

# **CHAPTER – VII**

**Raghupati Venkataratnam  
Naidu**



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### RAGHUPATI VENKATARATNAM NAIDU

Sir. R. Venkataratnam was born on Mahanavami in the year 1862 at Masulipatnam, a town of historic interest on the East Coast of Andhra Pradesh. It is now the District head quarters of Krishna district. "sprung of military blood on both the parental sides, he possesses a stalwart, well – built, imposing frame in which dwelt more robust health formerly than for the past few years. But the eyes are as expressive as ever under a protruding forehead indicative of a massive intellect".<sup>1</sup>

He got his early education in Northern and central India at places his father shubedar Raghupathruni Appayya Naidu's regiment was stationed from time to time. Hence, while Telugu is his mother – tongue, His second language at school and college was Urdu. And he displayed a command over that language and an acquaintance with its literature.

He read at the Zillah high school in Banda (U.P) during the Head Mastership of Babu Dinanath Banerji who was well known teacher in those times. From Banda he proceeded to Hyderabad while in the matriculation class. Dr.Aghornath Chattopadhyaya was then Head master of the Nizam's government High school. "An ineffectual and fruitless 1 ½ months there and the young student shifted to st. george's grammar school, chudderghat, then under an able head – master, Mr. W.A. Home, to whom was due the first insight into a correct study of English".

Shubedar Appayya naidu was a staunch Vaishnava devotee of the orthodox type and he brought up his son in strictly conservative ways! to the end of his life. Inspite of sharp divergence of belief and practice, the masterful temper of the father always held the meek – spirited son in almost physical dread.



Venkataratnam's interest in that great religious movement of modern India namely Brahmo Samaj was first awakened at the Banda High School. The name of Rajah Rammohan Roy, found mentioned in a small text-book of Indian history, as primarily responsible for the abolition of sati, prompted his – enquiry in the class as to who that good man was. His teacher though not a Brahmo, briefly described him as the founder of a new religious sect believing in one only god and opposing idolatry.

For university training he went up to the Madras Christian college, from which he graduated with physical science for his optional subject in 1885. To his almamater and to the benign personality of the illustrious Rev. Dr Millar Mr. Venkataratnam has always retained a passionate devotion, and year after year he has taken a leading part in the celebrations of the “College day” at Madras, while this premier educational institution of the south is justly proud of him as one of her most brilliant and representative products. He had the honour to preside over the said annual function with general approbation in the year 1916.

It was while pursuing his collegiate studies that he joined the *Southern Indian Brhamo Samaj* at Madras. This “decisive step” was due to the first missionary visit to madras in 1881 of Pandit Sivanadh Sastry. About whom Venkataratnam says “Always counted, always respected, always revered as my guru. He calls him as my souls parent”.<sup>2</sup>

At that time, he felt considerably indebted for personal spiritual guidance, among others to the late Mannava Butchayya Pantulu, then the leading spirit of the madras Samaj. There he read widely; he wrote freely for the organs of the Samaj edited by himself – first the *Brahma Prakasika* and subsequently *The fellow worker*.<sup>3</sup>

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2. Ibid. P. XVII

3. Ibid. P. XVIII



For about a year after taking his degree, he was connected with the editorial staff of a Madras weekly known as the *peoples friend*. Then he joined as a teacher, first in the theistic high school, Rajahmundry, and next in the C.M.S. High school, Ellore, from where he transferred himself to the Hindu High school, Masulipatnam, for the two years 1887-88. He took his M.A. Degree in English language and literature in 1891 and the L.T. Degree in 1897 and for sometime also pursued his studies for law. This later course, however was finally abandoned for his divinely appointed vocation – to the cause of enlightenment and progress.<sup>4</sup>

In 1892-93, He worked in Pachaiyappa's College, Madras as "Able and agreeable" Assistant professor of English, According to the testimony of then principal.

Later for five years – from 1894 to 1898 He settled down once more in his own native place of Masulipatnam, as Assistant Professor of English and history, besides being the superintendent of the high school department, in Noble College. He also did good work as a municipal councillor. He was also chairman of the primary examination board in Krishna for a term of three years.

Under the auspices of the local social purity association, he opened a memorable campaign for purity and against Nautch and "soon enlisted the practical sympathy and support of influential and promising spirits and, with signal success, extended the crusade far and wide over the Telugu country"<sup>5</sup>

The masulipatnam Brahmo Samaj, which had been in existence for over a decade and of which he had been a member since the days of his teachership in the Hindu high school, had been keeping up a languid life at the time through the

4 Ibid P XVIII  
5 Ibid P XIX



devotion of few old adherents. Now he threw himself whole – heartedly into the work of this little, straggling Samaj and soon strengthened it and spread its beneficent influence for social and religious reform among the educated public and particularly the student section of the town.

The next term of service was at Secunderabad as head of Mahboob college where he worked for 6 years, 1889-94, imparting the fragrance of his stainless character to the “Lascivious atmosphere of that luxury – Laden City”.<sup>6</sup>

Later Venkataratnam moved to Cocanada the next removal from Moslem to Andhra environment was like the return of the exile to home – land. To the educational – teaching and organizing – were done at Cocanada as principal of Pitapur Rajah’s college for nearly a decade and a half from February 1905 down to July 1919, enough testimony has been borne at different stages and from diverse quarters. His term as the Principal of the college was the most fruitfull and also the longest term of headship in the annals of the college. There was some opposition for his appointment but this hostility took little time to melt away; and the confirmation came by a unanimous vote, beforetime, after the very first year and at the instance of the very agencies that had opposed his introduction in the beginning. Yes; such is the irresistible charm of Mr. Venkataratnam’s personality.<sup>7</sup>

In fact wherever he settled he was first dreaded and reviled as an unsparing denouncer of individual vices and national iniquities; Nay, his very life amongst people was a silent rebuke to every species of unworthiness. But, incourse of time, the strength of his character would shame all antipathy into abasement, admiration, assimilation.

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6 Ibid P XIX  
7 Ibid P XXIII



The completion of the first decade was observed as a festive event all round; and the 'Address' of warm felicitations from the staff extolled "the expansion of the institutions, in all its departments. To nearly three times what it was when you assumed charge and the more than tenfold increase in the college department alone" as, 'by itself, an eloquent testimony to the earnest care, fatherly solicitude and pious devotion with which you have discharged the stewardship so Judiciously and confidingly committed to your charge"<sup>8</sup>

Like wise did the students, in their valedictory words on the eve of the final retirement, "Proudly rejoice to feel that your name will for along years be venerated by the Andhra student as identical with genius and erudition, sympathy and charity, purity and self – consecration".<sup>9</sup>

Visits of eminent people like provincial governors and executive councilors as well as the official university commissioners came from time to time convey the same commendation and carry the same conviction. Among the administrative improvements of a far reaching character were the free admission of girls and of the members of the depressed classes and the enforcement of the principle of strict religious neutrality at school.

Mr. Venkataratnam's masterly expositions of the deep philosophy of Shakespeare and Carlyle, wordsworth and Tennyson, have constituted in themselves not only an intellectual treat but also a spiritual stimulus known only to those who have had the good fortune to sit and learn at his feet.

In his own vocational line, Mr. Venkata Ratnam presided more than once (at Vijianagaram and masulipatnam) over the Northern circars students conference which he had himself helped to create. He has repeatedly been on the Board of Examiners,

8. Ibid. P XXIII to XXIV

9 Ibid P XXIV



besides being a fellow, of the Madras University. He sat on the S.S.L.C. Board for the triennium 1916-18. He was called to give evidence before the public service Royal commission in 1914. He was made responsible in 1918 for the formulation of a scheme of Moral instruction in secondary schools. He also served as chairman of the government education re – organization committee.

Apart from these, he was a member of the Godavari District Board and the vice – president of the Cocanada Taluk Board for 6 years, besides being in the local municipal council for several terms. He presided over the Krishna political and social conferences at Guntur in 1898, the provincial social conference at Ranipet (North Arcot) in 1904, the Northern Circars theistic conference at Rajahmundry and the Krishna and Guntur social conferences at Narsaraopeta in 1905, the All India theistic conference at Calcutta in 1906, the Adi Dravida conference at Amalapuram and the Anti-non-co operation conference at Cocanada in 1921.

In a word, learning and wisdom, charity and piety, have combined to make his remarkable personality a whole institution in itself. Upon a life of such heightened and many – sided activities the seal of government recognition was set by the conferment of the titles of Rao Bahadur and Dewan Bahadur in 1912 and 1918 respectively and, later still, by nomination to the reformed provincial legislative council, where they have now duly learnt to seek and value his sage counsel as one of the elected deputy presidents.

Venkata Ratnam was a powerful speaker. “The words always run before the thoughts in public utterance; and, spell – bound, you witness a rushing torrent of language laden with a wealth of imagery, allusion, anecdote, illustration and quotation, flowing with a rapidity which proves the despair of the expert reporter”<sup>10</sup>

10. Vol I. R. Venkataratnam message and Misistratation P



In the whole record of his varied work, including the three and thirty years of educational service amidst Christian, Muhammadan and Hindu surrounding, “he never lowered his flag”, as the Christian college magazine aptly put it in commendation of his ‘Rao Bahadur’ distinction.

