



CHAPTER – I **(Introduction)**

Reform Trends in Andhra



CHAPTER I-(INTRODUCTION)

REFORM TRENDS IN ANDHRA

A HISTORICAL SURVEY

Hinduism as distinct from Brahmanism of the earlier period has never been monolithic and indivisible. It could be described more as a union than a unity. Even in the earlier period, especially towards the close of the age of Upanishads, there appeared three different approaches to the realization of moksha, viz., the Gnana, Karma and Bhakti margas. The last two were designed for the ordinary masses, while the first was set apart for a chosen few. The Gnana marga led to practices of meditation and contemplation associated with tapas. The Karma marga led to a proliferation of religious observances and rituals. The third and the last inculcated the ideas of Bhakti or intense attachment to a personal God.

Two separate strands, the scholarly and the popular, may, therefore, be observed in the web of Hinduism. Popular Hinduism has had a distinct character marked by many pre-Aryan cults, polytheistic practices, pilgrimages and the like. When Hindu society came into close contact with Islam after the 12th century A.D., Hindu advaita influenced Islam as much as Sufism influenced Hinduism. By then, both “feudalism from above” and “feudalism from within”, to borrow D.D Kosambi’s expressions¹, had suffered a rude shock as the result of an unsuccessful military collision with Islamic hordes from Arabia, Afghanistan and central Asia. The consequent disarray in the feudal set-up of Hindu society was reflected in its religious life. It was this factor which, more than any other,

¹ D D Kosambi, An introduction to the study of Indian History, Bombay, 1956, p343



probably led to the rise of many movements of religious protests among the Hindus.

The existence of a number of heterodox sects in the Indian society, before the 19th century, professing principles of reform, was a general phenomenon. They emerged in different parts of India including Andhra. They were founded by non-Brahmins, especially those belonging to 'low castes', these sects, without any exception, denounced the evils associated with the Brahminical Hinduism, such as polytheism, idolatry and even caste observances.² another distinctive feature common to all these sects was 'Guru worship'. To them the Guru was something more than a spiritual guide, he was a divinity incarnate³.

In Bengal, the most prominent sect was that of the *Karthabhajas* in Nadia district. The founder was an ascetic by the name Aulechand who lived in the early 18th century⁴. The sect's followers had no faith in caste or religion and in their gatherings, twice a year at Ghospara, people belonging to different castes and religions participated and ate together. Another sect in Bengal was called the *Spashtadayakas*, founded by Rupram Kabiraj⁵. Caste distinctions were not observed while admitting members into the sect. However, it was different, in one aspect, from others in that it did not recognize the divine authority of the Guru. Balarai sect was founded by Balaram Hari of a 'low caste'. The balaramis ridiculed idolatry and gave up distinctions of caste. The *sahebadhanis*, *Bauls*, *Sakhibhavakas*, *Khusi Biswas* and *Ramvallabhis* were some other heterodox

2. See in this context Niharrajan Ray, "Movements of Socio-Religious protest and Social Change in Indian History", Bulletin of Ramakrishna Mission institute of culture, Vol. XXVII, No.5 (May 1976), pp. 101-03.

3. Pramatha Nath Bose, A History of Hindu Civilisation, Vol. I, New Delhi, 1975, first edn. 1894, p.105. He stated that some of the sects placed the Guru above God. The Guruship was generally hereditary, though sometimes elective.

4. K.K. Datta, Survey of India's Social Life and Economic Condition in the Eighteenth Century (1707-1813), Calcutta, the sect and his son Ramdulal was the real founder of the sect.

5. See Pramatha Nath Bose, p. 111.



sects of Bengal during this period⁶.

Coming to the Andhra region, the Bhakti cult was predominant during the middle ages, that is, much before the 12th century A.D. It became militant in course of time and assumed the forms of Veerasaivism and Srivaishnavism (also known as Veeravaishnavism).⁷ Basveswara (popularly known as Basava), of the Karnataka region, was the founder of Veerasaivism.

Basaveswara denounced the caste system, the Vedic rites of animal sacrifices, the inferior status of women compared to men and the ritual concepts of purity and pollution⁸. In the social sphere he opposed child marriages, allowed widow remarriages and pleaded for individual freedom in matrimonial matters⁹. Being a minister of a Jain king Bijjala of Kalyan, Basava gave state support to his followers and encouraged interdining among them. He was intolerant of his opponents and quite often resorted to force to propagate his faith and to suppress his opponents. Though Veerasaivism did not develop elaborate rules of ritual, purity and pollution, a Veerasaiva was assumed to be pure, and the concept of the mixing of the pure and impure exists among them even today. It is here that Veerasaivism became a slave to tradition¹⁰.

Veera Saivism and Srivaishnavism:-

The spread of Veerasaivism in Andhra was mainly due to a scholarly trio, namely, Mallikarjuna Pandita, Sripati Pandita and Manchenna Pandita. It was, however, less militant in Andhra compared to Karnataka because of differences between Basava and

6. Ibid., pp. 120, 112 and 113.

7. K. Satyanarayana, A study of the History and culture of the Andhra, New Delhi, 1977, p. 34.

8. J N Bhattacharjee cited in John Campbell Oman, the mystics ascetics and saints of India, London, 1905, p. 117; D.S Sharma, Hinduism through the ages, Bombay, 1956, p. 47.

