

# **Social Reformation in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Andhra - A Socio Philosophical Study**

**(With Special Reference to K. Veeresalingam, Gurazada and  
R. Venkataratnam Naidu)**

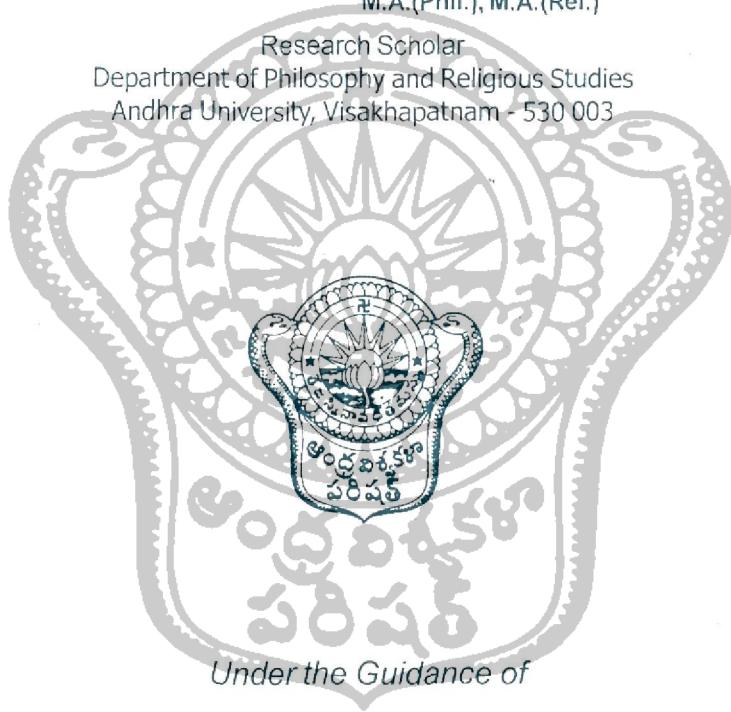
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**THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE ANDHRA UNIVERSITY, VISAKHAPATNAM  
FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN PHILOSOPHY**



## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis has been written entirely by me in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam. It has not been submitted earlier either wholly or in part to any university or institution for the award of any Degree or Diploma or other similar Title.

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## CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the thesis entitled "**Social Reformation in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Andhra - A Socio Philosophical Study (With Special Reference to K.Veeresalingam; Gurazada and R.Venkataratnam Naidu)**" presented to the Andhra University for the award of the Ph.D., Degree is a genuine and bonafide work done by **Sri.G.Madhava Rao, Research scholar** in the Department of Philosophy and Religious studies, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, under my supervision.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I take this opportunity to express my deep sense of gratitude to my revered teacher and director Dr.S.C.Suguna Kumari, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy and Religious studies, for her ever inspiring guidance and continuous encouragement given through out the course of the present Research work.

I am thankful to Prof.G.V.Raju (Rtd), for his encouragement and academic help. I am beholden to Prof..V.V.S.Sai baba (Rtd), Department of Phiolosphy & Religious studies, Andhra University, for his continuous encouragement. I am also thankful to Prof.S.D.A.Joga Rao (H.O.D), Prof.P.George Victor, Prof.S.Satynarayana, Prof.G.Veera Raju, Prof.K.R.Rajani, Dr.B.V.S.Bhanusree, Sri Ravi Babu for their encouragement.

I am thankful to Sri.V.Venkata Rao (H.O.D) of Philosophy, M.R.College (A), Vizianagaram, for his encouragement and affection. I am thankful to my colleagues for their good wishes and constant help.

I am thankful to the librarian Dr.V.S.Krishna library, Andhra Univeristy, Visakahapatnam, and to the librarian of the Renowned library (Saraswathaniketan) at Vetapalem, Prakasam District, for lending the necessary books and periodicals and to our college librarian (M.R.College), Vizianagaram and to the authorities of the District library at Vizianagaram for lending necessary books.



I owe deep sense of gratitude to late Sri.Jayanthi Ramalakshmana Murthy, a pioneer in the library movement in the Vizianagaram district, for giving me rare works on Sri Gurazada and Sri.K.Veerasingam: Sri.Raminaidu, an eminent scholar of Rajam was also kind enough to provide some rare volumes on Gurazada from his personal collection.

I am thankful to Dr.A.V.D.Sharma, M.A., Ph.D., D.Lit former H.O.D. of History & Rector, MANSAS, Vizianagaram, Sri.A.Lakshamana Raju eminent Journalist of Vizianagaram, and Sri.Rama Suri of the Department of Telugu, M.R.College and Sri.Rongali Pothanna, President District library Association for their precious and useful suggestions regarding my work. I am thankful to Sri.S.S.S.S.V.R.M.Raju, Advocate, former Public Prosecutor, Vizianagaram, for his guidance regarding social legislation and other legal issues.

I am thankful to my Roommates and my friends for their constant encouragement for completing my work.

I am thankful to Mallik and Ramu for their neat execution of the type work.

I take this opportunity to record my deep sense of love to my Mother Smt.G.Lakshmi Kantha and to my brothers 1. G.Srinivasa Rao 2. G.Venkata Rao, and my sisters, for their interest in my work and the inspiration provided by them and for their blessings for the successful completion of this work. Lastly I thank Sri Penumatsa Sambasiva Raju Garu, the Veteran political leader, philanthropist and well wisher of our family for his good wishes and blessings.



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## PREFACE

19<sup>th</sup> century was a period of great changes in India. The British administration of this period brought many structural changes in Indian Society. At that time there was large scale poverty and misery among the Indian agricultural classes. The impact of western culture brought in a new outlook among the Indian middle classes. Due to the impact of the British, an Urban based, educated middle class has emerged. It took the responsibility and the pioneering role of disseminating western ideas and bringing about a new social and political awakening.

The reforms were mainly initiated by the western educated intellectuals. They also belonged to upper and middle classes. They belonged mainly to higher castes in the Hindu ritualistic hierarchy. The nature of the causes they espoused were also mainly the problems of their communities. For example the emancipation of women in all its facets – Education, widow remarriage, Kanyasulkam (Bride Price) and infant marriage, wasteful marriage expenditure, were some of the issues about which they wanted change, and these practices were found in the upper castes of the Hindu society.

These practices were found not only in Andhra but in the whole Hindu society of that century. The social reform endeavours in Andhra were a part of the all India efforts in this direction. During the same period or even earlier similar attempts were made in Bengal and Maharashtra about which we will discuss in due course. My work covers the Andhra region of the present day Andhra Pradesh. This region was a part of the erstwhile composite Madras presidency. This area was directly governed by the British. This work seeks to study the various reform activities undertaken by the Andhra reformers of that period. Kandukuri Veeresalingam who belongs to this century (1849-1919) was the leader of the reform movements in the Andhra region.

Prior to Veeresalingam we find some significant but stray reform trends in Andhra. But it was Veerésalingam who consolidated these ideas, providing them with a form and a content. He was the first and foremost reformer in Andhra, though people like Raghupati Ventkata Ratnam, Unnava Lakshminarayana, Desiraju Pedabapaiah played a significant role as his associates.

Sri Gurazada Appa Rao (1861-1915) was a contemporary of Veeresalingam and both of them lived under the same social conditions. Like Veeresalingam he also tookup social issues of his times like women education, widow remarriage, Kanyasulkam, infant child marriage etc. He also wanted to change the Brahmanical society of his times and solve many problems that confronted them.

The social reformers were also against caste discrimination and untouchability. They believed in social justice and universal Brotherhood. They also pleaded for religious tolerance and inter-religious understanding.

While Veeresalingam was an active social reformer and writer, Gurazada Appa Rao was mainly confined to literature. Whatever changes he envisaged in the Hindu society, he wanted to bring them through his mighty pen. He was known more as great writer than as a social reformer. Gidugu Ramamurthy (1863-1940) was also a pioneer in social reform movement of Andhra Pradesh. He mainly concentrated on the literary aspects like change in usage of language. All these three wanted to bring a change in the literary format of writing in Telugu. In the earlier tradition Telugu writing was influenced by a Sanskrit and the language was terse. It was called as *Grandhika Bhasa*. The ordinary form of language was called as *Vyavaharika Bhasa*. Which means the language of the common man. The Sista Vyavahariaka means the refined language of the common man and now it is in vogue in Andhra Pradesh. Almost all regional languages of India follow the Sista Vyavaharika style of writing.



The news papers, electronic media and other communication channels follow this style.

Another contemporary and great social reformer of this century was Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu (1862-1939). He was an eminent educationist, a leader of Brahmosamaj, who has relentlessly worked for the education of the Girl child, Harijan uplift and against nautch practices. He also strived for social purity and temperance. Venkataratnam was highly inspired by the life and teachings, and practices of Veeresalingam and gave his whole hearted support to the reform moment of Veeresalingam.

My attempt in this work is to study and analyse, the contributions made by these thinkers to language, literature, and to social and political reform and assess their place in the modernisations and transformation of the Andhra People and their culture.

Throughout India and particularly Bengal, Maharashtra and Andhra we find great reform movements during 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. To some extent there was exchange of ideas and diffusion of social and cultural ideas and ideals among these states. It is also interesting to make a brief survey of the similar social reform movements, like that of Joti Rao Phoooley in Maharashtra and Narayana Guru of Kerala. Both had similar goals and did immense service to the weaker sections of the society and to universal education, mainly education of Girls and for the emancipation of women. They have also taken up other issues which did great harm to the society and denied social justice to the large sections of the Indian society. A brief analysis of their contribution for the social progress is narrated.



## Plan of The Work:-

The work is divided into VIII chapters in the I Chapter I have discussed about the concept of Hinduism and Brahmanism and how the popular Hinduism is different from Brahmanism. There were many sects in Hinduism and some of them were started by non-Brahmins. These sects wanted to bring social reform. The main sects are Veeresalingam and Sri Vystnavism.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> Century we had reformers like Vemana and potuluri Veerabrahmam.who tried to reform Hindu society and wanted the society to get rid of its evils.

The British attitude towards social reform and the activities of the missionaries was also discussed.

In the II Chapter I have discussed about two eminent social reformers of the same century one Jotirao <sup>h</sup>pooley (1827-1890) who belongs to Maharashtra and Naryanaguru (1856-1928), Who belongs to kerala. In a way they were the pioneers of social reform movement in the south and their ideas of social reform were highly significant.

In the III Chapter I have discussed about the social situation of Andhra in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. It deals with the caste system, social evils, superstitions, educational status the role of Christian Missionaries and about the socio-economic situation of Andhra Pradesh in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

In the IV Chapter I have discussed about Kandukuri Veeresalingam. (1849-1919). This study is mainly focused on Veeresalingam and his contribution to the social reform movement. In away he can be called as the father of social reform movement in Andhra in this chapter I have discussed about his social and political ideas and the formative influences on him. I have also discussed about his attitude towards Telugu language and literary style. His out look was rational and he opposed

many evils of the society. Like his eminent contemporaries, he was also a moderate in politics and considered the British rule as a boon.

In the Chapter V. I have discussed about Veeresalingam's contribution to the uplift of women. He is well known for his great work done in the area of women welfare and women progress. He considered that education of women is a priority area. His great contribution to social progress is his propagation of widow remarriages. He not only preached but took active part in performing widow remarriages. He was a prolific writer and wrote number of books. He was also a good Journalist and established monthly Journals to propagate his ideals of social reform. He was a good institution builder and started number of orphanages for the child widows. He also started number of schools for girls education. Veeresalingam opposed Kanysulkam and he also participated in temperance and social purity movements my study is mainly focused on the contribution of Veeresalingam social reforms in Andhra.

In the Chapter VI. I have discussed about Gurzada Appa rao (1861-1915) and his contribution to social reform in Andhra. Sri Appa rao was a teacher for some time and later became an administrator. His contribution to Telugu literature is praiseworthy. Veeresalingam, Gurazada Appa rao and Gidugu Ramamurthy propagated the usage of ordinary and popular language for the literary purpose. They said the common man must be in a position to understand the writings in his own language. In all most all languages of India this movement of ordinary language becoming literary language became popular. The theme of his writings had social purpose. He dealt with the themes of women uplift, widow remarriages and Kanysulkam. Like Veeresalingam he also fought for social reformation and change through his writings. Through literature he wanted to reform the society. In this

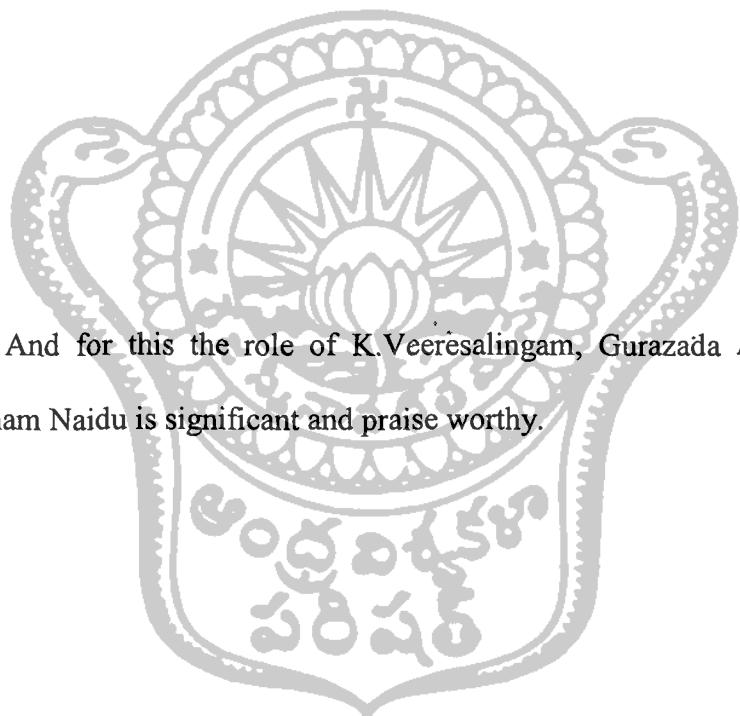


chapter I discussed about his writings, his views on reformation of language, his views on patriotism, rationalism and women uplift.etc.,

In the Chapter VII. I have discussed about Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu (1862-1939) Venkataratnam was influenced more by Brahmo Samaj. Veeresalingam and Gurazada Appa rao were also influenced by Brahmo Samaj but the impact on them was not so deep. Venkataratnam has shown great concern for the welfare of women. He wanted respectable position to women and believed in the sanctity of the institution of marriage and family. He believed in the purity in life and purity in action. Really he was a Brahmarshi. He had great respect for K.Veeresalingam and Gurazada Appa rao. Through his powerful writings and eloquent speeches, he influenced thousands of his students and others. He also worked for women uplift, supported temperance movement and like them, he was also Anti-nautch. In this chapter I have discussed about social purity and Anti-nautch movement, his views on sanctity of marriage, widow-remarriages, on Harijan uplift, untouchability and other social issues. As a practicing Brahmo, he believed in Monotheism and disliked idol worship. And at the same time he propagated inter religious understanding.

In the Chapter VIII. I have made a panoramic survey of the social reform movement in Andhra. Since 19<sup>th</sup> Century and tried to analyse the impact of these three thinkers on social reform in Andhra and how far their attempts bore fruit. And how the socio political developments in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century accelerated the social reform movements, by the latter developments like freedom movement for Indian independence. Social reformation is an ongoing process in any country and more so in a developing country like India. Social progress is not dependent on any one factor. The socio economic political and cultural development only leads to the overall development of any society and we are sure that India is in the process of integrated

development. And for this the role of K.Veerasingam, Gurazada Appa rao and R.Venkataratnam Naidu is significant and praise worthy.



# **CHAPTER – I**

## **(Introduction)**

# **Reform Trends in Andhra పరిష్కార**



## **CHAPTER I-(INTRODUCTION)**

### **REFORM TRENDS IN ANDHRA**

#### **A HISTORICAL SURVEY**

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

Two separate strands, the scholarly and the popular, may, therefore, be observed in the web of Hinduism. Popular Hinduism has had a distinct character marked by many pre-Aryan cults, polytheistic practices, pilgrimages and the like. When Hindu society came into close contact with Islam after the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Hindu advaita influenced Islam as much as Sufism influenced Hinduism. By then, both "feudalism from above" and "feudalism from within", to borrow D.D Kosambi's expressions<sup>1</sup>, had suffered a rude shock as the result of an unsuccessful military collision with Islamic hordes from Arabia, Afghanistan and central Asia. The consequent disarray in the feudal set-up of Hindu society was reflected in its religious life. It was this factor which, more than any other,

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<sup>1</sup> D D Kosambi, An introduction to the study of Indian History, Bombay, 1956, p343



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

The existence of a number of heterodox sects in the Indian society, before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, professing principles of reform, was a general phenomenon. They emerged in different parts of India including Andhra. They were founded by non-Brahmins, especially those belonging to 'low castes', these sects, without any exception, denounced the evils associated with the Brahminical Hinduism, such as polytheism, idolatry and even caste observances.<sup>2</sup> another distinctive feature common to all these sects was 'Guru worship'. To them the Guru was something more than a spiritual guide, he was a divinity incarnate<sup>3</sup>.

In Bengal, the most prominent sect was that of the *Karthabhajas* in Nadia district. The founder was an ascetic by the name Aulechand who lived in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup>. The sect's followers had no faith in caste or religion and in their gatherings, twice a year at Ghospara, people belonging to different castes and religions participated and ate together, Another sect in Bengal was called the *Spashtadayakas*, founded by Rupram Kabiraj<sup>5</sup>. Caste distinctions were not observed while admitting members into the sect. However, it was different, in one aspect, from others in that it did not recognize the divine authority of the Guru. Balarai sect was founded by Balaram Hari of a 'low caste'. The balaramis ridiculed idolatry and gave up distinctions of caste. The *sahebadhanis*, *Bauls*, *Sakhibhavakas*, *Khusi Biswasis* and *Ramvallabhis* were some other heterodox

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

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

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

5. See Pramatha Nath Bose, p. 111.



sects of Bengal during this period<sup>6</sup>.

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

Basaveswara denouneed the caste system, the Vedic rites of animal sacrifices, the inferior status of women compared to men and the ritual concepts of purity and pollution.<sup>8</sup> In the social sphere he opposed child marriages, allowed widow remarriages and pleaded for individual freedom in matrimonial matters<sup>9</sup>. Being a minister of a Jain king Bijala of Kalyan, Basava gave state support to his followers and encouraged interdining among them. He was intolerant of his opponents and quite often resorted to force to propagate his faith and to suppress his opponents. Though Veerasaivism did not develop elaborate rules of ritual, purity and pollution, a Veerasaiva was assumed to be pure, and the concept of the mixing of the pure and impure exists among them even today. It is here that Veerasaivism became a slave to tradition<sup>10</sup>

### Veera Saivism and Srivaishnavism:-

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Veerasaivism, in Andhra, contributed largely to the growth of Telugu literature. The life stories of Saivaite Saints were collected and written in Telugu poetry through the medium of native prosody (Desi matra) in dwipada<sup>10a</sup> metre<sup>11</sup>. Srivaishnavism developed in Andhra simultaneously with Veerasaivism. Its doctrines were, more or less, the same except that Vishnu was the deity instead of Siva. The original teachings of Ramanuja in favour of social equality, among which the removal of caste distinctions was an issue, were however, not abandoned in Andhra. A few rulers of the dynasties like the Velanati Chodas of Vengi and the Haihayas of Palnad patronized Srivaishnavism<sup>12</sup>.

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

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

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

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



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

### **Vemana:-**

It was during this period (in the 17<sup>th</sup> century), that Vemana, a poet-philosopher of Andhra, preached his ideas<sup>13</sup>. The times during which he was born-the last phase of the medieval period-were marked by the weak and corrupt rule of petty princes. There was general lawlessness and decline of arts and crafts. Social life was full of abuses and religion had degenerated into hypocrisy<sup>14</sup>.

Vemana was not associated with any sect nor did found one. He was a wandering saint, observing the life around him and commenting upon it. He belonged to the Reddi community in Rayalaseema area<sup>15</sup>. He expressed his views in a simple and lucid style, “useful to a beginner, though neither poetical nor classical”<sup>16</sup>. Humour was one of the chief characteristics of his poetry. Gentle irony and sweet humour were at times combined with bitter sarcasm<sup>17</sup>. He wrote about morals in an appealing style, intelligible to the common men<sup>18</sup>.

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



He attacked social inequalities and distinctions based on birth on two grounds; firstly that they were ethically wrong, and secondly, that they would sap the inherent strength of society and pave the way for its disintegration. Vemana attacked every external aspect of Hindu religiosity. He showed contempt for these Brahmin ritualists and ascetic devotees who set their hopes of salvation upon formal ceremonies<sup>19</sup>. He condemned caste and emphatically stated “that it is worth, not birth, that should determine a man’s position”<sup>20</sup>. Idolatry to him was the negation of worship and he used all sorts of derisive expressions towards those who were its slaves<sup>21</sup>. He attacked the different religions of his time as he found them full of pretensions, superstitions, rituals and symbols. Wandering from place to place he concerned himself with problems of men and spoke to them through his verses about social evils, exhorting them to liberate themselves from them. He sympathized with the lot of poor and the disabilities from which they suffered. He realized, unlike other poet-saints, that poverty was more corrupting than riches. However, he could not diagnose the causes of poverty and hence exhorted the rich to share their wealth with the poor. Like Kabir, he believed in oneness of God and his philosophy was universal-brotherhood of man<sup>22</sup>. He disapproved untouchability. According to him degraded human status was determined by low character, not by birth.<sup>23</sup>.

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



However, vemana's ideas on women were no better than the conventional Hindu view. It was here that Vemana fell from his reforming pedestal. He considered women as a source of evil and undependable. A woman should be kept under check and her movements should be strictly controlled. W. H. Campbell provided an explanation for this saying that in India women were opponents of reform soaked as they were in conformism<sup>24</sup>. this was however only a partial truth. After all conservatism of women was due to ignorance born of their backwardness for which men were largely responsible.

Vemana was thus a great phenomenon in Andhra during the middle ages. His philosophy was primarily humanism. He mainly concerned himself with man and his miserable state in society. His was a revolt against Hinduism which was infested with castes, rituals and superstitions. However, vemana, like other social reformers (generally mystic in their outlook and preaching the cult of bhakti) of the medieval times, was only a temporary phenomenon and his influence did not last long. In the absence of any fundamental change in the socio- economic structure of society such attempts were bound to fail<sup>25</sup>.

### Pothuluri Veerabrahmam:-

Pothuluri Veerabrahmam, popularly known as brahmam garu a Viswabrahmin by birth, was another reformer of this period<sup>26</sup>. Though the exact date of Veerabrahmam is

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

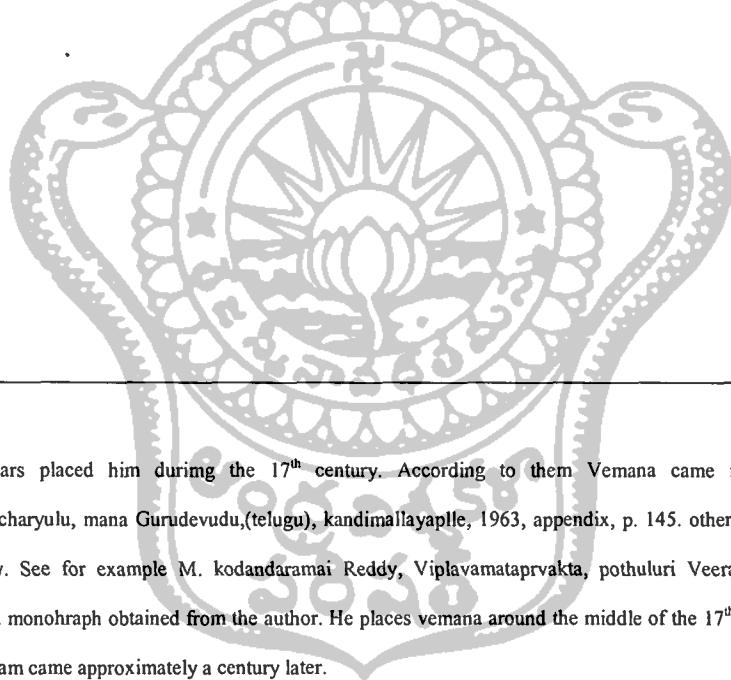
25. See D.P. Mukherjee, modern Indian culture, Bombay, 1948, first edn . 1942, p. 16, wherein he states that within the constraints of social system they were p. 16, where in he states that within the constraints of social system they were active revolutionaries but not dynamic ones.

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



uncertain the consensus among scholars is that he belonged to the period after Vemana<sup>27</sup>.

Veera brahmam propagated his ideas of reform through poems written in a simple style, called *Kalagnana Tatvalu*.<sup>28</sup> It is not known for certain whether veerabrahmam was a disciple of Vemana<sup>29</sup>. In his childhood, he was under the influence of Veerasaivism as his father was at the head of the Veerasaiva monastery (Peetha) at *papaghni* in the Karnataka Region<sup>30</sup> and had his schooling in the Vedic literature. The social conditions of Andhra during his period were not much different from the times of Vemana.



