

CHAPTER – V

Veeresalingam and the Uplift of women



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VEERESALINGAM AND THE UPLIFT OF WOMEN

The atmosphere in which Veeresalingam was brought up and educated and also worked was astir with many a new ideas both in the case of society and in the case of language and literature. "His uniqueness lies in the fact that he gathered them all up and fused them together. But a reservation must be made. Both his ideas and programmes of action were confined to the superstructure of the Andhra Society, and more particularly to marriage and morals, education and dissemination of Knowledge."¹

Veeresalingam did not completely free himself from the impact of tradition although bourgeois values such as thrift, hard work and frugality made their way in to his thinking. He was on balance predominantly modern. His attempts at the reform of literary style stopped half way between the pedantic and obsolete *grandhika* and the more popular and intelligible *Vyavaharika*. It was only in the later years he grasped the social significance of *Vyavaharika*. All the same, due credit must be given to him for his reform zeal and for having broken fresh ground in all these spheres of social life. In the words of M. Somasekhar sharma, he was the *Vegu-chukka* (the Morningstar) of Modern life in Andhra society.

Veeresalingam's first efforts before he initiated the reform movement, was to help in the creation of a healthy public opinion opposed to the social evils. Through his efforts he roused public interest over many issues like problems of women, administrative corruption, nautch problem, Alcoholism idolatory ect., He utilized his

1) V Ramakrishna, Social reform in Andhra P 87



talents as a writer and Journalist and as a speaker and as an organiser

While he was staying at Dowaleswaran as Headmaster of the Anglo Vernacular school, he started an association with some like minded individuals. They started a girl school (in 1874). The association used to discuss about religious and moral issues and also problems relating to the progress of the country and society.²

During this time, the Rajahmundry provincial school club was formed (July 1875) with Basava Raju as its secretary³. Its main aim was to arrange lectures on ethical and social issues and also to make its members lead their lives accordingly, setting an example to others.

While he was at Dawleswaram Veeresalingam Joined issue with kokkonda Venkataratnam pantulu⁴ who was editing the *Andhrabhasha Sanjivani* (published from Madras) by publishing articles in the *Purusharthapradayini* (Published from machipatnam). The controversy was over the subject of women's education. To counter the arguments of the orthodox sections, he decided to start Journal *Vivekavardhini* (in 1874).

To focus public opinion on social evils he wrote number of satires exposing the steady fall in social and individual values. The most well known of them were *Brahmavivahamu and VyavaharaDharmaBhodhini*⁵

To build up public opinion and for creating a necessary climate for his campaign for social reform, he established social reform association on September 8,

2) Veeresalingam Sweeya Part.I. p.84

3) Basavaraju gavvaraju later became a close follower and right hand mom of Veeresalingam in his reform activities at Rajahmundry. See for a brief biographical sketch of gavvaraju by Veeresalingam in his Col., Wroks, Vol. VIII, pp. 765-801.

4) Kokkonda Venkataratnam was on the faculty of the presidency college, Madras, teaching Telugu. He was then the leader of the orthodox section opposing reforms both in society and letters. As there is not single work on Kokkonda Venkataratnam, references to him are found in Veeresalingam, Sweeya, pt.I, pp.71-74, 96,146,154 and in pt.II,120,153,182 and 250.

5) The former portrayed the evil and superstitious practices connected with a Brahmin marriage and the later criticized the malpractices of the people in administration. See Veeresalingam, Col. Works, Vol.II (Rajahmundry, 1949).



1878, with some six or seven dependable members to carry on his mission by arranging lectures and conducting weekly meetings. His movement was mainly dealt with problems concerning women -female education, *Kanyasulkam* (bride Price) , infant marriages, and widow re-marriages etc.....

Women's Education:

The women in this country have lived in social bondage for centuries. Women, except under the matriarchal system, did not possess property rights, essential to develop individuality and self-respect. Women suffered, broadly speaking because of 1. Lack of social liberty, 2. infant marriages, 3. Polygamy 4. enforced widowhood, and more importantly and 5. want of education. A contemporary writer of this time gave a vivid description of women. " Deprived of all education, confined within the four walls of the house, seeing little of the world and knowing little of it, immersed in superstition and opposed by customs, our women-to our shame be it said are no better than slaves".⁶

The old *pial* school education was declining and in its place new schools were yet to come in to existence. There was a deep rooted belief in many parts of the country that women should not be educated. They felt that it would bring misfortune, to families whose girls were educated.⁷ There was also a feeling prevalent that female education was meant only for Devadasis who had to learn the fine arts in orders to dance in temples and on public occasions.⁸ Such a deeply rooted prejudice against women education cannot be removed, all of a sudden.

6) R.Venkata subba Rao, ed., Kamala's letters, Madras, 1902, P.191.

7) An interesting instance, in this regard, was given by A lady, p.56. She wrote that they had a Brahmin visitor (Post – office head writer at Rajahmundry) to whom her husband broached the proposal of opening a girls school and asked him whether any girls would join the school, "..... but sreenivasarow said, 'No, what for girls learn (Sic) ? ... he ended by saying that if a girl learned to read, some misfortune was sure to happen to her relations – most likely her father or mother would die".

8) This view gained strength, perhaps, because of the established custom of Devadasi children about attending schools. Kenneth Ingham, p.86. In 1875 the government of Madras decided not to admit children of Devadasis under the age of puberty. See Report on the administration of public affairs in the Madras presidency, 1876-77, Madras 1878,p.339



The British government efforts in its direction were almost non-existent till at least the middle of the 19th century when Dalhousie decided to extend support to the education of women.⁹ The decision of the government was subsequently confirmed by the dispatch of 1854. However no substantial progress was made in this direction, in the Madras presidency till the year 1868.¹⁰

Munro's efforts in finding out the general educational situation in Madras presidency had revealed that as many as 5,840 girls were on the rolls of indigenous schools, out of a total enrolment of 184,110.¹¹ The conservative attitude of government was also in tune with the general attitude of the officials who considered women's education a forbidden area to enter.

Missionaries were the pioneers in women's education in Madras presidency.¹² Between 1837 several Boarding and Day schools were opened in Madras by the C.M.S. (Church Missionary Society). In the initial stages only converts used to attend these schools as a girls school was opened in 1843 under the superintendence of Mr and Mrs. Braidwood with nine pupils¹³. The progress made by the missionaries (according to the reports of the director of public instruction) in female education was a little more than six – fold between the years 1866-67 and 1876-77.¹⁴

9) The minute of Lord Dalhousie was the first official pronouncement indicating the future policy of government in regard to female education. See for example J.A. Richey, ed., selection from educational Records, pt. II (1840-59), Calcutta, 1922. published for national archives of India, New Delhi, 1965. P.47.

10) The year 1868 was significant because during that year Mary Carpenter visited India and at Madras she took special pains to further the progress of female education.

11) Syed Nurulla and J.P. Naik, p.94, According to them the state of female education in Madras presidency was better than in Bengal and Bombay. Even then the percentage of girls in the total enrolment was only 317.

12) There were no Bethunes in Bombay and Madras where the work of pioneering female education was done by Christian mission. The first attempt to establish an Indian girls' school in Madras was made in 1821 under the auspices of the church missionary society. "Most, if not all, of the girls schools started up to 1850 belonged to Christian missions". Indian social reformer, September 3, 1922, Vol.XXXIII, No.1

13) The missionary conference, p. 158; Mary Carpenter, six months in India (in two volumes) London, 1868, Vol.I. pp.135-36.

14) In 1866-67 there were 4,638 girls of all castes and creeds in schools and the number increased to 28,151 by the year 1876-77. report quoted in the missionary conference, p.164. It is also worth noting that in the Madras presidency there were 248 women missionaries as against 301 in Madras in 1901. the major activity of these women missionaries was to spread zenane education.



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Concerning the Andhra region, the claims of certain writers that there were no girls schools prior to the one started by the initiative taken by Veeresalingam in 1874 at Dawaleswaram is not correct.¹⁵

Besides the contribution of the missionaries a few local attempts also merit our attention. The native efforts was mainly carried out by the aristocracy in the northern circars of Andhra. A school for the education of Hindu girls was opened in April 1867 at visakhapatnam by srimati Janakiamma, widow of suryaprakasa Rao of the well known Goday family of Visakhapatnam district¹⁶. After the death of the founder, this school was maintained by her daughter Smt. Ratnamma, wife of Shri G.L. Narasinga Rao the Zamindar of Anakapalli. She called in the aid of the sisters of the French convent of St. Joseph, who superintended the education¹⁷. Its curriculum included both English and telugu in addition to fine arts and crafts like drawing, music and needle work.¹⁸

In 1868 the Maharajah, Vijayarama Gajapathi, established a school at Vizianagaram for Rajput and Brahmin girls.¹⁹ None of the maharajah's school received any aid from the state and they merited admiration from the authorities of the government²⁰.

Girl's education was patronized by the Rajah of Pithapur also. A girls school was started at Kakinada in 1868 with a monthly contribution of Rs.100

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- 15) In their over enthusiastic attempt to credit Veeresalingam with several 'firsts', many people claimed that there were no girls schools in Andhra Prior to 1874. However, this was disproved by later researches. See for example, the article by D.V. Siva Rao, "Veeresalingam pantulu garu" Andhra Prabha, November 24, 1968.
- 16) The Goday family were the estate holders in Visakhapatnam district. A prominent member of the family Goday Narayana Gajapathi studied in Calcutta (1840-49). He was influenced by Brahmo Samaj. Another member for the family was the founder the first Telugu News paper Vrittanti.
- 17) The Madras Revenue Register, Vol.III. August, 1869; Avadivelu, Aristocracy of south India, Madras, 1913, vol. II, P. 13.
- 18) The strength of the school was 38. They included girls from Brahmin, Komati and Telaga Castes. See educational proceedings No.204, 8 may, 1867, Madras presidency, T. A.
- 19) It was run at an annual cost of Rs.12,000. It had 185 girls and 9 teachers. Education a proceedings, no.396, 26 november 18687, Madras presidency. T. A.
- 20) Madras education commission, Michael, the district collector of visakhapatnam, played a prominent role in the promotion of female education in the northern circars. See T. Rajagopal rao, A history of Indian school reform in the nineteenth century (Telugu), madras 1901, P.90



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(Recurring expenses), and Rs.300 per annum towards the purchase of prizes to be given a way to girls of special merit. Further more he donated a site and an amount of Rs.900 for the construction of a school on this site.²¹

In the Andhra region, the orthodox sections led by Kokkonda Venkata Ratnam were still voicing vehement opposition to women's education.²² If the orthodox sections were led by Kokkonda, Veeresalingam led the reforming group. As mentioned earlier his ideas on this subject bore fruit in 1874 when a girls schools was started at Dowaleswaram²³. This event opened a new leaf in the movement of female education in Andhra as it initiated a definite move in the direction of the spread of the movement.

A campaign, advocating women's education and introduction of English Language and through its medium western knowledge was started, in the columns of *Vivekavardhani*, the journal started by Veeresalingam. To ridicule the writings of Veeresalingam Kokkoda started a new Journal, with the name *Hasyavardhani*. Veeresalingam also started a new Journal *Hasyasanjivani*, a supplement to his *Vivekavardhani* to repudiate kokkonda's propaganda.²⁴

In many parts of the Andhra region, societies were springing up in Machilipatnam, Visakhapatnam and bellari. Through reform, papers like the Hindu gave expression to these ideas in their columns²⁵. Scholars like Dasu Sriramulu

21) Sriram Veerabrahmakavi, *Sri pithapura samasthana charitramu* (Telugu) pithapur, 1938, p. 252

22) A few novels based on social condition and activities of reformers of this period were written by the contemporaries with Veeresalingam and his co workers as characters in them. One such novel by N. Satyanarayana Murthy, Suseela, Vijayawada, 1967, portrayed vividly the opposition of Veeresalingam's ideas of reform.

23) This school, though not the first girls' school in Andhra, was significant in the sense that it was started by the collective efforts of a few ordinary and yet enlightened people in a small place under the influence of reform ideas and hence it deserves special note.

24) Social reform in Andhra-V. Ramakrishna P. 94.

25) The Hindu September 28, 1888



(1846-1908) from Machilipatnam, championed the cause of female education during this period²⁶.

Veeresalingam citing the example of the establishment of girls highschool at Puna requested the government of Madras to open a similar institutions in the Andhra region also²⁷. His efforts bore fruit and he started a girl school at Rajahmundry in 1881.

The Journal for women:

Veeresalingam's Journal for women *satihitabodhini* (first issue was published in April 1883), set an example and inaugurated an epoch of women's Journals in Andhra. This journal was exclusively meant for women and contained writings disseminating knowledge to woman particularly on scientific topics such as women's health and care of children²⁸. Many other Women's Journals such as *Hindu sundari*, *Zenana*, *Telugu Zenana*, *Kamaleswari*, *Chintamani savithri* were also started²⁹. Quite a number of articles written by women writers appeared in these and other contemporary vernacular Journals on topics like female education early marriages and fine arts³⁰.

This period also witnessed the publication of a number of tracts in Telugu by men and women on female education. Mention may be made of a few of them. P. Lakshmi narasamba.³¹ published a tract titled mahila kalabodhini. Two other tracts,

26) Dasu Sriramulu practiced what he preached. Not caring for the adverse public reaction and social ostracism, he educated his daughter and also taught her music. (music was supposed to be learnt exclusively by dancing girls then and others learning it would be put to severe criticism of the public). See *Mahakavi Dasu Sriramulu Jayanti sanchika* (Telugu), Hyderabad, 1975. p.8.

27) Vivekavardhani native news November 1884.

28) Veeresalingam; sweeya, pt.II. p.406. the journal was run till 1890 and it was publishing much material useful for women such as biographies of eminent women, moral tales, notes on house-keeping etc.

29) For particulars of these journals see T. Ramachandra rao's article "women's journal" in K.R.Seshagiri Rao, ed., pp.124-25. Seshagiri Rao, K.R., studies in the History of Telugu Journalism New Delhi, 1968.

30) See for example the volumes of Savithri, for the years 1904, 1905 1907; Telugu Zenana for the years 1898-1905; Krishna patrika, 1901-1907; the Kamesari, 1907 and kalpalatha, 1905.

31) She edited and published a women's journal from Kakinada called Savithri. Being a close follower of Veeresalingam she played a prominent part in the women's movement in Andhra. See Savithri, February 1904.



namely *Sri Dharma Bodhini* and *Sri -- Vidya pancharatna Vishayamu* by M. venkaiah, were written in the form of verses.³² Another important tract *Strividyasara Sangrahamu*, was brought out by B. Pattaabhirama sarma.³³ M. Balakrishna Moorthy from parlakimidi (Ganjam district) published *Balika Hitabodhini*, for use by women.³⁴ R. Venkatasivudu published a small book, *Elements of domestic economy*.³⁵

Writings of Veeresalingam: -

Veeresalingam wrote a good number of articles and books on the problems relating to women. He wrote *Deharogyadharmabodhini* (in 1889) dealing with the health problems of women. It was a scientific book which was serialised in his journal for women *Sati hitabodhini*³⁶. He published another book *patnihitasoochani* in 1896. This book deals with the problems connected to child birth and up bringing³⁷. He also wrote *Kavyas* and *Satakas* on women. In these writings he endeavoured to mark out a high place for women in family and society, and stressed the need for their education which in turn, would bring enlightenment to homes in general. Among his books on women the most popular and interesting was the *satyararaja poorvadesa Yatralu*. It is a humorous book modelled on Swift's *Gullivers Travels*. It is a powerful satire on the conduct of conservatives among males and their reactionary ideas with regard to women, and makes fun as a whole of the domination of men over women. In this novel the roles of men and women are reversed. Men bring up children, do household chores, they are put even under seclusion (gosha system...