The fact is, he simply lives his ideals and is content to leave the life to preach itself. He is a firm believer in the conscious up – building of character in each individual life; and his one aim is more and more to acquire and impart a healthy tone to the inner springs of conduct in growing accord with the will of the All – Holy, through the varied relations of life.

The root of all these outward excellences lies in his inner spiritual experiences. With him, recreation, morality, reform, all are organically related to religion. His is constitutionally a temper full of hilarity; he is habitually fond of company; and in social circles he laughs and plays with the bounding enthusiasm of a pleasure- seeker, ever ready with sallies of wit and humour, with apt anecdote and endless conversation, though never self – indulgent, self – obtrusive or even self – conscious<sup>11</sup>

Again, if he is generous in his private charities – and these, extensive for his limited means, are such that the left hand knoweth not what the right hand doeth – it is, not for the love of a good name or even out of pity for want and woe, but primarily for the vindication of the unfailing providence of love Eternal.

He cannot bear that the destitute and the distressed should feel that, wherever they go, they must only knock against iron – Walls of destiny and that the ruler of this universe is but a ruthless tyrant magnified into infinity.

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11. Ibid. XXXII





In a word, he cannot say 'no' to any call for succour from any quarter. Or again, born as a meat – eater, he turns a strict Vegetarian on principle, extremely sensitive to the sin of helping to take away a life none can give. Furthermore, in his staunch advocacy of the cause of social purity and its natural corollary, the anti – nautch movement, with which perhaps his name is best identified in the public mind both within and without the madras presidency.

Venkata Ratnam takes high ground, maintaining that “Purity is to character what symmetry is to beauty – not an accident of adornment but an essential of structure” and that “piety without purity is baser than gross superstition – it is sanctified sin;” and decrying “the custom that invites undisguised shame to the hall of honour or restores convicted impurity to the place of position”<sup>12</sup>.

Also, pre-eminent among Mr. Venkata Ratnam's distinctive traits is his peculiar devotion to the ideal of monogamy. Possessed with a profound sense of the sublime sanctity of the marriage relation, he holds, to quote his own pregnant words, that “ the true test of monogamy is the monocracy of the whole heart by the one all – endearing as the true mark of monotheism is the monolatry, with the whole soul, of the one All – sufficient.” After 5 brief years of wedded life, it has fallen to Mr. Venkata Ratnam's own lot, since the close of his twenty – seventh year, to concretize this supremely exalted ideal in him self.

And if, albeit this rigid monogamist position, Mr. Venkata Ratnam – Greatly to the bewilderment of superficial critics – lends his warm support to the cause of the remarriage of women, it is fundamentally because of the very anxiety to elevate the marriage ideal to the lofty pedestal of Ruskins “Single love” that he insists on liberty for the widowed to rebuild a home in view to the ends of self – realization. For what

12. Ibid. P XXXVI



moral value, after all, can attach to the celibacy induced by social coercion, and how far is it compatible with the acknowledged sublimity of the matrimonial relationship?<sup>13</sup>

Little wonder that Mr. Venkata Ratnam with the magnetic power that makes disciples, has made close friends and followers in several places far and near. For each one of them, he has a distinct corner in his capacious heart not meant for others; and kind, courteous and accessible to all, he maintains individual relations with these.

Venkata Ratnam loved his profession of teacher and said “I have elected to be a teacher more for the sacred responsibilities and noble opportunities than for the ample emoluments of the profession. Accordingly, I have been desirous of living, god knows to what purpose, a life from which the young – the hope of our dear land – may take a hint or two “. (1904)

No harsh word upon his lip, no graceless ruffle in his temper, simple and austere in habit, “wearing all the weight of learning lightly like a flower” in all humility, he cannot but strike even the casual, distant observer as a beautiful example of plain living and high thinking. “You are living here the life of an anchorite” was what a discerning visitor once remarked in his home<sup>14</sup>

Shortcomings there are in the fruitful if not eventful, life delineated above, but this life and the life of the ever – Venerated Rao bahadur Veeresalingam pantulu, such as they are, make up the two hemispheres of one glorious orb of illumination for us in the southern presidency – Venkata Ratnam the sage, Veeresalingam the hero; the one with his ideal of saintliness and passion for worship, the other with his ideal of righteousness and passion for work; the one an influence to mould the aspirations, the other a force to direct the energies – both, the twin-stars that have swayed, and shall long sway, the Southern Horizon.<sup>15</sup>

13. Ibid. XXXVII

14. R. Venkata Ratnam naidu. Messages and ministration Vol. I, XXXVIII

15. Ibid. P. XXXIX



### **Social Purity and Anti-Nautch Movement (1901):-**

My strength says sir Galahad “is as the strength of 10, because my heart is pure” Gladstone has observed that “Conjugal relation includes in itself all other loves; “and the Mahabharat defines the wife as “the friend in solitude, the father in duty, the mother in distress and the refuge in Wilderness”. Manu demands of him that would be a father-a noble image of the great creator-to be wholly satisfied with her he has taken unto wife, and guaranties good fortune to the house where the husband is content with the wife and the wife with the husband.

In fine, the delights of the home spring from the purity of the conjugal relation, and the strength of a nation depends on the happiness of its homes, He has no country who has no home; and he was no home who does not rejoice in it as the sanctum of chastity and the shrine of love. The plea for social purity is thus.<sup>16</sup>

### **What is Social Purity:**

Raghupati Venkata Ratnam Naidu says the sole remedy lies in that serenity which presupposes equal growth on all sides, that purity which points the way to perfection, that cleanliness of heart which is Next to godliness of soul. Purity is to character what symmetry is to beauty – not an accident of adornment, but an essential of structure. It denotes that apt assortment of man’s desires and appetites, in deferences to his special powers and faculties of thought and speech, emotion and arts, will and work, which , by subordinating the physical to the intellectual, postponing the immediate to the ultimate, and surrendering the pleasing for the good, combines in man the sacred functions of the heir of ages past and the architect of centuries to come.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> R Venkataratnam message and ministrations, Vol II P 14  
<sup>17</sup> Vol II Ibid P 17



If, as Carlyle holds, “society everywhere is some representation of a graded worship of heroes,” the life of a leader is a model to contemporaries and a heritage to posterity. That life embodies the moral ideals to be imitated by a thousand admirers; it maps out the moral path to be trodden by a thousand followers. When one of Englands wisest politicians laid down that he who would be a statesman must first prove himself a gentleman, the demand really meant that the aspiration to be honoured with public confidence implied the covenant to be clear and pure beyond every insinuation, above every suspicion.<sup>18</sup>

He says it consists in that uniformity of development – that moving forward of the whole man, to which alone is awarded the maximum of good. It is that conservation of vital energy which comes of a wise correlation of vital forces. It is that discipline of the heart under which man’s desires and powers are told off to their respective tasks and through their conjoint watch and work win the great victories of life.<sup>19</sup>

Applied to social life, purity is complete submission, whole – hearted homage, soul – deep obeisance, to what the sublimest English poet has named “the sun-clad power of chastity.” It is a call to the spouse to rejoice in the spouse, and a command to the parent to be pure amidst pleasure. It is a recognition of the stern truth that the righteousness which exalteth a nation has its secret strength in a well – governed and wise appetite, regulated by the ‘holy dictate of spare temperance.’<sup>20</sup>

He says that the happiness of marriage shall be earned only with the obligations of marriage, and the blessings of family life shall be the prize only of those who keep its irrevocable pledge. It declares human existence too sacred to be

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18. Ibid p.36.

19. Ibid p.18.

20. Ibid p.18.



cradled in lust; it proclaims the marriages bond too strong to be dissolved by freak of taste, defects of law, or even the transition of death. It honours holy wedlock as an ordinance of the most high and, hence, insists on the untarnished sanctity (to adopt F. Harrison's happy language), from even "one passing shadow of suspicion," of "the inviolable institution where on the happiness of all depends." It finally warns the creature that "hooks its right and wrong to the appetite" to beware and be not deluded, that "neither the sensual nor the drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of god."<sup>21</sup>

He says, to pursue pleasure as the purpose of life is the animal; to subdue pleasure to the purpose of life is the man. That follows the lead of instinct, this guides instinct with reason. Thus the animal is the creature of the day; but man is the pilgrim of eternity. This distinguishing prerogative makes, in man's case, pleasure the handmaid to progress – not an alien to be rejected, but a servant to be managed; not a disease to be rooted out, but an impulse to be regulated.<sup>22</sup>

### **Anti nautch (1894)**

The movement of Antinautich started in Madras to discourage the employment of Nautch – girls to sing and dance on occasion of social and religious festivities has received support from many societies for social reform, castes, social and religious bodies in the North – west provinces, Oudh, Panjab and Bombay; and the conference hopes that the members of all reform association throughout the country will continue this good work and pledge themselves to discountenance all such entertainments.