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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Of the some yogic tradition, of comparatively modern times, the prominent heterodox sect that deserves mention was the Nasraiah sect. Nasraiah, a Muslim of the Syed lineage died about 1825.<sup>36</sup> He preached mostly among the Madigas,<sup>37</sup> a moral code of good behaviour and also exhorted them not to worship idols and preached the unity of the Godhead. His centre of activity was the area around Vinukonda and Narasaraopet in the present Guntur district and his influence was fairly wide spread there. To belong the Nasraiah sect "meant advancement to the Madigas...It raised them in the social scale too."<sup>38</sup> They realized that Nasraiah's theism was better than the polytheism of their village cults. It should, however, be noted that the atmosphere of theism and social dissent created by the Nasraiah sect in Ongole (of the then Guntur district) area was made use of later by the missionaries for their own proselytizing efforts. It was in this area that the missionaries reaped a rich harvest by effecting a large number of conversions.

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

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

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

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



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

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

#### **EARLY BRITISH ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOCIAL REFORM**

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

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



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

### Charter Act 1813:-

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

### Activities of Missionaries:-

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

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

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

43. Julius Richter, pp.153-54.

44. S Sathianathan, p.52.



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

The missionary activities embraced the whole of the Andhra region. Education was their main interest, although they were also running orphanages, medical centres and industrial establishments. There was considerable increase in the total number of Christians (as shown in the table below) in Andhra between 1857-78.<sup>45</sup>

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

#### ***BRITISH ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOCIAL REFORM BEFORE 1857: UTILITARIAN TRENDS***

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

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

49. Charless H Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, O.P.U., 1964, p. 50. Several other scholars have held similar views R.C.Majumdar, ed., *British Paramoontey and Indian Renaissance*, P.II, Bombay 1665, pp 268-84, argued that missionaries played a significant role in the enlightenment of Bengal; Kenneth Ingham, p 122, N S Bose, *Indian Awakening and Bengal*, Calcutta, 1969, p.118, D.V.Siva Rao, “Christianization of India”, *Immoral Message*, Vol.2, No.6 (May, 1940) states that the Christian missionaries, had brought about a cultural revolution in India; J.F. Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements in India*, New Delhi, first Indian edn. 1967, p 387, M Venkataramiah, *Bharat Swatntroyama Charitra*, Part II (Telugu), Secunderabad 1976, p.97.



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

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

#### PRE-VEERESALINGAM PERIOD IN ANDHRA

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

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

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

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

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

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

55. Ibid., pp.165-66.



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

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

56 *Ibid*, pp 95-96

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

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

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



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

Another book, called *Stree Kalakollolini*, written by Jiyyar Suri and published Bangalore in 1875.<sup>64</sup> The book consisting of short essays was meant to meet the shortage of books for girls in the Telugu language. Each essay also had an English title, like 'Female education is not contrary to ancient usage', 'The beauty of knowledge', 'Uneducated females are enemies to children', 'The earth and other elements serve mankind', 'The whole world forms one family'.

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

60. *Ibid.*, p.165.

61. *Ibid.*, p.166.

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

63. *Ibid.*, p.216.

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

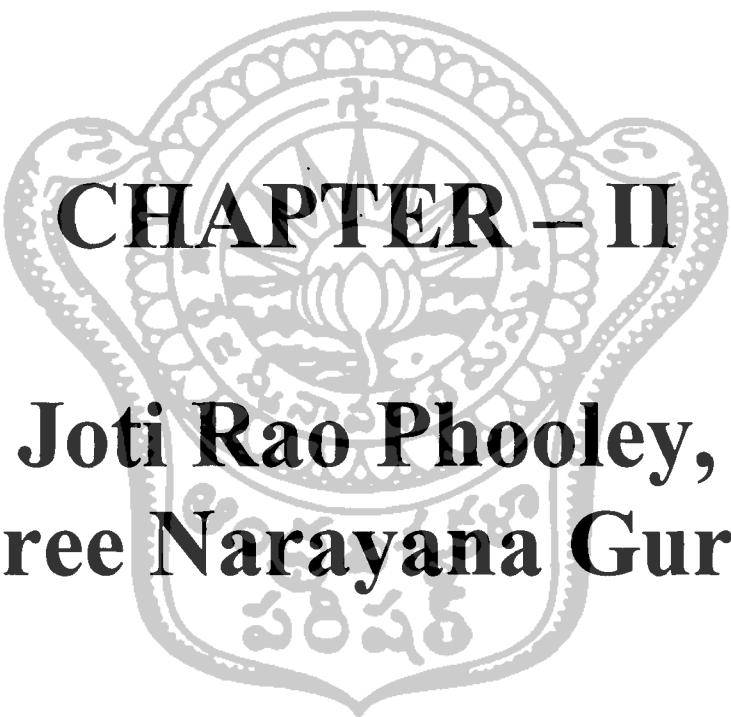


submitted to the government of Madras in 1870.<sup>65</sup> He Started that “the present style of Hindu marriages is so very ignominous and absurd and their effects so piteous and unremediable.”<sup>66</sup> Summing up the arguments, he stated that early marriages, the disproportionate age of the husband as compared to the wife, their mutual ignorance of each other before marriage and the payment of bride-price (Kanyasulkam), were the notable evils connected with the institution of marriage, resulting in widowhood and several other improper and immoral ways of behaviour. He proposed remedial measures such as banning early marriages and Kanyasulkam, fixing an age limit for girls (minimum nine years) and boys (sixteen at the lowest) and consultation by and consent of the couples prior to marriage”.<sup>67</sup> He drafted a questionnaire on these issues and asked the Government to circulate it among leading scholars and public men of all districts in Andhra and elicit their opinions before favourable laws on them.<sup>68</sup>

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

65. Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department, G.O.No.97, 25 January, T.A. Vedantachari submitted in December 1870 the elaborate memorandum running into twelve pages in English with a Telugu translation, to the Assistant Secretary Legislative Department, For St. George, Madras.
66. *Ibid.* For a period of nine months, according to his memorandum, he consulted several scholars in Visakhapatnam district, including the most orthodox ones, and, came to certain conclusions to be placed before the Government.
67. *Ibid.*, He was pleading for civil marriages when he proposed that marriages be registered in the Tahsildar's cutchery before their celebration.
68. Though not on the same lines but a similar trend was seen among some other scholars during the same period. A tract in Telugu, on the marriageable age of girls was written by Chadaluvada Ananthama Sastry, the brother of Seetharama Sastry who was a Telugu Pandit in the Presidency College, Madras. The theme of the tract was that a girl should marry only after the attained marriageable age of sixteen. See the Telugu translation of original Sanskrit text by O.Venkatarangaiah, *Vivahakanya Swaroopa Niroopanam* (Telugu), Madras, 1928, p.5. It appears that Anantharama Sastry submitted his tract, for approval to Sankaracharya of Kanchipuram. Then followed several tracts criticizing and condemning it. To mention only two of the tracts, viz., (1) A native of Madras, Srirama Sastry wrote the tract in Sanskrit, and (2) Gurram Venkanna Sastry of Nellore wrote *Vadprahasanaamu*, informed, gave up his caste later and took part in interdining with people of other castes. See K.Purushotham, “Gopinatham Venkata Kavi and other Poets of Venkagiri Samastanam”, pp. 480-82, Osmania University Ph.D. Thesis (Telugu), 1970.





**CHAPTER – II**

**Joti Rao Phooley,**  
**Sree Narayana Guru**

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## CHAPTER - II.

### JOTI RAO PHOOLEY (1827-1890) and Sree NARAYANAGURU (1856 - 1928)

In the reformation activities two eminent persons who did considerably great work in the field of social reform in the south were – Joti Rao phooley in Maharastra and Narayana Guru in Kerla. Both of them brought great changes in their areas and they were in a way the harbingers of a new transformed societies.

#### Joti Rao Phooley:-

Joti Rao was born in the 1827. as the younger son of Govinda Rao who was a flower vendor in Poona. His origins are thus humble and all through his life he struggled hard for the amelioration of the depressed classes and for the welfare of women.

Jotirao was the first Indian to start a school for the untouchables and a girls school in Maharastra.<sup>1</sup> He wanted to remove the ignorance and superstition of the Shudras, Atishudras and Indian women and to break the shackles of their slavery. So he heroically threw open the gates of knowledge to the lower classes and to Indian women. It was his aim to reconstruct the social order on the basis of social equality, justice and reason.

Jotiro naturally had to face opposition and also indifference at the hands of the Maharastrian writers and authors of his day who were mainly Brahmins. The prejudices of this adversaries who came from the Brahmin caste were so intense and the boycott of his name by them so complete that even those who carried on his battle for social justice, for educational opportunities and for removal of ignorance and superstition. Could not come forward to work on a biography of jotirao.

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<sup>1</sup> He started the first school for girls in the year 1848 August



Jotirao's attack on Brahminism was unmistakable. The Hinduism of his day had decayed and deteriorated into Brahminism which, according to him, bred social inequality and resulted into privileges and power for and defication of the Brahmins as a class. He realized that the seeds of their power, supremacy and privileges lay in their scriptures and puranas; and these works and the caste system were created to exploit the lower classes.

It is not Jotirao alone who said that Brahmanical scriptures were written to exploit the lower classes. A few years after Jotirao's death, Swami Vivekanand, giving his verdict on them, expressed the same view. The Swami said that whenever the Brahmins wrote anything they would deny all rights to others and he added that Vyasa tried to put meanings upon the Vedas to cheat the poor Shudras.<sup>2</sup>

So Jotirao attacked the Brahmanical scriptures and puranas, revolted against priestcraft and the caste system and set on foot a social movement for the liberation of the Shudras, Atishudras (Untouchables) and women. He was above caste. He agitated for the welfare of the Indian peasants and labour and it should be noted that the Indian peasants and labour Movement is an offshoot of his social movement. His sympathies were broader and were not confined to the labour classes. He started girls schools for the benefit of all classes, championed the cause of widow remarriage, conducted an orphanage and praised the work of those Brahmins who stood for social justice and reason.

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2. The complete works of Swami Vivekananda Mayavati Memorial Edition, Vol IV (1948), P.305.



In short, Jotirao stood for the dignity of man, religious toleration and human rights. He regarded all Indians as equal and free and declared that one law should be applicable to man and woman.

Fuss should not be made about Jotirao's attack on the Congress of his day. The earlier leaders of the Indian National Congress openly said that they wished to make British rule permanent in India. On the contrary, Jotirao, who had opposed the Poona Municipality spending money on the decoration of the city and on the address to be given to a British Governor-General on the occasion of his visit, believed that British rule would some day end. He had nothing to do with the Congress leaders of his day who did not care to associate themselves with the peasants, labour and Untouchables. A patriot of humanity, he was not prepared to regard those leaders as patriots who did not respect human dignity and the human rights of their countrymen. So high was the level of his patriotism.

Jotirao's life is thus an inspiration to those who really aim at achieving emotional integration and at giving a human, social and economic content to the Swaraj of India.

Noble Socrates was given poison and driven to death by hatred. Yet he lost no peace of mind. Look into his works. Those who live with reason and truth for the welfare of the world make posterity and themselves happy. Vedantists should not tolerate discriminations and prejudice. A rationalist will not take to religious practices and mutterings of *mantras*. That dedication is fruitless. A rationalist will not tonsure poor widows and will not worship stones and metals and trees.



Jotirao is a better poet than prose writer. His poems have a good flow. His prose is a wild fruit. It is not sweet but has medicinal properties. The prose is rough, at times suffers from grammatical errors and is occasionally obscene. Jotirao's poems reveal his wisdom and humanism.

Jotirao wrote a book called *Sarvajanik Satya Dharma Pustaka* which was posthumously published. *It is book on religion.*

In the preface dated April 1, 1889, to the book, which Jotirao has written for the benefit of all, he says that the Almighty has created numerous solar systems with stars and planets and various creatures. He has written this book to teach how men and women should follow the right path and live peacefully for the glory of God and the happiness of humanity, keeping in mind the Almighty, and enjoying the fruit of the holy and veracious kingdom of God.

Although Jotirao revolted against the Brahminical scriptures, he stuck to the main theme in Hindu philosophy that insists on the kingdom of God and not on the establishment of an earthly empire.

Almost all leaders of the *Satya-Shodhak Samaj* have on several occasions accepted the fact that Jotirao had abandoned Hindu superstitions and customs, rigid and irrational rites, rituals, dogmas and ceremonies, and simplified the other forms of Hindu ritual.

Jotirao worked and lived for the people. He taught people to think over religious rites and their origins, and he interpreted to them their correctness or falsehood as the case might be. He refuted idolatry and upheld belief in one God. He believed that people should not be exploited in matters of religion and in the practical world.



In the *Sarvajanik Satya-Dharma Pustaka* Jotirao further observe: "All religious works are written by men and they do not contain truth from beginning to end. Changes were made by certain obstinate men in these books to suit certain occasions and the requirements of the times. So religions have not become equally helpful to all; and they give rise to divisions and cults full of hatred and envy.

God created all things. He is kind and desires that all should enjoy human rights. If the earth we inhabit is created by God why should the peoples of different countries, be torn asunder ....when there are so many rivers in different countries how can a particular river in a particular country become the most sacred? That most sacred river does not hesitate to carry with its water the droppings of dogs. All men possess the same kind of features and intellect. Nobody is sacred by birth. Everybody has his virtues and vices as a human being.

Joti rao says offering food to God, is not the proper way of honouring him. Those men of the society who serve the people and by chance become helpless in old age, should be supported, and the orphans and crippled children should be maintained. The man whose conduct does not show discrimination, and who loves and serves all irrespective of caste or creed, be he a Brahmin, or a Red Indian or Mahar, he should be entertained at dinner.<sup>3</sup>

There is no such thing as heaven. It is no part of the universe. Woman is superior to man. One can repay the gratitude of all persons except the mother. She is the beauty of the home; she is the kind eye that guards all.

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3. Mahatma Joti rao pooley (Father of the Indian social revolution) Dhananjay Kheer. P.253, Bombay. Popular Prakashan 1964.



Woman is by nature weak. Man is greedy and bold. So he bent her to his will and kept her under his domination very selfishly by preventing her from acquiring worldly knowledge. Polygamy is cruel. Man is the source of greed, hatred and sin.

There should not be discrimination between laws for men and women. One law should be applicable to both. A man is allowed to marry three women, but a woman marrying three persons is not tolerated. So a man must not be allowed to marry more than one woman if his wife is alive. Greedy men have adopted these selfish laws. There should not be one law for the Brahmins and another for the Shudras. British rule has introduced laws before which every man, Brahmin or non-Brahmin, is equal.

Those who believe that man and woman are born free and they have all rights to enjoyment are followers of truth. Those who do not worship stars and stones but the God of the Universe are followers of truth. Those who, instead of dedicating things to God with the false notion of propitiating him, do not prevent human beings from enjoying things created in the world and who allow others to sing the glory of God, are followers of Truth. Those who do not hurt causelessly any creature in the world are followers of Truth. Those who do not individually or unitedly make aggression on others are followers of truth. God has given us freedom and religion. Those who do not deprive others of their rights or put others to a loss are followers of Truth. Those who regard excepting their wives, all other men and women as their brothers and sisters, are followers of truth. Every man or woman has a God-given right to freedom of expression in writing, speaking and publishing; he or she should not do it in such a way as to deprive others of their rights. Then alone they are followers of truth. Those who do not condemn others for their political views or religious beliefs and do not harass them are followers of truth.



Those who protect the rights of all men and women to property and freedom, and protect them from harassment are followers of truth. Those who do not take wine and opium or those who do not help such drunkards are followers of Truth. Those who do not kill beings except bugs, lice, scorpions, serpents, jackals, lions and tigers, and do not help greedy persons and murderers or suicides are followers of truth.

Those teachers who do not show partiality in teaching their pupils on account of casteist prejudices or those who condemn men who do so, are followers of truth. Those who are impartial in dispensing justice are followers of truth.

Those who help the men suffering from dangerous disease, or orphans or crippled or respect them who do so are men of right conduct. The religious books which are prepared by great men for the use of the common man contain some truth. If in a family a woman on reading Buddhism follows Buddhism, her husband on reading the Bible follows Christianity and her daughter follows Islam if she has read the Koran, or if the son is a Satya-Shodhak Samajian, they should not hate each other's faith. They should consider themselves as belonging to God's family and as children of one God.

Astrology has nothing to do with the future of a man. The birth of daughter should be as pleasing to man as the birth of a son. The function of naming the male child should be performed on the 12<sup>th</sup> day and in case of a female child should be performed on the 13<sup>th</sup> day. A child should be given milk at the breast of the mother for the first six months if possible. The mother should teach the child gradually.

Marriage should be settled by a girl or a boy in consultation with their elders. The boy and the girl should give proper thought to the matter. They should take a vow just after the marriage. They should give gifts to poor men irrespective of caste or creed.



Those who have lived virtuously and unselfishly die a peaceful death. They have no terrors of anything. While on the death bed one should call his relatives and friends, advise them to follow the path of truth, and then bid them farewell:

Oh God! You gave me concice and reson. I lived a truthful life in the world in obedience to your will receive my relatives and others also for their having lived a truthful life. Let your kingdom of truth prevail. Thus one should pray.

Thus filled with a heroic ethical purpose, Joti rao's ethico – religious personality stands on a high spiritual plane. By his emphasis on Truth, equality and Humanism, Mahatma Phooley occupies a place in the pantheon of great thinkers and sages of India.



### **Sree Narayana Guru (1856-1928):-**

Another great social reformer of this period was Sri Narayanaguru of Kerala who has transformed the lives of many depressed classes in Kerala.

About Sri Narayana Guru, Rabindranath Tagore said “I have Been touring different parts of the world. During these travels I have had the good fortune to come into contact with several saints and Maharshis (great saints). But I have frankly to admit that I have never come across one who is spiritually greater than Swami Sree Narayana Guru of Kerala –nay, a person who is on a par with him in spiritual attainments.

I am sure I shall never forget that radiant face, illuminated by self-efulgent light of divine glory and those yogic eyes fixing their gaze on a remote point on the distant horizon.”

That was the impression which Tagore gathered when he met the Guru in 1922.

Romain Rolland the famous French thinker sums up his observations by recording.

“The great Guru Sree Narayana’s teaching was permeated with the philosophy of Sanakara .... He was, one might say, Jnanin (one who has knowledge of self) in action, a grand religious intellectual, who had a living sense of the people and of social necessities. He has contributed greatly to the elevation of the oppressed classes (there were two million of them) in south India, and his work had been associated at certain times with that of Gandhi.”



Gandhi always referred to the Guru as his Holiness Sree Narayana Guru and accepted the Guru's points of view while intensifying Harijan uplift activities.

Today, Sree Narayana Guru's life, his message and his activities have urgent and specific relevance to India in particular and the world at large in general.

The Guru was an Adwaitin (believer in non-dualism) in the sense in which Sankara acharya was, but with a difference. In his sixteen years of preaching Adwalta (non-dualism) philosophy and establishing it as the sublime contribution of India to the world of metaphysical thought, the Acharya had created an elite who were to carry on his tradition. The Guru carries on the tradition, but in doing so extends it so as to becomes a Jnanin (follower of the path of knowledge of self) in action incarnated for the benefit of the suffering multitudes.

Within a period of less than half a century, he had transformed the depressed castes of Kerala from dust into men who could stand on their own legs as self-respecting human beings. Thanks to his activities, they could walk on the public roads with complete freedom. The roads around temples were thrown open to them in 1925 and the temple authorities were forbidden by law in 1936 to refuse entry to the untouchables into the temples, years before anything like it happened in other parts of India.

All roads lead to the same summit, so say the Adwaitins. The guru added a practical rider to it, saying that each man has to start the journey from the point at which he finds himself. The longest journey, says a Chinese proverb, starts with the first step. He began with that first step and lighted the way for his followers along the entire journey, by message, by reform of social customs, by provision of different types of

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houses of worship and. Above all, by metaphysical writing shorn of all irrelevant embellishments.<sup>4</sup>

Wherever there are down-trodden, underprivileged groups in the world, message of Sree Narayana Garu. “Educate that you may be free; organize that you may be strong; industrialise that your financial status may improve<sup>5</sup> – “has relevance at all times.

All these programmes have however, to be based on deep religious faith that the supreme ONE alone exists and all that we see are only its variegated manifestations. Every man's face is different from that of every other man and yet no one ever doubts that we are all human beings and therefore sons of the same Father in heaven.

The adwaita Philosophy of the Guru will prevent mutual cooperation and professions of oneness from deteriorating into a carnal philosophy of human pragmatism.

The message of 'One caste, one religion, one God for man should not have a commercial mentality behind it, if the United Nations Organisation and other world bodies are to succeed in their mission. Sree Narayana Guru's message has a universal significance and relevance for all times.

<sup>4</sup> Sree Narayana guru , Murkot Kunhappa, published by National book trust, New Delhi printed at kay kay printers, kamala Nagar Delhi, Year, 1982.p.vii

<sup>5</sup>. Ibid



### **Birth and Childhood:-**

Sree Narayana garu was born in A.D. 1856 in Chembazanthi a quiet little town, about 12 kilometers north of Trivandrum, the capital of the then Indian native state of Travancore. Trivandrum is today the capital of Kerala, one of the most fascinating States of India, nestling in the south west corner, with the western Ghats in the east and the Arabian Sea on the west forming its main borders.

There are two communities in Kerala known generally as Nairs and Ezhavas, who form the largest castes in that state. Nairs were Sudras belonging to the hierarchy of the Varna (Caste) system and so were counted among the cluster of the higher castes known as Savarnas (those having caste). The Ezhavas were an unapproachable caste belonging to the group of castes outside the Varna system and were, therefore, avarnas (outcasts, those not in the caste purview). Sree Narayana Guru was born an Ezhava.

Contact with Ezhavas at a distance of 12 feet was supposed to pollute the Savarnas this pollution distance increasing as one went up the scale of castes until at last the Ezhava polluted the Brahmin at a distance of 32 feet. At the same time, there used to be a number of castes below the Ezhava, one below the other, who polluted each other in various ways at varying distances. The maltreatment which these Avanas had to suffer was so horrible and meaningless that Swami Vivekananda characterized Kerala as the 'lunatic asylum of India'.

Untouchable, may even unapproachable and down – trodden, as the Ezhavas happened to be, there were even in those dark days a fair sprinkling of vaidyas or physicians among them practicing the Ayurvedic system, whose texts were in classical Sanskrit. Naturally, therefore, there were Sanskrit scholars of high caliber among them.



In fact, the entire landscape of Kerala is peppered with Ezhava Vaidyas (physicians) and Sanskrit scholars so much so too, survived among the masses in Kerala due to the Ezhava Vaidyas. Of course, the Namboodiri Brahmins were the repositories of Sanskrit and sastras like Ayurveda. But they were inaccessible to the ordinary run of men and their number was small.

Sree Narayana Guru provided guidelines on religion to the people at large-people who had to live an active rather than a contemplative life. He wanted them to understand that religion was not a mere formula or a set of rites and ceremonies, but a way of life. It permeated all life and was devoid of differences between the sacred and the profane.

Adwaita philosophy becomes pointless unless it teaches men to treat their followmen as equals. In Kerala, the greatest impediment to such conduct was the abominable caste system. Naturally, therefore, the Guru's message of universal love was expressed in the idiom of the people of Kerala, when he said: *One caste for man.*

The Ezhavas who numbered several lakhs were divided into Thiyyas, Chovans, Thandans, etc., who did not intermarry Swami's advent very soon moulded them into one community throughout entire Kerala. The temples, institutes, hostels, etc., of the Ezhavas were thrown open to all castes. As one humorist put it: "Even Brahmins were now permitted temple entry."

When several branches of the Ezhavas who had so far lived more or less in closed circles were wrought into one big community, thereby becoming the largest caste, the Nairs and others too combined together and formed bigger groups or societies for their own betterment. Further, the repercussions of Sree Narayana Guru's activities resulted in



all castes of Kerala opening their eyes and taking vigorous action to reform their own customs and rites. By this time, i.e. the early decades of the twentieth century, the reform movement and activities of the Arya Samaj, the Brahmo Samaj, the Ramakrishna Mission and the Servants of India society had spread their influence in Kerala society, thereby accelerating and informing the social movements here with modernizing tendencies.

The Nambudiris of Kerala, who were counted as the most orthodox of Brahmins, now became one of the foremost of radical communities in India. Their revolutionary activities on the fields of widow remarriage, etc. Were most amazing. The Nairs formed a society on the lines of the Servants of Indian Society and effected. Most significant changes in social life. The Pulayas stood up as men conscious of their rights. Happily, however, there was no violent animosity in Kerala in those days towards such activities by different castes.

The seed for it all was sown by Sree Narayana Guru who had thus in his own unobtrusive way upturned the virgin soil of orthodoxy and brought forth a goodly harvest of welcome changes with in a short span of 50 years. Kerala is unique in that the untouchable castes here have progressed much more and much faster than in the other states of India.