9. S M. Hrnashal, the lingayat Movement – A social revolution in Karnataka, dharwar, 1947, pp 90 – 91.

10. C Parvatham, "Veerasaivism – A Saivite Sectarian Movement of Protest And Reform In Karnataka". Paper Presented At The Seminar on Dissent, Protest and Reform on Indian Civilization, Simla, 1975



Mallikarjuna Pandita. Mallikarjuna Pandita did not discard the caste system but sought to reconcile it with Bhakti. but the movement of Basava left a deep impression on Andhra Society. It started an egalitarian trend which was played down later by the Brahminical creed. In course of time, in these areas, it compromised with the Brahminical creed and perpetuated the caste system.

Veerasaivism, in Andhra, contributed largely to the growth of Telugu literature. The life stories of Saivaites Saints were collected and written in Telugu poetry through the medium of native prosody (Desi matra) in dwipada^{10a} metre¹¹. srivaishnavism developed in Andhra simultaneously with Veerasaivism. Its doctrines were, more or less, the same except that Vishnu was the deity instead of Siva. The original teachings of Ramanuja in favour of social equality, among which the removal of caste distinctions was an issue, were however, not abandoned in Andhra. A few rulers of the dynasties like the Velanati Chodas of Vengi and the Haihayas of Palnad patronized Srivaishnavism¹².

The collision of Veerasaivism and Srivaishnavism, during this period (the last quarter of the 12th century A.D.), appeared to be an ideological reflection of the clash of the interests of rival feudal factions. Outwardly it took the form of a conflict between a reforming srivaishnava sect led by Brahmanaidu and the orthodox sect of Veerasaivism (which upheld the caste system and opposed interdining and social status accorded to 'untouchables') led by Nagamma (also known as Nayakuralu) resulting in a bloody war causing enormous destruction of life and Property. Nevertheless, the ballad

10a. A metre invented by Telugu poets characterized by simplicity and flexibility many popular works of Telugu poets were composed in this metre. Naturally it was held in contempt by the Sanskritists who, by faith, were Brahminical.

11. Among the telugu poets who professed Veerasaivism mention should be made of Palakuriki somanatha who wrote Basavapurana and panditharadhya charitra and sarveswara sataka by yathavakkula Annamayya. Somanatha undertook missionary work and narrated the life and miracles of Basava, in his long poem (written in Dwipada metre), Basavapurana, Madras, 1966, first edn. 1896. The second poem written by him, 'Panditharadhya Charitra' is a source book of social history of the period. See G.V. Sitapati, History of telugu Literature, New Delhi, 1968, pp. 12-13.

12. V. Yasoda Devi, "The History of Andhra Country (A.S. 1000 to 1500), subsidiary dynasties", Journal of the Andhra Historical research Society, Vol. XXVI (1960-61), (Rajahmundry),



palanati veeracharitra, clearly hinted at the attempts of Brahmanaidu to do away with the caste system under the influence of Vaishnavism.

Vemana:-

It was during this period (in the 17th century), that Vemana, a poet-philosopher of Andhra, preached his ideas¹³. The times during which he was born-the last phase of the medieval period-were marked by the weak and corrupt rule of petty princes. There was general lawlessness and decline of arts and crafts. Social life was full of abuses and religion had degenerated into hypocrisy¹⁴.

Vemana was not associated with any sect nor did found one. He was a wandering saint, observing the life around him and commenting upon it. He belonged to the Reddi community in Rayalaseema area¹⁵. He expressed his views in a simple and lucid style, “useful to a beginner, though neither poetical nor classical”¹⁶. Humour was one of the chief characteristics of his poetry. Gentle irony and sweet humour were at times combined with bitter sarcasm¹⁷. He wrote about morals in an appealing style, intelligible to the common men¹⁸.

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13. C.P. Brown who ‘discovered’ vemana to the Telugus, fixed his period, as the 17th century. See C.P. Brown, the verses of vemana (Madras 1911, first edn. 1829), Preface, p. 111. however, R. Ananta Krishna sarma, an authority on vemana, fixed it as the 18th century. See R. Ananta Krishna Sarma, Vemana Upanyasamulu, Waltair, 1971, first edn. 1929, p. 32. Biographers of vemana like V.R.Narla, Vemana, New Delhi, 1970, p. 34. believes that vemana was born in the 17th century (1652) and died during the first quarter of the 18th century.
 14. Vemana asked: “when people are starving, how can arts and crafts flourish? How can learning grow? How can an unbaked mud pot hold water?” V.R. Narla, p. 45. for social back ground of the times of vemana, see M.P.R. Reddy, “Vemana the Humanist”, in *Ithihas (Journal of the Andhra Pradesh Archives)*, Vol. II, July-Dec. 1974, No. 2, pp. 123-29.
 15. He mentioned his caste and place (Kondavidu) in one of his verses. Ishwar topa, saint Vemana-His philosophy, Hyderabad, 1950, p. 3. C. P. Brown believed Vemana to be a Jangama by caste. Brown, for the first time in 1824. came to know about vemana, at a time when he was forgotten and not mentioned among Telugu poets, through the book of Adde J. Dubois, op. cit p.275. Brown, who was then stationed at Machilipatnam collected the manuscripts of vemana’s poems and edited them which totaled more than 3,000 in number. See C.P. Brown, op cit., preface, p. I; K. Veerabhadra Rao, C.P. Brown (1798-1884) (A biography of a british civilian in the Madras Presidency who was also a Telugu scholar), (Telugu), Hyderabad, 1963, pp. 100-12.
 16. C.P. Brown, Preface, p. III.
 17. C.R. Reddy, Speeches and Essays, Nellore, 1970, p.2.
 18. M.M. Ali Khan, *the musings of mystic*, Hyderabad, 1966, p. 5, where in he compared vemana to the Persian poet sa’ di, and with Avvayyar, Tiruvalluwar, saint-poets of Tamil Nadu, Tukaram of Maharashtra, Basva of Karnataka; V. Subba Rao pantulu, sataka kavula charitamu, (Telugu), Narasapur, 1957, first edn. 1923, p. 110.