Raghupati Venkata Ratnam Naidu said that it is a matter for sincere congratulation to see this movement become popular. He says "When, some eighteen months ago, we – I had the privilege of being one of them – raised a humble voice of

<sup>21</sup> Vol II P 20

<sup>22</sup> Vol II P 21



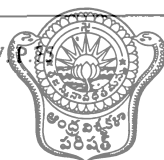
warning and protest against the national institution of the Nautch, diverse opinions were expressed from different quarters. Some pronounced it to be a wild – goose-chase; others ridiculed it as silly sentimentality: a few went the length of denouncing it as unpatriotic – nay, even irreligious; and one venerable gentleman, well – known and much respected as a veteran reformer, considered it to be no less chimerical than seeking to remove the Himalayas!”<sup>23</sup>

Venkata Ratnam was confident that this movement will succeed in due course and for the success one should strive hard. He says I have no doubt that, sure as a good and holy god rules over us and certain as truth must triumph and purity must prevail, this agitation will eventually, sooner or later, succeed in elevating a down – trodden a low – fallen class of India’s daughters and in wiping away a long – standing stain upon the nations, fair fame.

Venkata Ratnam gives three reasons for stopping Nautch. They are economy, humanity and morality.

#### **Economy:-**

He says “only three days ago speaker after speaker dwelt eloquently on the poverty of India; and most feelingly was the deplorable fact again and again referred to that a full fourth of the population in India has from years end to years end, been eking out a miserable life upon insufficient and unwholesome food. And if these our doleful complaints be not merely occasions to harangue against government but the outcome of genuine pity for our unfortunate sisters and bretheren – the expression of full and feeling hearts, ought we not to husband, our resources to the utmost degree and utilize the hundreds and thousands which are every month – may, every week –



emptied into the laps of these jezebels, in feeding hungry mouths and covering unclad backs, in nursing the sick and educating the ignorant? money thus spent is money invested in the Bank of heaven".<sup>24</sup>

### **Humanity:-**

He says in this the land of the zenana system – of the seclusion of women – modesty and retirement are the special graces of the fair sex; but here it is that a class of women- the victims of social tyranny – is so miserably degraded, so hopelessly fallen and so pitifully low that, as an indian poet has said, even to the approaches of a leper, to the advances of a most ugly creature, a 'dancing girl' is open by the mandate of custom and social polity. Here is my sweet, chaste sister, a rose in the garden of god, protected by sacred barriers from the frost of an alien's gaze; but there stands her unfortunate sister, flesh of her flesh, blood of her blood, and yet doomed by our society to be a profane vane against which the lust of any person may with impunity blow and rage! Can womanly degradation go further?<sup>25</sup>

Further Venkata Ratnam "remarks verily the Divine mother has her prodigal daughters and rejoices in their salvation. But by stereotyping the 'dancing girls' into a class and by practically making an erring life an invariable accompaniment of a public songstress and dancer, the Hindu society has not only thrown the noble arts of music and dancing into utter disrepute but also cut off the path of these unfortunate daughters of India to repentance and regeneration".<sup>26</sup>

### **Morality:-**

Venkata Ratnam says that "according to the pure ethics of the soul, he who sanctions immorality is no less guilty and punishable than he who commits it. Our

24 Vol IV P 78

25 ibid P 79

26 Ibid p 80



great Manu has said that not only the butcher who kills the goat but also he who cooks and he who serves and he who eats the meat are alike answerable for the loss of that life. And shall not we be held morally responsible for sanctioning and perpetuating by our silence and connivance that social law which condemns the 'dancing girl' to her pitiable plight?<sup>27</sup>

He says "that no person has a right to an enjoyment that works the degradation of a brother – man or a sister – woman; and yet they are all respectable and honourable men who enhance the mirth of their social gatherings and the attractions of their religious processions by securing the services of a woman who is enabled thus to be a public song stress and dancer only when she is 'fallen' surely we share in her sin when we require her, virtually though not verbally, to degrade herself for our amusement".<sup>28</sup>

Venkata Ratnam Says "that it is not out of hatred for the poor fallen woman, it is not out of a puritanic spirit that would proscribe all amusements, it is not without a full consciousness of the immediate consequences of the practice which were recommend, that we have undertaken this great, this up hill task. It is because we cherish the dancing girl' as a sister and pity her abject condition, it is because she must be stripped of her false glare and brought down from her adventitious position before she will repent or the community will pity her".<sup>29</sup>

Only Venkata Ratnam feels that music will thrive when it is divorced from immorality and dancing will become a grace when it will have ceased to be a disgrace.

He remarks "it is righteousness alone that exalteth a nation; and future Indian shall not and cannot be good, unless she unflinchingly put down every immoral

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27. Ibid. P. 80

28. p.80

29. P. 81-82





institution and uncompromisingly deny an honourable recognition to a person, however striking in beauty, however brilliant in parts or however eminent in position, if he or she has attained character".<sup>30</sup>

### **The Anti-Nautch Movement & Views on Other Issues:-**

#### **Anti-nautch movement:-**

About the movement Venkata Ratnam says one party traced it to a lurking hatred for the dancing – girl; another discovered in it a crusade against music; to some it appeared to be a graceless exposure of a small national weakness; to some others it was nothing better than a quixotic attempt to cure the irremediable. Even among friends but few realized that to discourage nautch was to demand purity in other respects, and to decline to employ the dancing – girls entertainment was to disapprove open impurity wherever found.<sup>31</sup>

He further says that the anti – nautch movement would be a huge cry for a trifle, almost a much do about noting – unless it presented itself as an integral factor of a larger endeavour, a particular application of a comprehensive principle, a concrete illustration of a lofty though seemingly new – born ideal. Its basis is not in fine manner, but in good morals; its aim is not mere elegant breeding, but pure living. If every one espousing this cause has not realized this high expectation, it is not the fault of the principle many are called but few are chosen.<sup>32</sup>

About India he says among the several countries with which India would wish to compete in morals and in civilization there is not one that accords to open flagrant impurity such recognition as this country gives to the 'nautch-girl'. Veiled vice and secret in chastity are to be found all the world over; but sexual immorality as a

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30. Ibid p.82

31. Vol.II P. 45

32. Ibid P. 46



hereditary and acknowledge profession, living in peace and amity with and amidst other avocations, fortified against the attacks of time or change, and endowed with the privileges of social sanction, is special to this land. By no other civilized people is the thin mask of music, as a profession suffered so fully to cover (and, for all social purposes, so completely to a tone for) the iniquity for a woman openly living a “fast life”. In the temple she has not only the free and ready admission of any other lay person, but, in innumerable cases, a position next only to that of the priest or the manager. No part of a town is too respectable for her residence; no circle of society, too high for her invitation no festive function, civic or social, is too solemn for her presence; to receive a guest or to felicitate a friend, to welcome a superior or to celebrate a jubilee, to solemnize a wedding or to initiate child into learning – aye, at times, to reverence a spiritual head or to honor a religious reviver, her song is the te-deum of thankfulness, her dance the exhilaration of enthusiasm. The benediction at many an auspicious ceremony is of her chanting; the longevity of connubial life for many a hopeful bride is secured through the talismanic “black deeds” of her stringing.<sup>33</sup>

About the dancing girls he says that these women have not always been thus patronized, is evident from ancient literature. They seem to have begun as virgins, dedicated to the service of religion – vestals that forgot the world in the thoughts of heaven. They were consecrated to the Lord; and to that age belongs the awful warning that to approach one of that class sexually was more sinful than thus to approach even one’s mother. It is of that by – gone period those well – meaning friends of India really think who defend the modern nautch – girl by unfairly comparing her to the mediaeval nun! However, nothing is so frequently, though in



most cases so imperfectly, imitated as religion; and the spontaneous self – forget fullness of the early generations became the forced asceticism of those who came after them.<sup>34</sup>

He says such have been the high origin and the low fall of a most unfortunate section of mother India's daughters; who (in the words of prof. Sir W. Monier Williams) were once "patterns of piety and propriety," but are now "Slaves to licentious passions of the profligate. Is not society bound to help them up to a pure course of life? "How is it," asks that eminent temperance – preacher and noble friend of India, the Rev. T. Evans, "that the temple priests and sacred Brahmins do not step to the front to reform such a degrading abuse as this?" But the question is really an appeal to the heart and the conscience of entire educated India.<sup>35</sup>

Bhandarkar says " I have always been of the opinion that he who patronises dancing – girls does not sufficiently hate the immoral life which they professedly lead, or value as highly as he ought to do female purity, which is the soil on which the noble qualities of women grow. The institution of nautch cannot but have a debasing effect on the morality of men and women. I shall not, without strong proof, believe in a man's being a faithful husband, if he takes delight in giving nautch parties and attending them. To have a nautch at ones own house is to give an object – lesson in immorality to the boys and the girls in the family, especially to the former. As long as nautch is fashionable among us and is freely indulged in, it is impossible that the morality of men should greatly improve, and our respect for women should increase."<sup>36</sup>

Bishop welldon's thoughtful observation that " the cause of morality in India would seem to make a definite advance, if at the beginning of the new century the

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34 Ibid P 51

35 Ibid P 51

36 IbidP 58



officials of government and the leaders of society were to make known their desire that nautches should not form part of any entertainment to which they ..... are invited”<sup>37</sup>

### **Temperance: -**

“Temperance” - wise moderation in the legitimate, cheerful abstinence from the forbidden – is, accordingly, the only law befitting man; and purity is temperance in that supreme relation of the sexes which, as ordering the joys of homes prescribing the ideas of society and linking generation to generation, sways the destinies of our race.<sup>38</sup>