This great progress was achieved without shedding a single drop of blood. Although the earlier struggles by the lower castes against oppression had produced violent fights with the vested interest, the movement for self-dependent in their rise in the social field under the leadership of Sree Narayana Guru was obstructed, if at all, in a more in those days where the higher castes came out to help and lead the movement of the untouchables for their rights.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid p 50



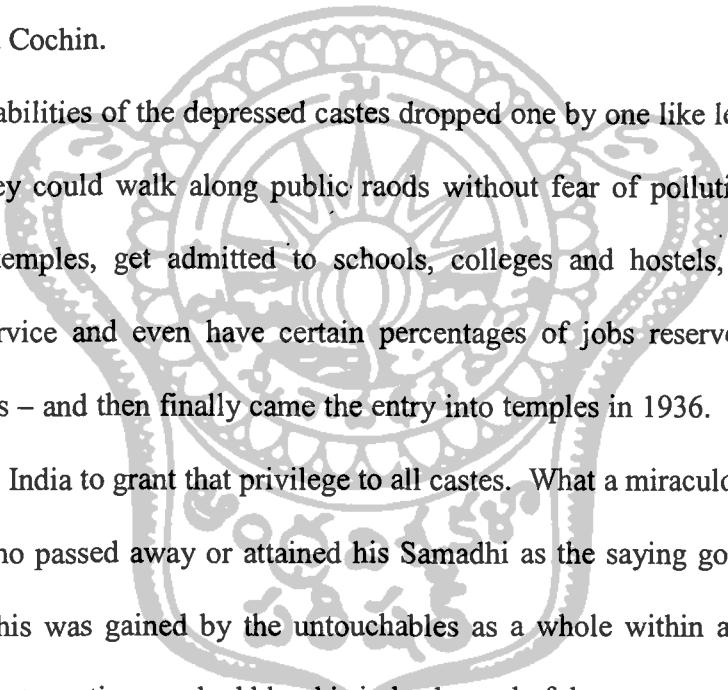
### **Their Achievements:-**

The Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam or S.N.D.P., as it is popularly known, was a society founded in 1903 under the aegis of the Guru for the dissemination of the ideals of Sree Narayana Dharma among the masses and for the uplift of the down-trodden castes of Kerala. Anyone from any caste could be a member of the Society. Quite naturally the reins of the society came into the hands of the Ezhavas, who happened to be in an overwhelming majority among its members. The Swami's ideal which was one of universalism was not affected by this circumscription of the society's leadership because everyone of them working under the Guru was heart and soul for the uplift of all depressed castes.

This uniformity of the S.N.D.P.'s membership facilitated the smooth management of the Society. The Ezhavas were numerically the largest caste, a factor which lent strength to their movements. They had a pivotal position, being at the top of the hierarchy of the untouchables and just below the Nairs. What they achieved inspired all castes below them to emulate their move for betterment, and induced the higher caste to examine and improve the customs and ways of their respective castes. The Ezhava tradition of Vaidyas (physicians) and Sanskrit scholars, landlords and richmen on top among them equipped them for quick progress up the social ladder. Their leader was a great saint and so the whole movement was imbued with a spiritual aura. Moreover, they had already made some trial movements earlier towards bettering their position in life, and achieved some success although those attempts involved some sporadic violence. They, therefore, welcomed this opportunity of struggling with greater dignity and aplomb.



The S.N.D.P. now had its vast annual gatherings. They were graced in its earlier days by the presence of the Guru who gave them guidance and determined the tenor of the deliberations. People assembled in hundreds and later in thousands, some special meetings having more than half – a – lakh of people who listened in pin-drop silence to speeches made without the aid of loud-speakers. Those meetings would very often be addressed by the higher castes and also by officialdom, including the Dewans of Travancore and Cochin.



The disabilities of the depressed castes dropped one by one like leaves in autumn until at last they could walk along public roads without fear of polluting anyone, use roads around temples, get admitted to schools, colleges and hostels, secure jobs in government service and even have certain percentages of jobs reserved for different groups of castes – and then finally came the entry into temples in 1936. Travancore was the first state in India to grant that privilege to all castes. What a miraculous achievement for the guru who passed away or attained his Samadhi as the saying goes in 1928! To think that all this was gained by the untouchables as a whole within a space of thirty years and without creating any bad blood is indeed wonderful.

### **Vaikom Satyagraha:**

T.K. Madhavan who was the third secretary worked like a Trojan, increasing the membership of the Yogam from 4,000 to 50,000 in four months. He organized the whole movement into a well-oiled machine that spurred to action every man, woman and child, In the Vaikom Satyagraha movement which he initiated for achieving the freedom of the roads round the upper – caste temple at Vaikom, he brought mahatma Gandhi to the South to bless his endeavours and guide the volunteers. Here was someone putting into



practice what Mahatmaji had been dreaming all along. The Guru, whom Gandhiji met, commanded the greatest respect from him. Always he referred to the Swami as His Holiness Sree Narayana Guru. His influence persuaded the Mahatma to redouble his efforts for Harijan uplift.

The Swami's spirituality was so inspiring and T.K. Madhavan's electrifying enthusiasm so contagious that the broad – minded higher castes responded in a manner that is not easily equaled or surpassed in the history of social reform in India.

During the Vaikom Satyagraha, Madhavan was supported by broad-minded higher caste leader. The Brahmin, Nilakandhan namboodiripad, a fearless freedom fighter and a social reformer of the front rank worked hand in hand with him. K.P. Keshavan Menon, a Gandhian, and Mannath padmanabham were his other close associate and advisers among higher castes who went to jail along with Madhavan for this cause. It is intriguing to note that Mannath Padmanabhan was the founder of the Nair Service society which was working for the welfare of the Nair community. Here he was offering Satyagraha and going to jail for the rights of communities who were below the Nairs also.

Not satisfied with the struggle and the arrest that followed, Mannath Padmanabhan led two processions starting from the north and south, consisting of one thousand Savarnas (higher castes) each, walking a distance of more than one hundred miles to Trivandrum, the capital for the State, and presenting a memorial to the maharaja on behalf of the entire group of lower castes. The Maharaja was sympathetic, but allowed the question to be decided by the legislative Assembly. Within a year, roads round the temples were thrown open to all castes. The year was 1925.



C.Kesavan gave the Ezhavas their main baptism in politics, and conjoined its activities with the movement for representative government. This was a new line where the Ezhavas joined hands with the Christians and the Muslims and fought for freedom.

R.Sankar, another stalwart Secretary of the S.N.D.P., concentrated on educational expansion. Within a decade and a half, the Yogam had 13 colleges under it.

### **Their Social Reforms:-**

The Comprehensive Scheme of activities which the Guru suggested to the down-trodden to take up for their advancement included social reform also. As far back as 1912, he summed up the various proposal which he had been suggesting at different times in response to the needs of each occasion.

Education appropriate to the times was, he said, the Sine quanon of all progress. Society did have enough promising boys who could grow up as assets to any community. Lack of money was the main obstacle that prevented them from rising to higher levels. Rich men should come forward to help these intelligent, studious, hard-working lads by granting them scholarships and other monetary aids.

Girls' education should be encouraged, and should never be neglected. Suppressed humanity should be made to stand up on its own legs. The masses should be provided with cottage industries and work-places in the cooperative sector. Instead of continuing as suppliers of raw materials to the affluent countries and purchasing finished products from them at high cost, they should produce manufactured goods in this country itself and thus help the poor. Let the money of the rich be utilized for these purposes also.



Universal education is indispensable. Adult literacy and establishment of libraries in every locality should be encouraged. While waiting for the unlettered to learn to read and write and progress slowly, leaders should provide them with short-cuts to cultural advancement. Learned men should inculcate modern ideas and culture in the illiterate through speeches, songs, dramas and similar means of development of culture.

The S.N.D.P had started a magazine called "Vivekodayam" which aimed at raising the cultural level of the ordinary man by a process of selective modernization. Kumaran Asan who edited the journal, was the greatest disciple of the Swami and one of the greatest thinkers and poets of modern Kerala.

Religious practices, social customs and rites often have, the Swami said, symbolic meanings which should not be overlooked. The magazine advocated a modern approach to inter-communal marriages and also in reforming and shortening the duration of various ceremonies as well as in economizing in their cost. The status of marriage rites was raised to that of sacrament, costly, meaningless customs, etc. were to be abolished.

The orthodox who did not quite appreciate these changes raised the canard that Asan was writing on his own, without Swami's consent or even knowledge. This suspicion was cleared by Swami at one or two public functions when he advocated the need to adopt these reforms by the community.

In those days the marriages of non-Brahmins were, as a rule, merely social functions, the Brahmin marriages alone being sacraments with prayers, *Mantras*, vows, *Poojas* and all the rest of it, taking up three or four day's time.



Swami converted the non-Brahmin marriages also into sacramental ceremonies with the performance of *Pooja*, the chanting of vedic veres, the exchange of vows, and with other concomitant observances-all of them hand-picked by the Guru out of the elaborate rituals of the orthodox Hindu marriage system. The Guru, who knew the modern man's mind through and through, limited the duration of the wedding ceremony to half an hour. And for those who were too busy even for that, he prescribed an abridged version that would last only ten minutes.

It is interesting to note that after Swami's close followers among the Ezhavas had adopted this sacramental ceremony and conducted it in temples, non-Brahmins such as the Nairs, and other commended transferring their marriage functions to the precincts of temples.

The Ezhavas and some of the higher cases used to conduct a mock-marriage prior to the regular marriage which took place only after a girl came of age. A small ornament called the Tali which was the symbol of the martial status was tied round the neck of the child by the person who conducted the ceremony. The real marriage ceremony, however, was performed after the girl had grown up the bridegroom being someone else altogether. The Guru declared that this *Tali Kettu* (tying of the Tali) function was meaningless and ordered its abolition. In some cases, he sent message to this effect direct to the parents of the children. In one or two instances, he walked into the midst of the crowd at the eleventh hour of the function and persuaded the father of the girl to stop the ceremony. The fathers agreed. It is noteworthy that in one instance it was the mother of the child who agreed to the stoppage of the function more readily than the father.



Another custom stopped by the Guru was the public feast and function conducted when a girl attained puberty.

These and other similar functions abolished by the Guru saved the families thousands of rupees which were being lavishly squandered in carrying out social ceremonies that had become redundant in this age. By a sort of osmotic process the Nairs and other castes too stopped observing these functions after the Ezahava community had carried out the reforms at the instance of the Swami.

Space does not permit the narration of all the social changes brought about by the Guru. Among them, however, the amalgamation of small castes deserves special mention.

There were certain castes in Kerala who were numerically so small that those microscopic minorities suffered certain disabilities peculiar to themselves. They were unable to stand up against the atrocities committed on them. As they were scattered in different localities, they found it difficult even to get their children married to members of their own caste. The Swami made the Ezhavas gather them into their fold and thereby saved them from a social crisis. The year in which he did this was as early as 1906.

It was more or less in this connection that he asked almost in despair. "A casteless society has to be formed. Who will work for it"?

The thought led to the formation of the Sree Narayana Dharma Samaj, consisting of *Sanayasis* whom he had enrobed, a samaj that was drawn from different castes including Brahmins, Nairs, Ezhavas and others.



The institutions at Sivagiri, Alwaye, etc, where caste distinctions had been wiped away from the very beginning are run by this Samaj of Sanyasis who were Brahmacharis (celebrates) with no worldly burdens of wife, children, family, etc., to restrict their service to the weal of mankind. They also run religious institutions, schools, charitable dispensaries, etc. Illuminating the minds of the lowest castes by the philosophy taught by the Swami is also part of their missions.

As early as 1921 he stated that "Alcohol is poison. It should not be produced, sold or consumed," anticipating the promulgation of prohibition by several years.

### Guru's Teachings:-

The Guru shows us the Vedantic way of understanding. His great philosophical poem *Atmopadesa Sataka* repeatedly tells us that mere knowledge is not enough. Look within – go and find search – try and experience – see how it works – think – practice what you are told. These repeated exhortations of his are intended to make one realize again and again that the comprehender of Vedanta does not mean a man who graphs the verbal meaning of the lines, but one who has verified the truths in his own person.

As the mystics would have it a person has to become what the knowns.

Sree Narayana Guru's religion is a way of confronting life in all its aspects. All mankind has to be responsive to true spiritual realization by living a amity, good fellowship, and love, free from all antagonism of race, nationality, creed or caste. This has to be done in the name of the one supreme being who is santam (calm, tranquil), Sivam (auspicious), Adwaitam (one), that is the under standing which produces the same result as in the case of an excited visionary who relises cosmic truths. The two processes



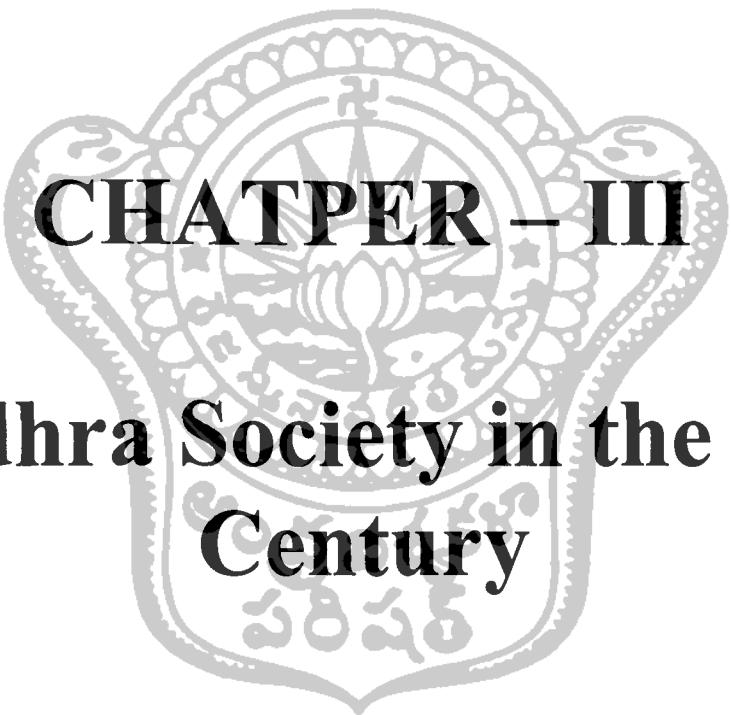
are one Practise it and you will actually experience, even when you cannot understand it through reasoning, how spirituality penetrates all activity.

The greatest emphasis is therefore laid by the Guru on the formula that there are both a theory and a corresponding way of life that cannot be divided. The Guru expounds this philosophy in terms of one tradition and then in terms of another, repeating at every opportunity: Verify it in yourself, verify it.

The great Swami, who contributed so much for the reformation of the caste ridden and superstitions kerala, and for the uplift of the down trodden attained Samadhi on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1928. at the age of 72.

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## **CHATPER – III**

# **Andhra Society in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century**



## CHAPTER-III

### ANDHRA SOCIETY IN THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

The Andhra Region was brought under the British control by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The struggle between the English and French known as the Carnatic wars was started for the control of seas and more particularly for position of strength on the coramandal coast, where important trading factories were established in places such as Machilipatnam, Madras and Pondicherry. With their involvement militarily, they brought a different turn in the contest that was going on between the Nizam of Hyderabad the Marathas and the Nawab of Karnataka with varying fortunes. The rivalry in the beginning was first commercial and that it became both military and political. By 1763 the British supremacy was established in the south and the political power of the French declined. It was thus in the Madras presidency that “The question was decided which of the European nations should be supreme in India”<sup>1</sup>. However, this did not automatically result in the establishment of British hegemony over Andhra. While most of the Andhra region had been under the de-facto-rule of the Nizams since 1724<sup>2</sup>. In 1765, Robert Clive, then governor of Bengal, succeeded, in securing Firman, from the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam. Who gave away the sarkar districts (The Gangam, Visakhapatnam, Godavari, and Krishna districts) except Guntur, to the British for their support to him in his misfortunes. The Nizam, the subadar of the Deccan, unwillingly conformed the cession of the sarkars to the British through treaty in 1766. The British became, thus the masters of coastal Andhra region stretching from Ganjam to Guntur.

<sup>1</sup> Imperial gazetteer of India, provincial series, Madras, Culcutta, 1908, Page 19

<sup>2</sup> M Venkata Ramayya, Ed the freedom struggle in Andhra Pradesh (Andhra) Volume 1, HYD, 1965, page 11



Guntur was occupied by them in 1788. In 1800, the Nizam, a year after the close of the fourth Mysore war, in which he fought in alliance with the British, had entered into a treaty with the British (under the system of Lord Wellesley's subsidiary alliances) and ceded to the company all the territories he acquired from Mysore earlier in 1792 to 1799. These included the Districts of Bellari, Kurnool, Cuddapah and Ananthapur, since then came to be known as ceded districts. In 1801 Wellesley annexed the Carnatic region to the British dominion and as a result of which the districts of Nellore and Chittoor were brought under the British power. With this the conquest of the British of Andhra was completed.

### Caste System:-

Society in Andhra during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was based on the caste system of Hinduism. Andhra is predominantly Hindu and Hinduism is structurally based on caste system. In the caste system we find hierarchical ordering of innumerable castes and sub-castes. The village community was a combination of many caste groups, each in general following its hereditary calling and enjoying its fixed status<sup>3</sup>.

A number of sub castes had branched off from the original varna system, in course of time due to a variety of reasons<sup>4</sup>. The most important of them were geographical expansion and growth of new crafts. In this respect we find certain sub-castes among the Brahmins in Andhra bear names denoting a particular area inhabited by them in the past<sup>5</sup>.

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3. For a detailed description of the village community in the Telugu District. See *fifth report of the select committee for the affairs of the East India Company*. 1812 Calcutta 1918 page 85.
  4. See abbe J. Dubois, *Hindu Manners, customs and ceremonies*, London, 1972, 1 Edn, 1817, pp.14-15.
  5. See Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of South India*, Madras, 1909, Vol.1, p.366. Where he discussed different divisions among Brahmins like 1. Vaidikis 2. Niyogis 3. Tamballa etc. Among these divisions existed many sub-divisions denoting areas, e.g., 1. Murikinadu 2. Veginadu 3. Pakanadu; for an original presentation of the probable historical origins of the division of Telugu Brahmin Community into Vaidikis and Niyogis. See K.V. Lakshmana Rao's article, "Andhra Brahmanulaloni Niyogi Vaidika Kalanurnayamu" in *Lakshmanaraya Vyasaaval* (Telugu), Vijayawada, 1965, Vol.1, p.p.1-17; also see Suravaram Pratapareddy. *Andhrula sanghika charura* (Telugu) Hyderabad, 1950, second edn., pp.425-25. The author quotes a verse from Hamsavimsati, a poetical work written in Telugu by Appala Raju Narayananamatyndu (1800-50) which reflected the social life of Andhra during his period. The verse mentioned different 'nadas' (territorial divisions) such as velanadu, venginadu, pulugulanadu, pragnadu, murikinadu, Renadu.



These numerous sub castes were endogamous groups with intermarriage and interdining strictly forbidden. These caste groups fragmented the society and prevented the growth of common social feelings or consciousness. The caste system in the south is comparatively more rigid than in the north and divided the entire population in to three social groups namely the privileged, the under – privileged and the untouchables (Unprivileged)<sup>6</sup>.

The Brahmins were at the apex of this social hierarchy by virtue of their high position in ritualistic hierarchy and monopoly of traditional learning. Although they were a minority they commanded unchallenged respect and status and acted as the Arbitars of morals in society by virtue of their monopoly over learning and ritualistic supremacy<sup>7</sup>.

The Brahmins were divided into srotrias or Vaidikis on the one hand and Niyogis or laukikis on the other. However this type of distinction was mainly confined to Telugu Brahmins. Vaidikis devoted themselves to the sacredotal functions of "Teaching the Vedas, performing and superintending sacrifice, and preserving the moral principles of the people<sup>8</sup>. But the Niyogis were secular in character and took to the sword and the pen with equal felicity as generals of Armies and as administrators or amatyas. They were more adaptable and naturally became predominant in matter that really counted position and power<sup>9</sup>. An English civil servant was to observe in 1853 that the secular members of the priesthood of India "ruled the political destinies of the country since the days of Manu (Sic), no matter who held the sword, whether mussulman, mogul, Hindoo; or Mahratta, and have from our first assumption of power ever striven to their utmost to fill the

6. V. Ramakrishna social reformin Andhra (1848-1919). Vikas publishing house New Delhi. Page.3

7. Ibid. page, 4

8. Census of India, 1891 Madras presidency. XIII pp.262-63.

9. Anit seal, The emergence of Indian nationalism. London 1968. page 98.



coffers of the state<sup>10</sup>. True to their tradition, the Niyogies were quicker in responding favorably to the new English learning <sup>11</sup>. Other groups of Brahmins in the area were those who had migrated from the Tamil country. The prominent among them were the Arama Dravidas in the Godavari basin, the Dimily Dravidas of Visakhapatnam and Srikakulam districts and the Pudur and Tummagunta Dravidas of Nellore district. The lowest rung among the Brahmins in the ritualistic hierarchy were the Tambala Brahmins who were priests in siva temples. In addition to the division among the Brahmins on the basis of their religious and secular callings, there was another division based on matters of doctrinal differences which led to denominational differences. Some are known as the smartas <sup>12</sup> and some others as Vaishnavaites <sup>13</sup>.

The caste groups had different codes of behaviour and etiquette. One for the “higher castes” and another for the “lower castes” the lower castes, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Andhra, were seeking to imitate the higher castes and adopt their way of life in rituals and ceremonials. This process called as ‘Sanskritisation’ was followed by a caste are subdivision of a caste. When a caste improved its material status. It did so by adopting Vedic ritual, quitting callings considered degrading or polluting, taking to vegetarianism, child marriage, discontinuing the practice of widow remarriage and giving up taking intoxicating drinks sacrifices of animals and fouls to village goddesses <sup>14</sup>.

10. J.B.W Dypes Salem, an Indian collectorate, Madras, 1853, p.324.

11. According to the 1891 census, of 54,082 Niyogi male members 2878 knew English. On the other hand, out of 56,778 vaidiki male members only 1,674 were educated in English speaking in terms of percentages, 24.69 per cent and 19.10 percent were illiterates among the vaidikis and Niyogis respectively. Anil seal, p.108 Dubashees or interpreters who served both the French and British were drawn from the Niyogis such as Enugula veeraswamayya, vennelacunty Soobrow, Kandregula Jogi pantulu and Burra Achchma.

12. Smartas were the followers of the doctrines of sankaracharya which inculcate the worship of both Visnu and Shiva.

13. Vaishnavaites were the followers of Vistnu.

14. Imperial Gazetteer of India, p.32. Two examples may be cited in this context, from among the non-Brahmin castes in Andhra, which have adopted Brahminical customs and ceremonies, velamas and kamsalis (Viswa-Brahmins). See *census of India*; 1891, Vol.XIII, P. 147. The Kamsalis have adopted the caste titles such as ‘Achari’ and ‘sarma’, similar to the Brahmin titles. The male members started wearing the sacred thread after performing regular thread investiture ceremony like Brahmins; also on this, see A. Vaidehi Krishna moorthy, Social and Economic conditions in Eastern Deccan (From A.D. 1000 to A.D. 1250). Secunderabad, 1270, p.p.43-44.



Now the rigours of traditional ideas on pollution and taboos were relaxed and social mobility became quite a common phenomenon. But the caste distinctions persisted, if not inwardly, in the inner recesses of private thinking and feeling. In this sense caste was driven underground, maintaining its sway over men's minds. With the introduction of western education, changes in the traditional economy, rise of new professions and growth of towns and the introduction of railways and other communications- more occasions and opportunities were created for social inter course between different castes. The Brahmins were the first to take to the new education, as fish to water, and occupy salaried jobs such as those of clerks and dubashees (translators) in the government sectors also due to certain social constraints imposed upon them (Brahmins) like abstention from manual work, prohibitions against involvement in trade and business (though less severe in this regard), they turned, in large numbers, to secular vocations<sup>15</sup>.

### Social Evils:

It may not be possible to list all the unseemly social deformities but we can mention the most glaring of them. They can be broadly classified as 1. religious 2. social 3. Economic and they can be further divided. For example religious evils can be classified into idolatory, ceremonials and pollution etc.. some of them overlap into social evils and at times economic evils.

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15. Instances are many in this connection. The Sataka (generally, a composition of one hundred verses instructing people on morals and good behaviour) literature of this period abounds with versus conveying the change of the life-style of Brahmins. See, for example, Seshadri Ramana Kavulu, ed., *Bhaktirasa Sataka Sampatam* (Telugu), Madras 1926, Vol.II, P.P. 260-61. G.V. Appa Rao, a well known Telugu poet and play wright, and a contemporary of Kandukuri Veeresalingam wrote a great social play condemning the sale of brides, *Kanyasulkam* (Telugu), in which he portrayed some of the orthodox Brahmins not only mouthing these ideas even while sending their children to learn English to secure lucrative jobs in the government. G.V. Appa Rao, *Kanyasulkam* (Telugu), Madras, 1968, first edn. 1897, pp 34, 95 and 223.



Most cruel of the socio religious evils was sati. This evil was prevalent for many centuries mainly in the upper castes. When the husband dies the wife was also burnt along with the body of the deceased husband. It was called as *Satisahagamana*<sup>16</sup>. It was more prevalent in Bengal than in other parts of the country. The less cruel socio religious evils were hook – swinging and fire walking<sup>17</sup>. These evils were also prevalent in Andhra. Domestic labour was worst of the economic evils. Which was also prevalent in Andhra<sup>18</sup>. Despite the declaration of the board of revenue in 1818 that the agricultural labourers were free, they frequently work on contract and were bound to the same villages and families during their life time<sup>19</sup>.