He attacked social inequalities and distinctions based on birth on two grounds; firstly that they were ethically wrong, and secondly, that they would sap the inherent strength of society and pave the way for its disintegration. Vemana attacked every external aspect of Hindu religiosity. He showed contempt for these Brahmin ritualists and ascetic devotees who set their hopes of salvation upon formal ceremonies¹⁹. He condemned caste and emphatically stated “that it is worth, not birth, that should determine a man’s position”²⁰. Idolatry to him was the negation of worship and he used all sorts of derisive expressions towards those who were its slaves²¹. He attacked the different religions of his time as he found them full of pretensions, superstitions, rituals and symbols. Wandering from place to place he concerned himself with problems of men and spoke to them through his verses about social evils, exhorting them to liberate themselves from them. He sympathized with the lot of poor and the disabilities from which they suffered. He realized, unlike other poet-saints, that poverty was more corrupting than riches. However, he could not diagnose the causes of poverty and hence exhorted the rich to share their wealth with the poor. Like Kabir, he believed in oneness of God and his philosophy was universal-brotherhood of man²². He disapproved untouchability. According to him degraded human status was determined by low character, not by birth.²³

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19. C.P.Brown, p. 173. there are several verses depicting this for example, “can we get salvation by bathing Frequently? Well, then all fishes must be saved”, etc; vedam venkatakrishna sarma. Sataka vangmaya sarvaswarmr, (Telugu), Madras, n.d., p.154.
20. See article by W.H. Campbell, “the one Great Poet of the people” in V.R. Narla, ed., vemana through Western eyes, New Delhi. 1969, p. 59.
21. To cite one verse, “the senseless fools with notions mistaken, worship the stones as though he dwells in them. Glows in Life the Lord of earth and heaven, and not in stone, adorned with many a gem”. Translated by Ali Khan, 31 Also see the article by C. Purnachandrarao’s “Vemana and Social Reform” (Telugu) in Krishana Patrika, 15 August, 1905.
22. “Place one single plate before all people who inhabit the earth; make them eat side by side and bury the caste . . .” Iswar Topa, p. 9.
23. “why should we constantly revile the pariah? Are not his flesh and blood the same as our own? And of what caste is He who pervades the pariah as well as all other men? C.P. Brown, p. 188.



However, vemana's ideas on women were no better than the conventional Hindu view. It was here that Vemana fell from his reforming pedestal. He considered women as a source of evil and undependable. A woman should be kept under check and her movements should be strictly controlled. W. H. Campbell provided an explanation for this saying that in India women were opponents of reform soaked as they were in conformism²⁴. this was however only a partial truth. After all conservatism of women was due to ignorance born of their backwardness for which men were largely responsible.

Vemana was thus a great phenomenon in Andhra during the middle ages. His philosophy was primarily humanism. He mainly concerned himself with man and his miserable state in society. His was a revolt against Hinduism which was infested with castes, rituals and superstitions. However, vemana, like other social reformers (generally mystic in their outlook and preaching the cult of bhakti) of the medieval times, was only a temporary phenomenon and his influence did not last long. In the absence of any fundamental change in the socio- economic structure of society such attempts were bound to fail²⁵.

Pothuluri Veerabrahmam:-

Pothuluri Veerabrahmam, popularly known as brahmam garu a Viswabrahmin by birth, was another reformer of this period²⁶. Though the exact date of Veerabrahmam is

24. V. R. Narla, ed., pp. 60-61

25. See D.P. Mukherjee, modern Indian culture, Bombay, 1948, first edn . 1942, p. 16, wherein he states that within the constraints of social system they were p. 16, where in he states that within the constraints of social system they were active revolutionaries but not dynamic ones.

26. S.V. Narashiah, et al., ed., andhradarsini, Vijayawada, 1954, pp. 283-84



uncertain the consensus among scholars is that he belonged to the period after Vemana²⁷. Veera brahmam propagated his ideas of reform through poems written in a simple style, called *Kalagnana Tatvalu*.²⁸ It is not known for certain whether veerabrahmam was a disciple of Vemana²⁹. In his childhood, he was under the influence of Veerasaivism as his father was at the head of the Veerasaiva monastery (Peetha) at *papaghni* in the Karnataka Region³⁰ and had his schooling in the Vedic literature. The social conditions of Andhra during his period were not much different from the times of Vemana.