32) B. Atchamamba, *Abala sachchitra Ratnamala* (Lines of noble women in three parts) (Telugu), Madras, 1901 introduction Kalpalatha a monthly journal edited by A. Kameswara Rao panthulu and published from Visakhapatnam), February 1904 and June 1905. the editor of the Journal reviewed the two tracts.

33) *Kalplatha* (a monthly journal edited by A. Kameswara rao pantulu and published from visakhapatnam).February 1904 and June 1905. The editor of the journal reviewed the two tracts.

34. B. Pattaabhirama Sarma *Strividyasara sangrahamu* (Telugu) gudivada, 1911. The author quoted extensively from the *smritis* and *srutis* to establish his argument in favour of women's education.

35 Savithri, January – February 1905.

36. Veeresalingam *Sweeya* Pt.II. P.208

37. Veeresalingam col.works, Rajahmundry 1951 vol.VI.



Men are not given education and all teachers are women.... Widowers are deprived of their moustache”³⁸

Veeresalingam translates his ideas in this regard into practical activity by starting a lower secondary school for girls as an appendage to the widows Home in Rajahmundry³⁹. The school gradually gained importance and even those women who were under seclusion started attending the classes unmindful of the opposition and adverse comments from the elders in the family and orthodox sections in society.

Spread of the Movement in Andhra:

The movement became wide spread. Women's associations were established at several places. A few details regarding this activity would show to what extent the movement spread. In 1899 a meeting convened under the auspices of the local reform association at Vijayawada discussed women's education and passed resolutions urging the government to take effective steps to promote female education⁴⁰. The Arya Bala samajam at Endagandi was established in 1904 and had a small library. It was holding, on an average, three meetings a month⁴¹. In October 1905 at Guntur a large conference of women took place and resolutions touching on the problems of women like education and marriage were passed⁴². As far back as 1817 an association called Veeresalingam Kavi club was at Kumudavalli (near Bhimavaram in west godavari district): it was established holding regular meetings and annual functions till almost the 1920s. Veeresalingam was actively associated with this club⁴³.

38) PP. 196-97 written under the influence of the English literature these satires had the sole aim of social reform and as such they were not, on all occasions, the best literary pieces. See the article on his farces (*prahasanamulu* by S. Gopalakrishna morthy in *Yugapurushudu*,

39) This school (started in 1905) was in addition to the one (girls school) he started in Rajahmundry in 1881. It had 50 girls on its rolls. Also a few family women were on the rolls in addition to a few of the grown-up girls. For the sake of family women who could not attend the school during the regular hours. Arrangement were made to run zenana classes for them thrice a week in the building meant for women's prayer meetings. See, for a detailed account of this. *Telugu Zenana* (a monthly telugu journal exclusively devoted to female education), January 1905; C. Lakshminarasimham's Autobiography, p.202.

40) *Telugu Zenana* August 1889, vol.VII

41) *Krishan patrika* November 15, 1905.

42) *Ibid.*

43) *Krishan patnka* November, 15, 1905



The Hindu girls Education society at Bellary was one such leading association established for the promotion of women's education. The officials and other local gentry came together under the presidentship of T. Varada Rajulu (District munsiff) and formed the society to promote girls education including music and other useful arts⁴⁴. In Guntur a female association *Stri Sanatana Dharma Mandali*, "was doing splendid work organizing social gatherings and meetings and maintaining schools and also organized a ladies conference for the Andhra Country"⁴⁵.

At Machilipatnam an association named *Brindavana pura stree Samajam* was established in November, 1902 under the leadership of Bhandaru Atchamamba and Oruganti Sundari Ratnamamba⁴⁶. The association used to meet twice a month and had membership of forty; a good number of non-members were also attending its functions. It had acquired a good collection of books (brought with the membership fees) and set up a library and had a peon to distribute books, newspapers and Journals to the members⁴⁷.

At Visakhapatnam, it was reported, *Sri Bharati Samajam* was started in 1905 and had 15 members. They discussed, in addition to problems of local concern, issues like female education and early marriages. Arrangements were also provided to teach household arts⁴⁸. It held its fifth anniversary meeting under the presidentship of Budhavarapu varalakshamma in May 1910 and discussed along with the annual report problems concerning women.⁴⁹ A meeting of the citizens of Visakhapatnam met and resolved to request "The government to establish in Visakhapatnam a school for the higher education of Hindu Women". The district collector forwarded it

44) Telugu Zenana, vol.12, No.s.10-11, April – May 1905.

45) The Hindu, June 7, 1910

46) Krishna patrika, February 7, 1909.

47) Krishna patrika, October 10, 1905,

48) Krishna patrika, May, 28, 1909. the editor connected the opening of women associations such as these are an indication of great change that was taking place in Andhra.

49) The Hindu, May 18, 1910.



favourably to the government⁵⁰.

Apart from several district and other lower level social conferences which discussed female education as one of the many items on their agenda, special reference has to be made to the a godavari district association conference at Rajahmundry (1914) and peddapur (1915)⁵¹, the Kurnool district conference (1914)⁵², and the first Bellary district conference (1914)⁵³, where the question of female education received special attention.

For the first time an all – Andhra Women's conference was organized at guntur in 1910⁵⁴. It was presided over by P. Lakshminarasamamba. Delegates from all over Andhra attended it. The conference laid its main emphasis on female education pleaded for the inclusion of vocational education along with general education in the curriculum and suggested the starting of at least one school, to begin with, in each district⁵⁵. it was noteworthy that women's organizations, realizing the need for vocational education, started demanding its inclusion in the schools.⁵⁶ The conference noted with gratification that women association were being established in villages where regular weekly or fortnightly meetings were taking place.⁵⁷

50) Education al proceedings, No. 440, May 21, 1912, Madras presidency T.A.

51) Public proceedings, No.517, 28 April 1914, Madras presidency. T.A. The conference at Rajahmundry took place on 21st, 22nd and 23rd of march 1914. At peddapur the conference was held on 6th and 7th march 1915. See public proceedings, No.774, 18 may, 1915, Madras presidency. T.A.

52) Public proceedings, No. 1298, 8 october 1914. T.A.

53) Pubic Proceedings, No. 130,27, January 1915 T.A.

54) At the national level, since 1903 a ladies section was added to the Indian national social conference and a women's conference was held in 1909. See R.C. Mazumbar, ed., ed., P.994.

55) See the presidential address of the conference published in guntur *Pradhana Andhra Mahila sabha upanyasamanjari* (Telugu) guntur, 1910, pp.7-11. the volume consists of speeches delivered during the conference.

56) The difference in the attitudes of Veeresalingam and leading women from Andhra, and the madras reformers was noticeable visible. Veeresalingam pleaded for vocational education to make women self – supporting and independent and to acquire useful skills in life. Muthuswami Aiyar was laying more stress on making women better housewives and at best women of enlightenment. Also see the presidential address of K. Nageswara Rao at the 22nd guntur district social conference (telugu), Bezvada, 1913, pp. 16-17 where in he suggested that women should be trained to undertake medical nursing and teaching professions which would suit their temperament.

57) M. kameswaramma, "Hindu streeela prasthutha Sthithi" *Andhra Patrika* (Telugu), (annual number, April 1911.



One special feature of this movement was that it threw up a few women as powerful writers. Considering culturally, the contribution of these women writers was no mean achievement. The leading writer, in this connection was Bhandarū Atchamamba (1874-1905), the author of *Abalasaccheritra Ratnamala* (Lives of Noble Women), in 1910.⁵⁸ She undertook a tour of Andhra in 1903, giving lectures and organizing women's associations, She provided shelter to many destitute women and persuaded her younger brother – in – law to marry a widow.⁵⁹

K. Seethamma (1872-1934) was another renowned writer of this period. She wrote the biography of Veeresalingam in verse. Which merited recognition in the literary circles⁶⁰.

Another woman who emerged as a powerful writer and organizer was P. Lakshminarasammamba. In addition to being a Journalist and organizer of Kakinda women students organization (Stri Vidyarthini samajam), she also wrote a tract on female education, *Mahila Kalabodhini*⁶¹.

Discussing broadly the spread and effects of the movement for women's education and the enlightenment it brought about in the Telugu districts, A contemporary stated:

Female education, though still at a low level, is however rapidly progressing. In 1881, there were in all 67 schools for girls and 2,569 girls attended them. In 1908 the number of schools increased to 329 and girls to 17,091. There are three or four

58) Referred above in F.N. 35. the contents of the book were first published by Veeresalingam in his journal chintamani. The author was in maharashtra for sometime and learnt the marathi language and translated from it into telugu the lives of maharashtra women reformers like Ramabai, See preface to the book by B. Atchamamba, op. cit.

59) Telugu Zenana, February 1905; Savithri, January – February 1905.

60) See K. Seethamma, *Sri Kandukuri Veeresalingam charitramu*, Kakinadu, 1921. the earliest biography of Veeresalingam (in Telugu) was by T. Venkata Subba Rao (referred earlier) published in 1898 seethamma's biography consisted, approximately, of 740 verses written in traditional style. The account she gave of him was more a glowing tribute than analysis of his life and works. Bharathi, February 1963. See for abrief biography of seethamma in *Vignanasarwaswamu*, Vol.VI, p. 1199.

61) B. Atchamamba, preface. See yugapurshudu, pp.97-102, for a number for other women writers of this period and particulars of their writings.



telugu Journals edited and published by telugu ladies themselves. In all chief centres in the Northern circars there are found ladies associations, where women gather in large numbers have lectures, *Kalakshepams*, music parties etc. Some times, social matters are also discussed. In some places women have been able to establish their own schools for girls wherein addition to ordinary education, music sewing, etc. are taught. Ladies conferences are organized where lectures on female education, given by ladies themselves... The Telugu women has developed a passion for lectures, social gathering and street processions... now that she is more ready to throw aside the old ideas, practices and traditions, the society is sure to powerfully change in no distant future.⁶²

Early Marriages:

In major reform activity that engaged the attention of indian reformers as a whole was in the field of marriage reform. It included movements against infant marriages and Kanyasulkam (purchase of brides) and in support of widow re-marriage.

It was calculated that, by the close of the 19th Century, there were 24, 257 married girls below four years of age in the madras presidency out of this 11,904 were in the northern circars alone, comprising the districts of Ganjam, Visakhapatnam, Godavari, Krishan and guntur.⁶³

Thus almost half of the total number were in the Northern circars though population of the region was one sixth of the presidency. This number, however, did not include the statistics of the ceded districts which amounted to one – fourth of the total number of early marriages. Married girls between the age groups of 5-9, in the

62) The Hindu, April 25, 1911. this is an extract from the article written by an anonymous writer under the caption, "the position of Telugu women".

63) Census of India, 1819, vol.XIV, Madras Table VIII, Paper 3, Chintamani, February – march, 1898.



whole of the presidency, were 1.44, 482 of whom 72,102 were in the Northern circars⁶⁴. Also nearly half of the total number of infant marriages took place in the circars.

Infant marriages were common mainly among the Brahmins. Though this practice was glaringly unreasonable and unscientific. It depended on religious grounds and parents who were not willing to perform early marriages were considered as sinners.⁶⁵

Sri Dampura Narasaiah (of Nellore district) Editor, People friend (at Madras) and as assistant teacher at pachayappah's highschool at Madras, Published a number of letters on this issue in Madras Times, 1865⁶⁶. This was the earliest recorded tract on infant marriages in south India by a Telugu intellectual working in Madras quoting extensively from smritis (including manu) and sastras in which marriages rites were mentioned, he declared that infant marriages were "contrary to the very sentiments and doctrines expressly promulgated in the sacred formula pronounced on the celebration of the marriages itself; and in the sacred books on which our marriages rites are founded."⁶⁷ He also expressed advanced views such as freedom of choice to be given to girls in choosing their husbands.

Veeresalingam took up the issue on the same basis, quoting the shastras, that infant marriages were not justified. Writing in 1884, he stated that 80 percent of the girls married quite early became widows. He made two suggestions in the form of practical measures to prevent the recurrence of infant marriages 1. fixing a time limit for married men to appear for the university entrance examination and also making

64) Ibid. the ceaded districts amounted to 21, 753: It is thus clear that early marriages were most common among the Andhra regions of the presidency.

65) "Reprehensible is the father who gives not his daughter in marriage at the proper time (8 years)". See D. Narasaiah, letter on Hindu marriage (A reprint of the letters that appeared in the Madras Times, Madas 1867, P.6

66) Narasaiah. D. lletters in Hindu marriages (A reprint of the letters that appeared in the madas times). Madras 1867.

67) Ibid.P.1.



them ineligible for scholarships or prizes, and 2. Preferring unmarried candidates for public employment⁶⁸

Veerasalingam wrote a satire, *Brahmavivahamu*, vividly portraying the evils of infant marriages, *kanyasulkam* and extravagant wedding expenses and the like. This social comedy, popularly known as *Peddayyagari pelli* (wedding of an old man), was staged several times in and around Rajahmundry town.

News coverage was given in the vernacular press highlighting the glaring examples of infant marriages. *Vartadarsani* brought to the notice of the public the case of a young girl of thirteen, who became pregnant and died in child birth⁶⁹. Infant marriages reached such absurd proportions that ten-month old children (sometimes even less) were married.⁷⁰ In a long articles on this topics, *Satyasamvardhani* concluded that early marriages would lead to the physical and mental degeneration of the nation.⁷¹

Active Measures:

To strengthen the movement number of steps were taken by various social reform associations and other agencies. The Rajamundry social reform association championed the movement against infant marriages and decided to work for legislation, declaring marriages of girls below ten years of age and of boys below fourteen, illegal. Moreover, the consummation of marriage, the association declared, should not take place before 14 and 18 years of age in case of girls and boys

68) Vivekavardhani, November 1884; Sanmargadarsani, January 1885, Native News, 1885. Also Veeresalingam lecture on this in his col. Works. Vol. VII, pp 37-38, where in he linked up this issue with the problem of widows.

69) Vartadarsani, April 1894, Native News, 1894 (published from Nellore) A former student of Veeresalingam, and a reformer later, V. Suryanarana Rao, in his autobiography, Suryanarayanayamu, p 18, mentioned that his sister was married at the age of 7 to an old man who died soon, leaving her a widow. Several instances of child marriages were mentioned by c. Lakshminarsimham in his Autobiography, pp.10-11 and 20. also see in this context vennelacuntry soobrow, married child-girls and who died prematurely of child birth.

70) Budhavidheyi, March 1888, Native News 1888 (The Journal was published from Machilipatnam). Telugu Zenana. June 1899, Vo. VI. No.12, published a news item that in sangivalasa village (Visakhapatnam district) a female child of 18 months was married to an young man of eighteen years.