Venkataratnam says Social purity is chastity in body and chastity in spirit- stern uncompromising repugnance to whatever is base or vulgar, indecent or immodest, in work or pleasure, speech or song, thought or sentiment, belief or life – stout, unrelenting opposition, despite the threat of law or the frown of society, the curse of pretentious piety or the loss of superious attachment, to every rule or habit, practice or institution that defeats, or tends to defeat, the high purpose of human life by gilding shame with fashion or condoling carnal longing as venial.<sup>39</sup>

In a word, it consecrates the entire life, from the cradle of childhood to the “skyeytent” of sagehood, unto the hastening of that ‘far – off diving event’ when man and woman, through their hallowed union, will achieve the glory of a god – illumined self – that sovereign power (in Tennyson’s thrice – happy words) which consists in self – controlling strength and self – knowing wisdom, in self – denying goodness and self – reverencing holiness”.<sup>40</sup>

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37. Vol.II.p.59

38. Vol.II. p.21.

39. Ibid. p.22

40. Ibid P.25



He says to enquire how marriage originated is outside the scope of this paper. It suffices for the present purpose to point out that true national progress has everywhere proceeded parallel to an increasing sense of the sacredness of the family bond. So far as it can be traced, the march of mankind along the heights of civilization has been in the direction of “constitutional Monarchy” as the strongest bulwark of the state, and of “*legalised monogamy*” as the firmest foundation of the home. But monogamy, like monotheism, Largely fails in its results when inherited as time – honored tradition or assumed as extraneous conformity.<sup>41</sup>

He says the true test of monogamy is the monocracy over the whole heart of the one all – endearing, even as the true mark of monotheism is the monolatry, with the whole soul, of the one All – sufficient. The essence of both is the complete devotion of one to the one; is both it is alone with the alone.<sup>42</sup>

He says the so-called faith of the majority has not only been stereotyped into a “zodiac of feasts and fasts” but also degenerated in not a few instances into pomp and performances far from elevating, if not positively offensive, occasions there be when inebriated enthusiasm, not content with bathing and feeding, bedding and wedding “the lord of the Universe”. Plans for him a nocturnal adventure from which he is supposed to return *incognito* before dawn; or when unbridled eagerness, toiling to scale the heights of Indra’s blissful abode, not only marks its progress with holocausts for dumb victims but terminates in a deed of sanctimonious sin that no system of morality dare justify.<sup>43</sup>

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41. Vol. II P.25-26

42. Ibid P. 26

43. Ibid P.30



Venkataratnam further says in our national ideal and traditions there is enough of chaste piety and inspiring purity to justify the hope that, if only this outer “abasement” could be swept away and the native grandeur revealed to the people’s heart, our nation, too, may realize and appreciate the sublime truth that piety without purity is grosser than rank superstition – it is sanctified sin. But it is one thing to hold out indiscriminately on our past greatness; it is another to emulate it judiciously.<sup>44</sup>

As Mrs. Josephine Butler has pointed out, state regulation of vice is but state sanction of vice; it is only “drilling, barracking and licensing vice” – procuring state – accredited instruments for the most debasing use. Likewise, the society that assigns in its hold a recognized place and a decent position to professional lewdness – aye, confers on it the dignity of a caste and tricks it out with a ‘catching name, condemns itself as “procuress to hell”. The future of a nation depends wholly up on its estimate of man – its hope of human possibilities, and the community that counts social impurity, not a temporary failing to be strenuously overcome, but a lasting frailty to be reduced to custom, looks down upon man as an “appetite incarnate”<sup>45</sup>

Says an eminent medical authority, “As soon prescribe theft or lying or anything else that god has forbidden as prescribe in chastity; and what is public recognition given to social impurity by state or by society but this culpable prescription of in chastity”.<sup>46</sup>

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44. Vol.II P.33

45. Ibid. P.35

46. Ibid P.36



**Excise: -**

In the budget for 1923-24 legislative council madras 13-3-1923. Raghupati Venkata Ratnam Naidu says “according to this sentiment, might I say that the distinction drawn between licit and illicit drink is absolutely meaningless? The difference between licit and illicit drink is a purely official finesse in which the popular sentiment has no share. Sir, I may note that this distinction, with the popular sentiment, has as much meaning as the distinction between licit bigamy and illicit bigamy to a truly typical Britisher nourished in the traditions of monogamy.”<sup>47</sup>

In the one case, bigamy, licit or illicit, is an evil that should be rooted out, in the other case, drink, licit or illicit, is a monster that has to be eliminated. Unto this sentiment which is wide – spread and which, in the renaissance of India, will be rehabilitated as one lofty national ideal, unto this sentiment, again, that formula to which ones attention is drawn so often, namely, maximum revenue and minimum consumption, that formula is entirely wooden, absolutely apathetic, altogether unconvincing.”<sup>48</sup>

Further he argues “therefore, sir, I venture to urge that a change must come; that government must be prepared to adopt another standard. Our government Should not fight shy of this good chance. If progress has to be made, if the nation as whole has to advance, the best thought, the finest sentiment and the noblest aspirations should be installed both as the censor and the guide of the nation; and as the thinking, the feeling and the resolute sections of the community demand total abstinence, this reform shall be achieved. With these words, I beg to support this motion (Cheers).”<sup>49</sup>

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47. Vol.II.p.134

48. Ibid. P. 135

49. Ibid.P.135



### About Marriage:-

About marriage Venkataratnam had an opinion which is spiritual in nature. He says it is the union of two hearts, the intertwining of two souls, into one through the grace of god in the mighty influence of love and unto the far-reaching fulfillment of the divine purpose in creation- in this union of holy wedlock these two are brought here to be cemented. It demands of each one of us here to supplicate the divine grace for the right spirit, the true and genuine sanctity of the heart.<sup>50</sup>

According to Venkata Ratnam Naidu it is not, as people lightly talk, a civil contract; not, as they of sense and appetite fancy, the procuring of gratification to the sense and the appetite; not the wife taken as in barter and the husband received as in traffic; not Goods received and returned; not the exchange of the merchandise of the community to create means of social uplift and efficiency.<sup>51</sup>

He says that these are all but accidental accompaniments, subsidiary concomitants. The essence at the rock – bottom of this function is even the going out of heart towards heart, the reaching out of soul towards soul, the mingling together of ideals and aspirations and the uniting of prayer and self – consecration. In a word, it is the blending of two into one for the glory of god as the supreme dispenser of all lofty destinies and the fulfillment of his purpose in establishing the kingdom of truth and Righteousness on earth.<sup>52</sup>

About *soothradharana* (Bridal knot) He says that they are not mere plates of gold, but coins of grace minted in the holiness of god, to be used on this solemn occasion as emblems of the unification of the two souls. And therefore, not merely or wholly in consonance with the tradition of the land but in profound acceptance of the

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50. R. Venkataratnam message and ministrations Vol VI., p.174-175

51. Ibid p. 175

52. Ibid p.176





truth in this sacrament, the Bridegroom will now follow, as I believe, the dictates of the spirit in him to fasten this not merely around the neck but near the heart of his beloved and make her his own – not merely a member of his family but the very companion of his soul.<sup>53</sup>

Venkata Ratnam Naidu considers every part of the marriage ritual has a spiritual significance. He says “you take the first step to gether to denote conjoint adherence to Truth. You take the second step to denote united discharge of Duty. The third step is to signify that you are at one in recognising and satisfying all the demands of family and home. The fourth is to show that you are alive to and will fulfill, all the demands of Relationship and community. The fifth is to show that you are jointly devoted to the best interests of the country. The sixth is to show that you are united in joint service for the welfare of the whole Humanity. The seventh and the sublimest is to denote that you are devoted to god as the supreme ordainer of your and all others destinies.<sup>54</sup>”

In ceremony of marriages in which he was a minister, he says “I have ministered but objects of my lifelong interest and devout prayer. Therefore, it is not the common language of advice and exhortation that I now use. But I tell you with feelings surging from the bottom of my heart that you are this day a source of immense joy to me. In your union my heart finds a picture of divine dispensation; and as you have been unified, my prayers go up to god to make you a truly model couple happily and righteously led on along the whole course of life, desiring nothing but the glory of god and always endeavouring to fulfill his will through all happenings.<sup>55</sup>”

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53 Ibid P 185

54 Ibid P 187-188

55 Ibid P 189



About the institution of the marriage. He says marriage is a most sacred function in the very purpose of creation – not a man – made convention but a god – established sacrament. The first duty, then is to be together in the company of god through the whole round of life – not two but one and yet two in the sense that each lives for the other; not two as distinct entities but in the sense of harmony.<sup>56</sup>

### **Raja Rammohun Roy:-**

About Rammohun Roy he says everyone of us, while praising Rajah Ram Mohan Roy for his work in the abolition of *Sati*, assumes thereby the responsibility to see that the reformatory work does not stop short with rescue from *Sati* and that the widow shall not be condemned to a life – long burning of the heart. ‘Better marry than burn’. Says the Apostle of god; whereas we, callous – hearted votaries of cruel custom, say in effect, “Better burn than marry” ! This is life – long torture, infinitely severer than consuming with flames a woe- begone frame that can set no store by life. *Sati* gone in the scheme of social uplift, India has accepted the obligation to obtain for crores of women the right to marry of their own free – will. And to how many, and how long, and how culpably, that freedom has been persistently denied<sup>57</sup>.