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27. some scholars placed him during the 17th century. According to them Vemana came much earlier. See K. Veeraghavacharyulu, *mana Gurudevudu*, (telugu), kandimallayaplle, 1963, appendix, p. 145. others placed him during the 18th century. See for example M. kodandaramai Reddy, *Viplavamataprvakta*, pothuluri Veerabrahmam (telugu), an unpublished monograph obtained from the author. He places vemana around the middle of the 17th century and states that veerabrahmam came approximately a century later.
28. Kalagnana means predicting the future linking it up with the present and past. Some scholars believe that kalagnana tatvalu were not an innovation of Brahmmam as some writers are inclined to profess, but tinogue earlier to him, from the period of the rise of veerasaivism see for example, B. Ramaraju, *Telugu janapada Geya sahityam* (Telugu), Hyderabad, 1958, p.402.
29. A statue of vemana is there even today at the tomb of veera brahmam at Kandimallayapalle, cuddapah district. Perhaps he might have come across the poems of vemana and was impressed by them. This can be illustrated by the fact that Veera brahmam mentioned Vemana at several places in his poems The contents of their teachings were, more or less the same, though conveyed differently. Vemana adopted a harsh and satirical tone where as Veerabrahmam adopted an appealing and gentle method. See P. Sambasivarao , “ Vemana chitramu ” in Bharati, October, 1974, (a Telugu monthly journal).
30. N. Gangadharam, *sri Potuluri Veerabrahmam gari Jeevitamu* (Kaliyugatilakamu) (Telugu), Rajahmundry, 1950, P S. Papaghni, an affluent of the River North Pennar is in Kolar district, bordering Andhra region, see C.Hayavadana Rao, ed., *Mysore Gazetteer*, Bangalore, 1930, Vol.V. p. 360



Veerabrahmam condemned the hierarchical system of caste and believed that Vedic knowledge could be gained by one and all. Accordingly he had among his disciples men from several castes.³¹ He pleaded for the discontinuance of idolatry and strongly criticized superstitions.³² He advocated marriage reform and stated that girls should be married only after they had passed the age of puberty. He admitted women into his order and made them eligible for sainthood.³³ Another significant aspect of his philosophy was his trenchant criticism of untouchability and pollution.³⁴ Unlike the usual practice of Brahmin Saints seeking alms for their livelihood, he continued his caste-occupation of carpentry and smithy. As this period witnessed sporadic Hindu-Muslim tensions in society, he pleaded for harmony between them. The Brahmins of *Pushpagiri* were influenced by his teachings,³⁵ and Nawabs of Kurnool accepted his faith.

Unlike Vemana, Veerabrahmam had several disciples who, after his death, carried on his teachings. Prominent among them were Siddhaiah, Eswaramma, Yadla Ramdos, Yagantivaru who spread their ideas through the medium of easy and intelligible songs. Even today one can see in Andhra a number of wandering sadhus singing the Tatvalu (philosophical songs) of Veerabrahmam and others. There are at present several small centers of worship of Veerabrahmam functioning, mostly patronized and run by members of Vishwabramin community to which he belonged.

31. Siddhaiah, the foremost among his disciples, was Dudekula (half Muslim) by caste, Kakkayya, a madiga (untouchable) and Annajayya, a Brahmin. *Ibid.*, pp. 91-95; K.Veeraraghavacharyulu, pp.: 16-20; also Pothuluri Veerabrahmam, *et al.*, *Kalagnanatavamulu* (Telugu), Madras, n.d., p.13.

32. T.Donappa, "Vemana, Veerabrahmam" in *Andhrayothi* (Telugu Daily). May 20, 1973.

33. K.Veeraraghavacharyulu, "Mahasamskartha Brahmagaru", (hereafter referred as Brahmagaru) in *Andhra Prabha* (Telugu Daily), June 24, 1973. Veerabrahmam himself married a girl, Govindamma after she attained marriageable age. his granddaughter Eswaramma became a Yogini (saint) and unlike bhushana Doss, *Kalagnansamhita Sri Eswarammagaru* (Telugu), Tenali, 1972, a biography and teachings of Eswaramma.

34. K.Jayarama Rao, *Sri Pothuluri Veerabrahmagari Charitra* (Telugu), n.d., 1970, pp.192-93. Also see N.Gangadharam, 270

35. K.Veeraraghavacharyulu, *Gurudevudu*, pp.91-93; Vignanasarwaswamu, Vol IV, p.1091.



Of the some yogic tradition, of comparatively modern times, the prominent heterodox sect that deserves mention was the Nasraiah sect. Nasraiah, a Muslim of the Syed lineage died about 1825.³⁶ He preached mostly among the Madigas,³⁷ a moral code of good behaviour and also exhorted them not to worship idols and preached the unity of the Godhead. His centre of activity was the area around Vinukonda and Narasaraopet in the present Guntur district and his influence was fairly wide spread there. To belong the Nasraiah sect "meant advancement to the Madigas...It raised them in the social scale too."³⁸ They realized that Nasraiah's theism was better than the polytheism of their village cults. It should, however, be noted that the atmosphere of theism and social dissent created by the Nasraiah sect in Ongole (of the then Guntur district) area was made use of later by the missionaries for their own proselytizing efforts. It was in this area that the missionaries reaped a rich harvest by effecting a large number of conversions.