71) Satyasamvardhani, June 1895, Vol. IV, No.6 other journals also published a good deal of material in the form of verses. Articles and short farces on this problem. See for example, telugu Zenana, July 1900, Vol.8, No.1: Krishnapatrika February 16, 1908; Hindujana Samskarini, June 1888, Native News, 1888.

respectively.⁷² Members were asked to take pledges in accordance with its objects that they would in no way be connected with infant marriages.⁷³ In 1898 T.Rajagopala Rao, an active reformer and follower of Veeresalingam, delivered a scholarly lecture on 'The Early Marriage' to the students association at Kakinada.⁷⁴ Malabari's campaign for the age of consent Bill aroused much interest in Andhra and memorials relating to it sent by Ranade to Veeresalingam were signed by the members of the Prarthana Samaj and the social reform association at Rajamundry.⁷⁵ The social reform conferences that met in Andhra gave priority to this issue in their agenda and resolutions were passed condemning early marriages.⁷⁶ In the neighbouring native state of Mysore the government passed legislation abolishing early marriages of girls below the age of 8 and boys of 14. It also prohibited by the same law, marriages of men above 50 years of age with girls below the age of 14.⁷⁷

72) K.R.V.Krishna Rao, Social Reform Association and its objects (Telugu) Rajahmundry 1894, P.4

73) See in this context the resolutions passed by the Indian social conference Bombay (1889) and Amrooti (1897) C.Y. Chintamani, pt.IV Appendix, pp.368-70.

74) T. Rajagopala Rao, The early marriage (A lecture in Telugu) Bezwada, 1998, pp. 3-14. In a novel written during this period by G. Kanakaraju entitled Viveka Vijayamu the problem of infant marriages was highlighted. See Indian social reformer, may 30, 1897, vol.VIII, No.83.

75) This act was considered as taking an extreme attitude in social matter R. Venkatasivudu, Samsmariti, p.15 Two public meeting, in this connection, took place at Kakinada and Machilipatnam. The discussion over this issue did not lead to any division in the ranks of Andhra reformers it did at madras. Suntharalingam, p.323.

76) See for example, the presidential address of K.Nageswara Rao on the occasion of the 22nd guntur district social conference in 1913, Bezwada, 1913, p.19. Also see the news item 'Mandala Sabhalu' (district conferences) in chintamani, February-March 1898, Vol.7. No. 8-9.

77) Satyasamvardhani, July 1893; S. Natarajan, A century of social reform in India, Bombay, 1959, P.103; Indian social reformer, November 22, 1896, vol.Vii. No.11 the issues was still being debated in the press as late as 1915. Similarly some journals welcomed the proposed civil marriage bill in 1911. Some vehemently opposed it. Krishna patrika, 25 August 1911, supported it while the Aryamatha Bodhini (Kakinada) 31 october 1911, opposed it. Native News 1911, Trilinga (Madras), in its issues of October and November 1915, pleaded for post - puberty marriages.



Kanyasulkam:-

The practice of Kanyasulkam (Purchase of brides) in Andhra could be traced back to medieval times.⁷⁸ It originated in poverty and also in the apprehension of parents that their daughters might not get married after they had grown up. However, this evil practice was mainly confined to the Brahmins and to a lesser extent to the vaisyas. Early marriages and their attendant evil, widowhood and the sanction of remarriage to widowers increased the demand for child brides. Also the prevailing notion that male heirs were essential to perform religious rites after their death and to look after family properties, induced old men to go in for the purchase of brides. The problem of purchase of child brides by aged men inevitably resulted in early widowhood.⁷⁹

Veeresalingam condemned the evil in his *Vivekavardhani* and also in his satires and public lectures. His lecture on Kanyasulkam was based on the shastras which according to him never sanctioned their practice⁸⁰. He stated that “according to *Manu* and *kasyapa* a purchased maiden cannot be a wife but only a maid servant. Accordingly she is not eligible to perform the religious rites intended to propitiate the manes....the self-styled upper caste people (Brahmins) continued to indulge in this devilish practice unashamedly.⁸¹ The campaign against kanyasulkam gained momentum. The social reform Association at Rajamundry took up the issue and propagated for its removal and requested the government to ban it by law⁸².

78) Social reforms in Andhra – V. Ramakrishna. Page. 106.

79) During the first half of the 19th Century this practice was rampant in 1833) received a letter from a village officer, requesting him for monetary help of an amount of sixty rupees to purchase a bride for his second marriage since he happened to be a widower C.P. Brown, Telugu Reader, Madras, 1852 pp.193-94.

80) See for the full text of the lecture in Veeresalingam, col. Works, Vol.VIII, pt.II. pp.26-28.

81) Ibid. Veeresalingam described the practice as the “sale of human flesh”, in the course of his presidential address at godavari district social conference in 1897. *Satyasamvardhani* June 1897.

82) K.R.V. Krishna Rao, pp.11-12.



Vernacular Journals started publishing articles, discussing the issue and ridiculing the orthodox for their adherence to this practice despite the clear sanction provided against it in the shastras⁸³ *kanyasulkam* was described as worse than 'slavery' by *vartadarsani*; it appealed to the government "to make it Punishable under the statute banning slavery."⁸⁴

Maharaja Ananda Gajapati of vizianagram made some notable efforts in this direction. In 1887 a survey was conducted and statistics were collected relating to *kanyasulka* marriages in visakhapatnam district during a period of three years. G.V. Appa Rao who was then a 'reader' to the Maharaja (Ananda gajapati) referred to the rules of survey in the preface to his play *kanyasulkam*. He stated that the number of *kanyasulka* marriages "recorded reached one thousand and thirty four, giving an average of three hundred and forty four for the year. Ninety nine girls were married at the age of 5 years, forty four at 4, thirty six at 3, six at 2 and three at the age of one the infants in the last instance carrying a price of, form three hundred and fifty to four hundred rupees a head. Strange as it may sound, bargains are sometimes struck for children in the womb. Such a state of things is a disgrace to society, and literature cannot have a higher function than to show up such practices and given currency to a high standard of morlas".⁸⁵ The maharaja moved the issue with the assistance of Valluri Jagannatha Rao, treasury officer of Nellore district, in the Madras legislature in 1888. No law could be made on this as the government held that the matter was connected with the native religion and its interference might hurt the feelings of the natives.⁸⁶

83) Krishna Patrika, March, 8, 1908 published a short drama, *Akrama Vivahamulu*", in which the educated daughter argued her case against the decision of her parents to sell her away to an old man in marriage. At this the father regretted educating her.

84) Vartadarsani, April 1894, Native News, 1894, *Satyasamvardhani* January-February 1894, Vol.3. Nos. 7-8; *Andhra Patrika*, October 13, 1915, Native News, 1915; *sarada telugu*, published from Butchireddipalem in nellore district. May – June and July 1896, published (in two instalments) along article on this.

85) G.V. Appa Rao. preface (1887 edn). This survey must have been on of the stimulating factors for apparao to undertake the writing of the play.

86) T. Rajagopalarao, p. 40; Hindu-Zenana Samskarini April 1888, *Chintamani*, February – march, 1898.

Widow- Remarriages:

The problem of widow remarriages, like that of infant marriages was not universal. It was mainly confined to the upper castes in society. In the Madras Presidency, in 1881, though there were 21 percent of widows among Hindu women, only less than 2 percent of them had become widows before they attained puberty.⁸⁷ However, the significant point appeared to be that about 12 percent of the total were below the age of thirty which meant that it was not altogether a problem of no significance.⁸⁸ The fact that early marriages were the main cause of widowhood was very well realized by the protagonists of reform and the same was stated in their lectures and writings. The census of Madras Presidency of 1891 strengthens this view. About 25 percent of the population were following the custom of infant marriages as a rule; among 15 percent it was fairly widespread and among the remaining 60 percent it was rare⁸⁹. A strong feeling existed among the higher castes against widow remarriages as they came to believe that it was prohibited by the sacred texts and by following these texts they desired to retain their social status and caste rank.

The miserable condition of widows and this "cruel and unnatural custom, highly prejudicial to the interests of morality and brought with the most mischievous consequences to society"⁹⁰ Induced the reformers to undertake movements against it in several parts of the country. Veeresalingam gave a vivid description of the condition of widows in his novel *Rajasekhara Charitramu*, which also reflects many

87) Government of India, census of 1881 (Madras presidency), I, pp.71-72. It stated that "certainly one-third, probably a larger proportion of the number of Brahmin widows are widows owing to this custom (of infant marriages)".

88) The papers on Indian reform, p.116, stated that in the Madras presidency every third Brahmin woman was a widow this fact indicates that the problem was acute among Brahmins even. Though other castes like the Velamas, Vaisiyas, the Viswabrahmins were during this period imitating the Brahmins and adopting many of their customs, rituals ceremonies.

89) Government of India, Census of 1891, (Madras presidency), XIII, P.145

90) Quoted from the petition submitted by Iswarchandra Vidyasagar in 1855 to prohibit this evil. Cited in Religions and social reform of Ranade. P.XVII. The early movements in favour of widow remarriages problem in Bengal and Maharashtra were led by Vidyasagar and Vishnu Shastri Pandit respectively.



other aspects of social life of his period.⁹¹

A widow was treated as a maid-servant in her parental home and her appearance was so detested that the word 'widow' became a highly abusive term. Her pitiable condition evoked much response from the writers of this period who wrote sympathising with her cause.⁹²

Before the movement for widow remarriages was started in Andhra In 1879, some attempts were made in this directions in the city of Madras about which Veeresalingam had prior knowledge.⁹³ Two Prominent individuals who were involved in the reform endeavours at Madras during this period were R. Raghunadha Rao and chentsal rao, the latter being the secretary of the widow Remarriage Association.⁹⁴ When the association was formed (in 1874) and its active member resolved to encourage widow remarriages, Raghunadha Rao and P.Ananda Charlu, who wanted the association to confine itself only to a scholarly discussion of the problem of widowhood, opted out of the Association.⁹⁵ Though the association failed to achieve anything tangible in the practical sphere of its activities, published a few pamphlets

91) Veeresalingam said that he was inspired in writing this novel by oliver goildsmiths 'vicar of wake field'. The novel deals with a typical lower middle class telugu family and contained a description of early marriages, marriage expenses, nautch parties, ghost-doctors, superstitions, Festivals for village goddesses, astrologers, sycophants and hangers – on. That is, a true picture of the dying feudal society. It became a model for novel-writing in Telugu. It was translated into Tamil and Kannada languages. It was translated into English as "Fortunes" "Wheel" in Telugu. It was translated into English as 'Fortunes' Wheel", by Rev. Hutchinson and was published in 1887 from London. The London Times, September 30, 1887. in its review described the books a "unique novel" the Hindus comment on it was saying that "Rajasekharacharitra marks an era in the annals of Telugu literature". See Veeresalingam, Sweeya, pt. II, pp.162-64.

92) In Andhra, for example, many articles and verses focussing mainly on the conditions of widows were published. Among them, two instances where the writers wrote in English may be cited see T. Sree ramulu, poems and reflections (Rajahmundry, 1904), P.I. pp.19, and 44-47. He wrote two poems on widows. (pp.44-47); R. Venkatasubba Rao, .193-94.

93) Veeresalingam speaks of these efforts rather disparagingly in his autobiography. The association at madras became defunct after a couple of years without achieving any results. See. Sweeya: pt.I, p.145.

94) Chentralrao was a native of Nellore town and had gone to madras to join the service of the government. He contributed articles on women's education, and translated the smritis into Telugu with commentary and published them in *Hindujana Samaskarini* with a view to justify the cause of women education and widow remarriages. See, for a biographical account of chentsal Rao. O. Venkata Rangaiah, Kondaru Nellori Gopavasu (Telugu), Nellore, 1933, PP. 120-22.

95) Leonard, p.75



and a tract on the desirability of widow remarriages.⁹⁶ Most notable of these was a tract, *Stripunarvivaha sangrahamu*, by paravastu venkata Rangacharyulu of Visakhapatnam published in 1875.

Even prior to this tract a few writings favoring widow remarriages has been published in Telugu in 1864(The year of Keshub chandraSen's visit to Madras) the first track in telugu on widow marriages was published ⁹⁷ . However, it was not an original work. It was a translation from a canarese tract. ⁹⁸ This was called *Hindu vivaha sastra sangrahamu* quoting from *manu smriti*, its stated categorically that both post – puberty and widow remarriages were sancationed by shastras and as such there was no prohibition against them. The author argued that in *kaliyuga* (the present epoch of man kind) since the span of life is rather short it would be desirable if girls are not married before 16 years of age. However under no circomstatances, should the age limit be below 12, This , he stated, would eliminate early widowhood too.

Also, articles infavour of and aginst widoe remarriages were published in *purushartha pradayini*. *Tatwabodini* (from madras) Published a few articles on the same subject but only in favour of widow remarriages.⁹⁹

96) Veeresalingam, Sweeya, pt.I, pp.145-48. That the reformers at madras were not turning out any serious work in the field of social reform was observed by pandit shivanath sastry during his visit to madras in 1881. According to bepin pal, sastry told him tht he would come across (in madras) "a group of educated Youngman who cut their hair like and used boots and shoes. I asked him what was the meaning of it. He smiled and said; they are the advanced reformers in madras. the hair instead of shaving the head as orthodox Brahmins and using boots and shoes instead of slippers and sandals indicated... the state of things, in Madras" See Bepin Chandra pal, memoirs of my life and Times, Calcutta, 1932, pp 388-89.

97) T. Rajagopala rao, pp.21 and 32. He did not suggest that the visit of Keshubchandra sen in any way influenced the publication of this tract. But it is true, as Rajagopal Rao stated, that the beginnings were made towards the widow remarriages movement only after keshub's visit, i.e., the Hindu widow Remarriages association at madras was started in 1874.

98) Ibid., P.21. the conarese tract was written (about 1850) by a revenue official krishnama nayaka of mysore city. It was a translation of a tract published earlier at nagpur.

99) Veeresalingam made use of these articles before he delivered his maiden speech on the topic. Veeresalingam, sweeya, Pt.I, p.156.



Charlapalli Bapaiah, the originator:

It was charlapalli bapaiah, a teacher in the local college and an intimate friend of veeresalingam who first broached to him the idea of performing widow re marriages¹⁰⁰. However, Veeresalingam did not evince much interest on it. He felt that the undertaking of such a heavy task would mean the mobilization of resources, both human and material which he did not possess. Still bapaiah went on prodding Veeresalingam to take the initiative and promised that he would be with him in the movement even if he had to break away from his kith and kin.¹⁰¹

In his lecture delivered on 3rd august 1879. On widow remarriages delivered at Rajahmundry, he adopted 2 methods; one designed to meet the requirements of the orthodox sections, and the other general public. Firstly, he used that technique of quoting extensively from the sacred texts like the Vedas and smritis¹⁰² and, secondly, adopted rationalist arguments. After quoting mainly from the smritis, he stated that the cruel practice of enforced widowhood. "is found nowhere in the world except in our country. Even in our country it is confined to the Hindus and among them only to the three upper castes¹⁰³". He described in detail various other evils related to the problem of widow hood. The pandits, among the opponents assembled, challenged his arguments which, according to Veeresalingam were not difficult to counter.¹⁰⁴

100) Bapaiah suggested that an organization should be formed at Rajahmundry to take practical steps in this direction Ibid.