### **Child – Widow:-**

Praising the work of veeresalingam, he says “In fact, many that did not know of the other great doings of Veeresalingam pantulu garu held him in distinction as the champion of widow – marriage. His prototype in Bengal, pandit Iswara Chandra vidyasagar, eminent as a men of letters, distinguished as an educationist and renowned as a philanthropist, himself valued his own work in the widow- marriage cause as his greatest achievement. What vaidyasagar thus stated in self – estimation may also truly

56. Ibid P.189

57. R. Venkataratnam message and ministrations Vol.V p.25



be said of Veeresalingam pantulu garu. His several achievements have been recalled either in detail or in allusion by the preceding speakers this evening. The greatest of all those is the practical and vigorous promulgation, in Andhradesa – indeed, in south India, of the primary right of widows to remarry, if they choose. Let me stress this point. When we desire to estimate correctly the character and the worth of pantulu garu's life and work, we should prominently bear this in mind that his noblest accomplishment is the securing of the franchise for widows to remarry, if they so desire.<sup>58</sup>

Venkataratnam says in our day we find widow-marriage has become a comparatively easy business, though it is, in truth, not quite so easy, after all, as we are prone to fancy in our seclusion. Therefore, we are apt to take it for granted that it was equally easy when the reform was first started. This is very much like imagining that, because the pilgrimage to Benares has become such an easy affair for us in these latter days, it must have been equally easy even unto those who had literally to measure out every foot of the weary way in the olden days when kasi and cremation – ground were associated, in thought, as equally fatal. Widow marriage at the beginning of the Reform was not like widow – marriages in ourtime. It was a question of life and death – veritable *Kurukshetra* fight, all the powers of darkness arrayed in opposition to the single torch – bearer of truth with his challenge – you shall vanish or I will perish! It required a leonine heart – indeed, a divine heart, to endure that struggle. Such a leonine heart, such a divine heart, was lodged in our revered Veeresalingam Pantulu Garu, as, indeed, no one can ever achieve anything of real worth unless he receives the holy impetus from on high.<sup>59</sup>

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58. Vol.V, p 23

59. Ibid, p 26-27



### **Monogamy:-**

Venkataratnam Naidu says “we in the Brahma Samaj have been led to believe in monogamy not only for this life but through endless time. Speech may be silenced and the body may vanish; but hearts’ loves shall live and endure for ever in indissoluble union ratified by Thyself as minister. Oh vouchsafe unto us the realization of this sublime truth of thyself wedding us and our being wedded to thee as also of that eternal spousal being constantly multiplied, illustrated and rendered evident by unions like this. Make the present union a vivid reflection of, a living testimony to, that eternal wedlock in which there is no male and no female but only the giving and the re giving of love for evermore”.<sup>60</sup>

### **Respect for women:-**

“Trample on woman”, says a distinguished friend of this cause, “and you trample on your own moral nature. Respect woman, care for her, work for her, give her knightly shelter and protection, and you shall find the loftier emotions gaining sway in your heart, and touching your life to finer issues.” “Whether you be young or old, think, I pray you, of the holy names of sister, (daughter) wife and mother; think of all the holy influences which stream forth upon an evil world from the relations which those sacred names represent, and resolve, one and all, that under no sky from which the sun shines down shall those names have a holier, tenderer meaning than in this fair land”.<sup>61</sup>

Quoting from indian scriptures he says nor need this inspiring appeal come amiss to a people with rich traditions and noble examples of social purity in the past. He says the crowning merit of our national hero was that he never shot but one arrow

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<sup>60</sup> Vol VI p 335-336  
<sup>61</sup> Vol II p 63



and never loved but one woman; the Kohinoor of her kind. Our national pattern of truthfulness preferred gifting away an empire to plucking the rose from a maiden brow. Our national model of devotion made purity the basis of piety by beholding a “mother” in every “stranger woman”. The greatest of our epics tells man “to look upon his neighbour’s wife as on her that gave him life”. The oldest of our bridal hymns exhorts the couple being wedded to pray jointly, “May all the gods that live above blend our hearts in love!” The true ideal of chivalry in India made the ‘Knight’ the rakhiband-bhai-the bracelet-wearing brother-of the ‘lady’. An ancient Indian conception of the deity is that of ‘half-man and half-woman’ the Harmoniser of the Sexes. A hoary precept of purity in our literature charges every person to honour the body and to keep it pure, for it is the abode of the spirit. May the sanctity of that indian sage abide in us who, when a celestial nymph visited his hermitage, employed her blandishments to disturb his penances, and immodestly laid bare her ‘mysterious charms’, exclaimed in child like innocence, “would that one could have mother of such beauty!” The grace of the All – Holy be with us all<sup>62</sup>!

### **His Views on Chastity And Celibacy:-**

‘Chaste as Diana’ is treated as a classic phrase to denote ideal chastity; Diana, an eternal virgin being appraised as the model of speakless chastity. This idea was rendered acceptable to most minds by the wide – spread misconception that the celibate alone could be rightly adjudged to be quite chaste. Asceticism and monasticism championed this nation. An air of sanctity attached it self to the women-Shunning sanyasin. In the final upshot, man was fancied to be ‘conceived in sin’. But as the human mind emerged from the medieval into the modern era, an emphatic protest had to be entered against this slender cast upon holy wedlock. In the hallowed



name of the mother – the venerated authoress of one's own being, the saving truth had to be borne in on the human soul that the wife can be no less chaste than the virgin. Married life is not incompatible with pristine purity. If it is not the cowl that makes the monk, neither does its absence argue the libertine. Asceticism, Eastern or western, misses this truth. It is obvious that the cradle of mankind is laid in the family; and the growth and continuity of a healthy race depends on the sanctity of marriage. Prohibition of marriage can never be an ordinance of God. It is a profound truth, on the other hand, that God is the divine maker of all true marriages. – The weal or the woe, therefore, of the individual or of the race, the salvation or the perdition of the soul or the society, lies in marriages. Man and woman are constituted, through wedlock, into trustees of posterity. Duty to posterity, which means the transmission of the *gift of life* from generation to generation, is the high sanction for holy wedlock.<sup>63</sup>

Venkataratnam says strict fidelity to married life is a most onerous duty. At the same time it is also a most exquisite privilege. Its due discharge may strain one's strength; but it also blesses one's soul. In the cultivation of this heavenly virtue, continence as regards the physical frame alone falls far short of the ordained ideal. To be married indissolubly, in thought, insentiment, aye, even in dream – that is the secret of that supernatural strength wielded by the *Pathivratha*, as proved in the death – daring savitri. If another woman, said to surpass Eve a thousand fold in beauty and grace, were to be substituted for her, yet he would; desire and have Eve alone, so avows even the frail Adam. Divine Chastity demand votaries from both the sexes. Man approves himself only when man's *patnivratam* mates woman's *pativratyam*. Self-exemption is arrogance. And thus wedlock, no less than celibacy, shall honour



and exemplify chastity.<sup>64</sup>

To serve this end, any proneness to harbour or express unchaste ideas shall be resolutely resisted. It is an idle fancy that chastity is only an extra accomplishment, not indispensable to a happy life. Sooner or later, by external rebuke or by internal smart, the Lotharios of the World are constrained to realize that chastity constitutes the pure essence of human happiness. Chastity is the basement of a dependable life, the corner – stone of a serviceable life, the cupola of an honourable life. It is not position, it is not pleasure, it is character, with its blessedness, that ought to be, and truly is, the end and fulfillment of human life. Is it not appalling, harrowing, excruciating to know that of all offences that man is liable to commit, in chastity is the one crime which, in actual fact, involves, drags in, a co-criminal, a yoke – fellow in perdition? That is the horror, the hell, of this deadly sin. On the other hand, those who, with hand clasping hand and heart embracing heart, ascend together the altar-stairs of love, enjoy the bliss of Heaven even on earth. If as Manu prescribes, woman has to depend upon man, in all stages, for the sustenance of life, is not man like wise dependent, all along, upon woman for the sweetness of life: man the stem, woman the creeper; man the sap, woman the flower?<sup>65</sup>

Very aptly and happily poets have compared the union of man and woman to the confluence of two streams merging into one current. At the altar each conveys body, mind and heart to the other; there is no residuum left to be shared with a third party. The scriptural text says, “God is a jealous God” – He will have the whole soul or none. The spouse, too, is a jealous person – claiming the whole heart or none. The glorification of the wedded life comes through that devotion of chastity, wherein fellowship, peace and love combine to make the marriage – bond – divine.<sup>66</sup>