The existence of such slavery on large scale in the pre colonial period cannot be disputed. Moreover they persisted even during the British rule. The popular legends such as *Bala Sanyasamma Kadha*<sup>20</sup>. Points this out.

The sub-ordination of woman in Hindu Society was confirmed and strengthened with the passage of time and became a settled fact in the feudal stage of the country's development. Neither the Muslim ruler nor even the British ushered in a totally new and higher stage of social development for their own reasons.

The British needed a domestic prop to their authority and for that they need revitalisation of the moribund Feudal order. This necessarily tended to perpetuate. All the social ills and evils, despite the superficial attempts of the British rulers such as Bentinck

16. Judicial consultations, Nos.2 and 4, April 6, 1821; Nos.11-12, July 27, 1821; Nos.11-12, July 27, 1821 (Madras presidency) T A.; also see vennelacurthy soobrow. *Life of vennelacurthy soobrow*, Madras, 1873, P.51. He wrote, "I visited the ceremony of the widow of Toomoo Pellpaiah who had just died burning herself on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband". It occurred in 1822; John A.C. Boswell, ed. Manual of the Nellore District (in the presidency of Madras), Madras, 1873, P.250; Rev. William Howell, amissionary of London missionary society at cuddapah in 1830s recorded two instances of 'Sati', and in another case prevented its occurrence with the help of the police. Missionary Chronicle (L.M.S.), Dec. 1831 London, PP-642-43,

17. Elijah Hoole, Madras, Mysore and the South of India. London 1844, II, edn, p. 357.

18. For an instance of domestic slavery in Andhra see D.R. Benaji, Slavery in British India, Bombay, 1933, P.81, wherein he mentioned that in 1817 in Visakhapatnam district a seven- month child was sold for eight rupees.

19. See Dharma Kumar *Land and caste in south India*. C.U.P. 1965 pages.45-48.

20. Sanyasamma Kadha (anonymous, Telugu) Madras 1972.



to wish them out of existence by needs of legislation. Mere legislation, unsupported by popular approval, could not do away with such practices. It could show that the rulers were at least benevolent or at worst hypocritical. To sustain a dying social order in their own selfish political interests and at the same time try to legislate them out presents the double talk of the colonialists<sup>21</sup>.

The most glaring among such skills and evils that beset the Andhra society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were *Kanyasulkam* (Bride price) and the Nautch problem. *Kanyasulkam* produced in its turn, evils such as infant marriages and cases of premature widowhood. The condition of the widow in the upper castes was tragic. The widow head was shaved and all ornaments taken off and the unfortunate women was deprived of all pleasures of life. She was not even allowed to participate in family ceremonies as her presence was thought to bring misfortune ... She became often an object of contempt and maltreatment....<sup>22</sup>

This miserable condition drove some of them to prefer death to much torturous existence; many committed *sahagamana* (Self-immolation). Sometimes the birth of illegitimate children led to infanticide. Among the So-called lower castes in the countryside widow remarriages were not unknown, though among the upper castes they were almost absent.

Devadasis (Nautch-girls, known as *Bhogamvallu* in Telugu) came to be considered as a synonym for prostitutes. They developed into an exclusive caste of their

21. V.Ramakrishna-Social reforms in Andhra 1848-1919, Vikas publishing House, "New Delhi" 1983, P.11.

22. See for a graphic description of widows and their miserable plight in society, the novel written by Kandukuri Veeresalingam *Rajasekharacharitamu*, written in Telugu. Veeresalingam wrote it before 1880. The novel gives a vivid account of social conditions of Andhra during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. See K. Veeresalingam, Col. Works, Rajahmundry, 1950, Vol.IV, PP. 1-231; *Papers on Indian reform* (editor not mentioned) Madras, 1888, pp.78-79. V.P.S. Raghuvamshi, *Indian Society in the 18<sup>th</sup> century*, New Delhi, 1969, P.106.



own “having its own laws of inheritance, its own customs and rules of etiquette”<sup>23</sup>.

“Married to presiding deity, they lived by prostitution and were in attendance at private houses on all Joyous occasions”<sup>24</sup>.

To maintain the prostitute and to attend nautch performance became status symbol and mark of social standing.

Alcohol drinking to begin with was confined mostly to the lower sections of the society gradually it spread among other sections.

### Superstitions:-

Education was limited to a tiny fraction of society and ignorance stayed as hindrance. People were believing in medley of superstitions. For example if an owl perched on a house, it would bring misfortune to the inmates and if a crow cawed on the roof of a house it would bring a guest<sup>25</sup>.

Bad omens included, being questioned regarding business on which one was setting out; or directly after leaving the house, catching sight of a single Brahmin, two Sudras, a widow, oil, a snake or a Sanyasi, would thwart the purpose of the visit. Good omens included the hearing of a bell ring, the braying of an ass or seeing a married woman. Or a corpse, flowers or a toddy-pot. Women and houses were often supposed to be possessed of evil spirits whom only a professional witch – doctor could treat. Trees and evil spirits were supposed to be intimately connected, and a stunted or deformed tree was often pointed out as the abode of a devil<sup>26</sup>.

23. V. Ramakrishna Social reform in Andhra. P. 12. Edgar Thurstone report on the page 131 “Report on the census of madras presidency 187,

24. John A.C. Boswell Page 215.

25. F R. Hemingway, godawari, Madras district gazetters 1907 P.46. Also J D.B gribble. Manual of cuddapah district Madras 1875, P.292.

26. Ibid.



Child birth was surrounded by a number of superstitions. A pregnant women was not supposed to see an eclipse. If she sees her child will be born deformed and it was called as *grahanasula*.

Women would rely for the health of their children chiefly on superstitious observances when her children fell sick the mother believed that it was caused by the displeasure of some god or godess or by the influence of some evil spirit. They would not get their children vaccinated, lest it provoked the wrath of the goddess for interfering with her sport.

Drought was dealt within various ways like pouring 1000 pots of water over the lingam in the siva temple. Another way followed to invoke *varuna* was that the *malas* would tie a live frog to a mortar and take it round a village in a procession saying "mother frog, playing in water, Pour rains by potsfull". The villagers of other castes would then come and pour water over the *malas*<sup>27</sup>.

Religious life in society was greatly effected by the supreme position held by the Brahmins. The festivals like *Sivarathri* and *Vykunta Ekadasi* were popular. There were also local gods and cults to which local people offered gifts. They were called as *Gramadevatas* or village deities. Every village had a shrine to some *Perantalamma* or a women who committed sati, the *gramadevatas* were women. They included *Nukalamma*, *Bangaramma*, *Maridamma*, *Pydithalli*, *Muthyalamma*, *Poleramma*, *Gangamma* and others. They had neither clear history nor definite attributes. In some cases buffaloes were sacrificed. In some places either chicken or Goat or sheep is sacrificed. They were all equally held in awe. And were worshiped as averters of dreadful diseases like

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27 W Francis, Vizagapatnam, Madras district gazetteers madras 1919 P 265



cholera, small pox etc.... They also grant boons to those who made vows before them and fulfilled them.

A number of ceremonies were prescribed by the Hindu religion in the life of an individual from birth to death. Women and young girls had a good number of religious observances called as *Vratams* and *Nomus*. However Most of these functions were performed by the richer sections of the community who had the means and leisure to perform them. The poorer sections were contented themselves with the less costly but more popular observances <sup>28</sup>.

### Education:

Education at the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Was mainly confined to the pial school system. It consisted of courses in Sanskrit, Arithmetic and Telugu given to pupils by a teacher who taught them on the pial at his house or under the shade of the tree. For this service he was meagerly paid by the parents of the pupils. As those schools had existed for a longtime without much change in their style of functioning and they had become irrational and outdated. The children were generally made to learn the whole alphabet in order. The learning was mainly by rote method. It took sometime to get out of this unimaginative and unscientific method of learning. Lord Munro, the governor of Madras presidency (1820-27) open a new page in the progress of education. He issued a minite 25<sup>th</sup> june, 1822). Enquiring into the state of indigenous education on the basis of Authentic sources. He asked for the reports from the District collector on the nature of Education, number of schools and other matters. A.D. Campbell, the collector of Ballari mentioned in his report that the indigenous school-system was not in a flourishing

28. Social reform in Andhra. V. Rama Krishna P. 14.



condition due “to the gradual but general impoverishment of the country”. He further stated that, “every school boy can repeat verbatim a vast number of verses the meaning of which he knows no more than the parrot that has been taught to utter certain words”<sup>29</sup>.

The main objects of the British in their educational policy were (a) to secure properly trained personnel for the public administration of the country at the lower levels, and (b) to spread western knowledge. The first aim was dominant during 1823-33 when finance of the company were not sound. The Madras school book society was founded in 1820 to enable people to “obtain books at reduced rates”, and also to pursue the necessary changes in school education. During the period 1833-53, the company pursued the second object of spreading western knowledge due to the spread of liberal ideas in England.

And till 1854 the company did not accept direct responsibility for educating the masses. The second half of the 19 century witnessed comparatively greater progress in Education with the establishment of Anglo-veracular school in many parts of Andhra. This was fecilitated with the establishment of rates schools by G.N. Taylor in the subdivision of Rajahmundry. He opened schools in 1852 on an experimental basis at a Nursapoar, palcole, penoogondah and Auchunta, which were supported by local subscription and their successful functioning attracted the attention of the inhabitants of many of the neighbouring villages. Taylor submitted to the government in 1854, the wishes of ryots of the village in the godawari delta Area: “who have comeforward to beg permission to contribute towards the expense of their children’s Education”<sup>30</sup>.

29. See for the extracts from the letter of A.D. compbell, H. Sharp, ed. Selections from Educational records, part I, 1781-1839, Calcutta, 1920. republished in 1965,pp.65-68.

30. Papers relating to the establishment of village vernacular schools in the subdivision of Rajahmundry Madras. 1856, p.23.



### Taylor's System:

Taylor patiently pleaded in the memorandum submitted to the government... "that while the Tamil population are provided with no less than 950 schools, there are but 30 in the entire presidency of Madras, in which efficient Telugu instruction is imparted". His proposal was accepted and came to be known as Mr. Taylor's system(also known as Rajahmundry system of schooling) A.J. Arbutunot, Director of Public Instruction, wrote to the chief secretary, Madras government that "... the greatest credit is due to Mr. Taylor for what has been already accomplished, and the introduction of some what similar system throughout the country"<sup>31</sup>.

The establishment of these schools in the Rajahmundry region created an educational atmosphere and people began.. "to clamour for English and have in many places applied for better teacher"<sup>32</sup>. Perhaps, in this, one could see the beginnings of enlightenment in the Godavari district which was to become later the center of reform activity in Andhra. The establishment of schools around Rajahmundry was the first major attempt made by the government for the extension and improvement of education in the Andhra Region.

A great impetus was given to education when the 'Local Funds' were created by the government in 1871<sup>33</sup>. The local fund act (Act IV) provided funds through house tax for the maintenance of elementary schools, for the training of teachers and for the construction of school buildings<sup>34</sup>. Act III of 1871 provided for the towns what act IV did for the rural districts. Thus the municipal funds were declared to be applicable to the support of education. As a result of this a number of schools were established.

31. Papers relating to the establishment of village vernacular school in the subdivision of Rajahmundry. Madras 1856.P74

32. Letter of Macdonald, Inspector of schools, to the district collector. G.O. No.329.

33. S. Sathinathin; *History of Education in the Madras presidency* Madras 1894, p.p.84-85.

34. Studies in Madras administration vol.II, pp 73-74



The growth of education in the Andhra region of the Madras presidency during the second half of the 19 century was phenomenal. The following table shows the results of the combined efforts of the government and the private agencies in the field of education from 1862 – 1899<sup>35</sup>.

District		Number of Institutions	Number of scholars
	1	2	3
Ganjam	1862-63	28	1,004
	1867-68	30	1,524
	1879-80	564	11,773
	1898-99	1,776	38,212
Visakhapatnam	1862-63	16	635
	1867-68	28	1,402
	1879-80	496	10,167
	1898-99	1,354	34,603
Godavari	1862-63	115	2,597
	1867-68	116	3,330
	1879-80	702	17,476
	1898-99	1,604	53,955
Krishna	1862-63	7	633
	1867-68	26	1,135
	1879-80	731	12,859
	1898-99	1,801	46,937
Kurnool	1862-63	2	133
	1867-68	5	202
	1879-80	228	3,687
	1898-99	670	14,838
Bellary	1862-63	12	828
	1867-68	19	1,134
	1879-80	488	7,973
	1898-99	1,215	27,139

35. This table is based on statistics furnished by the *reports of Director of public instruction in the Madras presidency* for the year 1867-68, 1879-1880 and 1898-99. Published at Madras in 1868, 1880 and 1889 respectively.



Cuddapah	1862-63	23	569
	1867-68	47	997
	1879-80	308	4,715
	1898-99	841	17,802
Nellore	1862-63	9	204
	1867-68	226	3,918
	1879-80	554	9,685
	1898-99	1,151	27,015

The above table shows that the growth of education was faster in the circars than in the ceded districts. This was due to two factors, viz., (i) The circars which came under the influence of the British earlier had more of its impact than the other regions, and (ii) the educational activities of the missionaries were widespread here. The table further brings out another significant feature: the delta regions of the Godavari and Krishna districts were leading the other districts both in the number of schools and scholars. Significantly this was the region which was comparatively richer and where the urban growth was more than the other regions. Further more, as has already been noted, the godavari district had the benefit of the Taylor's system of 'rate schools' through which a good number of schools were established throughout the district.



### **The Role of Christian Missionaries:-**

In the spread of education, the missionaries too played an important role along with the government. Even though the individual missionaries were carrying on informal schooling of children in the Godavari region prior to 1836. The first organized missionary school was started in 1836 at Nellore by the free church mission by 1850s the whole region was covered with an elaborate Network of mission schools. It was missionaries who first introduced the printing press in India and published books in Indian languages. They started schools both for boys and girls.

### **College Education:-**

In 1877 three first grade colleges were started in the presidency. One of was started at Rajahmundry. Between 1854 and 1882 in all four college were started in Andhra. Since the public philanthropy was slow, the government was exhorted to open more schools and impart new education to children. Since schools and colleges were started in urban and semi urban area except for a sprinkling of elementary schools in country side, education was by and large urban based.

Moreover the spread of education was confined to the upper and middle classes in the society. The table below shows the Brahmins had an upper hand in higher education.

	Percentage of total Hindus			Other including pariahs
	Brahmins	Vaisyas	Sudras	
College education	74.6	3.2	21.7	0.5
Secondary education	45.5	5.6	45.8	3.1
Primary education	14.4	10.0	68.4	7.2

Where as in the primary level sudras who comprised all the communities other than Brahmins, Vysyas and pariahs were not comparatively speaking far behind. For the



decade 1876-1886, 73% of the total Hindu candidates. Who successfully completed their university examinations were Brahmins.

In 1888 for every 41 Brahmins of school going age one was at college. However during the same year out of 2004 Vysyas and Sudras who were half the Hindu population only one was doing college education. That education has confined to upper castes in society like Brahmins and Vysyas is further brought out by the following figures for 1891.

Caste	Total males in caste	Percentage of literate
Brahmins	5,51,951	72.21
Vysyas (Komati)	1,44,223	60.46
Belijas	3,52,604	20.12
Kapu or Reddy	1,222,546	9.55
Pariah	9,97,319	2.75

The economic background of the students can be gathered from the report of the director of public instruction 1885-86 which stated that the children of rich land lords were making greater use of educational opportunity. The details for 1883-84 mentioned below will show that those who sent their children to schools and colleges were mainly land holders and officials.

	College excluding professional colleges	Secondary schools (100)
Land holders	38.40	34.00
Officials	28.50	20.50
Petty officials	11.80	17.00
Traders	7.00	7.00
Others	14.30	21.50



This is also born out by the evidence given before the education commission in 1882, by eminent men connected with education. P. Chentsel Rao stated: "The lowest classes in this country do not seek primary instruction at all. Their poverty compels them to employ their children as labourers from a very early age and .... Pariahs and others of the lowest classes are not admitted to schools in which caste natives have any influence"<sup>36</sup>.

### **Economic life:**

The establishment of the British rule in the Andhra region did not spell either the doom or the total destruction of the Zamindars<sup>37</sup> and Poligars<sup>38</sup>, in the circar districts and ceded districts respectively. Even though their wings were clipped and many of their erstwhile powers were taken away, their private armies dismantled and their policing functions have continued, they were allowed by the new rulers to collect rents and transmit to the government in their restricted sphres of authority. A sizeable portion of their former holdings was not transferred to the government, and for the rest they were made to pay peshcush on very stringent terms. The Andhra Zamindars were mostly from the upper non-Brahmin castes such as Kshatriyas, Velamas or Kammas. Wealth and social status conferred by caste combined to establish their ascendancy over the society.

36. Education commission, Chenstal Rao was superented of stamps and stationary in Madras and the fellow of the Madras University were more than decade. He was also officially connected with the administration of schools in the Godavari district under the 'Taylors system'. Rao pladed for the establishment of primary school in each village and that was the only was. According to him, to eradicate illiteracy in such a huge country as India. Rao was one of the leading social reformers of the Madras city along with Raghunatha Rao and others.
37. The number of Zamindars in Andhra was about 870. Nevertheless their political power was much greater. They controlled a quarter of the area of the Madras presidency. The extensive zamindars like vijayanagaram Bobbili, Pithapuram and Venkatsgiri were situated in the Andhra region.
38. Poligar or palayakkaran was the holder of territory, called 'Palayam' in Tamil, 'Palamu' in Telugu, which meant literally an armed camp. It was a strip of territory consisting of a few villages, granted to a chieftan in consideration of the military service that he agreed to render and the tribute that he consented to pay to the sovereign. As a political agency the poligar system was associated with medieval south India. Tamilnadu and Andhradesa (Rayalaseema area) accounted for most of the poligars. See K. Rajyan, *Rise and Fall of the Poligars of Tamilnadu, Madras, 1974, P. VI.*



Agriculture was the main stay of the people. The life of the peasants was miserable, positioned as they were between two sets of oppressors, one hereditary and native and the other intruding and Foreign, Viz the Zamindars and the polygars on the one hand and the company on the other. People connected with land, other than agricultural laborers were 47.32% of the entire population of the province. The agricultural classes, primarily small peasants, suffered due to high rent and over assessment irrespective of the type of settlement that was in operation. Under Ryotwari tenure, the share of the government was theoretically put at half the value of the net produce of the land.

Savage methods were employed to collect revenues forcibly from people, but as many of them were extremely poor, ignorant and afraid of the dire consequences, they seldom complained against tortures, of the state or revenue administration, in both the ceded and circar districts, and the attitude of the company were aptly described by Lord Macaulay; "Govern leniently, but send us more money, practice justice and moderation, but send us more money, be the father and oppressor of the people, be just and unjust, moderate and rapacious"<sup>39</sup>.

As a result of such an oppressive system of land revenue, cultivation was unwillingly pursued, and in several cases the cultivators deserted their lands. Furthermore, it resulted in heavy rural indebtedness throwing ryots to the mercy of village sahukars.

The frequent occurrence of famines during the 19 century added to the wretchedness of the agricultural population. Among the rural masses three section of

<sup>39</sup> Lord Macaulay in his essay on Warren Hastings cited in V Ramakrishna, Social reform in Andhra P 28



people suffered most namely, tenants, weavers and agricultural labourers. The famine of 1807 affected all the districts in the circar and the ceded areas. The famine of 1811. Called Nellore famine, was of a serious nature. More disastrous was the guntur famine in the year 1833 which wrought havoc with Guntur District.

The worst famine of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was that of 1876-78 which affected fourteen districts of the presidency covering an area of 80,000 Square miles. During this famine, three – fourths of million on an average, were on daily famine relief for nearly two years. The government, in spite of a number of reports sent by the district collectors and other revenue officials, did not formulate any rational policy of famine relief or prevention. It was only after great famine of 1876-78 that a commission, under the presidency of Sir Richard strachey, with Sir charles Elliot as secretary, was appointed by Lord Lytton to enquire into the famines in India and suggest the measures of relief and prevention <sup>40</sup>.

### Permanent Settlement:

The permanent settlement with its magic touch of land ownership and permanent assessment, was envisaged as stimulating industry, promoting agriculture and augmenting general wealth and prosperity <sup>41</sup>.

It conferred ownership of the land upon the former feudal intermediaries who held political and revenue powers over large tracts of land. The sponsors of the settlement did not care who the landowner was, so long as the land was cultivated and land revenue was regularly paid <sup>42</sup>. Since the respective rights of the ryots and the zamindars were left undefined and ambiguous the settlement wrought much mischief. It enabled the

40. Sir John strachey, India, Its Administration and progress, London, 1903, P.225

41. The fifth report, Vol.II, P.172. The court of directors of the East India company recommended in 1795 that the permanent settlement should be introduced in the Northern circars. See Revenue Despatches from England – Despatch of April 28, 1795 (East India correspondence). T A

42. S. Gopal, the permanent settlement in Bengal and its Results, London, 1949, P.17.



zamindars to enjoy enormous incomes, and affluence led them to live on an unprecedented scale. Unfortunately the rights of the peasants were nowhere defined, and thus the cultivators were exposed to unmitigated oppression. The settlement, contrary to expectations, did not introduce capitalistic farming of India. It deprived the peasants of their traditional ownership-rights, and made them dependent upon the zamindars and suffer misery and oppression.

In the districts of godavari, Krishna and Ganjam, the permanent settlement resulted in the beginning in the collapse of zamindars due to the excessive demand from the government. Several estates were either auctioned or surrendered, because of the liability of the zamindars to pay peshcush<sup>43</sup>.

After putting down the poligars of the ceded districts, Munro undertook a survey of the area and introduced the Ryotwari system underwhich the condition of peasants became worse. Under the Ryotwari system, the benefit of every ryot being a peasant proprietor at a fixed assessment proved illusory. Land rent was as high as Rs.35 to Rs.50 per acre. The fault lay in the over assessment of land and exacting demands of the administration. This made agriculture completely unremunerative and prevented the formation of capital within the agricultural economy. This system locked the way to the flow of outside capital in to the agricultural sector. The peasants who were in need of cash to pay land Revenue fell into the hands of Sahukars who became the defacto land lords. And in may cases the money lenders and the landlords were one and the same.

43 M P R Reddy, "The Agrarian system of Andhra under the east India company (1760-1820)" can unpublished typed manuscript obtained from the author,pp 170-73 In the first ten years after the permanent settlement, however, the British government was prepared to some leniency towards the Zamindars and proprietors By 1810, however, the attitude of the government had hardened and the inability of the proprietors to pay their revenues was accompanied by an auction sale or a private sale



The British administrators during the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were influenced by utilitarian ideas which to a large extent influenced the official policy of Indian land revenue pressed to pay land revenue in cash, peasants borrowed money. They also took to the production of cash crops and were thus exposed to the fluctuations of money market. The legal system introduced by the British ushered in even more far reaching changes in the agricultural sector than land revenue. Now, poor peasants were placed at the mercy of courts where money lenders could get favourable decisions by engaging lawyers. Earlier, peasants could not be evicted from their lands as the traditional village system was relatively considerate to them.

A note worthy feature of this period was the construction of the godavari and Krishna anicuts on the initiative of Sir Arthur cotton <sup>44</sup>. Besides developing cultivation, the British used the rivers as waterways for the transport of cash crops like cotton and tobacco from the interior parts to the centres <sup>45</sup>. They immensely helped the growth of agriculture in the Godavari and Krishana districts which since then came to be called the granary of Andhra.

Commenting upon the changes in Godavari District since the construction of the anicut, S. Nathamuni Mudaliar, a retired tahasildar from the district, stated: "The wealthier classes were much benefited and the condition of ryots was so much improved by the general high prices that instead of being in the hands of sowcars, they were sowcars themselves.... The vast increase in agriculture by irrigation has very materially

44. The sanction for the godavari anicut was received in 1847 and was completed by 31 march 1852. The work on the Krishna anicut was commenced in 1852 and was completed by 1855.

45. There are nearly 500 miles of canals which, besides carrying water for irrigation, are excellent lines of transport. Furthermore, the godavari navigation system was connected with the Krishna system (with its 300 miles of navigable canals) and from it again into the Backingham canal which runs along the coastline for a distance of 194 miles. Thus from Kakinada to Madras the Canal navigation is about 500 miles. The provision of cheap carriage not only in and around the district but to the seaport (Madras) greatly helped the British to exploit the natural resources of the Godavari district which sprang into prosperity during this period. *Lady Hope, general sir Arthur cotton, His life and works, London, 1900, p. 134.*



improved the condition of ryots.

The construction of railways in this part of the country was commenced in 1890 and was over by August, 1893. It was then called the East Coast Railway. The railways contributed to the further growth of trade and commerce and also made Journey easy and cheap. They also led to the flow of ideas from and direct access to the presidency metropolis (Madras city).