101) Ibid., B. Kesavanarayana, "widow marriage movement in Andhra" Ithihas (Journal of the Andhra Pradesh Archives, Hyderabad), Vol.II. No.1 (January-June, 1974)

102) Other reformers who pleaded for widow remarriage adopted the same method of quoting from the Vedas and smritis. For example, iswarachandra vidyasagar in his tracts entitled *marriage of Hindu widows*, Calcutta, 1976, established his argument with the help of parasara smriti which sanctioned widow remarriages. See Ibid., PP.2,22,34 and 70-71. Mahadev govind Ranade in his article, "Vedic Authorities for Widow – marriage", also did the same. He relied mostly on parasara smriti which was expressly intended for kaliyuga, where in a widow was permitted to marry in five cases of afflictions. see Ranade's religious and social reform, P. XiX. By quoting extensively from the shastras, these reformers tried to show that these evils had no sanction of the religious texts.

103) Veeresalingam, col.works, vol.VII, P. 524-83.

104) Veeresalingam, Sweeya, pt.I. pp.150-51:



In this connection, it is necessary to note his views on the shastras and smritis. In a meeting at Madras, at a later date, he was asked to state whether or not he had faith in the sacred texts. He replied in the negative. He stated that he was quoting from them for two reasons; to defend himself from the arguments of the pandits, and to convince the people who were mostly religious minded.¹⁰⁵

Soon after the first lecture, the Rajahmundry widow marriage association was organized (1879) with Veeresalingam as the secretary. It consisted of dedicated workers and local educated people. It was strengthened with the edition of New members like Nyapati subba Rao pantulu, who was lawyer at Rajahmundry and Atmuri Lakshmi Narasimham, the district munsiff. The association issued an appeal to the Rajahmundry widow marriage association issued an appeal to the public for help to conduct its activities. It condemned the 'tyrannical custom' and appealed to people to defy it and become free.¹⁰⁶

The first major tract published against widow remarriages was *Stri Punarvivaha Durvadanirvapanamu* by vedam venkataraya sastry in 1883.¹⁰⁷ Venkata Raya Sastry, a contemporary of Veeresalingam was a great Sanskrit scholar working in the Christian college in Madras.¹⁰⁸ It was stated in the book that it was blessed and financed by the sankaracharya of virupaksha matham and a few thousands of copies were distributed free.¹⁰⁹ Another tract, opposing widow remarriages was published from bobbili (Visakhapatnam district).¹¹⁰ The author followed the method

105) Veeresalingam gave an analogy in this regard. When a blind person was found carrying a lamp he was asked of its practical use to him. He replied that it was not meant for him but for others who may step upon him in darkness. See Veeresalingam, Swaya, Pt.I. p.223.

106) The appeal was issued in the name of Veeresalingam (as secretary of the association, in September 1879). See for its full text diaries and letters of Veeresalingam, pp. 150-54.

107) V. Venkataraya Sastry, *Stri Punarvivaha Durvadanirvapanamu* (Telugu), Madras, 1924, first edn. 1883.

108) For a biography of venkata raya sastry see *Vedam Venkataraya sastry garu* in *Adhunikāndhrā sahiti Nirmatalu* (upanyasya vyasa samputi). Telugu, Hyderabad, 1975.

109) V. Venkata Raya Sastry. preface.

110) K. Venkata Krishna Somayaji, *Vidhavavivaha Nirasakaranya samu* (Telugu), Bobbili, 1896. the author was the secretary of a local association called budhanandhini Sabha of which the president was R.V.S. Ranga Rao (The Rajah of Bobbili). August 1896



of presenting the arguments of opponents (in favour of widow remarriages) first and then presented his argument against them quoting from the puranas, Shastras and smritis. Another tract was published on the same lines by Sri Dikshitulu varu, namely *vidhava punarudvaha grantha Khandanam*,¹¹¹

Among those who opposed widow remarriages through their writings (articles) mention should be made of two scholars, namely Dasu Sriramulu (1846-1908), and K. Brahmayyastry (1863-1940). Sriramulu was a lawyer at Machilipatnam and published articles in his journal *kalpavalli* opposing remarriages.¹¹² However, the most formidable opponent of not only widow remarriage movement but the reform movements as a whole was brahmayya sastry. He started an association, Aryananda Brindayini Sabha, to spread the ideas of Hindu religion and simultaneously attack the reform activities initiated by Veeresalingam and others¹¹³. He edited and published the Journal *Aryamathabodhini* from Kakinada and through its columns launched a severe attack against reform movements¹¹⁴. Veeresalingam's trip to Kakinada to lecture on widow remarriages in 1881 was the beginning of the practical work connected with the movement. He came in to contact with the leader of the enlightenment section at Kakinada and the municipal chairman pydha Ramakrishnayya, who donated liberally and who was responsible for the founding of

111) The original tract could not be traced. The author Dikshitulu varu (nandiraju Lakshminarayana) was one of the pandits that took part in first lecture on widow remarriage delivered by Veeresalingam in 1879. References to his tract are found in K. Markandayasarma, *Sri Dikshita Charitramu* (Telugu) (Madras, 1906). Also we have come across a small pamphlet of 11 pages in Telugu opposing widow remarriages in the personal collection of books of paravastu Venkata Ranga Charyulu, Andhra University library, Waltair, which did not mention the author, place and date of publication. It is in a question-and-answer form written in an easy and readable style.

112) Dasu Sriramulu, *Abhinava Gadyaprabandhamu* (Telugu) Hyderabad, 1973, 8th edn. Pp.5-6 Sriramulu later became a convert to the reform movements and started advocating inter-sect marriages among the Brahmins and publication of books in vernacular literature on social problems. See D. Sriramulu, *Telugu nadu* (Telugu), Hyderabad, 1974, 6th edn. Pp. XXII – XXIII : Indian social reformer, June 22, 1902, vol. XII, No. 43.

113) J. Purshotham, *Kasibhatla Brahmayya Sastrygari Jeevithamu* (Telugu), Kakinada, 1936, pp.1-3 Even while he was a student he started Bhakta samajam in Kakinada to spread the worship of god among the fellow students. According to his biographer, Brahmayya sastry was very much opposed to the Brahma Samaj and its ideals. However, he adopted their methods of delivering lectures, issuing pamphlets and singing kirtans (songs) in the streets.

114) Veeresalingam in his autobiography conceded the adverse effects of the writings in *Aryamathabodhini* on the minds of the people. And to counteract its influence he started *Satyaavadini*. Veeresalingam, *sweeya*, pt I. pp. 280-83. See Brahmayya sastry's lectures attacking the reform ideas and propagating the tenets of the Hindu religion, N. Chalapati Rao Ed. *Sri Upanyalapyodhini* (Telugu)



the widow remarriage association in Kakinada. Veeresalingam in the course of the movement visited other places like Machilipatnam, Guntur, Bellary, Bangalore and Madras lecturing on the question of marriage of widows.

Performance of widow remarriages:-

The year 1881 was an eventful year as it witnessed the dynamic working of the three institutions established by Veeresalingam at Rajahmundry, namely the Prarthana Samaj, the social reform Association and vivekavardhani. With their active support the first widow remarriage was celebrated on 11 December 1881.

A contemporary student, who was present on that day. Described the event: "About 500 students attended the marriage. We were guarding all streets and lanes leading to our guru's (Veeresalingam) residence throughout the night. We all are there during the marriage and yet the priestly classes could not excommunicate us. We did not care for all that. Except Basava Raju Gavarraju, all other leading members of the widow marriage association and followers of Veeresalingam deserted him during the marriage. Those few who attended the marriage performed prayaschit."¹¹⁵ Soon after on 15 December a second remarriage took place and this time the performers took the newly married couples in a public procession in the streets of Rajahmundry. The district collector came from Kakinada to attend the function.¹¹⁶

Social boycott began in right earnest. It took the form of disallowing the people connected in any way with the remarriage to approach wells and enter temples.¹¹⁷ it was followed by excommunication letters issued by the sankaracharya

115) V Surya Narayana Rao, p 166

116) Veeresalingam, Sweeya, pt I p 196

117) Indian social reformer, November 3, 1894, Vol V No 40



to all those who attended the remarriage and a few others at Kakinada, including pyda Ramakrishnaiah.¹¹⁸ Except Veeresalingam and B. Gavarraju.¹¹⁹ All other including Pyda Ramakrishnaiah performed prayaschit.¹²⁰

The news of the first widow remarriage was well received in reform quarters, especially in Madras.¹²¹ Rajahmundry did become an asylum for widows as they now started writing secret letters to Veeresalingam, intimating their willingness to marry. The reaction to the movement was seen in the formation of two anti-widow marriage associations, one at Rajahmundry and another at Madras.¹²²

The reformers of Rajahmundry despite the odds they continued to help up the tempo of reform activity by performing a few more marriages in 1882, 1883 and 1884.¹²³ Iswarchandra vidya sagar, on hearing the news of widow marriages being performed at Rajahmundry congratulated Veeresalingam and wished him success in his exertions on behalf of the unhappy sufferers.¹²⁴ The Rajahmundry widow marriage association (started in 1879) did not meet, formally before 1884.

118) The orthodox section so rejoined at the action of sankaracharya that they took out a procession with the writs of excommunication in palanquin. A similar procession was taken out in Kakinada too. Veeresalingam, sweeya. Pt.I, p.199.

119) But unfortunately gavarraju met a premature death in 1883 to the great sorrow of Veeresalingam. As gavarraju did not undergo 'penance', when he died the Brahmins boycotted his funeral ceremonies. Veeresalingam, assuming the role of a purohit, performed the funeral rites with the help of a few friends. Indian social reformer, November 3, 1894 vol.V No.10

120) Lakshminarasimham (who was denied entry into the temple, which his grand father had built, as a part of social boycott) filed a defamation suit against sankaracharya which was dismissed in the district court. However, he won the case at the high court level. Though the judgement upheld the right of sankaracharya to communicate Atmuri, his method of sending the writ of excommunication was objected and he was fined Rs.200. This incident gave great fillip to the reformers. See personal paper of pyda Ramakrishnaiah. Also Veeresalingam, sweeya, pt.I, pp.203-04.

121) P. Venkatappaiah, a social worker from Madras, wrote a letter of congratulations, 13 December 1881. Veeresalingam, sweeya, pt.I pp.192-93.

122) Another letter of congratulations dated 12 December 1881 from Madras mentioned the formation of one such association at Madras, ibid.

123) In this connection, the services rendered by Rajyalakshmi, the wife of Veeresalingam, to the cause of widow remarriage deserve a place in Rajahmundry of social reform in Andhra. Her silent and sympathetic assistance Veeresalingam in his effort could hardly be exaggerated. She was aged for 8 when she was married to Veeresalingam (who was 13) and was illiterate. Veeresalingam educated her and made her a staunch supporter of the movement. When the cooks boycotted, during the performance of the first widow remarriage, in 1881, she fetched water from the godavari river and prepared the marriage feast. Later on she served as a teacher in the widow's Home and looked after the inmates with motherly affection and care. It is significant to note, in this context the opinion of sivanath sastry who visited Rajahmundry and had the first hand knowledge of Veeresalingam and his wife and their reform efforts. He stated that "Veeresalingam's wife is memorable person. On the one hand firm, energetic and dutiful and on the other tender – hearted and charitable. My friend Veeresalingam had achieved much despite social oppression because he had a wife like her. "when she died the whole of Rajahmundry mourned her death and felt that Veeresalingam was orphaned. The Hindu, August 2, 1910, in its obituary – note stated, that "She toiled hard in the cause of social reform encountering excommunication and social persecution and her labours contributed largely " to the success of the widow remarriage movement.

124) For the full text of the letter, dt. 24 october 1882, see Veeresalingam, sweeya, pt.I. p.249.



This clearly showed that the widow remarriage movement was spreading to other place where active discussions were taking place. Tanguturi Prakasam.¹²⁵ A student at a Rajahmundry during the height of the reform movements, mentions in his autobiography that he decided to perform the marriage of his widowed sister under the influence of the social reform movements at Rajahmundry led by Veeresalingam.¹²⁶ The conferring of the title Vidyasagar of south India by Mahadav govinda ranade and presidentship of the Indian social conference in 1898 were the two honours conferred on Veeresalingam in recognition of his yeoman service to the widow remarriage movement in the south.¹²⁷

The social reform movement at Madras did not gain much from the stay of Veeresalingam there.¹²⁸ of the few widow remarriages he performed at Madras, one deserves our special mention as it was the first widow remarriage in the adivelama caste. It was celebrated at his residence and “created quite astir among the Naidus in Madras and elsewhere”¹²⁹. The unique thing that he did at madras was the establishment of a widows home. This home was to provide, in addition to shelter, purposeful education by training them in household crafts and needle – work.

In addition to this Veeresalingam as the secretary of the Madras Hindu social reforms association, provided it with a building and collected over a thousand rupees as the nucleus of an endowment. Furthermore, he published voice of progress, a monthly Anglo-Vernacular journal on behalf of the association.¹³⁰ While he was at

125) Prakasam later became a leading political figure in the Madras presidency during the freedom struggle. When the first Congress governments were formed in the wake of the Government of India Act of 1935, he was the Minister for Revenue in the Madras presidency. He was the first Chief Minister of separate Andhra province in 1953. See for a study of Prakasam A. Rudriah Chowdary, *Prakasam A political study*, Madras, 1971.

126) See the autobiography of T. Prakasam, *Na Jeevithayatra* (Telugu) Madras, 1972 first edn. 1946, P. 52. the marriage of his widow sister, however, could not take place as she died.

127) Strictly speaking, Veeresalingam's efforts were confined only to the Andhra region and also to some extent to the city of Madras. However, there was no other widow remarriage movement in the south conducted on the scale of the one in Andhra. The comparison of Veeresalingam with Vidyasagar was apt on more than one count. Hemachandra Sarkar drew an impressive comparative picture of the two in his book *Sivanath Sastry*, Calcutta 1929, P. 48.

128) *Indian social reformer*, November 24, 1901, Vol. XII, No. 13; Veeresalingam, *sweeya*, pt. I, p. 283.

129) *Indian social reformer*, June 27, 1901, Vol. XI, No. 22.

130) *The comments of the Indian social reformer*, April -20, 1902, Vol. XII, No. 34, are worth nothing. “Several of Mr Panthulu's ideas has thus taken shape in the outline We gave a Journal Reading Room and widows Home, But they are not active.”



Madras he also visited Bangalore and delivered lecturer on widow marriages. There he helped in forming a reform association to organize propaganda in favour of widow marriages.

Veeresalingam had started making arrangements for the establishment of a widows home at Rajahmundry even before he left in 1904. the home was opened in 1905 and was named sree victoria widows Home¹³¹ widows above the age of 18 were eligible for direct admission and other (below 18 years) should obtain the permission of parents. Besides general education some vocational training was provided to the inmates.¹³² A new dimension of the home was the attached school which was open not only to widows but also to other girls.

As a fitting finale to the services he rendered to the widow remarriage movement, Veeresalingam established the *Hitakarini Samaj* and gave away all his properties worth 41 thousand rupees to the Samaj through a trust deed registered on May 2, 1908.¹³³ The main aim of the Samaj was to maintain the widow homes, orphanages for destitute children and schools to impart general education and teach handicrafts.¹³⁴

131) A thirty- acre site was purchased for the construction of the building. M. Achutarmaiah, a former student of Veeresalingam, contributed five thousand rupees towards it. The Rajah of pithapur gave twelve hundred rupees, to begin with the home was started at Veeresalingam residence and it was shifted to its own buildings in 1908. See for details K. Hanumantha Rao article "Panthulugari Samsthalu" in Yugapurushudu, pp113-17.

