimed at the uplift of Dalits, handloom weavers, and other marginalized sections of society. His rural development initiatives, particularly the Firka Development Programme, later served as a model for the Community Development Projects that transformed rural India.

## Introduction

Shri Tanguturi Prakasam Panthulu was a many- sided personality who combined the virtues of a fearless freedom fighter, an eminent journalist, an efficient administrator, and a visionary statesman. He was the first prominent leader from Andhra to renounce his lucrative legal practice in response to Mahatma Gandhi's call and dedicate himself fully to the freedom struggle. In 1921, he founded the daily newspaper *Swarajya*, which quickly gained immense popularity and attracted demands for publication in multiple languages.

Prakasam Panthulu's administrative acumen was evident in the bold and far- reaching decisions he took in diverse areas of governance. The Zamindari Abolition Report prepared by him for the Madras Presidency laid the foundation for similar reforms across India. His pivotal role in the formation of Andhra as a separate state remains a historic milestone. His life and work ushered in a new era of progress and prosperity, not only for Andhra but also for the nation as a whole.

## Social Contributions of Andhra Kesari Tanguturi Prakasam Panthulu

Andhra Kesari Tanguturi Prakasam Panthulu made an immense contribution to the social development of the Andhra region. Govind Vallabh Pant, the then Union Home Minister, aptly described him as “the architect of modern Andhra,” highlighting his exceptional ability to conceive and implement constructive programmes. Every moment of his life, Prakasam dedicated himself to the service of the nation.

### Rural Development

Prakasam Panthulu pioneered a series of revolutionary reforms inspired by Gandhian ideals. His programmes focused particularly on the upliftment of Dalits, handloom weavers, and other economically and socially disadvantaged communities. Through these initiatives, he sought to promote self-reliance, dignity of labour, and inclusive growth in rural society.

### Firka Development Programme

One of his most notable contributions was the Firka Development Programme introduced in the early 1950s. This programme aimed at integrated rural development by addressing agriculture, education, health, and local self-governance at the firka (group of villages) level. It later came to be recognized as a precursor to the Community Development Projects that played a transformative role in rural India.

### Village Republics

As a devoted follower of Mahatma Gandhi, Prakasam strongly believed that village republics should form the foundation of India's constitutional and administrative structure. He advocated self-sufficient and self-governing villages, arguing that such a system could effectively control inflation, prevent black marketing, and ensure lasting peace and harmony in the country.

### Zamindari Abolition

During his tenure as Revenue Minister, Prakasam Panthulu chaired the Zamindari Enquiry Committee and critically examined the structural distortions in agriculture caused by the zamindari system under British rule. The Zamindari Abolition Report he prepared for the Madras Presidency became a guiding document for the Government of India's subsequent efforts to abolish the system nationwide.

### Land Reforms

Prakasam Panthulu was among the earliest leaders to assert that land should belong to the tiller. His progressive views on land reforms emphasized social justice and economic equity. Even today, his ideas remain relevant in discussions on agrarian reform and rural development.

### Aparabhageeratha of Andhra

Prakasam Panthulu earned the title of *Aparabhageeratha* for his relentless efforts to resolve the water problems of the Krishna Delta region. He played a crucial role in completing the barrage across the Krishna River, later named the Prakasam Barrage. In recognition of his services, a bronze bust was installed in Vijayawada on 23 July 1951.

### Man of the Masses

Earning the revered title “Andhra Kesari,” Prakasam Panthulu endeared himself to the people through his unimpeachable integrity, courage, determination, and generosity. He undertook extensive tours across districts and taluks, forging a close bond with the masses and often declaring that every village and hamlet belonged to him. His famous proclamation—“People gave me money and I gave it to the nation; Prakasam is Andhra and Andhra is Prakasam”—captures his selfless spirit.

He donated his land and buildings near Ongole to the nation for the establishment of a rural university aimed at training youth in self-sufficiency and self-reliance. Remarkably, he was perhaps the only Chief Minister of India who died without owning a home.

## Conclusion

Andhra Kesari Tanguturi Prakasam Panthulu dedicated his life to the welfare, progress, and overall development of society. His ideas on land reforms, cooperative movements, and rural development continue to hold relevance in contemporary India. The Firka Development Programme remains a significant milestone in grassroots planning and rural transformation. Through his tireless efforts, Prakasam Panthulu sought to change the face of rural India and empower its people. His life of sacrifice, courage, and service earned him the enduring affection and esteem of the masses. As one of the most outstanding leaders in India's social and political history, his legacy continues to inspire future generations.

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