The growth of towns in Andhra began by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and many towns came into existence by the close of the century. The movement of rural population to the Urban areas was largely due to the higher wages and greater freedom from caste repression which the towns held out to the lower section of the population and to the superior social and educational advantages and the more varied amenities which they offered to the better – off classes. Generally the railways increased the trade of those places. Where they reached and also created new trading centres along its track. Among other factors that contributed to the growth of towns, mention may be made of the starting of industries, availability of cheap labour, tendency of rich land lords and other similar classes to live in towns, and modern education <sup>46</sup>.

### The raise of the middle class:

The new professional classes (educated middle class) come into existence in the wake of these towns. The revenue settlements on the one hand and industry and commerce on the other failed to develop rural capitalists and strong commercial classes respectively. Middle classes in the madras presidency, therefore, comprised mainly of people belonging to different professions like teaching, law, medicine and civil service <sup>47</sup>.

46. D.R. Gadgil, the industrial revolution of India in Recent Times, Calcutta, 1948, first edn. 1924, P. 137;

47 See B.M. Bhatia, "growth and composition of middle class in south India in nineteenth century", the Indian economic and social history review, Vol II, No.4, October, 1965,



The progress of the education was more rapid in the Madras presidency after 1857. The middle classes fought for liberal and democratic values and respected the individual but not religious authority. They stood for intellectual freedom and social mobility, and became the carriers of new ideas and provided social basis for and orientation to social reform movements<sup>48</sup>.

The new land relations and the consequent changes in the social fabric of Indian agriculture was a significant event in the process of the transformation from the pre capitalist feudal economy of India into a formal capitalist economy. Karl Marx spoke of the destructive as well as regenerative roles of the British rule in India<sup>49</sup>.

The destruction of the old village Economy, though it involved much suffering and misery, was progressive event. It was the right step in the right direction of uniting the Indian people Economically in to the unit. It put an end to the isolation of the village communities living in an atmosphere of social passivity and intellectual inertia. Further, the process of converting India into a market for foreign goods brought untold sufferings to the village artisans who swelled the ranks of the landless poor. Pressure on land and the consequent rural unemployment accentuated the agrarian crisis<sup>50</sup>.

Consequent on all this, there developed symptoms of a structural imbalance in the Indian society as a whole during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These events, along with the spread of education growth of towns, a modern legal system, political unity, better communications and the rise of new professional (Middle) classes led to the much desired social mobility and social change.

48. Sumit Sarkar, Bibliographical survey of social reform movements in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, New Delhi, 1975, P 1, stated that "Social reform movement of modern period had a upper caste (and upper and middle class) basis

49. K. Marx and F Engels, on colonialism, Moscow, n.d., P 84.

50. Social reform in Andhra, V. Ramakrishna P.36.



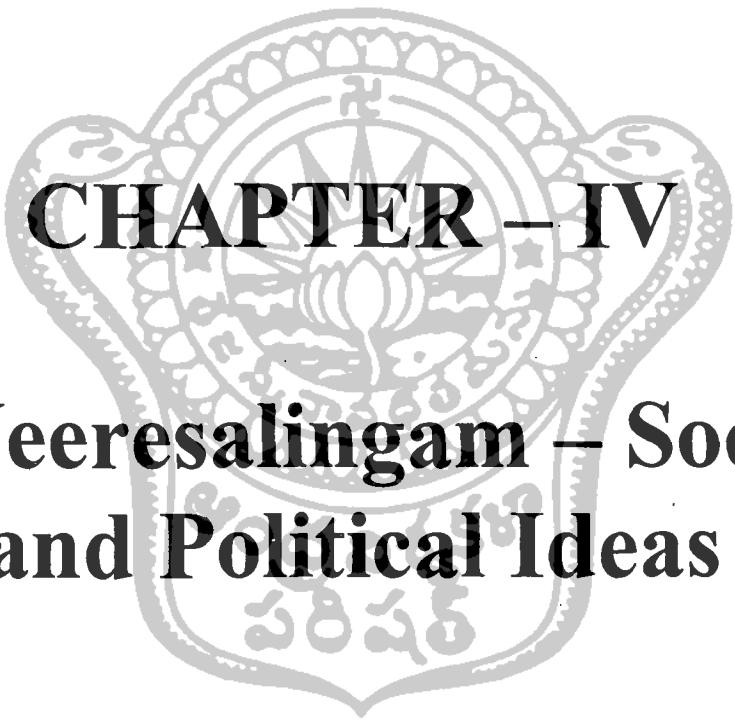
However, there did not take place the total break-up of the old economic structure and the full emergence of the capitalist system: and hence social change stopped midway, leaving the country semi – feudal and semi-capitalist, with strong ties between moribund feudalism and emergent capitalism both sub ordinately to an over-powerful alien colonialism<sup>51</sup>.




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51. Viewing the developments of modern Indian History in the light of colonialism and its restraints was the concept formulated by professor Bipan Chandra in his presidential address (Section. III), “colonialism and modernization, Indian History congress, Thirty – second session, 1970 at Jabalpur.





# **CHAPTER – IV**

## **K.Veeresalingam – Social and Political Ideas**



## CHAPTER – IV

### **K.VEERESALINGAM - SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IDEAS**

The first glimmerings of the modern Indian renaissance can be traced back to the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. But the new spirit gathered strength and momentum only in the first half of the next. Bengal was its pioneer. Under the powerful impact of western education and culture, it was the first Indian province to break away from the shackles of the dead past. With a freedom of mind reminiscent of the upanishadic age and the early period of Buddhism, the intellectuals of Bengal Questioned every dogma, examined every belief, probed every custom and tradition. Boldly rejecting everything irrational, retrograde and decadent in the national heritage, they welcomed from the western world whatever, they found to be rational scientific, liberal and progressive. In their zeal, some of them did, no doubt, indulge in such excesses as drinking bouts and the throwing of beef into the homes of orthodox Hindus. In spite of their stray aberrations, they were the heralds of a new dawn.<sup>1</sup>

The modern Renaissance took a pretty longtime to travel from Bengal to Andhra Pradesh. But once it arrived there in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it found a doughty champion in Kandukuri Veeresalingam. To make up for lost time, he had to take up not only the work of Raja Rammohan Roy but that of other great religious reformers like Debendranath Tagore, Keshub Chandra Sen and Shivanath Sastri. He had to labour in the allied fields of social and education reforms for carrying forward the work of Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. Though unacquainted with the role of Rammohan Roy and Vidya Sagar in evolving a new Bengali prose,

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1. Veeresalingam, V.R Nirla, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi 1969, Page 9



he had to be the creator of a new Telugu prose to put across new ideas. Again, independently of the influence of Bankimchandra chatterji, he had to pioneer new writing in Telugu. These were super – human tasks but he did not quail before them. Being (in the works of sir Raghupathi Venkataratnam) ‘a host in one’, he took them all in his stride. And at the end, he left the impress of his powerful personality on the life of the people amidst whom he had been born. He shook them out of their mediaeval stupor; he whipped them out of their ignorance; he purged them of many of their superstitions; and he gave an altogether modern, Progressive and humanistic turn to their life and thought. As Rajaji has Said;

Andhra Desh and Andhra People could not be what they are if Veeresalingam had not arrived to vitalize them. He was one of the great men of India, of keen insight, great courage and dynamic energy. He fought against untruth and championed the cause of progress with Herculean vigour.<sup>2</sup>

By training and temperament, Veeresalingam was a man of letters. But by confining himself to his literary work alone, he would not have achieved even a fraction of the mighty transformation which he wrought in his lifetime. He was fully aware of the powerful influence for good which the right kind of literature could exert; otherwise he would not have devoted so big a chunk of his life to writing it. But he felt that his times needed a man of action no less urgently than a man of letters. “Mere publication of books is of no use”, he told himself in his Diary; ‘what is more important and essential is the courage and readiness to put into effect what we believe

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid P 10



to be true. Courage in carrying out religious and social reform and readiness to suffer for the cause in which he had abounding faith- these were, indeed, his outstanding characteristics: No expediency for him, nor any compromise relentlessly he must march forward brushing aside all opposition.<sup>3</sup>

Two more instances of his consistency and perseverance can be cited here. Discouraged by the apathy of his erstwhile supporters and the bitterness of his opponents, Vidya sagar, long before his death in 1891, lost interest in getting widows remarried, a reform which he himself had originated. Veeresalingam too, had to face growing apathy as well as opposition; yet he fought resolutely till the very end of his days for the rescue of the hapless child – widows. Again, he proved himself, at least on one occasion, more courageous than Ranade. Faced with the threat of excommunication for attending a tea party given by Christian Missionaries, Ranade went through the ritual of expiation (Prayaschitta). In sharp contrast to this, Veeresalingam flung back in the face of the sankaracharya of the Virupaksha pitha the fiat of excommunication which he had issued.<sup>4</sup>

About Veeresalingam, Narla says. “It is far from my intention to claim on behalf of Veeresalingam that he was a greater man than Rammohun, debendranath, Vidyasagar, or Ranade. He would have himself hotly repudiated such a claim. Indeed, he considered himself a humble follower of these stalwarts. Though of a somewhat lesser stature, both in intellect and originality, than his great masters, he was uniformly more consistent, and he showed, at all times and in every situation, greater courage of conviction”.<sup>5</sup>

3 Ibid. P.10-11

4 Ibid P 11

5 Ibid P 11



For over half a century he bestrode the south Indian scene like a colossus and dominated its public life. And yet he hardly getting his due in the histories of his times. In his book *A century of social reform in India* by S. Natarajan mentions him only twice, and that too in passing. Another recent book, *Indian nationalism and Hindu social Reform* by charless H. Heimsath, devotes just one sentence to him. Even histories of modern Indian literature have not done him adequate justice.<sup>6</sup>

Veeresalingam was born at Rajahmundry – to put it more correctly, at Rajamahendravaram – on April 16, 1848. His father, Subbarayudu, was a poor Brahmin of the Saivite sect. His mother was Punnamma. Like the rest of the womenfolk of her times, she was illiterate. Most of her life, she was in the cruel grip of sickness and superstition. Her only son, Veereshalingam, inherited her sickness, though not her fear of ghosts, goblins and other phantoms. From birth he was dyspeptic. He was subject to severe colds and fits of sneezing. The asthma which soured his life started in his infancy. When six months old, he was stricken with smallpox. So virulent was its attack that this parents almost despaired of his survival. Roughly, up to 1870 there was hardly a year when he did not suffer from some serious illness or other. Thrice during this period he nearly drowned. It was, indeed, a miracle that he pulled through it all.<sup>7</sup>

Subbarayudu was poor when Veereshalingam arrived. But he had known betterdays according to the standards of the times. His forbears were very rich. Some of them served as *Diwans* of zamindars. They were men of culture and generous patrons of arts and letters. Their indiscriminate charities reduced subbarayudu and his elderbrother venkataratnam to penury. Subbarayudu got a clerks job in government.

6 Ibid P 12  
7 Ibid P 11



When serving there he died prematurely after a brief illness. This heavy blow fell on the family when Veeresalingam was in his fourth year.

Veeresalingam finished his elementary schooling and joined as an apprentice to a clerk in revenue office for a year or two. During his spare time he began to learn English and Arthematic from his uncle and Sanskrit from a friend of the family.

Later he was sent to school for his education. Veeresalingam used to be top in his class and used to get many prizes. He used to read classics and try to purchase some rare volumes. He married Rajyalakshmi (original name was Bapamma) in the year 1861. He was 13 and the his bride was 9 years old He passed matriculation in the year 1870. Due to his illness he could not complete it in the year 1868..He used to teach Telugu to Foreigners. One Mr. Barrow appointed Veeresalingam as an assistant teacher on a monthly salary of rupees 25/-. In 1871 he sat for and passed the criminal higher grade examination. He also passed translation (lowergrade) and precis writing. The low ethical standards that were tarnishing the fair name of the bar and the Bench. Made him stick to the teaching profession.

In 1872 he was appointed as a headmaster of the English school at Korangi. On salary of rupees 30/- per month. Two years later he became head master of the Anglo-veracular school at Dhavaleswaram on a monthly pay of Rupees 44/- after two years he resigned the job and returned to Rajahmundry. He wanted to be free for public work. But on the advise of his friends and well wishers. He joined in the local government arts college as second Telugu pandit on a lesser salary of rupees 25/-. He had made various experiments in the form of literary writing in the beginning he gave importance to write in classical style. Though he continued his writings in the classical style he began to question himself : what is the purpose of language ? It did not take him long to find an answer .The main purpose of language is

communication of ideas. The simpler and more lucid the language employed, the more effective is the communication of ideas.

If one is asked to give a definite date for the birth of modern writing in Telugu, one need have no hesitation in stating it was born on the day Veeresalingam posed a question to himself about the purpose of language.

Having come to see the futility of the archaic and artificial prose which he was writing till then, he discarded it totally and proceeded to create a new one. As in the case of every pioneer, his path was beset with many pitfalls. He had to achieve a clean break with the past without doing violence to the genius of the language of its idiom, to his lasting credit, he largely succeeded in the difficult task. Which he thus set himself.

Inspired by his friends and admirers, he started a girls school in September 1874. It was probably the first institution of its kind in Andhra, Until then the only girls' schools were schools for teaching music and dance and other seductive arts useful for the dancing girls.

Around 1881 Veeresalingam helped to found at Rajahmundry another institution for women education. About this time he launched his *Satihitabodhini*, a monthly journal, exclusively devoted to the service of women. Though it ran for three years only - it made history.

With the characteristic consistency he personally educated his wife. Who was illiterate at the time of marriage. He taught her so diligently and thoroughly that she could assist him as a teacher for the widows in the hostles, started by them. Veeresalingam started different types of schools for girls and also helped many to join in a teacher training schools and colleges, so that they can help in promoting women education.



In the year 1878, September 8, he started social reform association, and on that day social reform in the South took a big leaf forward.

Veerasingam performed the first widow-remarriage on December, 11, 1881 in his house. He faced stubborn opposition from the conservatives. By 1892 he has performed 29 marriages.

During his stay in madras he performed some more marriages. He assumed the leadership of south Indian Brahmo Samaj and of the south Indian social reform association. 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 in 1898. four years later, he was the president of the Madras social reform conference which met at Kakinada. In the following year, he was elected president of the Indian national theistic conference held at Madras. He had presided over many other social reform and theistic conferences and was to preside over more of them.

Veerasingam had nothing much to complain against Madras; except that his social reform activities were not flourishing as vigorously as at Rajahmundry. His hands were otherwise full, and he was much respected.

Veerasingam returned to Rajahmundry in the year 1905. With in few months of his return. He started a new girls school, a new weekly, a new widows home a rescue home, and an orphanage. For the continuation of the work after he was gone, he founded the *Hitakarini Samajan* on December 12, 1906 with 36 members and endowed with all his properties, cash on hand, his copywrite, his library etc.... Every bit of hit had been earned with the sweat of his brow; never in his life had he accepted for his own use any monetary help or even a costly present; he had firmly turned down the offers of large money gifts from the maharajas of vijayanagaram and Pithapuram.



In the year 1910 on August 11. his wife died in her sleep. After the death of his wife Veeresalingam was never his oldself again. 'He lost his buoyancy, his fighting sprit, his very just for life. He survived her by about 9 years and they were years of pain, sorrow and frustation for him. The death in 1909 of one of his closest associates Desiraju Peda Bapayya, Gavar Raju, greatly added to his loneliness of spirit.

As befitting a life long worker, Veeresalingam died in harness 'his pen in his hand, he was spending the summer months of 1919 in Madras as the guest of K.V. Lakshmana Rao. The founder of *Vijnanachandrika grandha mandali* on may, 27, He passed away completing his biography. He dictated his parting message. It ran "I am departing before completing many of the tasks which, I have undertaken during my life-time. I hope and trust that my friends and comrades and the lovers of reform would carry forward my unfinished work. The mass of our people are weighed down under ignorance and superstition and are devoid of all the better things of life. It is your duty to give them education and enlightenment, culture and freedom, equality and justice. I beg of you, I beseech you, to do your best for our dumb millions<sup>8</sup>."

With his last breath he finished his last message. On that dark day an epic life came to a close, and India lost one of her brave, noble and great sons.

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8. Veeresalingam, V.R. Narla (1968) published by Sahitya Akademi and printed at prominent printers, Delhi page, 76.



### **Veerasingam Social and Political Ideas:**

Reform movements in Andhra, during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, were associated with the name of Kandukuri Veerasalingam (1848-1919). He indicated and led these movements providing them with the necessary ideological content and organization form. He was a pioneer of public life in Andhra as one who both inaugurated a new era in Telugu literature and strengthened the recent but inchoate elements of social reform so as to give them the force of a movement<sup>9</sup>.

Veerasingam had undergone a great transformation before he undertook various reform activities. An analysis of this change as well as a discussion of his ideas would help us in appreciating the account of reform movements which we propose to present in the subsequent chapters.

Veerasingam's ancestors were employed as Dewans and Deshpandeys – revenue officials – under Muslim rule. Some of them were even estate holders. Veerasalingam's grandfather was a Dewan under the local estate holders of the Godavari district and was known for his philanthropy and liberal patronage of poets and scholars. His grand father, during the last stages of his life went without a job and spent much of his saving on the marriage of his eldest son, and by the time of his death, the family had just enough to maintain itself.

9. Veerasalingam has been described by several scholars as the one who "Changed the current life in Andhra, with no predecessor in his line and no successor of equal stature". Ishwara Dutt, "Pioneer of modernism in Andhra", Swatantra, April 17, 1948. The idea that he was the creator of modern movements in Andhra-Social and literary – has been the unanimous theme of a number of Telugu scholar. For example, C.R.Reddy, "Veerasingam Pantulu Guru" Andhrapatrika (Telugu daily), June 21, 1919; Arudra, "Gadya Tikkana, Samgha samskartha Kandukuri Vecerasingam Pantulu", Vikasalahari (Telugu), Hyderabad, 1974. See also Andhrapatrika, annual number 1919, P.52. This estimates of veerasalingam, however, sounds hagiographic and uncritical. There were stray but strong trends of ideas of social reform in Andhra prior to the emergence of veerasalingam. Also there were predecessors to veerasalingam who new forms into the Telugu literature. Never the less, the uniqueness of veerasalingam lay in consolidating these trends to develop them into movements.



His father and uncle were, according to Veeresalingam, well versed in Telugu and had a working knowledge of English too. His father was employed for some time in the office of the District Collector and then joined the service of the Rajah of pithapur. Even though his ancestors were fanatical saivaites (lingayats), his great grandfather married a girl of vaishnavaite sect (among the smartha Niyogis) and gave up the lingayat caste symbol. This reform trend, though appearing insignificant, was claimed by Veeresalingam as having influenced him even as a boy<sup>10</sup>

Veeresalingam was educated in the traditional *pial* school system. He learnt elementary arithmetic, read conventional Telugu books like *satakas*, and acquired a preliminary knowledge of Sanskrit<sup>11</sup>. As there did not exist examination-oriented schools. He was asked to learn and work in the local Government Revenue office to qualify for a job. During this period he was introduced to the rudiments of English by his uncle. After 1858 the certificate-awarding schools were started and veerasalingam was sent to the Government District school at Rajahmundry (in 1860) where he studied for the college entrance course and successfully finished it in 1870, qualifying himself for admission into the first year of the college course. As the first year college course was abolished in Rajahmundry in 1870, he could not pursue his studies further and joined the Rajahmundry government District school as an assistant teacher in 1871<sup>12</sup>.

10. Veerasalingam, Sweeyaa, P.I.P.7

11. Sataka is the composition of one hundred verse (some times as little more or less) instructing people mainly in morals and good behaviour. In Telugu there are many satakas among which Vemana and Sumati are highly popular even to this day.

12. As a student of the government school, besides acquiring a good knowledge of Telugu literature, veerasalingam studied English, History, Geography and science. One does not know for certain what books he read in English. However, the course content of the middle schools of that period (up to the 18<sup>th</sup> standard) included Bradshaw's English Reader – V, Mannual's English gramemr, Lethbridge's History of India, Collier's History of England, Geography manual and Mathematics Comprising arithmetic, algebra and geometry. C. Lakshminarasimham, Sweeyacharithamu (autobiography in Telugu), Bezwada, 1944, P.35.



Veeresalingam was born and brought up in an orthodox Brahmin family. He had immense faith in the validity of the Vedic Mantras. He wrote two satakas in Telugu during his early literary career which clearly reflected his orthodoxy. He addressed them to the presiding deities of two temples in Rajahmundry<sup>13</sup>.

### **Formative Influences:-**

In an attempt to evaluate the influences on Veeresalingam, who led an orthodox life earlier, it becomes necessary to consider the spirit of the time and the ideals of Social Justice which made him devote his attention to the eradication of Social evils. We have no evidence to show whether any personnel or emotional factors contributed to change in him. With regard to the influences of the Brahmo movement in Bengal and the Prarthana Samaj of Bombay, two mutually, opposite views have been expressed<sup>14</sup>.

Veeresalingams rational mind was beginning to doubt and question the superstitions and retrograde customs in society. He said that he was not prepared to be blindly led by any established faith or heresy and wanted to go in to the truth of the matter. He associated that if he is convinced of a thing he would pursue sincerely. At this state of life when his faith in traditional customs and beliefs was tottering we learn from his autobiography that he borrowed from one of his friends a volume of the collected speeches of Kesav Chandrasen. “After reading his speeches my faith

13. Veerasalingam, though a Saivite by birth, sang the praises of Vishnu (in the of strong rivalry between the two denominations of saivaites and vaishnavaites) in one of his satakas for which he claimed credit for his liberality of outlook. (Veeresalingam sweeyya, Pt I. P57.)

14. A. Ramapati Rao stated that Veeresalingam was influenced by the Brahmo reformers of Bengal through the prevailing social conditions had a deep impact on him. See introduction in A.Ramapati Rao, ed. Kandukuri Veeresalingam Diaries and letters (Telugu), Vijayawada, 1970. A similar view was expressed by his earliest biographer T.Venkata Subba Rao, Sri Kandukuri Veerasingha Kavi Charitramu (Telugu) , Rajahmundry, 1894, P.41. An opinion contrary to this has been expressed by Venkatarangaiah in an article written in the souvenir *Yugapurushudu*, Veeresalingam (hereafter *yugapurushudu*). Hyderabad. n.d., P.33. He states that Veeresalingam was influenced neither by Benagl nor Maharashtra reforms and the interest in reform was his own. See also in this context, D.Anjaneyulu, *Kandukuri Veeresalingam*, New Delhi, 1976. P.24.



incertain established truth was shaken”<sup>15</sup>.

The arrival of Atmuri Lakshminarasimham, a teacher and a Brahmo by faith, to the District school in Rajahmundry strengthened his changing convictions towards reform. Under his influence Veeresalingam and a few of his co-students formed themselves into a society to discuss social issues once a week<sup>16</sup>.

Rajahmundry as we have observed earlier had among its population, elements of enlightenment<sup>17</sup>. It might be due to the progress made in the economic sphere after the construction of the godavari anicut or the early establishment of the government school and college, the Judicial and revenue establishments and the activities of the missionaries.

Though the spirit of reform did not effect all sections of the educated community equally, it did create at least among some of them, a general recognition of the existing social events and need for an analysis of the Indian socio religious conditions. On the influence of western ideas among his fellowmen, Veeresalingam wrote “It is admitted by one and all that Western lore has worked wonders among the natives of India we are quite aware that English education has rendered natives more refined in their manners has dispelled the mist of superstition from the minds of several of them, if not many and has considerably developed their moral caliber”

15. Keshubchandra Sen visited Madras in 1864 and delivered a few lectures. This created a stir in the public not only of Madras but of certain mofussil towns as well. This visit coincided with the beginnings of Brahmo movement in the Madras presidency. See Keshubchandra Sen, Diary in Madras and Bombay, 9<sup>th</sup> February to 8<sup>th</sup> April 1864, Culcutta, 1887, cited in J.G.Leonard, “Kandukuri veeresalingam, 1848-1919, a Biography of an Indian Social Reformer”, Doctoral thesis, university of Wisconsin, 1970, P.64.
16. The influence of Brahmas from Bengal, and in Particular Kesev Chandra sen, Veeresalingam has been pointed out by D.V.Siva Rao. In his article “Sri Veeresalingam.” In Andhra Prabha (Telugu Daily) November 17.1968.
17. Veeresalingam’s personal library which constitutes a major part of the present Rajahmundry Town Hall library. His collection consists of both english and Telugu books among which mention may be made of encyclopaedias, literary histories and histories of different nations. Standard books on Brahma Samaj are also found in good number. We find in these books the pencil markings and marginal writings of Veeresalingam. What remains to day is only a part of his huge library, which unfortunately, his correspondence (with mahadev govardhan Ranade, Ishwarachandara vidyasagar, pandit sivanatha sastry, Babu Hemachandra sarkar and other) was lost to posterity. Whatever remained mostly in an unconnected and fragmented form, of his diaries and letters, has been collected and edited by A. Ramapati Rao.



whenever it is properly imparted”<sup>18</sup>.

In 1874 Veeresalingam started a Journal, *Vivekavardhani*. It is a land mark in the life of Veeresalingam in this Journal he used to criticize the orthodox sections, over women's education. Thus one can observe the growth of intellectual conviction in him and the dedication to the cause of eradication of social evils. It was only in the year 1878. Veeresalingam emerged as an active and committed social reformer when he started the social reform association in Rajahmundry and took up the cause of widow remarriages, and other social activities.