132) Telugu Zenana, september 1904; Krishna patrika March, 15 1906. the 'Home' was primarily meant for poor widows. Food and education were freely provided.

133) Except the income that he would get through the Royalty of his books, he gave away every thing to the society. For the maintenance of the Hitakarini Samaj and the Trust Deed, see the appendices in Veeresalinga, sweeya,

134) The Samaj has been running a high school a widows Home, prayer hall. Library and read up room. After the death of Veeresalingam, vekata Ratnam became its president and managed the institutions especially the high school and the Home with the liberal help he managed to get from the rajah of pithapur.



Estimate:-

The scope of the widow remarriage movement was confined only to a section of society, and that too primarily to the upper castes. It was so because this particular evil was more glaring in these castes, especially the Brahmins. It was not so rampant in the other castes at least until they chose to 'sanskritise' their way of life. The lower castes had been practicing the *maru manuvu* method of marriage which permitted a man or a woman to choose a mate as soon as the one was dead or discarded. It, therefore, afforded little opportunity for them to remain in an unmarried state for long unless they were too old. This can be illustrated by analyzing the caste composition of remarriages performed by Veeresalingam and his followers. As mentioned earlier, of the 63 widow remarriages performed till 1905, 57 were among Brahmins (of different sub-castes), 3 among vaisyas and the remaining three belonged to the non-brahmins conceding that some of the so-called lower castes were gradually adopting the rituals and customs of the castes above them, yet the problem never assumed serious proportions. However, it figured prominently on the agenda of the social reformers of India during the 19th century. In fact, it was a problem which was interlinked with two other social evils, namely, Infant marriages and kanyasulkam.¹³⁵ Considering the serious efforts put in to this movement, its results were paltry. The movement originated mainly "to do away with the suffering of child widows" and did not concern itself much about grown up widows.¹³⁶ Even in Bengal where the movement had its beginnings and also had the benefit of the leadership of vidyasagar it had not made much progress.¹³⁷

135) Widow marriages are not looked down upon today. But child widows are rare because there are NO infant marriage. However, the practice of Kanyasulkam is replaced to day by varasulkam (purchase of bridegrooms, or dowry).

136) Benoy ghosh in samajchitra, cited in Asok Sen, p.88.

137) Vidyasagar was harassed by the remarried couples for pecuniary benefits and he ran into heavy debts. He was so disgusted with the whole issue that he remarked. "I would never set my hand to setting widow - marriages if I had known my country men to be so worthless and good for nothing . . . My efforts would cease with the passing of the act. It is for my faith in the words of those gooders and benefactors of the country that I have been ruined in health and means". Letter by Vidyasagar to durgacharan banerjee, father of surendranath banerjee, cited in ibid., P.63 maharashtra also did not produce glittering results.



In Andhra the movement became widespread in some towns. Besides Rajahmundry the head quarters of Veeresalingam, guntur, Bellary, Vizianagarm Visakhapatnam, Berhampur (now in Orissa) and Kakinada became centres of the movement. It did not, in all probability reach the country side, where only few upper caste families lived. However, the movement created an awareness among the people against such evils and contributed mainly to the dissemination of reform ideas in general. It was successful campaign against orthodoxy. It sanctified the individual revolt against traditions and made men more rational in their outlook and independent in action. The entire movement for the uplift of women was a pioneering effort to emancipate them from oppression it also generated a firm intellectual conviction mainly among the educated sections that women deserved a respectable, if not equal, place in society. Reformers like Veeresalingam with a middle class background could not go beyond the limits of a typical bourgeois intellectual of the 19th century and demand for women the right for a share in ancestral property. The failure of the movement should be seen in the light of the contemporary "society's priorities, with its consciousness and goals"¹³⁸

In Andhra the impact of the movement nearly disappeared. In two decades.¹³⁹ As mentioned earlier, its scope was limited. Also the reformers, while mainly concentrating on the performance of widow marriages and increase their number, rarely bothered about the temperamental suitability and the mutual like of the couples. Such imbalances, More often resulted in the ruin of the marital life of the new couples.¹⁴⁰

138) The convergence of the aims of reformers or reform movements and society priorities and goals would depend upon "the entire social progress". See Asok Sen, p.37.

139) The comment of indian social reformer, November 24, 1901, Vol.XII, No.13, is worth nothing performance of widow marriages," hitherto in the circars there has been of bridegrooms: now it is of brides."

140) Writing about such hastily concluded marriages at guntur, Krishna patrika, July 1, 1905 advised the reformers not to perform such marriages, Veeresalingam himself admitted this fault see his sweeya, pt.I, p.244. r. venkatasivudu was more candid when he wrote that reformers considered it improper to go in to personal quantities of those people who making heavy sacrifices, came forward remarry. Whenever those workers, associated with Veeresalingam, attempted to bring this to his notice, he became very angry with them. Such marriages are R. Venkatasivudu further stated, brought discredit to the movement. See R. Venkatasivudu, samsmriti, p.142.

It was alleged to by the critics of Veeresalingam that he was more interested in the performance of new marriages than to take care of the married couples.¹⁴¹ However, Veeresalingam refuted this criticism by saying that in order to pay the married couples in time, he had incurred debts.¹⁴²

Veeresalingams departure for madras in 1894, when the movement was at its peak considered a distinct loss to the northern districts.¹⁴³

Finally, the community that was covered by widow marriages was small and therefore the couples were apprehensive of their further prospects. Such a pioneering movement, when it had to make some progress, could not pay much attention to problems like temperamental compatibility of couples and the choice of widows in selecting their partners and the like. In a way the movement was highly individualistic in so far as it centered round a few individuals.¹⁴⁴ Veeresalingam trust – Hitakarini Samaj – did provide scope for looking after the community of remarried families. However, it should be remembered that this was only one of its many objects. Moreover, it was not established till 1908 and also its resources were not adequate.¹⁴⁵

141) Gudipati Chalam, a Brahmo and a close follower of Venkataratnam and letter a prominent literary figure is Telugu, expressed the same views in his autobiography. He had the benefit of knowing about the widows Home and conditions is it as his aunt was an inmate there. He stated that when some of the widow marriages brokedown, the reformers did not bestow much concern for such unfortunate women. Also he pointed out that widows had no option in choosing their partners. See G.V. Chalam, Chalam (Antibiograhay, Telugu), Truvannamalai 1978 pp. 60-6 and 142.

142) Veeresalingam stated this in course of his lecture on the History of present and future conditions of widow marriage, in 1887. See Col. Works, Vol.VII, P. 769 This was corroborated by his biographer T.V. Subba Rao, P.31.

143) Indian social reformer, November 24, 1901, Vol XII. no. 13. It further stated that, "There has thus occurred abreak in the community of reform work in these districts. . . Al practical reform activity there is consequently at a standstill."

144) For example, the community of Newly married couple around Rajahmundry completely relied up on few individuals like Veeresalingam and Atmuri lakshminarasimham. Atmuri, after his break with Veeresalingam due to personal mis understanding became actively involved in the freedom struggle the movement was. Abandoned at guntur.

145) The toal assets a mounted to of 41 thousand rupees.



The “Social Purity” Movement:-

The social reformers of 19th century Andhra gave prominence to purity in public and private life. Their main object is “The total abstinence from intoxicating drinks, purity of private life, the abolition of the devadasi system”¹⁴⁶. Consequently, the movement, in its practical sphere of activity, comprised two main activities, namely¹⁴⁷, eradication of the nautch, and¹⁴⁸ temperance. The reformers considered that “.... The maintenance of purity in the relations of the sexes is vital to national greatness and prosperity”, and once these ‘golden links are weakened, they feared that “all the strong bonds of civilized society will be weakened and loosed.”

Nautch Problem:-

The nautch question agitated the minds of the reformers mainly on three grounds namely

1. To improve morality in society
2. Uplift of women (Uplifting those who are leading the life of prostitution)
3. Removing the stigma that is associated with Fine arts like music and dance.

The institution of nautch (or Devadasi) came to be considered as nothing but prostitution¹⁴⁹. The Devadasis evolved into a ‘caste’ which, shockingly enough, was exclusively meant for public enjoyment. It was sanctioned in the name of religion and was sanctified by society¹⁵⁰.

The dancing girls, in 19th century Andhra¹⁵¹ came to occupy an ‘honoured’ place in society. She was present on all public occasions. Dancing girls were

146. The Phrase “social purity” was coined by Raghupati Venkataratnam *India social reformer*, Vol. XLIX, No.40.

147. Raghupati Venkataratnam’s article “Social purity and Anti – Nautch movement” in C.Y. Chintamani, Ed., P. 255.

148. R.G. Bhandarkar, scholar and social historian asserted that “in a country in which women are trampled upon. There can be no great advance in social or moral matters” *Indian social reformer*, September 15, 1894, Vol. V. No.3. For Mrs. Annie Besant’s views see C.Y. Chintamani, Ed. p.276 F.n.

149. G.A. Oddie, Social protest in India (British Protestant missionaries and social reformers), New Delhi, 1979. pp. 103-104.

150. See K.V. Gopalaswamy, edlk grace abiding; message and ministration of Brahmashri Sir, R. Venkataratnam, Kakinada, 1965 p. 148..

151. In Andhra the Devadasigirls were called Bogams and sons and came to be considered a separate caste. Census of India, 1901, Madras, VolXV. P.I. P. 151.



patronized by leading members of society such as vakils (advocates). Government officials and businessmen. It was then a matter of prestige to keep a dancing girl as a concubine. The number of such women were estimated to be about two lakhs in the Madras presidency¹⁵². Nautch parties were organized in the name of certain prominent individuals and came to be known to the public as Naidu's Melam (Naidu's nautch group) and pantulu's Melam (Pantulus nautch group) and the like¹⁵³.

It was a practice that all those present should contribute some amount, whether or not one had the ability to pay¹⁵⁴. People took it as an opportunity to attend and encourage such things merely to please the officials and others with power and influence and thus it led to corruption in public life.

Veeresalingam's Efforts:-

Veeresalingam, while condemning the evil, traced its historical origins. Originally its aim was to patronise fine arts but ultimately it ended in prostitution. Columns of his journal, *vivekavardhani*, were used to condemn the evil practice. To educate people on this issue, he used his creative talents and wrote a satire, *Vesya priya prahasanam*, in which he ably met all the arguments of the opponents of the reform, for example the possible damage to music and fine arts if the nautch is abolished¹⁵⁵.

In 1881 the students at Rajahmundry, Under the auspices of Veeresalingam, started a movement against nautch parties, similar to the one started at Madras. They convened a meeting in 1893 to sign the memorials sent by the madras association to be submitted to the governor of Madras on this issue¹⁵⁶.

152. R.C. Mazumdar, ed., *struggle for Freedom*, Bombay, 1969, P.995. It was, however, not possible to ascertain the correct figure as many of them were perhaps registered in the census as temple servants.

153. Veeresalingam, *Sweeya*, Pt. I, p.90.

154. This practice was called *vosagulu* meaning 'gifts' it was also called *vasoollu* 'collections' See K.V. Desikacharya, *Veerasalingam Pantulu – Jeevitha charitra* (Telugu), Rajahmundry, 1954, p.23.

155. M.R. Appa Rao, *Brahmashri Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu* (Telugu), (Originally a talk given during the Centenary celebrations of Venkataratnam), (Kakinada, 1962) P.11, also see in this connection the two articles by Ch. Venkata Sastry in his *Kathalu – Gandhalu*, (telugu), kadiyam, 1958, 2nd edn, Vol. II, No.12.

156. *Satyasamvardhani*, June 1893, Vol, II, No.12.



In the Godavari District social conference, in 1897, a resolution was passed “not to get up nautches at the time of marriages”¹⁵⁷. The students at Rajahmundry and Kakinada signed pledges that they would never attend nautch parties and indulge in any form of activity that would violate the principle of social purity¹⁵⁸.

An article published in Krishna Patrika on the nautch problem in 1909 received remarkable attention from the public including from a number of people belonging to ‘caste’ of nautch girls¹⁵⁹. It gave a summary of the efforts made by the reformers in this direction in Madras and Andhra. The writer appealed to the ‘community’ of nautch girls to take in initiative to reform themselves in the wake of the movement. The response to this articles, particularly from the nautch community, was encouraging. A note from one among them (anonymous) was published saying that nautch was nothing but prostitution and they should put an end to that¹⁶⁰. The note also appreciated the efforts made by the Arya-Vysya association (a caste association of the vysyas) to eradicate this evil practice¹⁶¹.

Efforts of the government:

At the instance of the instruction received from the secretary of state for India, the home secretary of the government of India sent a note to the chief secretary, Madras presidency, to elicit opinions on the extent of the spread of the evil of

157. Ibid., June 1897.

158. There such students mentioned this in their autobiographies. p. 182. and A. Lakshmi pati, Sweeyacharitra (autobiography in Telugu), Madras, 1973, P. 27. similar pledges were signed by the students at Bapatla (Guntur district) under the leadership of Desiraju Pedabapaiah. See K. Hanumantha Rao *Sweeyajeevitha* sameeksha, autobiographical review in Telugu, Rajahmundry, 1973, P. 63, for the full text of the pledge see C.Y. Chintamani, P.281.

159. The article was written by A. Narayana Rao in Krishna Patrika, November, 5, 1909.

160. Ibid., December 2, 1909.

161. Caste associations were beginning to appear in Andhra By thistime, eventhough they became prominent only after 1920, by which time the justice party emerged as the mouth – piece of the non-Brahmin castes in the South. Among the Vysyas who strove hard to eradicate thisevil mention should be made of Darishi chenchaiiah. A freedom fighter and an advocate of social reform, he along with Bangalore nagaratnamma and her daughter Yaminipuma Tilakam (both from the ‘community’ of nantchgirls) started a Journal and conducted several meetings through out Andhra. Under their influence, several members of the nantch – girls “community” gave up their ‘profession’ and got educated and settled to respectable lives after marriage. See D. Chenchaiiah, Lit., PP. 270-73. yaminipuma Tailakam started at Madras an orphamage called Hindu Yuvati Saranalayam for the Children of nantch girls. K. N. Kesari, P. 180.



prostitution, by employing such methods as buying young female children for the profession, and taking them into the fold by marrying them to god, a flower or a sword¹⁶². It further enquired whether the sections, No. 272 and No. 273 of the Indian penal code were effective enough to tackle the problem¹⁶³.

The above proceedings and their publication in Krishna Patrika roused the attention of and response from the general public and the 'community' of the nantch girls. Vernacular journals started commenting up on this and suggested the adoption of stronger measures to curb the evil. An open letter in response to the note of the secretary of state for India, signed by 38 prominent members of the community appeared in Krishna Patrika. While gratefully acknowledging the efforts initiated by the reformers in this direction, they realized that such a reform as this would succeed only with the assistance of the government. They expressed their pleasure at the initiative taken by the government to introduce steps prohibiting the girls below the age of 16 from being 'recruited' into profession¹⁶⁴. This letter was an unmistakable sign of change that was coming about from within the 'community'. At times such reform efforts from within resulted in social boy cott and non-cooperation from other caste groups¹⁶⁵.

Legislative Measures:-

The Bill on protection of minor girls was introduced in the central legislature; it was welcomed by the native press. The Hindu commented that the bill will lead to fruitful results, in the social political progress of the country"¹⁶⁶. Krishna Patrika exhorted the people to hold meeting in support of the bill and make it a law¹⁶⁷. However,

162. The note dated March 3, 1911, by the secretary of the state to Indian was translated and published in full in Krishna patrika, July 7, 1911. the governor General issued the note to the government of the madras presidency on april 17, 1911.