64 Ibid p 319

65 Ibid 320

66 Ibid 320



### Protection of Women:-

About protection of women he says and now, the final word. Colonel Todd, in his immortal work, "The Annals of Rajasthan", records a very significant practice. In western countries, When knighthood<sup>1</sup> prevailed, the knight was the *lover* of the lady to whom he was devoted. Here in India, he was the lady *brother*. The lady that needed a knights protection sent him a *rakhi*. (Wristlet – we may style it Kankanam) humayun, it is said, was the recipient of such a token of trust from a Rajput princess; and he raised the siege of a fortress that his father had deputed him to capture. Now, our youths are the *Rakhiband bhais*, the bracelet wearing brother, of all customes – oppressed maidens. In these days of the urge for self – determination all round, our youths must determine to be trustees and upholders of the honour and freedom of all their sisters who are the victims of social injustice. Will they realize, then, that youth is not ebullience but resolution, not animal spirits but moral energy, not reckless rush but sustanined service? Live pure, speak true, right wrong, and follow conscience as king: that is the appeal. To youth in the spirit of chivalry. In terms of Eastern chivalry, according to colonel Todd, one of the most inspiring of historians, a youth pledges himself to be the champion of her whom he adopts as his sister. You have no right to the honoured name of brother, unless you have a sister – a neglected, ill – used sister – to stand by and support. When you become a *rakhiband bhai* – a bracelet – wearing brother – to a neglected young widow, then will India be blessed you and you in India. Thus, god bless you all, young men, and through you, your sisters, the young widows!<sup>67</sup>





### Elevation of the depressed classes:-

Venkataratnam in the legislative council pleads for the welfare of the weaker sections about the need for looking after the welfare of the Depressed classes. He says as I have already hinted, in view of the vast numbers concerned and in view of the wide range of work that has to be done, in any humble opinion-if my humble opinion finds endorsement at the hands of the Hon. Member in charge of this department for the elevation of the depressed classes should constitute a separate department by itself. If in the beginning the financial outlay is large, it will be so only for a limited period of time. For, as the work appeals further to the heart of the people, I am sure there will rise from all communities voluntary workers who will each declare, if I may use the well-known language, '*my dhanam, my manam and my thonam*' all are dedicated to this work; and I have rendered myself unto this work. Therefore, sir, in the employment of workers for this department we should always bear in mind that it is the voluntary work that is going finally to succeed; and this good work will be best achieved if we also remember the proverb, viz., that blood is thicker than water, and employ, to the largest extent possible, workers from the depressed classes themselves.<sup>68</sup>

He said let it not be said of members of the so-called higher castes that they have fomented such difference between the members of the depressed classes, that they have employed some of these people to their own advantage, as it was said, I do not know with what justice, that when the distinction was made between the pro Brahman used the pro-brahmin non-brahmin as his own instrument for pitting one section against the other. I hope there will be no such unfortunate situation; but we shall pledge ourselves, despite all differences, to step forward and devote ourselves to

68. R. Venkataratnam message and ministrations Vol.III.P.173



this work of the elevation of the depressed classes. Continuing his plea, he says “Sir, in this connection I am reminded of a great saying of that world – renowned teacher of practical morals – *Sadi*, the author of *Gulistan* wouldst thou conceived the plight of an ant under the feet, imagine thine own plight under the feat of an elephant. It is that imagination that we will have to exercise, that imagination which will beget in us the higher charity of which it was said that it would not only give but also forgive. Let us proceed on this principle. Then alone shall we render justice to the depressed classes.<sup>69</sup>”

About uplifting the weaker section he gives the example of lord Budha. He says one last word, sir, and I have done. During the early period of that noble quest which led to the *Maha Nirvana*, the final emancipation, it is said that prince Siddhardha, when returning, a certain evening, from a visit to an ashram on a hill-top. Fell among a flock of sheep, wherein he found this pathetic spectacle. There were two lambs, one strong and sound of limb capering a head from boulder to boulder with the other lambs, and the other, weak and crippled and lagging behind in momentary danger of being lost sight of altogether. The poor mother, divided between these two young ones, was now rushing forward to meet the healthy lamb and again hastening back to see whether it might enable the crippled one to keep pace. Sir, at this juncture, as Siddhardha noted this moving sight, he lifted the crippled lamb and said: ‘mother, the heart has been divided between the two young ones. I have taken the crippled one in my arms. I will enable it to keep pace with the rest of the flock. Let thy heart be at peace’. The heart of mother India is now similarly divided between the progressive classes and the depressed classes; and I appeal to these and other spirits of light and leading to play the part of Siddhardha, lift the depressed



classes to their bosoms and address *Bharatha Matha* ‘ Let thy heart be at peace, we will take care of them.’<sup>70</sup>

### **Venkataratnam- A Moderate:-**

Venkata Ratnam considers that the british rule of India was providential and god given. He says “the first point on which I desire to lay great emphasis is the imperative duty resting on you to be unswervingly loyal to the king emperor and his rule. Say what others may to the contrary, never doubt the truth that the British connection with India is not an accident of aimless chance, the infliction of an iron fate or the sport of a heartless demon. No: a thousand time, no. it is a wise and benevolent providence that has put this ancient nation, with its great past and its vast possibilities, to school under the tuition and guidance of probably the most level – headed and statesmanlike of modern nations. Defects and drawbacks, errors and wrongs, there may be; aye, they are; but with its inspiring traditions, its justice- loving instincts and its invigorating institutions the British nation has been designed by Heaven itself to be the maker of the future of our country – a free, united and prosperous India.”<sup>71</sup> Fancy not for one moment that the present system of administration is satanic, a sink of sin, a rule of Ravan, that should at the earliest possible time be relentlessly swept out and “cast as rubbish to the void”<sup>72</sup> A great structure of reconstruction on depend broad foundations, with reliable and choice material, after a noble design, is being gradually raised ; and you may take it almost as a settled fact, a pre – ordained conclusion, that England’s work in India is not going to be demolished as a hopeless failure ; it will be continued from decade to decade till it has reached its culminating success in the complete amelioration, in the perfect happiness, of India. (It is rather hard to believe that the spirit which denounces the British administration of India as satanic, as the regime of the devil, can have “Love”

70. Ibid.p.176

71. Presidential Address, I, Godavari, Adi-Andhra Conference, Anjalapuram 01.02.1921

72. Vol.III, p.209



for its master – motive. At any rate, there is absolutely no occasion for your community ever to hesitate in cherishing and practicing whole – hearted loyalty to the Sovereign and the Empire.<sup>73</sup>

### **Harijan Uplift:-**

Venkataratnam says that the Daliths should try to come up in all fields. About their progress, he says schools, both for general and technical instruction, will rapidly spring in to existence, and free admission into them of members of their community will be insisted upon as a prime condition; better habitations in sanitary localities and with requisite accompaniments for the ordinary needs of life will be early sought to be provided; participation in the rights and privileges of citizenship will be increasingly accorded;<sup>74</sup> endeavours to wean them from such objectionable habits as now hamper they will be earnestly changed; institutions calculated to relieve them from their abject poverty and save them from their helpless indebtedness will be brought into existence rapidly and effectively. Thus the future appears to be, under god, very reassuring. But none can help those who will not help themselves. The supreme effort to shake off lethargy, to dispel their ignorance and superstition, to discard their objectionable habits, to improve their domestic and communal conditions and surroundings, must spring from the heart of the community itself. He says they must apply their own shoulders to the wheel of progress. He says they must arise from amongst you men and women who, though not highly educated, will yet show a keen sense of responsibility and be actuated by a spirit of devotion to the great cause of the advancement of their community.<sup>75</sup>

He further says : Unless you make it clear by your endeavours and exertions that you are eager and earnest to elevate yourselves; unless you are prompt and

73. Ibid. P. 210.  
74. Vol III. P.213  
75. Vol.III, p.214



persevering in the discharge of this prime duty of self – help, and come out, in rapidly increasing numbers and in a spirit of disinterested patriotism, to taken in your community a strong passion for education, a burning desire for self – improvement, a lively appreciation of cleanliness, temperance and thrift, you will fail to elicit the warm sympathy and strong support of the communities around you. You will likewise lie beyond the reach of government which necessarily conditioned by human limitations, will confine its activities to those whose zeal vindicates their claim to assistance and encouragement<sup>76</sup>.

### **Untouchability:-**

About untouchability he says “my next point is this. In these days, every – where – almost from every month – is to be heard a regretful reference to the question of ‘untouchability’. This curse, we are told, must be removed from the country, if the nation is to make real progress. But is untouchability of one kind only? Is not widow- marriages prohibition also a type of untouchability? Here is a girl in sound health and in the bloom of youth; she has every requisite for being a help – mate to a Youngman; unfortunately, she is a widow and, therefore, untouchable. Untouchability assuming various forms, even as the leper cannot be touched on hygienic grounds, numberless girls are, for no real defect, pronounced untouchable for marital purposes! But if India is to achieve true freedom. This species of untouchability also must be removed as assiduously as the untouchability of the “Depressed Classes”.<sup>77</sup>

Exhorting them to better their lives Venkataratnam says avail yourselves of all opportunities for the removal of every mark or indication of inferiority or degradation that this grievous system has placed upon you. Lose no chance when you

76 Ibid p. 214  
77. Vol V p 23-24



can, by firmly standing on your own legitimate rights, make it clear that you are fully alive to your own self respect. Of course, no one will seek or wish to infuse an undesirable spirit – for example, one of pride or of vehemence – into any member for your community. But pride is one thing, self – respect is another. Firmness is one thing, vehemence is another. Likewise, humility is one thing, servility is another. Liberty is one thing, impudence is another. Cultivate manly virtues, while carefully resisting every temptation to yield to unsocial or unbecoming weaknesses. Thus you will achieve your life – object by liberating yourselves from the meshes of the caste system.<sup>78</sup>

He said the late Swami Vivekananda of honoured memory is said to have declared that, before he passed away, he would see panchamas (Harijans) installed as priests in fifty different shrines of note all over the land. The great teacher did not live to make good his intention; and one may well doubt whether, granted even a patriarchal age, he should have been able to achieve the task, But let us accept his intention as a prophesy and let us say that then alone the panchama has a place in Hinduism, then alone Hinduism is entitled to his allegiance, when priesthood is ordained solely on the ground of personal fitness; and a panchama is as readily eligible for that sacred office as a member of any other community.<sup>79</sup>

#### **Dalit (Harijan) conversion to Christianity:-**

Venkataratnam says “The late hon’ble Dewan Bahadur Raghunadha Rao once declared at a public meeting that the salvation of the depressed classes lay in their becoming Christians first. That an ardent Hindu like that venerable gentleman should have made this admission was, indeed, very significant, I do not, of course, quite.