### Starting of Vivekavardhini:-

Vivekavardhini was a monthly in the beginning. In 1876 it became a Fortnightly and later a weekly<sup>19</sup>. It was not the first Journal in Telugu prior to that there were *vrittanti* (1838), Followed by *Vartamana Tarangini* (1842), *Hitavadi* (1862), *Sri Yakshini* (1863) *Tatwa bodini* (1864), *Sujanaranjani* (1864), *Andhra Bhasha Sanjivini* (1871), *Purusharthapradayini* (1872). See Bangorey's article. “Nellore Patrikala Charita” (Telugu) in *Vikrama simhapuri mandala sarwaswamu* (Nellore, 1963);

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18. Susobhan Sarkar quoted Rabindranath Tagore who held a similar view with regard to the “magic touch of western culture that roused Bengal from its torpor, and stated that though the Bengal reformers like Rammohan and Vidyasagar were fond of quoting Hindu scriptures in defence of their reforms their “Obvious original model was western liberalism”. See susobhan sarkar (General president's address, muzafferpur, 1972) *Indian History Congress, Proceedings of the Thirty-Third session*. New Delhi, 1973, P.13. However, Veeresalingam grew in his views on the influence of education (including English education) in general on men's minds motivating them towards reform: he stated, “you often hear it is stated that education is the best remedy for the evils from which our society is suffering. If by education you mean that which is imparted in your schools and colleges, this statement does not express the whole truth .... for, we know the majority of our educated men are as backward in espousing the cause of social reform in practice as their uneducated countrymen.... A friend was telling me.... That education, while it makes good men better, makes bad man worse. This program.... must...be accepted with a good deal of reservation; but observation will show you that literary education is often double edged weapon....this education....must be supplemented first, by a familiarity with the ideas of reform, and secondly, by the influence of personal example”. See the presidential address of Veeresalingam delivered on the occasion of the 12<sup>th</sup> Indian social conference held at madras in 1898, published in C.Y.Chintamani, ed , Indian social Reform, Madras, 1901, PP.204-5. Veeresalingam by 1898, might have experienced apathy, if not non-cooperation, from a number of educated people in his reform activity which prompted him to adopt this view.
19. He first issue was published from Dowaleswaram, and until a press was acquired, it was printed at Madras. Besides vivekavardhini, Veeresalingam published a few other journals in Telugu, namely *Hasyasanjivini* (1876), *Sathihitabodhini* (1883), *Chintamani* (1891), *Satyasamavardhani* (1891), *Chitrenana* (1904) and *Satyavadini* (1905)

But it was the first Journal devoted to social regeneration. In way it was a one man show. Veeresalingam was its life and soul-editor, printer, publisher, proof reader all rolled in to one. He conducted this Journal single handedly and the promised help never came from his friends and well wishers. The journal had as its motto, a verse taken from the Telugu Mahabharata, "Do unto others as you would have them do to you". The two main aims of the Journal were, (1) to increase the moral tone of the people and thus work towards social progress, and (2) Improvement of the Telugu language.

Veeresalingam made it an effective weapon reflecting public opinion against growing corruption and immorality in the administration. He attacked official highhandedness as well as prostitution and concubinage prevailing in society. Soon it (Vivekavardhani) became a guardian angel of the public and the terror of venal officialdom in and around Rajahmundry and a centre of Veeresalingam's reform activities. Thus he earned high praise as the first Journalist in Andhra who used Journal as the effective media of disseminating the ideas of reform and modernism<sup>20</sup>.

#### Attitude to Literature:-

By 1874 the evolution of Veeresalingam's ideas on life from that of orthodoxy to non-conformism led to a corresponding shift in his attitude to literature also. Veeresalingam was naturally an heir to the ways of writing which were in vogue by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They can all be characterized as forming part of *Panditha Sampradaya*, or the scholarly tradition in language and literature, and they were intertwined with the predominant form of social organization which was decadent feudalism.

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20. S.Natarajan History of the press in India New Delhi 1962 Pg 2



After the down fall of the Vijayanagara empire, subsequent to the military defeat in the Battle of *Rakkastangadi* in the year 1565, there cropped up a large number of small kingdoms and chieftaincies all over the Andhra Country and the Tamil Country. They were all supported by a motley crowd of poligars who, in their turn, were propped up by armed retainers. The fragmentation of the political authority was coupled with social disorder. The decline in the classical literary values reflected this social phenomenon<sup>21</sup>.

The *prabandic* gear of the days of Vijayanagar was now inflated in terms of numbers and deflated in terms of quality, producing what are known as *Kshudra* or debased *prabandhams*. They gave undue importance to the meaner variety of *Sringararasa* with emphasis on the details of coitus and sexual satisfaction known as *parakiya sringara*. Whole poems were composed to give two to four different meanings to the same terms employed by the poet. Still greater poetic feats were performed in the name of *Chitra Kavitha* and *Bandha Kavitha*.

A writer of the southern school of Telugu, Samukham venkatakrishnappa Nayakudu of Madura, had produced *Jaimini Bharatham* in a stilted, pedantic and rhythmic prose early in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This style was far removed from the language current in the Andhra Country. It, however, fitted in with the scholarly school of literature and at the same time ignored or looked down upon the more popular and intelligible style of prose writing, employed by commoners as well as scholars in their day-to day intercourse, in letter writing, court documents and even in learned commentaries on kavyas. Charles Philip Brown made a conscious attempt early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the aid and guidance of his Telugu Pandits, such as

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21. V.Ramakrishna – Social reform in Andhra, New Delhi, 1991, P. 52-70.



Vathyam Advaita Brahmasastry, to revive this useful style of prose writing and to give literary currency.

But Paravastu Chinnaya Suri thwarted Brown's labours by reviving the scholarly style of prose writing known as *Grandhika*, with his prose work of *Panchatantra*. As the Andhra scholars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were naturally partial to this more respectable style. Veerasalingam's first essays in prose writing were cast in its mould and, in fact, they went one better, as for example, in his *sandhi* and *vigrahamu*<sup>22</sup>. Similarly his early verses were also of the same scholarly stamp as in *Suddhandhara Niryoshthya Nirvachana Naishadhamu*<sup>23</sup>. It was not until he put his shoulder to social reform that he first realized the utter uselessness of this style, both in poetry and prose, and especially in the latter. He deliberately sought to make a break with the old ways of prose writing with an eye on social reform.

Veeresaligam, the old-fashioned scholar, was withdrawing into the background and Veeresalingam, the man with a purpose was emerging. He believed that if the main purpose of language was to communicate ideas and to be an effective instrument of communication of ideas the language should be simpler and more lucid. In this context he wrote, "What is a language for? For men to communicate their ideas to one another. What are books in a language for? To pass on their ideas to those who are removed both in time and in space. Can such a thing be accomplished by books such as *vigrahamu*? No, it does not. Common readers have to have recourse to dictionaries and scholars in order to get at the meaning of words and sentences..... So how should books be? They should be intelligible to all. Thinking thus I decided to write books. Unlike *Vigrahamu*, in an easy style and gave expression to this idea in the press.

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22. See for the full texts of Sandhi and Vigrahamu, Veeresalingam Col. Works vol 9.Rajahmundry 1937.  
23. Veeresalingam Sweeyam pt.I.P.63



Further he said “He continued”, even though it has been my opinion that books should normally be written in *salakshana*, easy style, it is also my opinion that they may be written also in the style in accordance with their varying content. I thought of preparing a new grammar and a prose work in accordance with it, to suit the times and the growth in prose writing because I think that all old grammars have been composed solely for versification at a time when there were no prose works and, therefore many of the requirements of old grammar are not suited to the development of prose literature and hence the need for a change in grammar”<sup>24</sup>.

Veeresalingam wanted to make the language simple so that his ideas on social reform can be understood by the common people. This decision was indeed, a turning point not only in Veeresalingam’s life but also in Telugu literature, as well as in the social reform movement in Andhra. His social reform and his literary works were not too exclusively different aspects of his achievement. They were really complimentary to each other.

#### Telugu prose:-

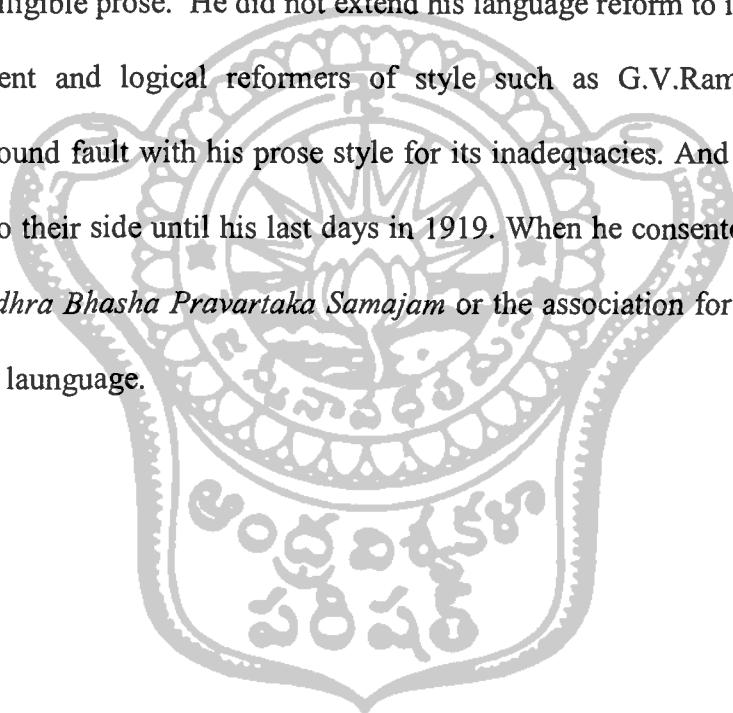
After having realised the futility of the earlier prose as a means of communication, Veeresalingam discarded it and evolved a new prose that was clear and simple and not beyond the understanding of the non pandit<sup>25</sup>. With the same end of propagating his ideas on social reform, Veeresalingam pioneered in adopting new literary genres such as a novel, the farce or *Prahasanam* and the play, both from English and Sanskrit<sup>26</sup>.

24. Autobiography of Veeresalingam sweeyam PT II P.124-125.

25. Veeresalingam was never excused for his deviation from the old style and as it was in the field of social reform. He had to face strong opposition in literary sphere too. See for example V.R.Narla, Traditional Indian Culture and other essays, Vijayawada, 1969, PP. 10-103; G.V.Ramamurthy Andhra andita Bhishkkula Bhasha Bheshajamu (Telugu), (Guntur), 1933), PP.3-4.

26. Veeresalingam was not the first novelist for he was preceded by Narahari gopalakrishnamma chetty who wrote Sri *Ramgaraja Charitramu* in 1872. In the field of essay, his predecessor was, samineni moothoo Narasimma Naidu (Satihit Soochnee). However, Veeresalingam greatness lay in the fact that he took up these infant – like genres into his lap and nourished them to establish them finally in the field of letters.

As C.R.Reddy has said in literature he commenced by writing prabhandas, bristlling with *Slesha*,<sup>27</sup> *Citrakavitha* and the entire gamut of ugly artificialities and ended as the creator of the Telugu novel, The Telugu social satire, the Telugu drama, especially of the social type, and of science and scientific biography in Telugu. But he stopped half way in this regard as best relaxing some of the rules of the sandhi and reducing the number of sanskritic compounds from his new prose which he names *sulabha* or intelligible prose. He did not extend his language reform to its logical end. The more ardent and logical reformers of style such as G.V.Ramamurthy and G.V.Apparao found fault with his prose style for its inadequacies. And they failed to win him over to their side until his last days in 1919. When he consented to head the *Vartamana Andhra Bhasha Pravartaka Samajam* or the association for promotion of current Andhra launguage.




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27. It is form of poetry in which a verse gives two different meanings.



### **Social Ideas of Veeresalingam:-**

Veeresalingam chose the teaching profession as he liked to lead a comparatively independent life. A number of his illustrious contemporaries also chose the same profession with similar views<sup>28</sup>. Teaching was an honoured profession and people with idealism and zeal for social work took to it as it gave them considerable leisure. The teaching profession gave him ample time and opportunity to sow in the receptive minds of generations of his students the seeds of reform and liberal thought and prepare them for solid practical work in future. Veeresalingam had immense faith in the capacities of the young and their cooperation in his work, which proved to be correct Judging from the great support he received from them during the height of his reform activity<sup>29</sup>. When some of his critics said that he was depending excessively up on students for his social reform movement he said. “our opponents are showing as a weakness on our side that the majority of our Samaj-Members and the others that take part in our gatherings and talks-are students. They take it as a draw back and feel happy that our cause is not strong. On the other hand I take it as point in our favor which augurs well for the future. Our country looks forward with great eagerness towards the students, who will grow into elders tomorrow....if these students....work for the benefit of the country with greater courage, zeal and capacity and make their motherland a heaven an earth”<sup>30</sup>.

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28. To cite only a few examples, Ragupathi venkataratnam, chil-akamarthi Lakshminarasimham, and Desiraju Pedabapaiah were teachers.
29. R. Venkatasivudu, *Veeresalingam samsrithi* (Telugu), Guntur, 1931, P.133. Veeresalingam himself gratefully acknowledged the help he received. From students in his autobiography, Pt. I, P.158. on the demise of Veeresalingam in 1919 one of his former students was asked to write the editorial in an illustrious telugu weekly, Krishna patrika, may 31, 1919, in which he started that the teachings of Veeresalingam on social evils and the need to eradicate them left a deep impression their minds.
30. Veeresalingam lecture (in Telugu)on “The duties of educated men” (vidyadhidhikula Dharmamulu) in Veeresalingam, col.works., VII (Lecturer). Rajahmundry, 1951. The lecture was delivered in 1893 under the auspices of the prarthanam samaj, Rajahmundry.



Veerasingam wanted to create strong base among students for the support of his movement in Rajahmundry. Where the anti reform, orthodox sections were very strong. He earned the reputation of being one of the greatest teachers who inspired the young generation and strove hard to create awareness and social consciousness among the youth of his time. Many of his students became his dedicated followers professing faith in his teachings and extending whole hearted support in his activities unmindful of the consequences<sup>31</sup>.

For many of the reformers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Andhra, the spread of education in general and of education of women in particular was the main issue. Veerasingam also held the view that the progress of nation depended much up on education of its women. With this view in mind. He strongly pledged in his speeches and writings for their education. In an article; “women’s education”, he argued that, “there are some who think that education is for securing jobs, for a living and ask, ‘why do women need education when they do not have to work and earn’? I wish to ask them, ‘In that case, where is the need for education for men who do not have to earn for their living? Though uneducated. A laborer makes a living out of his toil. One can take up a number of profession for a living; education is not that necessary to eke out one’s livelihood. Education is for something else, for knowledge, for wisdom and for the fulfillment of deeper and nobler urges of life. Women need education for the same purpose”<sup>32</sup>.

31 See V.Suryanarayana Rao, Suryanarayaneeyam (an autobiography in Telugu) Kovvur, 1936, P.165.

32 Veerasingam, Col. Works, Vol.VIII, Pt I, PP.20-21 and PUL SP 10-14

Kokkonda Venkata Rathnam in his Journal *Hasyavarthini* argued that women do not deserve education. Answering them in a sarcastic manner Veeresalingam wrote in his journal that men do not deserve education. At times he lashed out his opponents for example.

Were women to be educated,

“What would happen to the sale of human flesh,

Thinks one.

What would become of the time-old domestic ceremonies, Laments one.

Who would serve me as though I were her very god;

mourns another.

Whom am I to thrash and to labour

Rages another.

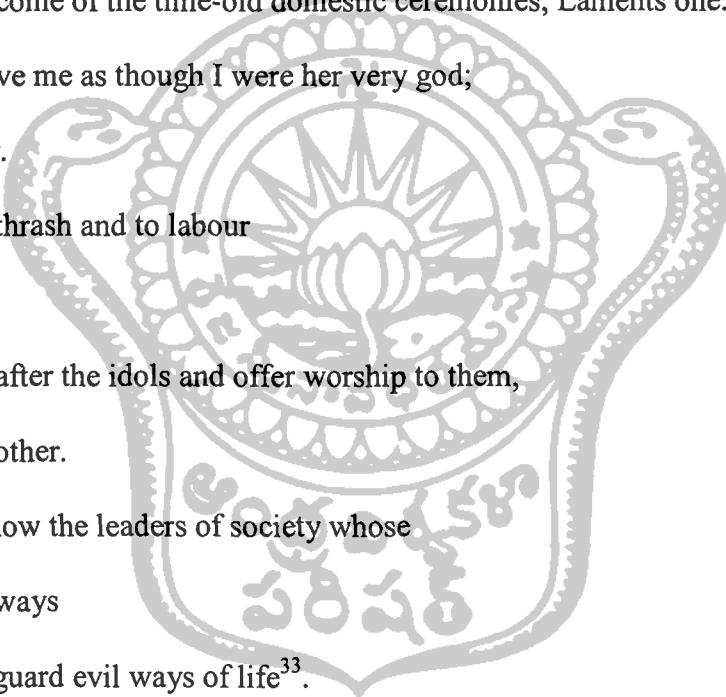
Who will look after the idols and offer worship to them,

Reasons yet another.

And these are now the leaders of society whose

Old-fashioned ways

Are out to safeguard evil ways of life<sup>33</sup>.



The reformers of Andhra wanted to liberate people from the deep-rooted superstitions and social evils. The spread of scientific knowledge and the growth of rationalistic thinking were the two aspects. Which Veeresalingam stressed in his speeches and writings. According to him ignorance was the main cause of all superstitions and social evils. He pleaded for the spread of scientific education in the local language.

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33 See Veeresalingam sweeyam charita part II, P 261



He declared.

In order to increase the total happiness of the common people books in easy and lucid Telugu Prose should be written on subject like astronomy, anatomy, physiology, Hygiene, Philosophy and Religion, Mechanics, Logic and Ethics, Economics, History and Geography<sup>34</sup>.

### **Rational out look:-**

Veeresalingam ridiculed the pseudo-scientific information given by the puranas and other Hindu scriptures and appealed to the people not to place faith in them. Veereshalingam's rationalistic out look could be seen pervading all his writings, either in criticising out dated customs or in introducing Reform ideas. Scientific education was meant to serve two purposes, to dispel the darkness of ignorance of masses, and to develop native agriculture and industries. He compared the western scientific knowledge to bright sunshine which breaks darkness and ushers in the dawn.

Veereshalingam felt the society could not improve unless the people are educated. He also wanted that mass education should be through the medium of the vernacular language. He wrote that: "Books have to be written in simple and lucid vernacular prose and made available to the people at low cost...popular books of knowledge should be written in vernaculars. Even one such book which can impart basic knowledge of one of the sciences would be able to bring enlightenment in some measure. When people come to understand the phenomenon of solar and lunar eclipses from a scientific point of view they will firmly reject the myth and meaningless rituals connected with them. People tend to become less and less superstitions as they learn more and more of natural sciences. Therefore competent

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34. Veereshalingam, Col. Works, Vol.III, Pt.III, Pp.10-11



people would consider my suggestions sincerely and undertake to write suitable books on sciences in vernaculars "for the benefit of the progress of the country"<sup>35</sup>.

As a rationalist he wanted the reason should be the hallmark of any Social custom or tradition. He stated any number of quotations from the Vedas and Sastras does not in the least help the reformer to bring about even a single widow marriage. If he wants to effect practical reform he must bring in reason to his help and appeal to the feelings of reasonable men....Reason can accomplish in one week what the so-called national lines cannot effect in a year. They may say this is a violent measure. Yes, violent maladies require violent remedies<sup>36</sup>.

### Caste System:

Veerasingam was against the caste system of India and considered that it has many evil consequences. He said our caste system prohibits certain castes' people from receiving education. This has largely impeded the development of their knowledge and skill. In a word while is progressing in all branches of human activity, we have to keep pace with other developing countries. Without education this is not possible. An uneducated craftsman hardly knows the improved skills and techniques employed in his vocation with the result that his growth remains permanently stunted. The present caste system has created mutual distrust and hatred. There are now among our people, not only the four castes but innumerable sub-castes...This naturally results in disunity and bitterness<sup>37</sup>.

35. Veerasingam wrote two separate articles on vernacular languages in his journal *vivekavardhini*, October 1861 and November 1886, included in his collective writings, Vol.VIII. Pt.II, PP. 556-70 and Pt.III, PP.667-70.

36. This extract is taken from the inaugural address delivered by Veerasingam as president of the sixth madras provincial social conference held at Kakinada. See Indian social reformer, Vol.XII, No.43 (1901-02). Veerasingam, in this speech, was answering critics of social reform movement who suggested that reforms should be organized on "national lines". He asked what those "national lines" were by which that reform (widow marriage reform) could be brought about

37. V.Ramakrishna. *Social reform in Andhra*. P.79.



### **Veeresalingam as a Moderate (Political Ideas):-**

In the assessment of Veeresalingam, from the beginning, a controversy arose as to his attitudes towards the Raj. By Comparing the British rule to the earlier post-mughal India which witnessed anarchy and lawlessness. He praised the British rule for its achievements in law, administration and security of life and property. As it was the case with other reforms of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Veeresalingam too believed that the British rule was a god-given boon (Divine Dispensation) to the Indians. These ideas of Veeresalingam were expressed in his lecture on “The national congress and its aims”, delivered in 1889 and incorporated in his col. Works, vol., VIII, pp.3-50. That he was a reactionary in politics has been asserted by K.Venkaiah<sup>38</sup>. Another view point, that he was loyal to the British Government and Cultivated good relations with top ranking district officials, for he needed their help in his social reform activities, was expressed by K.Punnaiah. Also this view was, to some extent, based on the incidents that took place in Rajahmundry in 1907 in the wake of swadeshi movement. He openly condemned the terrorist activities of people like Khudiram Bose and removed his portrait from the reading room, which was placed there in his absence. The students of the local college, who were once his loyal followers, were no longer with him. He was ridiculed for his attitude stemmed from two grounds. (1) he was a moderate in politics, and (2) the movement of 1907 was reactionary socially<sup>39</sup>.

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38. Desseya Bhashala, Jatula Samasya. Praja Swamica Pariskaramu, Telugu guehr.P.18-24  
 39. He described these incidents in detail in his sweeya, pt.II, pp.317 and 320-24.



It is not correct as some are inclined to suggest that Veeresalingam was socially a progressive but politically a reactionary. But it can be said that he was a typical representative of early Indian nationalism. He can be classified as a moderate among moderates.

He glorified of the benefits of the British rule. He was convinced that the elements of civilization introduced by the British government like education, administration civil and criminal courts, modern needs of communication and other scientific advantages, would place British rule as a great benefactor in proper Historical perspective<sup>40</sup>.

Veeresalingam compared the relation ship between the British government and Indian people to that between mother and child, the child, according to him (India), was perfectly justified in asking for freedom and the mother would grant all that the child merits<sup>41</sup>. He feared that if the British were to leave India, it would result in lawlessness and disorder and above all it will give a set back to the efforts for social reform and felt that the majority of the people are yet un enlightened. He stated that because of the British rule there are no civil wars and there is peace and order in our Country. If the British were to entrust the whole political power and responsibility of the Management of state affairs to Indians even for one year, India would soon (with in months) be Balkanized into many warring factions resulting in the infighting between different religions castes and nationalities. The illiterate majority would brand the educated minority as atheists and evil doers and suppress them and revive the dying social evils and traditions. All this would ultimately result in anarchy. Hence in order to avert this catastrophe befalling our nation, let us pray to

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40 Veeresalingam collected works Vol VIII pp 10-13  
41 Ibid P 16



God to ensure the British rule over us for ever<sup>42</sup>.

Veerasingam wanted for the representation of Indians in the local government and also in the viceroy's council. Unlike other moderate-nationalist he had no grasp of the nature of British colonial rule in India. He failed to make a sharp criticism of the economic content of colonialism. In a way he was not a moderate nationalist of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and for greater resemblance to the reforming intellectuals of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Still Veerasingam as a representative of the educated middle classes who were the ideological spokes men of the raising bourgeoisie of India, had great enthusiasm for swadeshi as early as 1880 and Advocated the manufacture of Indian products.

He wrote that "Almost all the clothes worn by the rich as well as the poor are manufactured in England. It is much cheaper than the cloth that our weaver produce here. It is manufactured by machines and hence chapter. Hence everyone has given up buying swadeshi cloth; they are all buying clothes manufactured in Europe. Crores of rupees that are spent every year in the purchase of foreign cloth are thus flowing out of our country in to foreign lands impoverishing further a country which is already poor. If on the other hand, textile mills are set up in our country, all that money will remain here"<sup>43</sup>.

Veerasingam was one of the delegates elected to attend the third session of the Indian national congress held at Madras in 1887. However he did not attend the session as a delegate since he was advised not do so as he was teacher in the government service<sup>44</sup>.

42. Ibid., pp. 17-18, lecture on Indian national congress in 1889. It is clear from this that the freedom he wanted was of a limited character within the general frame work of the British empire. Even about this, in the early stages, he did not have clear-cut ideas for he did not specify the type of relationship that should subsist between England and India.