163. Ibid. Also see the united India and Native states, July 15, 1911, Native News., 1911.

164. Krishna Patrika, July 28, 1911.

165. Ravi, January 12, 1911 reported an incident at peddepuram (Godavari district) were 40 families of prostitute community reformed themselves. Local Kamsalis and Devanges grew Jealous and refused to work for them and also in the neighbouring villages" which resulted in tension in that area Native news.

166. The Hindu, September 19, 1912. the Durbar (Published from Guntur) October 1, 1912, Bharatamata (Published from Vizianagaram), October 2, 1912, also supported the Bill. Native News, 1912.

167. Krishna Patrika, September 21, 1912; also see the Madras Standard, September 1912. Ibid.

the bill that was finally passed declaring the traffic among minor girls to be a criminal offence was not applied to the Devadasis¹⁶⁸.

Venkataratnam realized the magnitude of the problem and said that they could perhaps succeed only to the extent of creating consciousness among a large section of people in Andhra that nautch was an institution that deserved to be eliminated¹⁶⁹. For example, the Zamindar of pithapur took a decision not to arrange nautch programmes during functions, including wedding ceremonies and thus set an example to others¹⁷⁰. The Indian social reformer reported another incident in which a Reddy marriage in a village in Tadipatri taluk (Anantapur district) did not have a nautch programme and asked others to emulate it¹⁷¹.

Another significant result of the movement was that certain castes gave up the practice in their fold. It was customary among the Jakkula caste (in Krishna district) to set apart one girl for prostitution. This was given up. The *Hindu* reporting on this stated. "In Tenali Zakkula caste women were leading lives in prostitution. The community took a vow under the influence of some educated people that they will marry their females and since have acted upto their vow"¹⁷².

Impact:

The impact of the movement could further be illustrated by a report published in the *Indian social reformer*. In Bellary as in other places to keep a nautch girl was considered an honour. "Now all that has changed", and even "secret concubinage of anything like a permanent character is greatly on the wane"¹⁷³. Furthermore, "the report

168. It was only in 1925 that an Act was passed which extended to the Devadasis those sections of the penal code which declared traffic in minor girls a criminal offence.

169. R. Venkata Ratnam, *Sweeya pravachanadyutulu* (Telugu), on autobiographical account), Rajahmundry, 1914. P. 40.

170. Krishna Patrika, May 10, 1906.

171. Indian social Reformer, September 15, 1894, vol. V., No.3.

172. The Hindu, June 7, 1910: Edgar Thurston, vol. I A and B, p. 140.

173. *Indian social Reformer*, March 16, 1895, vol. V. No.28.



stated that after the starting of the anti-nautch movement” an amount of restraint has been brought to bear upon attending nautches will visible only to the careful observer. Many a man of wealth and position and especially of education, a voids having a nautch in his house on marriage occasions. The anti nautch movement was gaining ground”¹⁷⁴.

However, the practice continued in the absence of effective alternatives offered to nautch girls. The problem of their future life worried them once they gave up their “profession”. So the entire problem had certain economic overtones connected with it. Ample educational opportunities with financial help during the period of education and provision of employment opportunities could have solved the problem to a great extent. Moreover, the movement demanded too high a tone of life from the society at large. It emphasized the moral facts to the detriment of the human factor. It was almost ‘Puritan’ in its rigidity and moral in elasticity. This might be one of the reasons for the comparative failure of the movement. Furthermore, loose morals were not the monopoly of the nautch girls. Prostitution had its other social facets – debauchery and adultery.

Temperance Movement: -

Another social evil which was wide spread among the people was alcoholism. This habit of drinking intoxicating liquors is a universal phenomena. Even from ancient time this habit was found throughout the world. Many aboriginal communities were having some type of intoxicating drinks prepared from the locally available grains or trees. Thus the habit of drinking was not new to India. However the form in which it existed during the 19th century was attributed to the British rule¹⁷⁵. Realizing the large

174 C Chakradhara Rao, president of Eleventh Andhra Provincial Kalavanthula (Nautch caste) conference held at gudivad in 1945 referred to the movement gratefull, and acknowledged the change it brought about among the members of his community See for the full text, cited in B Kesavanarayana, *Political and Social factors in Andhra* (1900-1956), Vijayawada, 1976, P 219

175 see W S Caines article, “The Temperance problem in India”, in C Y Chintamani, ed ,op , cit, p 87 the author, a member of the British parliament, took active interest in the temperance problem in India He visited India more then once, and made on – the – spot study of the problem and observed its serious character. At his initiative the Anglo-indian Temperance association was formed in London with himself as the secretary and Samudra Singh, B.A as president



focused attention on the problem from various angles. *Andhra Prakasika* Praised the lecture delivered by Caine, about the evil consequences of the abkari system¹⁸¹. It further commented. "As a general rule no arrack shop should be opened in a village without the consent of the villagers. These shops were having pernicious influence on the welfare of the common people"¹⁸².

The spread of this habit to women and increase in the sale of Foreign liquor were the two new developments which again were criticized by the press. *Samrajya pradayini* regretted that the higher classes and even women took to the drinking of liquor in great quantities and requested the government to take effective measures to prevent the evil¹⁸³. A tract in Telugu was published in 1893 enumerating the evils of drinking liquor¹⁸⁴.

In the Madras presidency the Revenue was mainly derived from the sale of liquors, opium and other drugs¹⁸⁵. The "Farming system"¹⁸⁶ was the method through which liquor was supplied at first. It was replaced by the improved excise system (in 1874) under which the monopoly of supply of arrack or to day in each district was given to one contractor subject to the condition that he paid duty on every gallon of spirit that was sold. This system gave scope to a serious growth of illicit practices. Finally by the turn of the century the 'contract distillery system' was adopted according to which the sale of liquor in each district was given to the highest bidder. The Indian social conference during its 10th session at Calcutta in 1896 discussed the issue and passed a resolution in favour of the Temperance movement¹⁸⁷. Also the Indian national congress

181. In the wake of caine's visit to India during 1888-89 a number of temperance societies were formed the existing social reform association also undertook the responsibility of fighting against the evil. Speaking for the whole of India, it was estimated that there were 130 such societies "comprising over one hundred thousand members chiefly from among young and educated Hindus." P.N. Bose, vo.II. pp.101-02. See also in this context lucy carrol. "The Temperance movement in India". "Politics and social Reform", Modern Asian studies, 10, (1976), pp. 417-47.

182. *Andhra Prakasika*, Native News, February 1889.

183. *Samrajya pradayini*, Vivekavardhani, February 1892, Native News.

184. Gurulinga Devara, the lecture on Alcohol (Telugu), Ellore, 1893. The author was the editor of a journal called memoranjani.

185. Liquors included country spirit, toddy, locally manufactured beer and foreign liquors. However, the major source of revenue was country spirit and today. See G.T. Boad, the Madras Presidency, Madras, 1933, P.55.

186. By this method spirits, were manufactured by the government and the right to retail was given to farmers.

187. Chintamani, appendix, p.372.

took up the issue and started passing resolutions against the excise policy of the government¹⁸⁸. However, in Andhra, the Indian national congress did not take up this particular issue until 1921, when the picketing and boycott of liquor shops was taken up as a part of the constructive programme of the congress¹⁸⁹. Nevertheless the policy of the congress gave added emphasis to the temperance movement.

The vernacular journals that dealt with this problem during this period were *Ravi*, *Andhra Kesari*, *The Bharati*, *The Desabhimani*, the *Vasundhara*, etc. perhaps realizing that it was impossible to wipe out the evil completely. Madras reformers like G. subramanya Aiyar asked the government to gradually reduce the number of toddy and other liquor shops. Also he suggested that it was necessary to stop the sale of liquor below trees and unlicensed toddy on the roadside¹⁹⁰. The demand of the reformers for the reduction of the number of toddy and arrack shops was conceded by the government first in the city of Madras and then in the mofussil places too¹⁹¹.

The temperance movement in Andhra appeared to have been confined mostly to urban areas and in such other places where the reform movements were popular. For example in Bellary it was popular and sabhapati Mudaliar who was once a liquor contractor for three districts of Bellary, Anantapur and Kurnool, gave up his liquor business and actively propagated the message of the temperance movement¹⁹². We have no evidence to suggest that the Andhra reformers had taken the message to the masses.

188. For example the congress passed resolutions on the subject at its fourth (1888), fifth (1889), sixth (1890) and the sixteenth (1900) sessions. During the 16th session it passed a lengthy resolution on this issue in which it stated that the supply of cheap liquor was responsible for the rapid increase in the consumption of liquors.

189. See O. Venkata Subbaiah's article, "Nellore Zilla Bharata Swatantryamamu" in Vikrama simhapuri Mandala Sarvaswamu (Telugu), Nellore, 1963. for details on the successful campaign of 'liquor boy cott' movement in Andhra district, See M Venkatarangaiya, vol.III.(A.D.1921-1931) pp.186-89.

190. Extract of the speech delivered at Tanjore on temperance was reported in the Hindu Nesan, March 26, 1908. Native news, 1908. Subramanya Aiyar was one of the leading social reformers of Madras and was associated with the Hindu for along time. He performed remarriage of his widow daughter and thus incurred displeasure and social boycott from the orthodox sections in Madras. He was the editor of Swadesimitran in Madras. See for a biographical account, S.A. Govindarajan, G. Subrahmanya Iyer, New Delhi, 1969.

191. The Madras standard, December 13, 1908. Native News, 1908.

192. Mudaliar formed "an association for the suppression of Drunkenness" and was its president. Shortly after he induced the muslims of the place to form the "Mussalman Temperance Society". Its president was Kazi Abdul Lateff Saheb. P.N. Bose., Vol. II, PP. 102-03 F.N.



Essentially it was a problem that hit the poorer sections most. In Bengal, at Baranagar, Sasipada Banarjee started a temperance society comprising mainly of industrial labourers. The working men's society at Baranagar publicly recognized his work and felt thankful to him¹⁹³. In Andhra nothing of that sort took place¹⁹⁴. The local situation (Baranagar had a large population of factory workers) must have also played a crucial role in Andhra in this regard concentrated mainly on the dissemination and spread of temperance ideas and including students to take pledges of 'social purity'. In this connection the Hindu commented that there was growth of intemperance especially among poorer classes and "all the efforts they have not amounted to much when the effect is taken into consideration – of temperance reformers have so far borne not much fruit, either in the way of checking corruption of spirits by discouraging it by active propaganda or in the matter of bringing public opinion to bear on the government so as to make them perceive the gravity of the problem and adopt proper and timely remedies"¹⁹⁵.

Thus Veeresalingam, wanted to fight against all social evils, which were prevalent at his time. As mentioned earlier he wanted to create a healthy public opinion opposed to the social evils. He roused public interest over many issues of social concern like uplift of women, women education, early marriages, widow remarriages, nautch problem, alcoholism. Thus he was a pioneer of the social reform movement in the 19th Century, Andhra Region.

193. See A. Raj Kumar Banarjee, *An Indian pathfinder*, pp.73-74.

194. This observation is relevant only to practical work among the 'lower' sections of society. Reformers like Venkataratnam and Veeresalingam, in their writings. Showed high sense of consciousness of their appreciation of the problem vis-à-vis the poorer sections of society. Venkataratnam in his presidential address to the first Godavari Adi-Andhra (scheduled castes) conference held at Amalapuram in 1921 appealed to the audience to give up drunkenness. See K. V. Gopala Swamy, p.225.

195 The Hindu, January 1, 1912; Native news, 1912.





APPENDIXES



APPENDIX-I

SOME IMPORTANT EVENTS IN VEERESALINGAM's LIFE

- | | | |
|----------------|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 16-4-1848 | - | Born at Rajahmundry |
| 1860 | - | Joined in District school. |
| 1861 | - | Marriage with Bapamma (Rajyalakshmi) |
| 1870 | - | Passed Matriculation |
| 1871 | - | Passed criminal higher grade examination |
| 1872 | - | Appointed as the Head master of the English school at Korangi on a monthly salary of rupees 44/- |
| 1874 | - | Started a girls school at Dhavaleswaram. |
| 1874 – 75 | - | Joined as Telugu Pandit in government Arts College, Rajahmundry. |
| 18-6-1876 | - | Vivekavardhani was converted in to a fortnightly. |
| 8 – 9 – 1878 | - | Started Social Reform Association |
| 22 – 9- 1878 | - | Demise of Veeresalingams mother. |
| 3 – 8 – 1879 | - | Gave a lecture supporting widow-remarriages. |
| 11 - 12 - 1881 | - | Performed first widow remarriage was performed. |
| 1897 | - | Leaving for Madras on long leave. For the publication of his works |
| 1898 | - | On the insistence of Ranade he presided over the Indian Social Reform Congress, held along with the Annual session of the Indian national congress at Madras. |
| 12-12-1906 | - | Founded Hitakarini Samaj with 36 members. |
| 1909 | - | Begins tour to many places to collect funds for Hitakarini Samaj |
| 11-8-1910 | - | Veeresalingam's wife Rajyalakshmi Dies. |
| 27-5-1919 | - | Veeresalingam dies in Madras. |



APPENDIX - II

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF VEERESALINGAM'S PRINCIPAL WORKS

- Markandeya Satakam and Gopala Satakam.* 1868-69
Rasikajana Manoranjanam. 1870-71
 Suddha Andhra Nirostya Nirvachana Naishadhamu. 1871.
 Suddha Andhra Uttara Ramayanamu. 1872.
 Neeti Chandrika, Vighramu (Panchatantra). 1874.
 Neeti Deepika (A collection of 100 verses). 1875.
 John gilpin (translation of Cowper's poem). 1875
 Sangraha Vyakaranamu (Outlines of telugu Grammar). 1875.
 The comedy of Errors (unfinished translation of shakespeare's play in verse). 1875.
 Abhagyopakhyanam (A satire). 1876.
 Padartha vivechaka Sastramu (Chemistry: some Questions and Answers). 1877-78.
 Brahma Vivahamu (A Social play). 1878.
 Neeti chandrika – Sandhi (Translation of Panchatantra). 1878.
 Suddha Andhra Bharata Sangraham. 1879.
 Vyavahara Dharma Bodhini (A social play). 1879.
 Ratnavali (A translation of Harsha's play). 1880
 Viveka Deepika (A play). 1880.
 Venneesu Vartaka Charitramu (An unfinished translation of Shakespeare's The merchant of Venice). 1880.
 Rajasekhara charitra (A noval) . 1880.
 Chamatkara Ratnavali (Prose adaptation of the comedy of errors) 1880.
 Satyavathi Charitra (A moral tale) 1883.
 Sakuntalamu (Translation of kalidasa's Abhijnana Sakuntalam). 1883.
 Satya-Drowpadi Samvadamu (a dialogue in verse). 1883.
 Chandramati charitramu (A prose tale for women). 1884.
 Stree Neeti Deepika (A collection of hundred verses edited for use in Girls's Schools). 1884.
 Prahlada Natakamu (A mythological play). 1885.
 Probodha Chandrodayamu (Translation of Krishnamisra's play). 1885.
 Malavikaagnimitramu (Translation of Kalidasa's play). 1885.
 Dakshina Gograhamamu (A mythological play). 1885.
 Raga Manjari (Translation of Sheridan's The Duenna). 1885.
 Satya Harischandra Natakam (A mythological play). 1886.
 Dambhacharya Vilasanamu (A satire). 1886.
 Apoorva Brahmacharya Prahasanamu (A farce). 1886.
 Tarka Sangrahamu (Outlines of Logic). 1886.
 Andhra Kavulu Charitramu (Lives of Telug poets). 1887.
 Satya Sanjeevani, (A moral tale). 1887.
 Sareera Sastra sangrahamu (Outlines of physiology). 1886.
 Hasya Sanjeevani, Part I (A collection of 19 farces). 1888.
 Deha Arogya Dharmabodhini (guide to Health). 1889.
 Satee Hitabodhini (Advice to Women). 1889.
 Tiryag-Vidwan-Maha Sabha. 1889.