Most of these sects were led by people from 'lower castes' and their following too came mainly from the same source, even though the membership included heterogeneous castes. They were motivated by the aim of social betterment which was not assured to them by orthodox Hinduism and hence their rejection of caste hierarchy. It was true that these trends originated generally in personal revolts. Nevertheless they displayed a growing trend of protest in religious and social life.³⁹ All these movements were independent by nature and were in no way influenced by western ideas. These movements, lacking in organization and a clear and constructive social programme, succeeded only in creating a temporary stir in society. They were

36. Emma ranschenbush Clough, *While Sewing Sandals or Tales of a Telugu Pariah Tribe*, (A History not in Books), London, 1899, pp. 157-62.

37. Untouchable castes are divided into two sects-Malas and Madigas. 38. Clough, pp. 163-65.

39. See in respect K.N.Panikkar, Presidential Address, Section III, Indian History Congress (Thirty Sixth Session), December 29-31, 1975, Aligarh, pp.3-5.



perhaps more emotional than rational, in their out-bursts against socio-religious evils. Hence their gradual and ultimate absorption into the established Brahminical order.

One indirect result of these different sects in Andhra was the growth of a healthy literary trend in Telugu. The reformers employed an easy and spoken dialect to communicate their ideas to all sections of people in society. Mahadev Govind Ranade stated that the provinces where these movements were popular witnessed the growth of "a literature of considerable value in the Vernacular language of the country."⁴⁰ In his estimate they also "modified the strictness of the old spirit of caste exclusiveness" and, "raised the Shudra classes (*sic*) to a position of spiritual power and social importance almost equal to that of the Brahamins." Though this is a generous estimate of the influence of these sects on the position of the Sudras it is nevertheless true that an effort was made to remove the social distinctions based on religious sanction. But as long as the Brahmins were enjoying social predominance and the Sudras were occupying a lower position there could not have been any possibility of the latter improving their social status considerably. The efforts of the reformer-saints were limited by the medieval socio-economic frame work and eventually led to the absorption of these ideas and movements into the traditional order, with minor adjustments but without major changes.

EARLY BRITISH ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOCIAL REFORM

The East India Company followed till 1813 a policy of laissez-faire in regard to Indian social and religious matters, though there were some isolated Englishmen who evinced interest in social reform and educational activities. Its main interest was trade and the acquisition of territory was only a means for creating wealth in India for

40. M.B.Kolaskar, ed., *Religious and Social Reform* by Mahadeva Govind Ranade, Bombay, 1902, Introduction, p.XI; Dr. Irfan Habib, "The Historical Background of the Popular Monotheistic Movements of the 15th-17th centuries", Seminar on Ideas, Medieval India, Nov.1965, Delhi.



their investment. The Company, during this period ruled but hardly governed. The attitude of the British after 1813 can broadly be discussed under two heads, namely: (1) Evangelicism, and (2) Utilitarianism or liberalism which were the outcome of a new reforming zeal in the wake of the Industrial Revolution in England during the first quarter of the 19th century. Those two concepts, Evangelicism and other Utilitarianism, were movements of individualism which intended to free the individual from his age-old bondage to authority and superstition.⁴¹ They were the politico philosophical expression of a triumphant bourgeoisie out to convert its subjects to the supposed benefits of a true religion and a true political philosophy.

Charter Act 1813:-

The Charter Act of 1813 was a landmark as well as a turning point in the history of Education in India. The funds granted towards educational expenditure were not large, but the government did not spend even the paltry amount of the sanctioned.⁴² However, the large-scale missionary educational activity to some extent compensated for this Lacuna.

Activities of Missionaries:-

The London Missionary Society started its work in 1795 in South India and its first centres in Andhra were established at Visakhapatnam in 1805 and at Cuddapah in 1822, the latter growing into an important centre from the view point of proselytisation.⁴³ The mission had an English school at Visakhapatnam and also a school for female education.⁴⁴ Perhaps this school was the first of its kind organized by alien enterprise.

41. T.R. Metcalf, *The Aftermath of Revolt and India, 1857-60*, New Jersey, 1965.p.8.

42. Of the moderate amount of Rs 50,000 sanctioned annually to the Madras Presidency even by the year 1848-49 (by then the collegiate department was also organised), only little more than half was expended by 1853 a balance of over Rs 3,00,000 had accumulated. See *The Eighteenth Annual Report from the Governors of the Madras Presidency, 1948,-49*, Madras, 1849, pp.8-9.

43. Julius Richter, pp.153-54.

44. S Sathianathan, p.52.



The L.M.S. extended its activities into the neighbouring Ganjam district establishing schools at Chicacole (present Srikakulam) and Chatterpore.