43. He raised, though vaguely, that there was drain of resources.

44. From out the India and he desired the profits to accrue to the Indian entrepreneurs. Vivekavardhani, April 1880.



In the lecture in the congress (1889) he spoke of the rights of the people and how the congress aimed at striving for these rights. The founders of the congress hoped that the British would help in securing these rights. Veeresalingam too nurtured such hopes. He stated "at a time when we were ignorant, not knowing our rights, they taught us how to demand them; they helped us attain maturity. How can such enlightened and kind-hearted people fail to bestow on us those rights when we become qualified for them"?<sup>45</sup>

The demands of the early nationalist movement, may appear humble, when judged from the present day standards. We should not assume from the tone of these declarations that the early congress leaders were reactionary on the contrary they represented the most educated and enlightened force in Indian society. The Indian peasantry was not organized on a mass scale and the working class was still to come into being as a force to reckon with. The bourgeois intellectuals of the time strove hard for social reforms, for enlightenment, education, industrialisation and technical progress. "The intelligentsia of those days derived inspiration from the congress resolutions. And Veeresalingam was not exception in this respect, though his political understanding and activity were far more limited and conservative compared to the moderate nationalists of the time".<sup>46</sup>

### **Social and Political Reform:**

Veeresalingam belonged to that section of the reformers who believed that the social reform should take place along with political reform, if not precede it. In this he was one with the Maharashtrian reformers – Bhandarkar, Malbari and others. He held the view that when social evils like ignorance, Superstition, caste and sub-caste

45. Veeresalingam ed. works Vol.VIII. Pp. 15-16

46. V. Ramakrishna. *Social reform in Andhra* P.82.



were prevalent, there was no use in securing political freedom<sup>47</sup>.

Veerasingam stated in this connection that like the uniform growth of all limbs in a body, various facets of life in society – social, political economic and cultural – should be developed without detriment to any one of them<sup>48</sup>. Delivering the presidential address of the 12<sup>th</sup> Indian social conference at Madras in 1898 Veerasingam declared. “.... I believe the political development of a country must largely depend upon the social condition of the community which supplies the physical, intellectual, moral resources of the people”<sup>49</sup>.

While realizing the need to bring reforms in all fields of country's life, he argued that social reform and political reform should go together. He said “If we demand Justice from our superiors in matters relating to the government of the country, we ought as well to do justice to our inferiors in social matters .... How can we with consistency, be liberal in politics and conservative in social matters”<sup>50</sup>. He asked By the turn of the century the trend was clearly in favour of political reforms through vigorous political agitation, and the same period witnessed the comparative decline of the social reform movement. This was the reason why Veerasingam was harping on this theme repeatedly.

The growth of Veerasingam's ideas was a continuous process. When he set out to work in 1874 he was very young, only 26 years old. Never the less he had a will and individuality which were unyielding to pressures and influences. He stated in his autobiography. “Wherever a wrong appears it is not in my nature to suffer it in

47. Veerasingam, Col. Works, vcl.VIII, P.5., He published an article, “Political and social reforms ” in Vivekavardhani. Ibid., Pt. III, PP. 81-82.

48. Veerasingam, Sweeyya, Pt., I. P. 80. Mahadev Govind Ranade expressed similar views on this questions. See. T.V. Parvate, Mahadev Govind Ranade (a Biography), Bombay, 1961, P.150.

49. C.Y. Chinthamani P. 202.

50. Presidential address to the 6<sup>th</sup> Madras provincial social conference held at Kakinada in 1902. see also Indian social reformer Vol. 12, No. 43, (1901-1902) First Published from Madras and than shifted to Bombay.



silence. I do not have peace of mind, until I find a remedy for the wrong. "This gives us an idea of the Keynote of his personality" <sup>51</sup>

### Man of action:-

The most prominent trait in his character was his indomitable courage and steadfastness of purpose "I am not disposed even as a boy to give up an undertaking or let slip my purpose, when once I enter upon it" <sup>52</sup>. He wrote in his autobiography.

Veerasingam was not content to remain a mere preacher, or dreamer. He had a philosophy of action and a programme of work. With regard to the work to be done, in transforming public life in Andhra, he expressed his views in one of his lectures where in he discussed the qualities and requirements of a practical worker.

He says "every person of right thought thinks of leading others to right conduct; but there are only very few who can really do so .... We see many people who always imagine that they could improve the world only when they reach a certain position or acquire wealth and pass away miserably doing nothing for the world. Wealth the position are not got easily without our yielding to many undesirable acts. He who relies on truth .... should be prepared to set aside consideration of father, mother, friends and relatives .... Unless a man betters himself first, he cannot better others. And to better himself he must leave the service of the old dame custom and worship trust... all other means for sustained action like courage, steadfastness and patience are got in a moment. These are thousand times more efficient weapons than the old sastras..... Even though your efforts may fail in the beginning. Do not get dispirited. Show to the world the usefulness of your attempts without giving them up, by publishing books, by delivering lectures and by showing it in your deeds" <sup>53</sup>.

51. Veerasingam, Sweeyam, Pt.I, P. 49.

52. Veerasingam, Sweeyam, Pt.I, P.60.

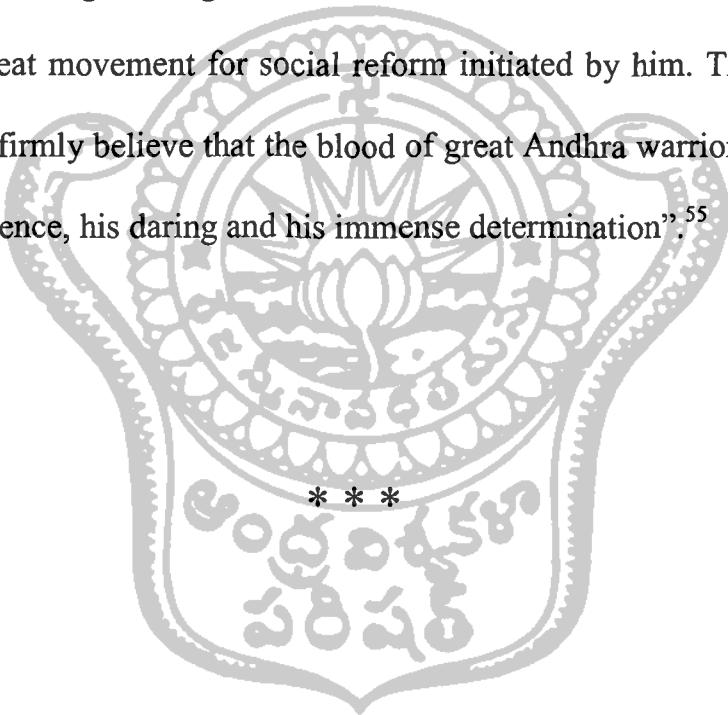
53. Veerasingam , Col. Works, vol.VIII, Pp. 47-51, translated and edited by gurunatham, pp.43-45.



This attitude of Veeresalingam helped him greatly in carrying on his work. As he once said, "It is confidence in my character that has made me rely on my word throughout my life ..... Even my bitterest opponents in social reform had confidence in my character and trusted my word fully" <sup>54</sup>.

#### Appa Rao on Veeresalingam:-

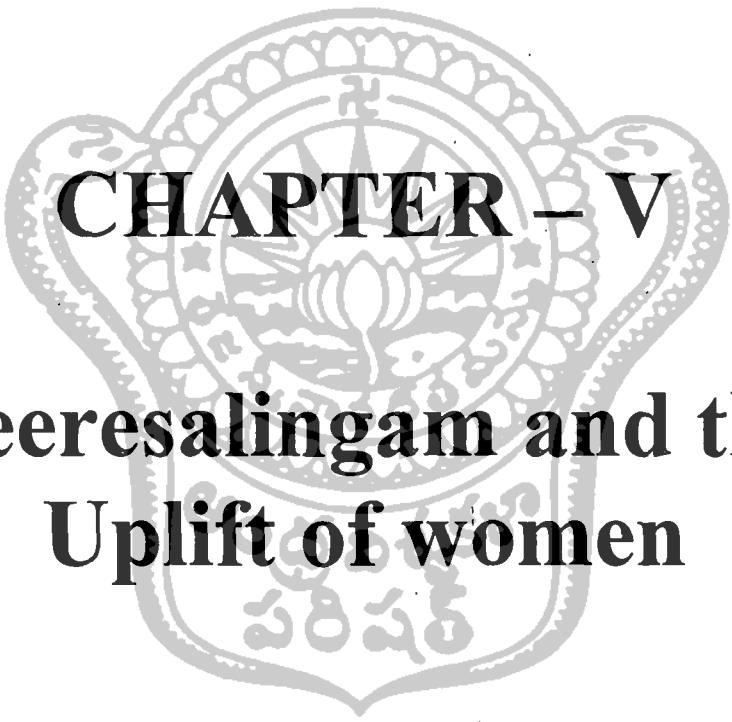
Gurazada Appa Rao rightly remarked: "Veeresalingam is indeed a great man. I honour him for being the originator of a definite trend in our modern literature and for the great movement for social reform initiated by him. This is superb human task. I firmly believe that the blood of great Andhra warrior Chiefs runs in his veins. Hence, his daring and his immense determination".<sup>55</sup>



54. Ibid P.47.

55. Gurazada commemorative volume, ed, M.Chalapathi Rao.





## **CHAPTER – V**

# **Veeresalingam and the Uplift of women**



## CHAPTER - V

### 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."<sup>1</sup>

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

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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.<sup>2</sup>

During this time, the Rajahmundry provincial school club was formed (July 1875) with Basava Raju as its secretary<sup>3</sup>. 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 pantulu<sup>4</sup> 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 *Brahmayivahamu* and *VyavaharaDharmaBhodhini*<sup>5</sup>

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 Sweeyam Part.I. p.84

3) Basavaraju gavarraju later became a close follower and right hand man of Veeresalingam in his reform activities at Rajahmundry. See for a brief biographical sketch of gavarraju by Veeresalingam in his Col. Works, 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 no single work on Kokkonda Venkataratnam, references to him are found in Veeresalingam, Sweeyam, 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 latter 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”.<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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 19 century when Dalhousee decided to extend support to the education of women.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup>

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.<sup>11</sup> 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.<sup>12</sup> 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 caste girls school was opened in 1843 under the superintendence of Mr and Mrs braidwood with nine pupils<sup>13</sup>. 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.<sup>14</sup>

- 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 archieves of India, New Delhi, 1965. P.47.
- 10) The year 1868 was significant because during that year mary carpenter visitied 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 madras in 1901. the major activity of these women missionaries was to spread zenane education.



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.<sup>15</sup>

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 district<sup>16</sup>. 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 education<sup>17</sup>. Its curriculum included both English and telugu in addition to fine arts and crafts like drawing, music and needle work.<sup>18</sup>

In 1868 the Maharajah, Vijayarama Gajapathi, established a school at Vizianagaram for Rajput and Brahmin girls.<sup>19</sup> None of the maharajah's school received any aid from the state and they merited admiration from the authorities of the government<sup>20</sup>.

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

- 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 Godaya 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 aproceedings, no.396, 26 november 1868, 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.<sup>21</sup>

In the Andhra region, the orthodox sections led by Kokkonda Venkata Ratnam were still voicing vehement opposition to women's education.<sup>22</sup> 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 Dowleswaram<sup>23</sup>. 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.<sup>24</sup>

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 columns<sup>25</sup>. 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, through 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 period<sup>26</sup>.

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 also<sup>27</sup>. 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 children<sup>28</sup>. Many other Women's Journals such as *Hindu sundari*, *Zenana*, *Telugu Zenana*, *Kamaleswari*, *Chintamani savithri* were also started<sup>29</sup>. 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 arts<sup>30</sup>.

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.<sup>31</sup> 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) Veerasingam; sweeyam, 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 "womens 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 womens journal from Kakinada called Savithri. Being a close follower of Veerasingam she played a prominent part in the women's movement in Andhra. See Savithri, February 1904.



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

### Writings of Veeresalingam: -

Veeresalingam wrote a good number of articals and books on the problems relating to women. He wrote *Deharogyadharma bodhini* (in 1889) dealings with the health problems of women. It was a scientific book which was serialised in his journal for women *Sati hitabodhini*<sup>36</sup>. He published another book *patnihitasoochani* in 1896. This book deals with the problems connected to child birth and up bringing<sup>37</sup>. 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 sachchrita Ratnamala* (Lines of noble women in three parts) (Telugu), Madras, 1901 introduction Kalpalatha a monthly journal edited by A. Kameswara Rao pantulu and published from Visakhapnam), 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 *Strividya sarasangrahamu* (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 ....”<sup>38</sup>

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 Rajahmundry<sup>39</sup>. 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 education<sup>40</sup>. The Arya Bala samajam at Endagandi was established in 1904 and had a small library. It was holding, on an average, three meetings a month<sup>41</sup>. 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 passed<sup>42</sup>. 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 club<sup>43</sup>.

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 (*prahasnamulu* 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 roles. 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. Arrangements 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 presidency of T. Varada Rajulu (District munsiff) and formed the society to promote girls education including music and other useful arts<sup>44</sup>. 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"<sup>45</sup>.

At Machilipatnam an association named *Brindavana pura stree Samajam* was established in November, 1902 under the leadership of Bhandaru Atchamamba and Oruganti Sundari Ratnamamba<sup>46</sup>. 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 members<sup>47</sup>.

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 arts<sup>48</sup>. It held its fifth anniversary meeting under the presidency of Budhavarapu varalakshmamma in May 1910 and discussed along with the annual report problems concerning women.<sup>49</sup> 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 patrka, February 7, 1909.

47) Krishna patrka, October 10, 1905,

48) Krishan patrka, 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 government<sup>50</sup>.

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)<sup>51</sup>, the Kurnool district conference (1914)<sup>52</sup>, and the first Bellary district conference (1914)<sup>53</sup>, where the question of female education received special attention.

For the first time an all – Andhra Women's conference was organized at guntur in 1910<sup>54</sup>. 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 district<sup>55</sup>. it was noteworthy that women's organizations, realizing the need for vocational education , started demanding its inclusion in the schools.<sup>56</sup> The conference noted with gratification that women association were being established in villages where regular weekly or fortnightly meetings were taking place.<sup>57</sup>

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 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> of march 1914. At peddapur the conference was held on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> 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 upayasanjari* (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 22<sup>nd</sup> guntur district social conference (telugu), Bezwada, 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 streela prasthutha Sthiti" *Andhra Parivaka* (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 Bhandaru Atchamamba (1874-1905), the author of *Abalasaccheritra Ratnamala* (Lives of Noble Women), in 1910.<sup>58</sup> 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.<sup>59</sup>

K. Seethamma (1872-1934) was another renowned writer of this period. She wrote the biography of Veerasingam in verse. Which merited recognition in the literary circles<sup>60</sup>.

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

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 Veerasingam 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 Veerasingam charitramu*, Kakinada, 1921. the earliest biography of Veerasingam (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, 103 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.<sup>62</sup>

### 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>63</sup>

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, Part B, Chinaman, February – march, 1898.



whole of the presidency, were 1,44,482 of whom 72,102 were in the Northern circars<sup>64</sup>. 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.<sup>65</sup>

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, 1865<sup>66</sup>. 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 marriage itself, and in the sacred books on which our marriages rites are founded."<sup>67</sup> He also expressed advanced views such as freedom of choice to be given to girls in choosing their husbands.

Veerasingam 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 ceded 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, Madras 1867, P.6

66) Narasaiah, D. letters in Hindu marriages (A reprint of the letter that appeared in the madras times). Madras 1867.

67) Ibid.P.1.

them ineligible for scholarships or prizes, and 2. Preferring unmarried candidates for public employment<sup>68</sup>

Veerasingam 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 birth<sup>69</sup>. Infant marriages reached such absurd proportions that ten-month old children (sometimes even less) were married.<sup>70</sup> In a long article on this topic, *Satyasamvardhani* concluded that early marriages would lead to the physical and mental degeneration of the nation.<sup>71</sup>

### **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 Veerasingam lecture on this in his col. Works Vol. VII, pp 37-38, where he linked up this issue with the problem of widows.

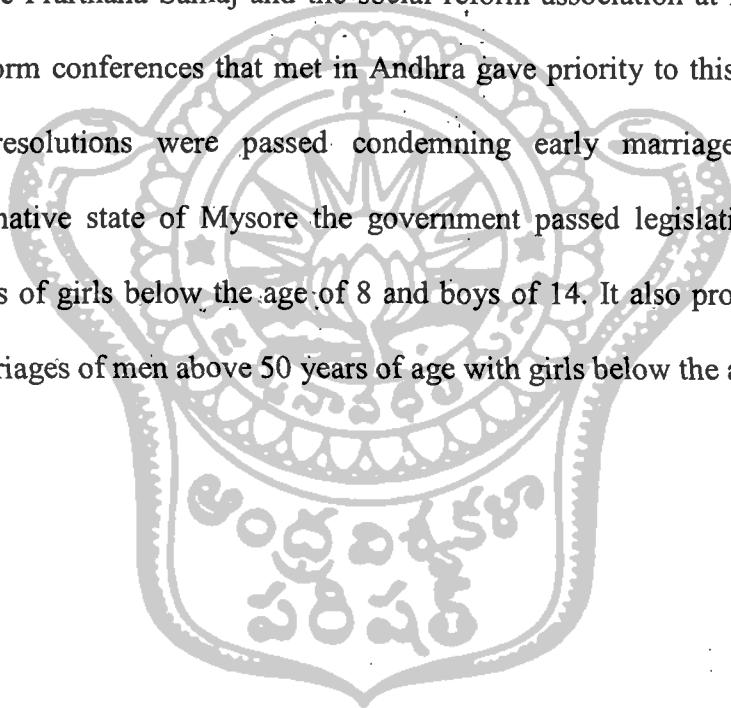
69) Vartadarsani, April 1894, Native News, 1894 (published from Nellore) A former student of Veerasingam, and a reformer later, V. Suryanarana Rao, in his autobiography, *Suryanarayananayamu*, p 18, mentioned that his sister was married at the age of 7 to an old man who died soon, leaving her a widow. Several instances of child marriages were mentioned by c. Lakshminarayana in his Autobiography, pp.10-11 and 20. also see in this context vennelacountry 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.<sup>72</sup> Members were asked to take pledges in accordance with its objects that they would in no way be connected with infant marriages.<sup>73</sup> 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.<sup>74</sup> 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.<sup>75</sup> The social reform conferences that met in Andhra gave priority to this issue in their agenda and resolutions were passed condemning early marriages.<sup>76</sup> 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.<sup>77</sup>

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- (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 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 reforemer, 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.<sup>78</sup> 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.<sup>79</sup>

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 practice<sup>80</sup>. 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.<sup>81</sup> 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 law<sup>82</sup>.

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

79) During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> 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 Veerasingam, col. Works, Vol.VIII, pt.II. pp.26-28.

81) Ibid. Veerasingam described the practice as the “sale of human flesh”, in the course of his presidential address at godavari district social conference in 1897. *Satyasamvardhanam*, 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 shastras<sup>83</sup> *kanyasulkam* was described as worse than ‘slavery’ by *vartadarsani*; it appealed to the government “to make it Punishable under the statute banning slavery.<sup>84</sup>

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”.<sup>85</sup> 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.<sup>86</sup>

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 apparaao to undertake the writing of the play.

86) T. Rajagopalrao, p. 40; Hindu-Zenana Samskarini April 1893, 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.<sup>87</sup> 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.<sup>88</sup> 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 causes 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 rare<sup>89</sup>. 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”<sup>90</sup> Induced the reformers to undertake movements against it in several parts of the country.. Veerasingham 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, vaisyas, the, 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.<sup>91</sup>

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.<sup>92</sup>

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.<sup>93</sup> 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.<sup>94</sup> 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.<sup>95</sup> Though the association failed to achieve anything tangible in the practical sphere of its activities, published a few pamphlets

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- 91) Veeresalingam said that he was inspired in writing this novel by Oliver Goldsmith's 'Vicar of Wakefield'. 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 book as a "unique novel" the Hindus comment on it was saying that "Rajasekharacharitra marks an era in the annals of Telugu literature". See Veeresalingam, Sweeyya, 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. Sweeyya: 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 Samskarini* with a view to justify the cause of women education and widow remarriages. See, for a biographical account of Chentralrao. O. Venkata Rangaiah, Kondaru Nellore Gopayya (Telugu), Nellore, 1933, pp. 120-22.
- 95) Leonard, p. 75



and a tract on the desirability of widow remarriages.<sup>96</sup> 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 tract in telugu on widow marriages was published<sup>97</sup>. However, it was not an original work. It was a translation from a canarese tract.<sup>98</sup> This was called *Hindu vivaha sastra sangrahamu* quoting from *manu smriti*, its stated categorically that both post – puberty and widow remarriages were sanctioned 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 circumstances, should the age limit be below 12, This , he stated, would eliminate early widowhood too.

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

96) Veerasingam, Sweeyaa, 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) Veerasingam made use of these articles before he delivered his maiden speech on the topic. Veerasingam, sweeyaa, Pt.I, p.156.



### Charlapalli Bapaiah, the originator:

It was charlapalli bapaiah, a teacher in the local college and an intimate friend of veeresilingam who first broached to him the idea of performing widow remARRIAGES<sup>100</sup>. 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.<sup>101</sup>

In his lecture delivered on 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 taxes like the Vedas and smritis<sup>102</sup> 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 castes<sup>103</sup>”. He described in detail various other evils related to the problem of widow hood. The pandits, among the oppnents assembled , challenged he is arguments which, according to Veeresalingam were not difficult to counter.<sup>104</sup>

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 remARRIAGE. 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 expressively intended for kaliyuga, where in a widow was permitted to marry in five cases of afflictions. see Ranade’s religious and social reform, P. XI. 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, Sweeyam, 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.<sup>105</sup>

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 on 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.<sup>106</sup>

The first major tract published against widow remarriages was *Stri Punarvivaha Durvadanirvapanamu* by vedam venkataraya sastry in 1883.<sup>107</sup> Venkata Raya Sastry, a contemporary of Veeresalingam was a great Sanskrit scholar working in the Christian college in Madras.<sup>108</sup> 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.<sup>109</sup> Another tract, opposing widow remarriages was published from bobbili (Visakhapatnam district).<sup>110</sup> 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, Sweya, 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 *Adhunikāndhra sahitī Nirmatalu (upanyasa 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 Khandanamu*,<sup>111</sup>

Among those who opposed widow remarriages through their writings (articles) mention should be made of two scholars, namely Dasu Sriramulu (1846-1908), and K. Brahmayya Sastry (1863-1940). Sriramulu was a lawyer at Machilipatnam and published articles in his journal kalpavalli opposing remarriages.<sup>112</sup> 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 others<sup>113</sup>. He edited and published the Journal Aryamathabodhini from Kakinada and through its columns launched a severe attack against reform movements<sup>114</sup>. 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 Dikshitula varu(nandiraju Lakshminaryana) was one of the pandits that took part in first lecture on widow marriage delivered by Veeresalingam in 1879. References to his tract are found in K. Markandayarma, 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, 8<sup>th</sup> 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, 6<sup>th</sup> edn. Pp. XXII – XXIII : Indian social reformer, June.22, 1902, vol.XII, No.43.

(113) J. Purshotam, 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 open to the Brahma Samaj and its ideals. However, he adopted their methods of delivering lectures, issuing pamphlets and sinking kirtans (songs) in the stracts.

(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 Satyavadini. Veeresalingam, sweeyam, pt I. pp. 280-83. See Brahmayya Sastry's lectures attacking the reform ideas and indicating the tenets of the Hindu religion, N. Chalapati Rao Ed. Sri Upayalapayodhini (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 remarrriages:-

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 (Veerasingam) 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."<sup>115</sup> 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.<sup>116</sup>

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.<sup>117</sup> it was followed by excommunication letters issued by the sankaracharya

115) V Surya Narayana Rao, p 166

116) Veeresalingam, Sweeyya, pt I p 196

117) Indian social reformer, November 3, 1894, Vol V No 10



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

The news of the first widow remarriage was well received in reform quarters, especially in Madras.<sup>121</sup> 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 marriages associations, one at Rajahmundry and another at Madras.<sup>122</sup>

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.<sup>123</sup> 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.<sup>124</sup> The Rajahmundry widow marriage association (started in 1879) did not meet, formally before 1884.

118) The orthodox section so rejoiced 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's marriage 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.<sup>125</sup> 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 Veerasingam.<sup>126</sup> 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 Veerasingam in recognition of his yeoman service to the widow remarriage movement in the south.<sup>127</sup>

The social reform movement at Madras did not gain much from the stay of Veerasingam there.<sup>128</sup> 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"<sup>129</sup>. 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 Veerasingam 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.<sup>130</sup> 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 Chowdari, *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, Veerasingam'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 Veerasingam with Vidyasagar was apt on more than one count. Hemachandra Sarkar drew an impressive comparative picture of the two in his book *Sivathan Sastry*, Calcutta 1929, P. 48.

128) Indian Social Reformer, November 24, 1901, Vol. XII, No. 13; Veerasingam, *sweeyam*, 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 have 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 lectures on widow marriages. There he helped in forming a reform association to organize propaganda in favour of widow marriages.