Maha-Aranyapura – Adhipatyamu (A satire). 1889.
 Hasya Sanjeevani, Part II (A second collection of 17 farces). 1891.
 Satyaraja purvadesa Yatralu, Part I (Satire). 1891.
 Alankara Sangrahamu (Outlines of Prosody). 1892.
 Pathika Vilasamu (Translation of Oliver Goldsmith's The Traveller). 1892.
 Satyaraja Purvadesa Yatralu. Part II (Satire). 1893-94.
 Neeti Katha Manjari (Aesop's Fables). 1893-94.
 Kalyana Kalpavalli (Translation of Sheridan's The Rivals). 1894.
 Jyotisha Sastra Sangrahamu (outlines of Astronomy). 1895.
 Saraswati-Narada Villapamu (A dialogue in verse). 1895.
 Patnee Hita suchani (Guide to Housewives) 1896.
 Lakshmi-Shanaischara Vilasamu. 1896.
 Jantu Swabhava charitramu (The Habits of Animals). 1896.
 Raja Rammohun Roy Charitra. 1896.
 Hasya Sanjeevani, Part III (Farces). 1897.
 Stree Punar-Vivaha Prahasanamu (An unfinished comedy). 1900-01.
 Savithri satyavathi sambashanam 1904.
 Sweeya Charitramu (Autobiography). 1911.
 Jesus Charita (Life of Christ). 1913.
 Navyaandhra Vyakaranamu (New Telugu Grammar; unfinished) 1919.

Veeresalingam has also adapted into Telugu Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*. He wrote brief histories of the more important of the Indian states like Hyderabad, Mysore, Travancore, Baroda, Gwalior Kashmir. He published short biographies of Queen Victoria and Queen Alexandra; also biographical sketch of many other famous women. All these were subsequently included in his collected works. The written texts of his more important speeches and his essays on social problem which appeared originally in *vivekavardhini* and his other journals were also included.



APPENDIX - III

AN APPEAL TO THE INDIAN PUBLIC OF THE WIDOW MARRIAGE ASSOCIATION

(Viveka Vardhani 1879 September)

Fellow Country Men and Gentlemen:

Those amongst us who are anxious for the improvement of Hindu society – especially the elevation of our women to that position which we know was accorded them by our ancestors and we ourselves see they occupy among the more enlightened nations of the earth – those amongst us who feel the slightest zeal in this most urgent reform cannot but bewail the pernicious effects of certain custom now obtaining amongst us which though it has been attacked from time to time by isolated societies in different parts of the country seems to call for a more united effort on the part of all the enlightened sons of India for its entire suppression – we mean the enforced widow – hood of those who lose their husbands at however tender an age.

Countrymen! Carry your selves in imagination for a minute into those remote times when India set a brilliant example of civilization to other nations. Are you not proud that your country was the cradle of all sciences? Was it not by your ancestors that the Greeks and the Arabs were initiated in the secrets of medicine and the first principles of Mathematics? Did we not once possess Sanscrit the best of languages, Astronomy the most sublime of sciences and the most complete systems of philosophy and the best law givers? Was there not a time when our shastras were truly interpreted and acted up to scrupulously? Did our country not possess along with its other embellishments its patriots too? How very noble were their efforts could any but the greatest geniuses produce our Dharma Shastras, Grammar, Logic, Philosophy and Astronomy? Was that no a time when our women were educated and socially on a level with men?

As a proof of what they were in those ancient times we refer you to the names of Seeta, Sacuntala, Anasuya, and Avva &c. And to show what they are still capable of inspite of the disadvantages under which they labour we cite the example of the late lamented Toru Dutt to whose genius the SATURDAY REVIEW OF AUGUST 23, 1879 pays the following compliment : “We now know all about Toru Dutt, (who translated the VISHNU PURANA into English Blank Verse) who was at that time (1876 in which year was published from her pen “A SHEAF GLEANED IN FRENCH FIELDS”) a girl of twenty a pure Hindu without a drop of European blood in her veins and who has since to the misfortune of literature passed away in her twenty-second year. Further on it says “There is every reason to believe that in intellectual power Toru Dutt was one of the most remarkable woman that have lived. Had George Sand or George Eliot died at the age of twenty one, they would certainly not have left behind them any proof either of application or of originality superior to



those bequeathed to us by Toru Dutt; and we discover little of merely ephemeral precocity in the attainments of this singular girl.”

Now countrymen ! descend to our times and observe carefully. He that runs may read that we have degenerated. Can any one lay his hand on his heart and assert the contrary? India once a jewel of the world is now an object of contempt. Have we improved what our ancestors bequeathed to us? Do we act up to their dictates with reverence ? Gentlemen ! A moment's reflection must tell you that we have utterly disregarded the good old precepts of our fore fathers and in their shrine we have placed a usurper on the throne and we now worship him, may render him object service. Custom is the tyrant to whom we universally bow. We feel his tyranny, but yet we are too weak to set his power at defiance. We know that he is not our supreme ruler and yet in our rigid adherence to him we forget our real guides the shastras. How often have we not felt that custom has misled us, thrown obstacles in the way of our progress, and has laid the axe at the very root of our progress, and has laid the axe at the very root of our happiness? Are we still to adhere to him in spite of the endless miseries inflicted on us? No. We are to obey the law of nature; action is accompanied by reaction. We have tied ourselves hand and foot and yielded to custom. But nature bids us break the ties and declare ourselves free and we rise from our lethargy. We are no more intoxicated with the magic influence of custom. Let us gird up our loins and pull down the usurper, to restore to the throne the proper claimants- the shastras. This duty of ours is but the discharge of our debt to our country and a proof that we try to be worthy of our position as the descendants of men whose country was once adorned by such illustrious personages as Dharmaraj, Gouthama, Manu, Parasara, Vicramarka &c.&c.

Countrymen! So for you may think that we have no definite aim. It is therefore necessary that we should tell you what it is. You all know how miserable the state of women is in our country; a girl is married at an age when she is hardly capable of understanding the serious nature of the intended change in her life. Have you not met with cases where innocent children have mistaken the whole ceremony for mere ordinary feast with tomtoms and cakes? Is the mind of the girl better developed when the sad news of her husband's death is received in the family? May we not wish for a kalidas who could describe the heart-rending scenes when widowed young girls ask their parents, who tear their hair and beat their breasts, such innocent questions as “ what is the matter papa” why do you cry? Mamma why do you weep”? wholly unconscious of the cause of their grief-the sad fate which dooms the darlings to perpetual widowhood.

What widowhood means, gentlemen, we need not attempt to describe. Owing partly to this cause of early marriage and partly to the prohibition of remarriage of women and also owing to habit of widowers in advanced ages marrying girls in their infancy.....owing to each and all of these causes we say the number of our widows has been painfully on the increase. With the number have grown the evils of widowed life. As soon as a young girl loses her husband she is deprived of her ornaments, and very often of her rich black hair, she is given one meal a day and all the menial and heavy work is allotted to her share. What does all this mean? Over working her and striving her. But is this all ? there is something more fearful. These wretched widows



can yield to all this, but they cannot conquer nature. They are on the horns of a dilemma. Are they to overcome nature to gain the approbation of society or to yield to the demands of nature and fall in the eyes of society? To conquer nature is almost impossible. But though to leave the dear father, dearer brother and sister and the dearest mother and like low woman is also to conquer nature in one sense and a costly sacrifice on the part of the poor females, yet how in their helpless unprotected state can they resist the promptings of nature, roused by the solicitations of evil – minded men? As a matter of fact they yield to temptation. Now what is the result ? Pregnancy? The eyes of society must be screened, their clamour suppressed. The poor parents and brothers, otherwise innocent are now accomplices in the guilt. Abortion will be the result which will be repeated on every fresh occasion. At this stage, it some times so happens, that nature laughs at the frail attempts of human minds to frustrate her efforts. In the contest nature wins and an innocent child has ample reasons to expect a great deal and to whom the world looks with anxious eyes for the regeneration of your country, come forward and help your brethren. 'Union is strength'. Come and offer your liberal help. Be prompt and we shall not draw back. Believe us to be in great earnest.

Widow Marriage Association
Rajahmundry, September 1879.

K. Viresalingam,
Secretary.



APPENDIX IV
DEED OF TRUST
EXECUTED BY

Rao Bahadur Kandukuri Veeresalingam Pantulu

Son of

KANDUKURI SUBBARAYUDU GARU

Residing in Rajahmundry,

This day the second of may 1908.

Know all men by these presents that an Association under the name and style of *Rajahmundry Hithakarini Samaj* having been formed and registered under the Registration of Societies Act, Act XXI of 1860, for the promotion of educational, philanthropic and other useful work, I do hereby appoint myself and the members of the Managing Committee of the said – *Rajahmundry Hithakarini Samaj*, during the tenure of their office as such as Trustees and convey to them my right, title and interest in all the properties mentioned in the accompanying Schedule and valued at Rs. 41,500 to be held and managed for the benefit of the aforesaid *Hithakarini Samaj* subject to the following conditions:-

1. That the said property shall be under my sole management and control as Trustee during my lifetime to the benefit of the said *Hithakarini Samaj*.
2. That the said trustees and their successors in office shall on no account sell, mortgage or otherwise alienate my two storeyed ancestral house, item No.1 as per the accompanying Schedule, wherein I was born, but shall always keep the said house in good condition.
3. That the said Trustees and their successors in office shall on no account sell, mortgage or otherwise alienate the two gardens with the buildings thereon, items 4 and 5 as per the accompanying schedule, but shall improve them as funds permit, reserving such vacant portions of the gardens as may necessary for night schools, technical or other useful institutions, that the said *Hithakarini Samaj* may hereafter establish.
4. That the said Trustees and their successors in office shall on no account sell, pledge or otherwise alienate my library item No.6 as per the accompanying Schedule, but shall permit the said library to be used as a free library by the institutions of the *Hithakarini Samaj* that may be situated in my aforesaid garden and with the permission of the *Hithakarini Samaj* by other institutions or by the public at large on any conditions which the said *Hithakarini Samaj* may impose.



5. That for the maintenance of myself and my family the said trustees and their successors in office shall permit me to appropriate to myself during my lifetime the sale proceed of my books and other publications the copyright whereof has been hereby conveyed in trust.
6. That the said Trustees and their successors in office shall permit me to reside free of rent or any other liability either in my garden house or in my ancestral town house, items 1 and 4 as per the accompanying Schedule, according to my choice.
7. That the said Trustees and their successors in office shall permit my wife, should she survive me, reside during her lifetime free of any rent or any other liability either in my garden house of *Rajya Lakshmi Vilas*, items 1 and 4 as per the accompanying schedule, and shall give her a monthly allowance of Rupees (30) thirty out of the income from the properties hereby conveyed in trust and shall also give away One thousand Rupees out of my Life Policy for two thousands, item 8 per the accompanying Schedule, which she is authorised to spend as she likes.
8. That the said Trustees and their successors in office shall utilize the income from all the properties hereby conveyed in trust, after payment of any taxes or other legal dues thereon, for the maintenance of the widows' home and the school connected therewith, and the surplus, if any, shall be utilized for any other institutions of the said Hitakarini Samaj as the trustees may determine. If, On any account, the widows' home or the school should cease to exist, the Trustees shall utilize the said income for any other institutions of the said Hitakarini Samaj as the trustees may determine.
9. that the object of the widows' home being the amelioration, by education, re-marriage, or by other means of the condition of the widows and of widows and of others, if any, that may be admitted into the said home by the said Hitakarini Samaj, the Trustees and their successors in office shall spend for each re-marriage performed either according to Hindu rites under Act XV of 1856 or according to the provisions of Act III of 1872 or any other legal enactment in force providing for such re-marriages a sum not exceeding Rs.(50) fifty for each re-marriage if the parties to such marriage be not in a position to bear the expenses thereof and if the Hitakarini Samaj or its Managing Committee approves of the proposed re-marriage.
10. That the Trustees and their successors in office shall permit my wife, kandukuri Rajya Lakshmmamma, to exercise supervision over the widows' home, so long as she is inclined to do so, in consonance with the objects and the rules of the said institutions.
11. That the Trustees and their successors in office shall appoint P.V. Subba Rao, son of P. Seshayya, whom I have been bringing up as my ward, the



librarian and the vendor of my books on a monthly salary of Rupees not less than (15) fifteen and provide him and his family with free lodgings in the gardens items 4 and 5 as per the accompanying schedule, so long as he chose to fill the said office.

12. That the Trustees and their successors in office shall reserve the piece of land in the southern side. Of gardens item 4, adjoining the puntha from the gate east ward to graft mango garden for house sites and permit only Brahmos, with their families, to occupy and build thereon, provided they undertake to let their houses only to such persons as the Trustees and the *Hithakarini Samaj* approve of, and provided they agree to give the right of pre-emptions to the trustees for a price not exceeding Rs.500 or Rs.1,000 if the house be an upstairs building, according to the value of the buildings.
13. That the Trustees and their successors in office shall utilize, for the Trust purposes, only the interest accruing from items 8,9,10 and 11, as per the accompanying Schedule, but shall not draw any portion of the *Corpus* thereof.
14. That the trustees and their successors in office shall pay to Mr. M. Atchutaramayya or his heirs or assignees, towards the money spent by him for the "home for women and children" and for a well to be sunk in the compound, a sum of Rs.5,000 or less according to the money actually spent by him for the said building and the well, if he insists upon such payment, when the undermentioned five gentlemen of the town, namely, district Judge, Godavary ; Sub-Collector, Rajahmundry; Chairman of the Rajahmundry Municipality ; Principal, government Arts College, Rajahmundry; the senior Missionary of Rajahmundry, declare unanimously, in writing, that all the three institutions namely, the widows' Home, the Orphanage and the Rescue Home, have ceased to exist, but not so long as any one of the said three institutions should be working.
15. That the Trustees and their successors in office shall allow the upper study of *Rajya Lakshmi Vilas*, item I as per the accompanying Schedule, for prayer and other religious or social meetings of ladies.
16. That the Trustees and their successors in office shall reprint my works as often as, and whenever, the existing stock may be exhausted; for such purpose they shall reserve and spend from time to time, a sum not exceeding half the sale proceeds of the said works.
17. If the *Hithakarini Samaj* cease to exist or deviate from the object of the Trust, the government shall be entitled to resume all Trust Properties and administer the Trust by employing their own Agents or servants for the purpose.