The missionary activities embraced the whole of the Andhra region. Education was their main interest, although they were also running orphanages, medical centres and industrial establishments. There was considerable increase in the total number of Christians (as shown in the table below) in Andhra between 1857-78.⁴⁵

Year	Native ordained agents	Baptised Christians	Adherents unbaptised	Total
1857	Nil	2,318	1505	3,823
1878	24	29,574	83,396	1,12,994

Missionaries tried to seize control of education through which they could better mould men's minds at their most impressionable age. Along with the establishment of Anglo-vernacular schools, through which they desired to convert the higher castes, the missionaries established several elementary schools in the countryside. Indigenous schools were mainly catered to the Brahmins and a few non-Brahmins. Stirred by the teachings of the missionaries, the Malas and Madigas began to request for more schools in the second half of the 19th century. In order to satisfy this demand the missionaries established a teacher training school at Machilipatnam.⁴⁶ The motives of 'Untouchables' in failing under the influence of missionaries were, firstly, to gain a status in society which was denied to them by caste Hindus down the ages and to win the favours of the government through the intercession of the missionaries.

45. The table is based upon the statistics furnished in *The Missionary Conference*, 442.

46. G.A.Oddle, "Christian Conversion in the Telugu country 1860-1900. A case study of One Protestant Movement in the Godavari-Krishna delta", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol.XII, No.1 (Jan-Mar. 1975). That there was a constant demand for more schools is clear from several sources. See for example. J.A. Sharrock, *South Indian Missions*, West Minister, 1910, p.221; A Lady p.132.



While not belittling the missionary efforts in the sphere of education, it is necessary to state that their educational effort was neither completely altruistic nor reformatory. It was undertaken with the conscious motive of spreading Christianity. Bible was necessarily taught in schools and scripture stories were used regularly.⁴⁷ There were objections and organized protests against this.⁴⁸ The result of this agitation was that the teaching Bible was prohibited temporarily. Starting of schools by missionaries was both the cause and result of their proselytizing activities. The schools provided them with an opportunity to teach people about their religion, and places of social intercourse and religious worship. And to provide better living conditions and a suitable career for the converts they had to open some technical and vocational schools and also to provide general education to them as all the converts could not be admitted into the existing schools.

It is true that the educational endeavours of the missionaries, even though religiously motivated, did spread enlightenment among certain sections of society by dispelling their superstitions and making them feel equal and self-respectful in society. However, economic position of the 'lower' classes, despite large numbers of them becoming Christians, did not permit them to reap the benefits of education. Several writers have attributed the rise of modern social reform movements to a

47. C.R.Williams, *Letters Written during a Trip to South India and Ceylon, in the Winter of 1876-77*, London, 1877, p.115.

48. One of the earliest vernacular journals *Purushartha Pradayini* (published from Machilipatnam) published a news item in its Vol.V, No.7 (July, 1876), to this effect; Public Proceedings, No. 305, 26 Feb. 1861, Madras Presidency. T.A. 'In this regard the efforts of Gajula Lakshminarasu Chetty are worth mentioning. Born in 1806, became the earliest popular leader in Madras. He was the guiding spirit, as president, behind the Madras Native Association, which was the precursor of the Madras Mahajana Sabha. He opposed the teaching of Bible in schools and also fought against the introduction of Caste Disabilities Act which was favourable to converts to Christianity. He convened a public a public meeting (a forerunner of all modern protest political meetings in South India) and submitted a 'maharaj' (memorandum) with nearly twelve thousand signatures and sent it to England. For a comprehensive account of Gajula Lakshminarasu Chetty, see G.P. (G. Parameswara Pillai) *Representative Men of Southern India*, Madras, 1896, pp. 145-64; V.Vital Rao, *Gajula Lakshminarasu Chetty—"A Pioneer of the Freedom Movement"* in the *Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society*, Vol.XXII (1952-54); D.V.Sivarao, *1857- Purvarangamulu* (Telugu), Vijayawada, 1957, pp.166-70; B.B.Mazumdar, *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas*, Calcutta, 1967, p.10.



response to the “ethical challenges of Christian doctrine...”⁴⁹ However, this was not true when one looks at the motives behind the missionary activities which were freely allowed in India after 1813. It was a fact that they have collected information regarding social evils and forcefully presented them to the British public and the government. Nevertheless, it should also be noted that their attitudes, writings and conclusions regarding Indian religion and social life were, in most cases, hostile, exaggerated and ill-informed. That their efforts could not have contributed to the regeneration of India might be seen in their failure, both to organize any scheme for national education and to introduce a sound scientific and technological curriculum.

BRITISH ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOCIAL REFORM BEFORE 1857: UTILITARIAN TRENDS

The utilitarian reformers generally viewed India as a land of superstition and despotism. They approached India with certain basic convictions, namely (1) immediate and rapid introduction of reforms, (2) dependence on political, social and economic theories of England as a guide for such reforms, and (3) trust in the vigour of the new middle classes in reforming India.