78. Vol III. P.225  
79. Vol III. P.228



Agree with the view. I do believe that gradually, may be very gradually, Hinduism will be so remodeled, will so broaden and refine itself, as to become the saving faith of all communities including the Panchamas. But as circumstances stand at present, it need be no matter for comment or sneer if many a poor but slightly educated Panchama should be led to think as the great Dewan Behadur Raghunadha Rao did. Nor would it be just and fair to them to think that most of these converts were lured by social or material attractions, Given no religion worth the name, no faith that enters into and uplifts the life, where they were; on the other hand, receiving a cordial call to God who, they are taught to believe, took special care and thought of the humble and the erring; they may naturally accept that gospel in good faith; and it will only confirm their belief when as the direct result of that acceptance come, social amelioration educational advancement and material improvement."

### **Forced conversions:-**

He says "Forced conversions being out of date, an appreciable number of persons give up a religion only because that religion has given them up. After all, if you accept my view that only through a total abnegation of the oppressive caste system can you liberate yourselves, a change of faith accepted as an honest conviction need place no obstacle between the Hindu and the non-Hindu as regards social amenity and civic co-operation. It will be to the gain of both that they agree to differ as to their religion but combine and co-operate in achieving their joint advancement educationally, socially, morally and economically, By all means adhere to your own faith, if you are satisfied with it; but ape not the undersirable manners of the so-called higher castes by turning your noses at the panchama Christian. Victims of religious and social ostracism, be not yourselves guilty of that sin. I should, on the other hand, exhort Panchama Christians, if there are any present, not to allow their acceptance of



another faith to lessen, in the slightest degree, their sense of attachement and their burden of obligation to their kith and kin in the Hindu fold. However improved by training and pruning and even grafting, let them recognize their old ancestral stock. Let them remember that charity is the highest law of their faith and “charity begins at home” I know of families where hearty relations continue to exist notwithstanding diversity of faith. What is found possible practically in individual cases ought to be made possible as between communities. My last exhortation in this connection is to those who may, by God’s grace, achieve their own improvement socially and educationally above the general level of the community. It is distressing to hear that some of these few fortunate members of the caste selfishly seeks to safeguard their own position and respectability by looking askance at, if not by wholly keeping aloof from, the rest of the community. This is, to say the least of it, unmanly. Manliness will disdain to fight shy of its origin, however humble. Courage lies in facing the situation in a spirit of complete self – denial. These erratic persons can never delude others into the belief that they are a separate and higher caste. It is only the general uplift of the caste that will secure real recognition and appreciation. Till then such doubtful individuals will be treated like the bats in the fable, until they boldly take their stand by their own kith and kin and, giving up all vulgar hankering for places and positions, seats and votes, devote themselves wholeheartedly to the advancement of those who are flesh of their flesh and bone of their bone. Thus united, you will achieve the great destiny of your community in a manner and at a pace which it will not be possible to command without such union.”

For unproving the condition. He says that there are several subjects relating to their improvement such as grants of lands on encouraging terms, formation of Co-





operative societies, adoption of certain healthier methods of living, improvement of their moral and social habits and the life that do deserve consideration.

Venkataratnam exhorts them to have faith in God, faith in a well-intentioned Government, faith in the good men of all communities, faith in themselves as children of God and faith in a just cause, namely, the emancipation of their community from its crushing disabilities. He says “right is with you, coming times are in your favour, and the great moral law that governs the world must operate on your behalf. With this faith, receive hope – hope that even the darkest night must yield place to a glowing dawn; hope that you who have toiled and laboured and waited for ages will have your reward in the combined and ceaseless endeavours of all parties and of all communities to render back to you, as a mere debt long overdue, their fullest measure of love, sympathy and service, till the lowly be exalted as the highest and the neglected be proclaimed the dearest unto God.”<sup>80</sup>

### **Idolatry:-**

Venkata Ratnam Naidu as an adherent of Brahmo samaj opposed idolatry and considered it to be harmful. He says “There are not only gods many but almost everything is a god” “The effect of idolatry on the nation have been very injurious”. Says the *Gita*, he who worships matter becomes matter “Or a blockhead; and the Hindu mind has certainly been stupefied and paralysed to that extent.”<sup>81</sup>

Quoting Veeresalingam he says “some brand their shoulders, some pierce their tongues and arms, some hook their backs and swing, some mortify their bodies by fasts, some sacrifice fowl, sheep and even buffaloes to their stone gods and but for the authoritative prevention of the government, some would, with hearts as hard as the

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80. Vol.III,p.233.

81. Vol.I,p.112



stone – images they worship, be ready, not only to sacrifice their fellow- men and their own begotten children to the idols, but also determine to commit suicide by falling beneath the car of the stump armed Jagannadhaswami.” What more inhuman actions can man do? Is not this conversion of the human to the demoniac nature due to the influence of idolatry? And as the deity, so the devotee. Man is moulded by his ideals. If they are low, gloomy and cruel, he cannot be noble, cheerful and generous. “Idolatry as now practiced by our countrymen”, says Rajah Rammohan Roy, and which the learned Brahmin so zealously supports as conducive to morality, is not only rejected by *Sastras* universally, but must also be looked upon with great horror by common sense, as leading directly to immorality and destructive of social comfort.<sup>82</sup>

Venkata Ratnam says that it is not possible to change mindset in a day or two. He says it is an unfortunate mistake to suppose that the up holders of a pure spiritual worship aspire to revolutionise the whole world of superstition and idolatry in day. They are fully aware of the fact that it takes perhaps a year to undo the mischief of a day. They know quite well that it will requires many a generation before India purges and unscales her long – abused sight and kindles her undazzled eye at the full beam of noon.<sup>83</sup>

### **Religious Tolerance:-**

About the plurality of religions and mutual understanding Venkata Ratnam says here it is, as the song goes, that the Hindu and the Mussalman, the parsee and the Christian, the jain and the Buddhist, the sikh and every other sect, have found not merely a forced toleration but neighbourly co-operation. Here it is that the gospels of different peoples have been commanding at any rate, demanding – the attention and the allegiance due to them – a phenomenon the like of which is not witnessed in any

82 Vol I, p 114  
83 Vol I-P. 117



other country. Here it is, therefore, that the problem of the Universal in man has to be faced and solved.<sup>84</sup>

Venkata Ratnam considers that intolerance is due to some dogmatic beliefs. He says a kindred cause of intolerance is the belief that, as only a select 'few' are 'privileged' to the 'channels' of truth for the 'many', some one "chosen" people is the sole custodian of Truth for all nations. As respecter of persons, god has 'ordained' a priest; and as a respecter of nations, he has 'chosen' one 'people'. The 'chosen' people are the sole trustee or agent of the Truth; god's inspirations is their prerogative; Heaven's direct guidance is their birth right.

The 'chosen' ones may form a race like the Jews or the Hindus, or may constitute a church like that of Islam or Christianity. But all agree in the dogmatic assertion that they – and they alone – possess the true and genuine revelation of god. To them alone has been confided the original celestial shield of Minerva; all others are vulgar human imitations meant merely to dupe the fool or confound the Knave. 'Burn away the big library'. The conquering Khalif is reported to have said, when he has captured Alexandria; for, if those countless volumes pretended to teach what the sole 'god-sent' Book did not contain, their pretension was simply blasphemous; but if they made no such pretension, they were a superfluity, a weariness, that should cease to be.

The world has laughed at omar, but has none-the-less honoured his precept and example by acting somewhat similarly.<sup>85</sup> To bigots and sectarians it is altogether inconceivable how god would have bestowed a like care on all souls and nations, or how he should have been equally mindful or benevolent in all ages. Whatever self complacency or national vanity may avow, it is, however, an eternal truth, which

84. Ibid. P. 126

85. Vol.III.p.46



modern thought and research have been steadily bringing into clearer light, that the All – wise has been raising unto himself witnesses in all ages and nations; and that truth, like light, has been shining on and spreading over all times and countries, expanding and intensified with the roll of centuries and the onward march of man. But hoary fancies are charming and it is hard to give up a time – honored prejudice, especially when it is flattering to ones nation or church.