18. The Trustees and their successor in office shall place the *Prarthana Mandir*, item 3 as per the Schedule, at the disposal of the *Prarthna or* Brahmo Samaj free of rent, for prayer and other religious, social and moral purposes, as long and as often as the Prayer or *Brahmo Samaj* continues to exist. The *Prarthana Mandir* shall never be used for political, theatrical, or other purposes involving idolatry or repugnant to the principles of the *prayer of Brahmo Samaj*.

The names and additions of the present trustee are here under given:-

1. Rao Bahadur K. Veeresalingam Pantulu Garu, Son of Subbarayudu Garu, retired Telugu Pandit, Presidency College, Madras, residing at Rajahmundry.
2. Raghupaty Venkataratnam Naidu Garu, M.A., son of Appaiah garu, Principal Pittapur Rajah's College, Cocanada.
3. karumuri Veerabhadraswami Garu, B.A., son of Mallikharjunudu Garu, Secretary, Municipal Council, rajahmundry.
4. Dharvada Venkata Krishna Rao Garu , B.A., B.L., Son of Venkata Rao Pnatulu Garu, High Court Vakild, rajahmundry.
5. Nalam Krishna Rao Garu, son of Kamaraju Garu, Land holder, Rajahmundry.
6. Kanaparti Sreeramulu Garu. Son of Narasimhulu Garu, High Court Vakild, Rajahmundry.
7. Ganti Lakshmannd Garu, B.A., B.L., Son of Narasimhulu garu, High Court Vakild, Rajahmundry.
8. Chilakamarthi Lakshmi Narasimham Garu, son of Venkanna Garu, Landholder, rajahmundry.
9. Karumury Kamaraju Garu, son of Veerayya Garu, Merchant, Rajahmundry.
10. Mokkaapati Subbarayudu garu, B.a. Private Secretary to the Rajah of Pittapur.



SCHEDULE OF THE TRUST PROPERTIES

1. My ancestral two – storeyed house and the newly built two – storeyed house, known as *Rajya Lakshmi Vilas* in the Old Taluq Cutchery Street, in the Second Ward, about 1,000 square yards in extent, and valued together at Rs.6,5000 and bounded on the North by the all taluq cutchery street, on the East by a public street, on the south by a public lane, and one the West by the house and site of Mr. Gadicherla Narasimha Rao.
2. Two bungalows and site in Lakshmivarapupeta in the 4th ward about 14,739 square feet in extent purchased by me from Mr. Cheruvu somayajulu, bounded on the North by a public street, on the East by a public blind lane, on the South by the Madras Railway cutting wall, on the West by a public site and rampart, and valued together at Rs.2000.
3. The *Prarthana Mandir*, a two – storeyed building about 80 yards in extent, attached to the Town Hall on its western side, bounded on the North by the Hospital Road, on the East by the gate – way, the steps, the room behind the town hall gallery, and the verandah with staircase, which are join property of the town Hall and the *Prarthana Mandir* on the South by the Town Hall site, on the West by the lane common to the town Hall and the *Prarthana Mandir*, and valued at Rs.1,500.
4. Garden purchased from Challapalli Rangayya Pantulu Garu and others, Survey Nos. 390 and 396, about 22 acres in extent, with two tiled houses, one two – storeyed bungalow, and a tiled summer house known as *Anandasramam*, bounded on the North by the garden of Mr. Maradugula Venkataratnam and government vacant site, on the East by Government vacant site, on the South by public puntha, on the West by Mr. Maradugula Venkataratnam's garden, and valued together at Rs.6,000. s.No. 390 measures Acr. 7.71 and S.N o. 396 measures Act. 13.83.
5. Garden purchased from Mr. Challapalli Ramayya Pantulu, S.No.410, four and half acres in extent, with the four buildings therein subsequently built and presented by Mr. M. Atchutaramayya, bounded on the North by Puppula tank, on the East by Mr. Maradugula Venkataratnam's garden, on the South by public puntha, on the West by Government vacant site and by the site of the late Captain Taylor, and valued together at Rs.6,000.
6. My library consisting of English, Sanskrit and Telugu books valued at Rs. 1,000.
7. The copyright of all the books, written or published by me, valued at Rs. 10,000.
8. My life policy No. 3,152 of 2nd September 1882, for Rs.2,000 in the Oriental Government Security Life assurance Company, Limited, Bombay.



9. Rs. 2,000, lent to Mr. Cheruvu somayazulu under a registered mortgage deed dated 17th April 1907, and numbered 713, in the Rajahmundry Sub-Registrars's office.
10. Rs.1,000 lent to Mr. Rayavarapu Apparow and another, undr a registered mortgage deed, dated 1st May 1907, and numbered 1,003, in the rajahmundry Sub-Registrar's office.
11. Cash Rs. 3,500.

The total value of the aforesaid properties is Rs.41,500 and they are all in Rajahmundry.

K. VEERESALINGAM

Witnesses :-

R. Venkataramayya

P. Virabhadrayya



APPENDIX - V

EMINENT CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL REFORMERS OF VEERESALINGAM

BRIEF SKETCH OF ISWAR CHANDRA VIDYASAGAR (1820-91) MAHADEV GOVINDA RANADE (1842-1901)

Across India, there is a long list of reformers who undertook major efforts on women's behalf. In Bengal, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar championed female education and led the campaign to legalize widow remarriage, and Keshub Chandra Sen, a leader of the Brahmo Samaj.

To illustrate the efforts of these male reformers, I will sketch the life work of a Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, from Bengal; Virasalingam Pantulu, a Telugu speaker from Madras Presidency; and Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade, from Bombay. These three men were born in the first half of the nineteenth century, were well educated, and had personal experiences which caused them to reflect on the plight of women in Hindu society.

Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar:-

In 1828 eight – year-old Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-91) walked, with his father, from the village of Birsingha in Midnapur District to Calcutta to seek admission in an English-language institution. The fees at Hindu College were too high for his father to pay so Iswar Chandra was enrolled in Sanskrit College. While studying in Calcutta he lived at the home of a friend whose sister was a child widow. This was Iswar Chandra's first experience of the hardships this custom imposed on women. Sometime later his old guru decided to marry a young girl. Iswar Chandra was enraged and demonstrated his anger by refusing his guru's hospitality. Before a year had passed the guru died and left behind a girl widow with nowhere to go and no means of support. Iswar Chandra vowed then to devote his life to improving the status of Hindu widows and encouraging remarriage.

Iswar Chandra also became an impassioned supporter of female education and an opponent of polygyny. He wrote lengthy tracts substantiating his positions with scriptural citations and historical data. A decline in religion created the environment that allowed contemporary customs to thrive, he wrote. When his opponents protested, he insisted they were misinterpreting scripture and employed a masterful command of Sanskrit to point out their ignorance.

In this first tract on widow remarriage (1855) Iswar Chandra claimed that this practice was permissible in *Kali Yuga* ("The Dark Age"), the age in which he and his contemporaries lived. Two thousand copies of this book were sold in the first week, a reprint of 3,000 soon sold out, and the third reprint was of 10,000 copies. But not everyone was convinced. On the streets of Calcutta Vidyasagar found himself insulted, abused, and even threatened with death. But he pressed on and urged the



British to pass legislation that would enable Hindu widows to remarry. To support his request Iswar Chandra collected almost 1,000 signatures and sent this petition to the Indian Legislative Council. The Council received thousands of signatures for and against this measure but the members finally decided to support the “enlightened minority.” The Hindu widow Remarriage Act was passed in 1856. Although the value of this Act for improving the lives of women has been questioned, one cannot doubt Iswar Chandra’s desire to create a more humane society.

The Remarriage Act did not change the status of widows. Frequently blamed for the husband’s death, the high-caste widow was required to relinquish her jewelry and subsist on simple food. Young widows were preyed upon by men who would make them their mistresses or carry them away to urban brothels. But woe to the widow who succumbed to a suitor and became pregnant. In 1881 the court at Surat in western India tried Vijayalakshmi, a young Brahmin widow, for killing her illegitimate child. At the first trial she was sentenced to hang but on appeal this was changed to transportation for life and later reduced to five years. This case so emerged Tarabai Shinde (c. 1850-1910), a young Marathi housewife, that she wrote *Stripurusha-tulana* (“A Comparison Between Women and Men”). Vijayalakshmi’s case had triggered an intense public discussion about the misfortune of widows and the issue of widow remarriage. For Tarabai, it was clear that this issue was simply a metaphor for the general mistreatment of women. She wrote: “So is it true that only women’s bodies are home to all the different kinds of recklessness and vice? Or have men got just the same faults as we find in women?” As for widows: “Once a woman’s husband has died, not even a dog would swallow what she’s got to.” Tarabai Shinde’s cry for equality went unheeded in a world where reformers wanted to help women, not accord them equal status.

Vidyasagar lived in a world where the males among *Kulin Brahmins*, an aristocratic caste with rigid marriage rules, were highly sought after as bridegroom and able to marry as many women as they wished. As Vidyasagar collected data on this custom, he became horrified by the magnitude of the problem. Using as a sample 133 *Kulin Brahmins* of Hooghly District, Iswar Chandra revealed the abuses inherent in polygyny. One fifty-year-old man had married the abuses inherent in polygyny. One fifty-year-old man had married 107 times; Bholanath Bandopadhyaya (age fifty-five) had eighty wives; Bhagaban Chattopadhyaya (age sixty-four) had seventy-two wives, and so the documentation continued. Arguing that the practice of Kulinism was inhuman, Iswar Chandra presented the government with a petition signed by 2,500 persons requesting the legislative prohibition of polygyny. No action was taken and ten years later he presented another petition, this time signed by 21,000 persons. The government, overly cautious about social reform in the wake of the rebellion of 1857, declined to act. Vidyasagar continued his campaign and although he produced anti-polygyny tracts in 1871 and 1873, the issue was dead.

Vidyasagar’s third campaign focused on mass education for girls and boys. He had been appointed Special Inspector of Schools for the District of Hooghly, Midnapur, Burdwan, and Nadia and was able to use his influence to establish a system of vernacular education in Bengal, including forty schools for girls. J.E.D. Bethune, legal member of the Governor-General’s Council, had set up girl’s school in 1849 and it became Vidyasagar’s responsibility to guide it through its difficult years. He remained associated with it until 1869.



Despite this great man's efforts, widow remarriage never received the approval of his society, polygyny was not abolished, and the battle for female education had only begun. From the perspective of women's rights, the new law often proved remarriage, were often deprived of their rightful inheritance and those castes were denigrated as inferior. Widow celibacy was lauded by the elite as a hallmark of respectability. Vidyasagar's biographer has written about the elusive nature of Vidyasagar's goals: he strove to introduce fundamental reforms within the colonial context. His proposals proved too radical for many of his contemporaries and although the colonial government criticized Indian customs, they were unwilling to back his efforts for change. Vidyasagar personified the best of the nineteenth-century social reformers, arguing for social change he demonstrated an "untiring will for positive social action."

Mahadev Govind Ranade:-

In Bombay, justice Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901) graduated from Elphinstone College in Bombay and became a teacher and journalist. Like so many other young men of his generation, he questioned the customs and beliefs of his society. In 1869 Ranade joined the Widow Marriage Association, and in 1870 the Prarthana Samaj. At first, he and his colleagues were engaged in "intellectual protest against superficial dogmas untenable for a rational mind," but later they became more interested in social action.

In 1871 Ranade was made a judge in Poona where he joined a group of committed social reformers intent on achieving real change. Soon after he had received this appointment his wife of almost twenty years died. Social reform colleagues expected he would marry a widow. But Ranade's father, anticipating this disaster, moved quickly to arrange a marriage between his thirty-one-year-old son and an eleven-year-old girl. Ranade protested but did not refuse the match. Married to Ramabai, Mahadev became both her husband and teacher, mentoring the girl who became one of India's most important social reformers.

In the following year Ranade tried to mediate between a reformist agenda and traditional society. He wanted to encourage widow remarriage and female education and oppose child marriage, but his personal world, located between tradition and modernity, was fraught with moral ambiguity. Other reformers voiced their disapproval but they were unable to push him towards a more radical stand.

Ranade's reputation as a social reformer rests on his role in building one of the most important institutions for social reform – the National Social Conference (begun in 1887) – and in his philosophy of social change. Firmly believing India had enjoyed a golden age, when women enjoyed a higher status than in his time, he blamed the *smriti* ("remembered" religious literature including law books, epics, and *puranas*) writers for the fall. Only gradual reform, accomplished without radical or wrenching change, could bring about the restoration of the golden age. Ranade argued that evolutionary change was inherently Indian; outside forces could act as a stimulant but the true impetus for change came from the inner resources of the society itself".



Ranade described the society he hoped to see as changing “from constraint to freedom, from credulity to faith, from unorganized to organized life, from bigotry to toleration, from blind fatalism to a sense of human destiny.” He warned his critics that to stand still or work against change would result in decay and possibly the extinction of Indian society.

Every year reformers, working alone or with local organizations, attended the National Social Conference where they learned about initiatives all over the sub-continent. In his role as founder-leader, Ranade recommended four methods of accomplishing social change. His favourite method was using argumentation, especially citing examples of past tradition, to convince opponents that many customs were accretions rather than part of true Indian culture. If the appeal of history was ineffective, he suggested the reformer use moral argument. It was only after trying to persuade people that reformers should focus on legislation. When all else failed, social rebellion was in order. At the second annual meeting of the National Social Conference in 1889 over five hundred people took a solemn vow that they would support widow marriage and female education, and cease practicing child marriage and the exchange of dowry. This was a significant step, in Ranade’s view, towards the identification of reforms for women with an all-India agenda.

After her husband’s death, Ramabai wrote a memoir describing her childhood, her marriage to Justice Ranade, her early education at his hands, and their life together until his death in 1901. This memoir, published in the early years of the twentieth century, includes Ramabai’s account of her childhood and marriage at age eleven in 1873. The childhood she recalled was not one of terror and anxiety. Raised to regard early marriage as inevitable, Ramabai wrote of how she and other little girls looked forward to the celebrations associated with marriage. When taunted by the women in her husband’s household, she kept her peace and admitted that her interest in reading was unseemly in the presence of women with very little education. At least in the way she recalled her life, Ramabai was a dutiful wife even if her “duties” were a departure from the normal tasks of women.

These reformers viewed women as their subjects – to be changed as a consequence of persuasive arguments, social action, education, and legislation. The historian Sumit Sarkar has argued that these reformers were concerned primarily with modifying relationships within their own families and sought only “limited and controlled emancipation” of their womenfolk. Women themselves were not partners in the schemes created for their regeneration; more often they were portrayed as opposed to their own liberation. Without first-hand accounts by these women, their reluctance to change in the ways prescribed by their husbands and fathers could be read as a nascent feminist resistance, an intelligent reading of their true interests, or plain and simple opposition to any change. Shudha Mazumdar has related her mother’s oppositions to Shudha becoming a “boarder” at St. Theresa’s School for Girls.

She felt that my being a boarder would result in many complications, and make it difficult, if not impossible to give me in marriage when the time came....To prevent me from becoming a permanent liability on the family, dependent on my brothers in old age, she recommended that to ensure my economic independence it was of paramount importance to execute a deed beforehand in my favor, granting me the rights of a substantial portion of my father’s estate.



But these reformers, like Shudha's father, were unwilling to relinquish the power of the patriarchy or redistribute wealth. They dreamed of a world where women would be educated and free from some of the worst customs of the society-child marriage, sati, polygyny. But at the same time, these new women would be devoted to home and family.