Apart from various reform measures that the utilitarians undertook in the fields of revenue administration and judiciary, abolition of slavery, sati, and female infanticide, legalizing widow marriages they launched education programme presumably to improve the ‘decadent’ Indian society. Both evangelical and utilitarian trends got submerged in their attitudes towards education. Wood’s dispatch in 1854 settled all conflicts regarding educational policies conclusively and made the state assume responsibility for educating

49. Charles H Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, O.P.U., 1964, p. 50. Several other scholars have held similar views R.C. Majumdar, ed., *British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance*, P.II, Bombay 1965, pp 268-84, argued that missionaries played a significant role in the enlightenment of Bengal; Kenneth Ingham, p 122, N S Bose, *Indian Awakening and Bengal*, Calcutta, 1969, p.118, D.V.Siva Rao, “Christianization of India”, *Immoral Message*, Vol.2, No.6 (May, 1940) states that the Christian missionaries, had brought about a cultural revolution in India; J.F. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, New Delhi, first Indian edn. 1967, p 387, M Venkatarangiah, *Bharat Swatantrya Charitra*, Part II (Telugu), Secunderabad 1976, p.97.



the masses of its subjects.⁵⁰ However, the motives of the colonial rulers in their educational programmes was to serve their colonial requirements, which were clearly spelt out by Macaulay when he “asserted that trading with a civilized nation was more advantageous than ruling a backward one.”⁵¹ And his well noted expression about creating an English-educated middle class, “a class of persons Indian in colour and blood but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect, illustrates the colonial framework in which the British educational programmes were concerned”.⁵²

That utilitarian acted with self-interest could be seen in their economic policies which tended to so reorganize the Indian Society as to suit the new demands of England’s economic system in the wake of industrial Revolution. However, to the extent that they introduced an era of liberal and humanitarian reforms in social sphere, they represented progressive era.⁵³

PRE-VEERESALINGAM PERIOD IN ANDHRA

Prior to Veeresalingam the urge for ideas of reform was not absent in the minds of the Indian elite. Enugula Veeraswamaiah (1780-1836), a Brahmin and a dubashee in the Sadr Supreme Court at Madras, left in his travelogue traces of this recognition of social evils and tried to analyse them.⁵⁴ While criticizing untouchability as not being originally sanctioned by the Smritis, he attributed large scale conversions into Christianity to the ill-treatment meted out to the ‘lower’ castes in society.⁵⁵ He criticized the empty rituals in

50. For the details of Wood’s dispatch, see B.T.McCully, English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism (C.U.P., 1966), pp. 135- 42.

51. Cited in G.D. Bearce, p.163.

52. Cited in K.N. Panikkar; p.7.

53. See in this context remarks of R.P. Dutt, India Today, Calcutta, 1970, p:305.

54. Enugula Veeraswamaiah’s *Kasiyatra Charitra*, was originally compiled by Komaleswarapuram Srinivasa Pillai and published in 1838. The latest edition was published in 1941 by D.V.Siva Rao with notes and comments. Enugula Veeraswamaiah was scholar in Telugu, Tamil and Sanskrit with a considerable knowledge in English. The author undertook a pilgrimage from Madras to Kasi (Benaras) via Ceded districts (Cuddapah, Kurnool and Anantapur), and Hyderabad and while returning traveled through the Circar districts (Ganjam, Visakhapatnam, Godavari, Krishna, Nellore). He described in detail the social conditions of Andhra prevailing during that period with his comments against the social evils.

55. Ibid., pp.165-66.



temples and laid more stress on true and singleminded devotion to God. He stated that “the caste system was a creation of man and the division of castes should be functional and hence caste distinctions were untenable.”⁵⁶ He disapproved of sati and placed his faith in the concept of one God.⁵⁷ As one of the founders of the Hindu Literary Society in Madras during the 1830s he contributed to its activities such as the spread of English education and the generation of political consciousness among people by arranging public lectures.⁵⁸ The Society admitted members from different castes. The programme of this body included activities like the promotion of widow remarriage, female education and the uplift of depressed classes.

The most important contribution in this direction was made by Samineni Muthoonarasimmah Naidoo of Rajahmundry, a district munsiff, who in the book *Hitasoochanee*⁵⁹ succeeded in drawing the attention of his contemporaries to the social inequities connected with marriage and female education. The book, according to the author, was meant for women “as women need a certain type of knowledge concerning their problems”. He pleaded for the introduction of scientific education and for the translation of scientific works from English into vernaculars. He went to condemn popular superstitions like the belief in the existence of evil spirits and in the efficacy of the methods adopted by witch-doctors. He exhorted the people not to worship village

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, pp 95-96

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p 233 Veeraswamaiah, it should be noted, was a contemporary of Raja Ram Mohun Roy. We do not have any evidence whether or not he was in touch with the Bengal reform trends

⁵⁸ Some of the other co-founders of this society were Komaleswarapurma Srinivasa Pillai and Vembakam Raghavacharyulu Gajula Lakshminarasu Chetty was also associated with the society later Srinivasa Pillai liberally donated a sum of Rs 50,000 towards the development of education and started a girls' school in Madras. See A Ramapati Rao, *Veeresalingam Pantulu, Samgra Pariseelana* (Telugu), Vijayawada, 1972, pp 7 and 17, K Veerabhadra Rao, “Adhunikandhra Kavittwam meeda Anglasahitya Prabhavam” (Telugu), *Bharathi*, November, 1953