Crusades may have ceased, religious persecutions may have largely disappeared; but civil disabilities and social restrictions will surely continue to prejudice peace and disturb good – will until man cordially recognizes the principle of religious catholicity and clearly perceives that truth is a many – sided polygon, which discovers its several phases to diverse nations and that he alone is wise in his generation who, like the honey – gathering bee, goes . “from bower to bower, And assiduous sips at every flower.”<sup>86</sup>

He says that four kinds of qualities or necessary for religious understanding may we, then, as its single sovereign remedy, respectfully plead with our gentle readers to search for, and, when vouchsafed, to enshrine in their hearts, that saving and sanctifying religion adorned with the four cardinal graces of *Independent* quest of truth; of *immediate* inspiration from him, the fountain – source of all truth; of *catholic* appreciation of wisdom from all quarters; and of *spiritual* adoration of god through *trust* in him as the unerring guide and *through endeavours* after him as the supreme exemplar of all? May the grace of the All holy one shape our consecrated lives into model of a *faith* so serene, a *hope* so secure and a *charity* so sublime as to trans figure even this darksome globe into a pleasant paradise!<sup>87</sup>

86 Ibid. P.47  
87. Ibid. P. 50



### **Inter – Religious Understanding**

Venkata Ratnam believes there should be understanding between religions. He says it is said that, on a certain occasion, one of a party of friends said to Goethe, 'we were discussing last night whether you or Schiller was the greater poet'. And he replied, 'why did you not rather feel thankful that amongst you there were two such poets? That is the spirit of true religion. Instead of instituting a comparison as to the superiority of this or that messenger of God – a task which presupposes the pose, 'I am superior enough to judge between them' – the right thing would be, so far as God vouchsafes unto us the chance, to assimilate all that is pure, good and lovely in the lives and teachings of all the great teachers of the world. We must cultivate this mutual fellowship as followers of the several dispensations of God. I do not know if there are many here who are familiar with the historical fact that Prince Dara Shikoh, the eldest brother of Aurangzeb and himself a very pious and God-visioned soul, remarked that the Upanishads constituted a very illuminating commentary on the Koran. That is the spirit in which I would have every one of us study the gospels of the several religions.'<sup>88</sup>

For the inter religious understanding. He says "to my Hindu brethren, I would say: Let us not only study the Koran but follow the subsequent, perennial flow of its pure crystalline stream through thirteen centuries. At the same time, I would exhort my Moslem brethren to make a study of the gospels of other faiths. And thus we shall come to find that God never did forget any nation. For his part, Mahammad again and again declares that the revelation of God has been vouchsafed to different people in diverse ways through varying ages. He is not that monopolist who says through him alone revelation has come. Let us imbibe that spirit; and then, we shall find that, as



the persian verse says, we are truly members of one another. In this all too imperative task, the first thing is a sympathetic study of other faiths and experiences, so far as it is possible for us; and the second is a frank preparedness to throw overboard from our craft whatever is not essential. Pure and true".<sup>89</sup>

### **Universal Brotherhood:-**

About universal brotherhood he says we are primarily one, because he has created us one. We are essentially one, because we are moulded of the same substances. We are eternally one, because all are the undying offspring of one sire', not merely 'but parts of one stupendous whole'. Herein lies the real truth, the central truth, of our spiritual life. Our brotherhood is not the brotherhood of the many grouped together as one, as is the ordinary notion of brotherhood. It is not the brotherhood of diverse elements knit together, but the brotherhood of the multifarious emerging out of the one; not the brotherhood of several notes mingling into one strain, but the brotherhood of many off shoots from one parent – stock; not the brotherhood of several workmen labouring in one field or factory, but the brotherhood of the many disciples germinating from the spiritual seed, plot of a single preceptor.<sup>90</sup>

Venkataratnam like Veeresalingam, fought against all social evils. They had mutual appreciation and Venkataratnam, being Junior, was influenced by the writings and reform activities of Sri Veeresalingam. Both being Brahmos, their approach to many, social issues and religious concepts, reformation techniques were similar. Like Veeresalingam, he holds a significant place in the reform movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Andhra.

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid p 369  
<sup>90</sup> Vol II, p 279

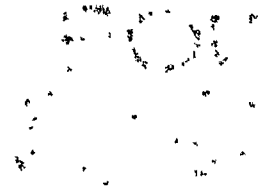




# APPENDIXES



**APPENDIX - I**  
**SOME IMPORTANT EVENTS IN**  
**R.VENKATARATNAM's LIFE**



1-10-1862 Born on 1, October in Machilipatnam father Sri Appayya Naidu,  
 mother Smt Shesamma.

**Education:**

- Primary Education in Banda (Uttar Pradesh)
- His teachers 1) Dinanath Benarjee 2) Gangadhar Mukherjee
- Passed in Metric under the guidance of Aghorinath Chattopadhyaya
- Bhadarighat Learning English under the guidance of W.A. Home
- 1885 – B.A. Madras guidance of Rev. Dr Miller
- 1891 – M.A. Madras
- 1897 – Madras L.T.
- Madras discontinuation of law.

**Profession:**

- 1886 – Editorship of the people friend (Weakly)  
 1887 – Rajahmundry. Teacher in high school  
 1888 – Eluru C.M.S. High School teacher Machilipatnam teacher in local Hindu high school  
 1889-92 – Secunderabad principal mehbub college  
 1892-93 – Madras English professor pachiappa college  
 1894-08 – a) Machilipatnam lecturer of English and History noble college  
 b) High school superintendent  
 c) Municipal councilor  
 d) Chairman primary school board (for 3 years)  
 e) Participating in the activities against nautch and other social activities.  
 f) Membership in Brahmosamaj
- 1905-1919 - A) Principal - Pithapur Maharaja's college  
 B) Fellowship in Madras university  
 C) Before Royal public service commission  
 D) Membership in S.S.L.C. Board  
 E) Membership in godavari district board  
 F) Vice president Kakinada Municipal council  
 G) Vice Chairman state legislative council
- 1922 - Pithapuram college diamond Jubilee  
 1925-28 - First elected Vice Chancellor - Madras University  
 - Lifetime Member of Madras university  
 - Social, political and welfare activities:-





- 1880-90 - Participation in National Congress Activites
- 1898 - Guntur President Krishna Political social conference
- 1904 - Ranipet (North ortharcat) president state social welfare association
- 1905 - Rajahmundry president Theist association
- 1906 - Culcutta - president All India Brahmo Samaj meetings.
- 1921 - Amala puram - president Adi Andhra mahasabha
- 1927 - Kakinada - president Brahmasamaj temple foundation
- 1929 - Madras - president Brahmosamaj
- 1933 - Kakinada president Rajarammohan Roy centenary celebration
- 1935 - Membership peoples party
- 1937 - Kakinada - state theist association
- 1935-39 - Kakinada - president Brahmosamaj

#### **Titles :-**

- 1912 - Rao Bahadur – Govt. of India
- 1918 A) Dewan Bahadur
- B) Kulapathi
- (Awarded by South Indian teachers federation)
- C) K.I.H. (British government)
- 1924 - Sir (First educationist in madras presidency who was awarded the Title of “Sir”)
- 1926 - D. Litt (Andhra University)
- 1932 - L.L.D. Madras University
- 1933 - Brahmarshi

#### **Editorship**

1) Brahma Prakasika, 2) Fellow worker 3) Nivedana

26-5-1939 – Demise



## APPENDIX - II

### (SPECIMEN PLEDGES)

#### A. For Adults.

With the help of God, I pledge myself to keep the following covenant:-

1. I will not attend any gatherings where naughties are present, or invite them myself, or do anything else that tends to encourage them.
2. I will not use impure language, or tell coarse jests, or sing indecent songs, or indulge in listening to such language, songs or jests.
3. I will not in witnessing indecent pictures, paintings, or scenes.
4. I will not converse or read, for the sake of mere pleasure, about subjects that are calculated to suggest impure thoughts, and will do my best not to entertain any such thoughts.
5. I will be chaste in body and will endeavour my utmost to be chaste in mind, as well as to promote the cause of purity in general.

#### B. For Boys

In order to preserve my own personal purity and to encourage it in others, as being one important factor of a sound character, I promise, with trust in God's help and guidance to try my utmost-

1. To cultivate such habits as will help purity in thought, speech and action;
2. To abstain, while showing obedience to the wishes of my father (or guardian), from such engagements as are like to be harmful to personal purity; and
3. To persuade my friends and school mates to do like wise.



## APPENDIX - III

### Enfranchisement of women

Venkata Ratnam says addressing the legislative council madras on 1-4-1921.  
Mr. President,

If I did not rise earlier to have my 'say' on this subject, it was not that I needed to be persuaded, that a required to be shown by convincing arguments, that this way a very desirable reform. Those that know me know that I should be believing all my past life I did not warmly support this resolution. My only regret is that there are said to be certain insuperable difficulties, by way of statutory restrictions, for the admission of ladies as members of this house. I shall be very glad if the legal luminaries that are here will be able to devise some shortcut for attaining that very desirable object. I hope that, before long, we shall be privileged to hail lady members here, that this house will have the pleasure of welcoming really desirable, talented and respectable ladies to give the benefit of their co-operation, their advice and support, to the deliberations of this house.

He further says "I am quite confident, sir, that this change will result in a great gain, that it will add appreciably to the value of the work and to the prestige of this house. I may add that I, for one, do not think it very necessary to state elaborately the arguments in favour of this proposition, either historical facts or psychological theories. For me at least, the old dictum of John Stuart Mill is enough. Race (human race) is essential, sex is accidental. I welcome this motion on that broad basis.

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