⁵⁹ Samineni Muthoonarasimmah Naidoo, *Hita Soochanee* (Moral Instructor in prose), (Telugu), Madras, 1862. The author was one of the earliest English educated persons in Andhra. As he died in 1856 the book was probably written around 1850. There are 8 essays in this book, each dealing with eight different topics like education, marriage, medicine and the like. These essays were earlier printed in a Telugu journal, *Hitavadi* published from Machilipatnam. The book is written in an essay style. See K Enoch, ‘Telugu Vyasa Parinamam’ (Evolution of essay in Telugu), Sri Venkateswara University Ph D Thesis (Telugu), 1973



deities in order to escape from epidemics like cholera but to observe cleanliness and appealed to them to take proper medical care for their cure. With regard to his ideas on marriage he was much in advance of his contemporaries. He stressed mutual love and affection between the bride and the groom and severely criticized wasteful expenditure in the name of marriage ceremonies.⁶⁰ He mentioned and proved with the help of slokas (read during marriage ceremonies) that marriages were, in the past, performed only after girls attained proper age and maturity of mind.⁶¹ He thus condemned the system of child marriages and suggested a marriageable age of 12 for girls, and 16 for boys.⁶² Further more he attributed the practices Kanyasulkam (purchase of child brides) to the system early marriages which resulted in widowhood and immoral practices like debauchery and cruel practices like infanticide.⁶³

Another book, called *Stree Kalakollolini*, written by Jiyyar Suri and published Bangalore in 1875.⁶⁴ The book consisting of short essays was meant to meet the shortage of books for girls in the Telugu language. Each essay also had an English title, like 'Female education is not contrary to ancient usage', 'The beauty of knowledge', 'Uneducated females are enemies to children', 'The earth and other elements serve mankind', 'The whole world forms one family'.

A significant move in the direction of marriages reform was made by G.Vedantachary, Deputy Inspector of schools Visakhapatnam, in a memorandum

60. *Ibid.*, p.165.

61. *Ibid.*, p.166.

62. *Ibid.*, pp.176 and 195.

63. *Ibid.*, p.216.

64. Jiyyar Suri, *Stree Kalakollolini* (Telugu), Bangalore, 1876. The author (1850-95) was a Telugu teacher in the army girls' school at Bangalore. The book is divided into three parts, the first, called *Stri Niti*, forms advice to females; the second, *Stri Vidyamany*, contains the authorities illustrative of the propriety of female education and the third, *Stri Manamu*, treats of the respect due to women. The authors' ancestors were educators of the native army stationed earlier at Visakhapatnam. When the army headquarters was shifted to Bagalore they too changed their residence. Jiyyar Suri wrote some other works including one on the evils of the nautch. His book *Stri Kalakollolini* received favorable notices in Journals like, *Purushartha* and *Madras Standard*. During the summer months of 1876 he visited several towns in Andhra, and Veeresalingam at Rajahmundry. See for his biographical details Y.Bhashyacharyulu, *Sriman Paravastu Jiyyarsurigari Jeevithamu* (Telugu) Bangalore, 1935.



submitted to the government of Madras in 1870.⁶⁵ He started that “the present style of Hindu marriages is so very ignominious and absurd and their effects so piteous and unremediable.”⁶⁶ Summing up the arguments, he stated that early marriages, the disproportionate age of the husband as compared to the wife, their mutual ignorance of each other before marriage and the payment of bride-price (Kanyasulkam), were the notable evils connected with the institution of marriage, resulting in widowhood and several other improper and immoral ways of behaviour. He proposed remedial measures such as banning early marriages and Kanyasulkam, fixing an age limit for girls (minimum nine years) and boys (sixteen at the lowest) and consultation by and consent of the couples prior to marriage”.⁶⁷ He drafted a questionnaire on these issues and asked the Government to circulate it among leading scholars and public men of all districts in Andhra and elicit their opinions before favourable laws on them.⁶⁸

By the end of the first half of the 19th century, therefore, Andhra society had experienced the first stirrings of reform activity which became more prominent and pronounced during the 1870s under the leadership of Kandukuri Veeresalingam, and about whose contribution we will discuss in the later chapters.

65. Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department, G.O.No.97, 25 January, T.A. Vedantachari submitted in December 1870 the elaborate memorandum running into twelve pages in English with a Telugu translation, to the Assistant Secretary Legislative Department, For St. George, Madras.

66. *Ibid.* For a period of nine months, according to his memorandum, he consulted several scholars in Visakhapatnam district, including the most orthodox ones, and, came to certain conclusions to be placed before the Government.

67. *Ibid.*, He was pleading for civil marriages when he proposed that marriages be registered in the Tahsildar's cutchery before their celebration.

68. Though not on the same lines but a similar trend was seen among some other scholars during the same period. A tract in Telugu, on the marriageable age of girls was written by Chadaluvada Ananthama Sastry, the brother of Seetharama sastry who was a Telugu Pandit in the Presidency College, Madras. The theme of the tract was that a girl should marry only after the attained marriageable age of sixteen. See the Telugu translation of original Sanskrit text by O.Venkatarangaiah, *Vivahakanya Swaroopa Niroopanam* (Telugu), Madras, 1928, p.5. It appears that Anantharama Sastry submitted his tract, for approval to Sankaracharya of Kanchipuram. Then followed several tracts criticizing and condemning it. To mention only two of the tracts, viz., (1) A native of Madras, Srirama Sastry wrote the tract in Sanskrit, and (2) Gurram Venkanna Sastri of Nellore wrote *Vadprahasnamu*, informed, gave up his caste later and took part in interdining with people of other castes. See K.Purushotham, “Gopinatham Venkata Kavi and other Poets of Venkagiri Samastanam”, pp. 480-82, Osmania University Ph.D. Thesis (Telugu), 1970.