Veerasingam 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 Home<sup>131</sup> 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.<sup>132</sup> 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, Veerasingam 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.<sup>133</sup> 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.<sup>134</sup>

131) A thirty- acre site was purchased for the construction of the building. M. Achutarmaiah, a former student of Veerasingam, contributed five thousand rupees towards it. The Rajah of pithapur gave twelve hundred rupees, to begin with the home was started at Veerasingam residence and it was shifted to its own buildings in 1908. See for details K. Hanumantha Rao article "Panthalugari Samsthala" 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 o the Hitakarini Samaj and the Trust Deed, see the appendices in Veerasingam, sweeyya,

134) The Samaj has been running a high school a widows Home, prayer hall, Library and read up room. After the death of Veerasingam, 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 Veerasingam and his followers. As mentioned earlier, of the 63 widow remarriages performed till 1905, 57 were among Brahmins (of different sub-castes), 3 among vaishyas 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.<sup>135</sup> 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 it self much about grown up widows.<sup>136</sup> 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.<sup>137</sup>

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 *sāmajchitra*, 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 surendra nath 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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”<sup>138</sup>

In Andhra the impact of the movement nearly disappeared. In two decades.<sup>139</sup> 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.<sup>140</sup>

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 swecya, 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 Brides 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, samskriti, 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.<sup>141</sup> However, Veeresalingam refuted this criticism by saying that in order to pay the married couples in time, he had incurred debts.<sup>142</sup>

Veerasingams departure for madras in 1894, when the movement was at its peak considered a distinct loss to the northern districts.<sup>143</sup>

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.<sup>144</sup> 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.<sup>145</sup>

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- 141) Gudipati Chalam, a Brahmo and a close follower of Venkataratnam and later a prominent literary figure in Telugu, expressed the same views in his autobiography. He had the benefit of knowing about the widows Home and conditions 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 (Antibiogrpahy, 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 a break 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 total assets amounted to of 41 thousand rupees.



### The “Social Purity” Movement:-

The social reformers of 19<sup>th</sup> 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”<sup>146</sup>. Consequently, the movement, in its practical sphere of activity, comprised two main activities, namely<sup>147</sup>, eradication of the nautch, and<sup>148</sup> 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 prostitution<sup>149</sup>. 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 society<sup>150</sup>.

The dancing girls, in 19<sup>th</sup> century Andhra<sup>151</sup> 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 ministrations of Brahmashri Sir, R. Venkataratnam, Kakinada, 1965 p. 148..

151. In Andhra the Devadasigirls were called Bogams and satis 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 presidency<sup>152</sup>. 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 like<sup>153</sup>.

It was a practice that all those present should contribute some amount, whether or not one had the ability to pay<sup>154</sup>. 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.

### Veerasingam's Efforts:-

Veerasingam, 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 abolished<sup>155</sup>.

In 1881 the students at Rajahmundry, Under the auspices of Veerasingam, 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 issue<sup>156</sup>.

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. Veerasingam, Sweeyya, Pt. I, p.90.

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

155. M.R. Appa Rao, Brahmashri Ragupati 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, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. Vol. I & II.

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”<sup>157</sup>. 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 purity<sup>158</sup>.

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 girls<sup>159</sup>. 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 that<sup>160</sup>. The note also appreciated the efforts made by the Arya-Vysya association (a caste association of the vysyas) to eradicate this evil practice<sup>161</sup>.

### 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 this time, even though 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 this evil mention should be made of Darishi chenchaiah. A freedom fighter and an advocate of social reform, he along with Bangalore nagaratnamma and her daughter Yaminipurna Tilakam (both from the ‘community’ of nautch girls) started a Journal and conducted several meetings throughout Andhra. Under their influence, several members of the nautch – girls “community” gave up their ‘profession’ and got educated and settled to respectable lives after marriage. See D. Chenchaiah, Lit., PP. 270-73. yaminipurna Tailakam started at Madras an orphage called Hindu Yuvati Saranalayam for the Children of nautch 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 sword<sup>162</sup>. It further enquired whether the sections, No. 272 and No. 273 of the Indian penal code were effective enough to tackle the problem<sup>163</sup>.

The above proceedings and their publication in Krishna Patrika roused the attention of and response from the general public and the ‘community’ of the nanch 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 profession<sup>164</sup>. 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 boycott and non-cooperation from other caste groups<sup>165</sup>.

#### 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<sup>166</sup>. Krishna Patrika exhorted the people to hold meeting in support of the bill and make it a law<sup>167</sup>. 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) where 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 Devadasis<sup>168</sup>.

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 eliminated<sup>169</sup>. 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 others<sup>170</sup>. 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 it<sup>171</sup>.

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”<sup>172</sup>.

### 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”<sup>173</sup>. 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, *Sweeyya 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"<sup>174</sup>.

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 19<sup>th</sup> century was attributed to the British rule<sup>175</sup>. 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 Samuel Swan, M P 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 system<sup>181</sup>. 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"<sup>182</sup>.

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 evil<sup>183</sup>. A tract in Telugu was published in 1893 enumerating the evils of drinking liquor<sup>184</sup>.

In the Madras presidency the Revenue was mainly derived from the sale of liquors, opium and other drugs<sup>185</sup>. The "Farming system"<sup>186</sup>, 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 today 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 10<sup>th</sup> session at Calcutta in 1896 discussed the issue and passed a resolution in favour of the Temperance movement<sup>187</sup>. 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 government<sup>188</sup>. 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 congress<sup>189</sup>. 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 roadside<sup>190</sup>. 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 too<sup>191</sup>.

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 movement<sup>192</sup>. 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 16<sup>th</sup> 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 Swatantryayamamu" in Vikrama simhapuri Mandala Sarvaswamu (Telugu), Nellore, 1963. for details on the successful campaign of 'liquor boycott' movement in Andhra district, See M Venkataramaiya, 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. Subrahmany 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 Lateef 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 him<sup>193</sup>. In Andhra nothing of that sort took place<sup>194</sup>. 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"<sup>195</sup>.

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 19<sup>th</sup> 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.

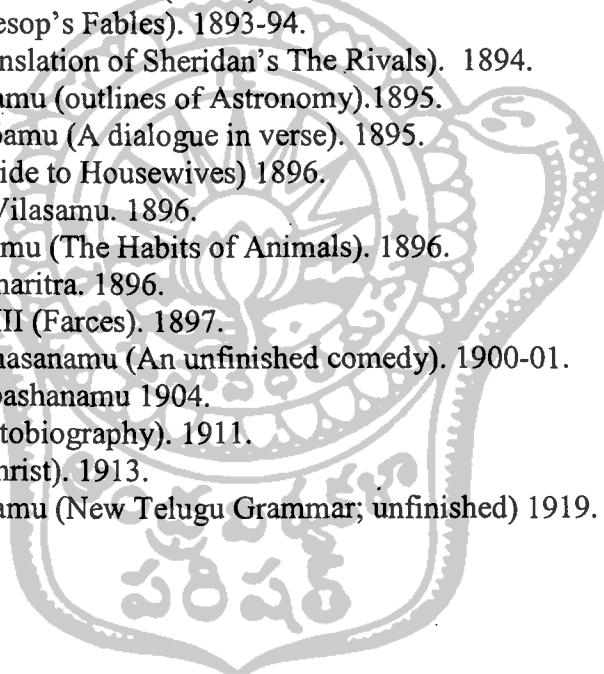


## APPENDIX - II

### BIBLIOGRAPHY OF VEERESALINGAM'S PRINCIPAL WORKS

- Markandeya Satakam and Gopala Satakam.* 1868-69  
*Rasikajana Manoranjanam.* 1870-71  
 Sudha Andhra Nirostya Nirvachana Naishadhamu. 1871.  
 Sudha Andhra Uttara Ramayanamu. 1872.  
 Neeti Chandrika, Vigrahamu (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.  
 Abhagyopakhyanamu (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.  
 Sudha 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 Gograhanamu (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 sambashanamu 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 posses 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 out 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 bids 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 strving 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 dialemma. 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 repreated 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 winds 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 brothren. ‘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 the 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, tht 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-mariage.
10. That the Trustees and their successors in office shall permit my wife, kandukuri Rajya Lakshmamma, 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 upstair 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 al 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, retified 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 Vakil, rajahmundry.
5. Nalam Krishna Rao Garu, son of Kamaraju Garu, Land holder, Rajahmundry.
6. Kanaparti Sreeramulu Garu. Son of Narasimhulu Garu, High Court Vakil, Rajahmundry.
7. Ganti Lakshmanna Garu, B.A., B.L., Son of Narasimhulu garu, High Court Vakil, Rajahmundry.
8. Chilakamarthi Lakshmi Narasimham Garu, son of Venkanna Garu, Landholder, rajahmundry.
9. Karumury Kamaraju Garu, son of Veerayya Garu, Merchant, Rajahmundry.
10. Mokkapati Subbarayudu garu, B.a. Private Secretary to the Rajah of Pittapur.



## SCHEDEULE 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 mortage deed dated 17<sup>th</sup> 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 mortage deed, dated 1<sup>st</sup> 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 had 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 *Stri-purusha-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 his 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 this 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.

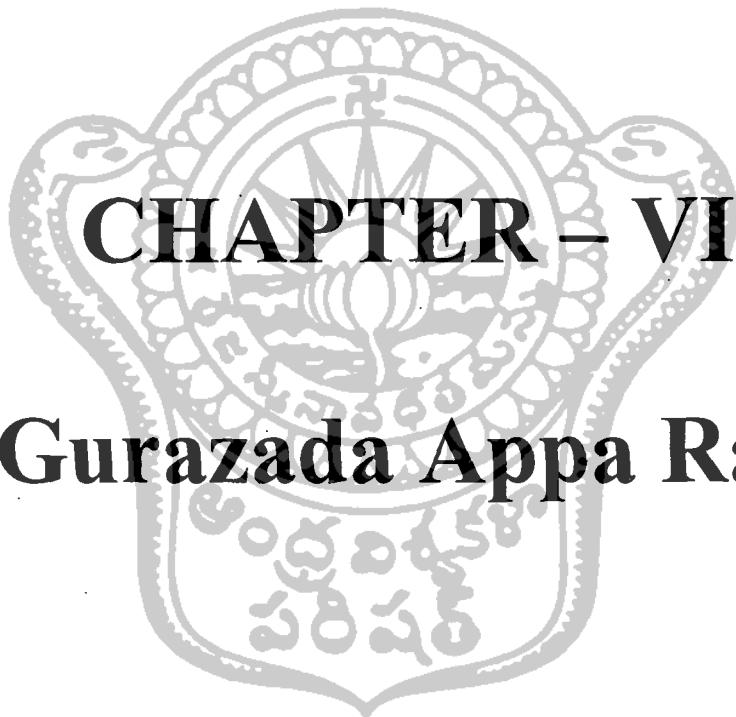
After her husband’s death, Ramabai wrote a memoir describing her childhood, her marriage to Justice Ranade, her early education at his hands, and their life together until his death in 1901. This memoir, published in the early years of the twentieth century, includes Ramabai’s account of her childhood 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 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.





# **CHAPTER – VI**

## **Gurazada Appa Rao**



## CHAPTER-VI

### GURAZADA APPARAO

Gurazada Venkata Apparao was born on 21. September 1862 in Rayavaram, of Yelamanchili Taluk of Visakhapatnam District. His father Venkata Ramdas worked in vizianagaram estates as peisheker for sometime and also worked as revenue supervisor and khilledar. Sri Apparao had his earlier education in chipurupalli, till he was aged 10. Later he moved to vizianagaram till the completion of his graduation in Maharajas college Vizianagaram. Gidugu Ramamurthi was his classmate during his High School and college days and their friendship lasted till end. He completed his matriculation in the year 1882. Sri C.Chandrasekhara Sastri who was the principal of the college took keen interest in Sri Apparao and arranged for his studies by providing board and lodge. Even when he was just a student of matriculation he wrote poems in English. When he was student of F.A (inter mediate) he wrote *Sarangadhara* in English. He and his brother *Syamal Rao* used to write poems in Indian *leisure hour*- a journal published from Vizianagaram. Sambuchandra mukharjee a famous journalist of Bengal who was the editor of a *Reis and Reyyat* published *Sarangadhara*, and appreciated Apparao, for his literary skills. He also wrote another literary piece called *Chandrahasa* but this is also not available now.

Apparao studied B.A during 1884-1886. in Maharajas college Vizianagaram with philosophy as the main subject and Sanskrit as the second language. For some time he worked as teacher in maharaja's college high school. For a salary of 25Rs. Per month. He married Appalanarasamma in the year 1885. for some time he worked as a clerk in collectors office in the year 1887. He joined as a teacher in the Maharajas College on



salary of 100/-Rs. He came into contact with Anandagajapathi the then ruler of Vizianagaram in the year 1887. and this has changed the direction of his life. In 1891 he was appointed as third lecturer and he was to teach English, Grammer, Sanskrit literature, Transalation and History of GREECE and ROME.

Bride price (*Kanyasulkam*) was prevalent in those days and the Maharaja encouraged him to write a drama on themes of social issues, prevailing at that time and Apparao wrote *Kanyasulkam* in 1892. He was appointed in the year 1895 as the Epigraphist of the Estate. He dedicated his *Kanyasulkam* to Anandagajapathi in 1897. In the introduction he also wrote about the need for change in the style of language from classical to the language of the common man. This stress on use of the language of common man became a big movement. The pioneers of this movement were Kandukuri Veeresalingam, Gurazada Appa Rao and his colleague, Gidugu Ramamurthi. It is because of their endeavours, we have the modern Telugu language (sista vyavaharika). Used in all forms of literary writing.

The demise of Ananda Gajapathi in 1897. and the later court litigation regarding adoption continued for a period of 15years and saw Appa rao as the chief advisor of the estate, this has taken much of his time and during this period he could find little time for his literary activities. Inspite of his court commitments, he continued his literary pursuit. He wrote *Kondu Bhattiym* in 1906, *Neela giri songs* in 1907. revised addition of *Kanyasulakam* was published in 1909, *Thoka chukka* in 1910. *garland of pearls* and *Kasulu* in 1910. *Bilhaneeyam* and the story of *Lavana Raju* in 1911. and *Kanyakam* in 1912, *Subhadra* in 1913.



Appa Rao also became member of the board of studies of Madras University (1911). For his movement for the use of ordinary language he started *Andhra Sahitya Parishad* in 1911. When the University has not accepted the ordinary language as medium of instruction, he sent dissent note to the Madras University in the year 1914. He wrote *Dinchu Langaru* in the year 1914.

Appa rao's health began to fail. And no amount of medical care could improve his health. *Langaru Ethumu* was his last writing in 1915. In the same year he celebrated his house warming and in the same year he passed away on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1915.

#### Style of Writing:

Gurazada Apparao wanted that the early marriages in the Brahmin community should be discouraged. He says under the orders of his highness the maharajah of viziyanagaram a list was prepared of Brahmin *sulka* marriages, celebrated in the ordinary tracts of the Visakhapatnam District during three years. The list is by no means exhaustive as the parties concerned were naturally averse to admitting acceptance of bride money but such as it is, it forms a document of great value and interest. The number of 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 five years, forty four at four, thirty six at three, six at two, and three at the age of one! the babies in the last instance carrying a price of from three hundred and fifty to four hundred rupees at head. Strange, as it may sound, bargains are sometimes struck for children in the womb. Such a scandalous state of things is a disgrace to society, and literature cannot have a higher function than to show up such practices and give currency to a high standard of moral ideas. Until reading habits prevail among the masses, one



must look only to the stage to exert such healthy influence. These considerations prompted him to write *Kanyasulkam*.

About the style of his writing the drama. He says "I clothed the play in the spoken dialect, not only that it is better intelligible to the public than the literary dialect, but also from a conviction that it is the proper common diction for Telugu. Dramatic style is no doubt determined to some extent by usage, but the absence of any real dramatic literature in Telugu, leaves a writer free to adopt that outward form which he deems most appropriate for the presentation of his ideas. The metres in use in Telugu, with their alliterative restrictions, are incapable of imparting to language conversational ease which is indispensable in a comedy, or continuity in which, as Mr. Ward remarks, lies real life. One might invent new dramatic measures but it would be a superfluous task, so far at least as comedy is concerned, as prose is gaining ground all over the world for dramatic purposes".

Apparao says that a new literary dialect should be developed which can be easily understood by the common men. The purpose of literature is to make the common man understand higher issues or problems of life. He says it has been remarked that the use of what is wrongly termed the vulgar tongue mars the dignity of a literary production but that is a piece of criticism which one need not heed at the present day when the progress of the science of language has established better standards for judging the quality and usefulness of tongues than the whims of Grammarians of old linguistic strata. The Telugu literary dialect contains many obsolete words and arbitrary verbal constructions and expansions which were necessitated by a system of verification based both on alliterations and on quantity. A licence, which, no doubt, as its own advantages of introducing Sanskrit words to an unlimited extent has been but too eagerly availed of by



poets who brought glossaries into requisitions, revealed in fantastic compound formation, and made the Telugu literary dialect doubly dead. This is not the place to dilate on the question of linguistic reform, but this much might be said. If it is intended to make the Telugu literary dialect a great civilizing medium, it must be divested of its superfluous obsolete and Sanskrit elements, and brought closer to the spoken dialect from which it must be thoroughly replenished. There is not much dialectical difference in the Telugu Generally spoken in the various parts of the Telugu Country, so a new common literary dialect can be established with comparative ease if only able writers set about it in right earnest.

Apparao compares his *Kanyasulkam* to Veeresalingam's *Brahma vivaham* which has also similar theme, he says "recently, I happened to read *Brahma vivaham* by Rai Bahadur Veeresalingam Pantulu Garu and found that there were some parallel passages in our plays, a thing perfectly natural considering that his peace traversed the whole field of Brahmin Marriages. But it will be seen that these plays have little else in common, our treatment being essentially different. *Brahma vivaham* was meant to be a pure comedy of manners, while in *Kanyasulkam* humour, characterization, and the construction of an original and complex plot have been attempted with what success, it is for the public to Judge<sup>1</sup>."

About the style of Telugu literary writing Sri Appa rao says the "Telugu intellect is also seriously handicapped by the tyranny of authority of a highly artificial literary dialect, a rigid system or alliterative versification, and literary types which have long

1. Preface to the first addition: *Kanyasulkam*



played out. I shall say a word here about the literary dialect. Since I wrote the preface to the first addition, this spoken dialect gained ground. My friend, principal P.T.Srinivas Iyengar, recently started a Telugu teaching reform society among the aims and objects of which the cultivation of vernacular Telugu holds a prominent place and Mr.Yates, whose name will always be remembered in the Telugu Districts for the introduction of the Rational Methods of teaching into our schools, has lent weight to the movement by accepting the presidentship of the society<sup>2</sup>.

He further remarks “I cannot understand how modern writers fail to see the merits of spoken Telugu, its softness elicited the admiration of foreigners its range of expression. At this moment the next prose in the language is in the spoken Dialect. Strange as it may sound. Telugu prose owes its origin and development not to the patronage of kings or to the influence of foreign literatures. But to the exertions of a curious English man who stimulated compilation of local histories in the vernacular during the early years of the last century”<sup>3</sup>

About the new literary Dialect he says “I view the Telugu literary Dialect as a great disability imposed by tradition up on the Telugu. Let those who love fetters venerate it. My own vernacular for me, the living Telugu, the Italian of the East, in which none of us is ashamed to express our Joys and sorrows, but which some of us are ashamed to write well. Literature in the vernacular will knock at the door of the peasant; and it will knock at the door of Englishman in India. Its possibilities are immense”<sup>4</sup>

2. Preface to the Second addition: Kanyasulkam unilit (P.102)

3. Gurzada Apparao. Preface to the Second edition 103

4. Ibid (unilit). P.104



No argument in favour of a vernacular literature is needed with persons who are conversant with the history of the English Dialects and the prakrits, and I know it is not arguments that will evolve a new literary Dialect for Telugu. A great writer must write and make it. Let us prepare the ground for him.<sup>5</sup>

Sri Apparao considers that Kanyasulkam is a social evil which needs social reform. He also considers "that there is legal support for this social reform. The cause of social reform has received strong support from a recent decision of the Madras High Court in which a full bench consisting of chief Justice sir Arnold white. And Justice Miller and Munro rules. "That a contract to make payment to a father in consideration of his giving his daughter in marriage is immoral and opposed to public policy within the meaning of section 23 of the Indian contract Act"<sup>6</sup>

### **Gurazada Appa Rao – The Man And His Work**

#### **Introduction:**

Shelley says poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world; Gurazada as one ranks high amongst them. At a time when the humanity as a whole was about to step on the threshold of a modern era, there appeared Sri Gurazada Appa Rao on the literary scene of the Andhra as a herald of the dawn. He lived in two centuries at the end of the last and the beginning of the present, i.e., from 1862 to 1915, the saddle of the new epoch, and brought about a harmonious blend of the old and the new in his literary output in a short but substantial compass.

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5. Ibid P.104

6. Ibid P.104



Although the great Veeresalingam, his senior contemporory, is acclaimed by one and all as the pioneer of social reform and the protagonist of the literary renaissance in Andhra, Apparao is considered to be the pioineer of the modern poetry and short story and the greatest of the reformist dramatists in Telugu<sup>7</sup>.

### **Gurazada's Poems:**

He was one of the very few writers in Telugu who can be styled as 'thinkers'. I do not mean to say that he was a great philosopher or a Mahakavi in the strict sense of the term, but he happened to be the main stem from which two distinct schools of modern poetry in Telugu branched out and flourished with flowers and fruits of considerable fragrance and taste.

He made the debut of his poetic career with *Subhadraparinayam*, a poor replica of the old models. But very soon he not only realized his limitation, but also the inner urge and the rhythmic being of his poetic temperament; and he turned from the verse form to the song form of poetry. In 1907 he published a volume of his songs of the blue hills<sup>8</sup>.

The poetic element in these song is not of a high order. Within a few years afterwards, he exploited the potentialities of his elements, had grown up in his poetic stature and made a forward march into the realms of modern poetry with his *Mutyalu Saralu*, poems in a musical setting with altogether a novel tone of course, the metres newly employed by him, are not at all new to Telugu as some people think. They are good old bottles which he a one for the first time filled with new wine and are proved to

7. Dr.S.V.Joga Rao, Gurazada Appa rao –The man and his work in Gurazada Sata Varshika Jayanthi (Visakha). century publication.  
See Page 58

8. Ibid P.58



be capable of any kind of narration and evocation of new modes of expression. Sri veeresalingam had already paved the way to new avenues of thought and Gurazada made a triumphant march along with his charming song and found fresh blossoms of ideas, and fountains of poetic inspiration<sup>9</sup>.

Amongst the four of his story-poems, '*Purnamma*' although the shortest, stands as a master-piece. It deals with a theme originally conceived by him; the sad story of a young girl given in marriage, nay, sold to a very old man by her own father, which ends in her suicide and appeals greatly to the readers sense of pathos. Sure it was a distinct attempt of social reform on the part of the author against the values of the day. The themes of other story-poems, though drawn from other sources, i.e., *Kanyaka* from Vysya purana, *Damon and pithias* from greek legend and *Lavana Raju Kala* (the dream of Lavana) from Jnanavasishta, are well presented in a new perspective and in a didactic vein and alluring style. Lofty ideas and fervent feelings in emotional drifts and sentimental currents go hand in hand in all these poems. Even the handful of his stray poems would show the essential features of his personality as a man of ideas and manners, taste and talent, humour and wisdom, as a social reformer and patriot to an extent and above all a rational thinker.<sup>10</sup>

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9. Ibid P.59  
10 Ibid P.59



### Gurazada's Plays:-

*Kanyasulkam* is the striking key note of Gurazada's eminence as an author. It is an original drama with broad thematic spectrum and definite social purpose well-couched, in pleasant prose in living language of the people. *Kanyasulkam* takes its name from a social custom of the same name prevalent in those days in some parts and in some communities of Andhra. It means a kind of dowry offered in marriage to the bride, nay, to her father, in fact. Some fathers used to be very hardhearted money-mongers and they were even prepared to sell their girls as fillies to men of any age if only they pay price for it. It was almost another form of slave-trade, and savants like Veeresalingam, Dabiru Krishna Murthy Suri, and Gurazada Apparao waged war against the evil. All the three have taken the drama as the best means for its successful operation. But Gurazada's play won high reputation for many reasons. *Kanysulkam* deals with more than one social purpose. It expounds the native genius of the Telugu tongue in a vivacious manner. It presents the reader a rich exuberance of refined humour in all its aspects and makes him burst into laughter even in his solitude. Above all, it has given us, the people of Andhra, a host of immortal characters who shine bright on the Telugu literary firmament for generations to come.

### In short, the main theme of the Kanysulkam is as follows:-

One Mr.Girisam, the here of 'Bonkula Dibba' of Vizianagaram a place famous for its being a rendezvous of able liars of the town and a loafer and pretender to the core, pretends love to a manageress of petty hotel and to Madhuravani, an angel amongst the dancing girls of the town and an exception to her class. Having been flooded with debts, he cunningly manages an escape from the town and goes to an 'Agrhara' and puts up in the house of Agrihotravadhani, an orthodox Brahmin on the pretext that he can be a good



tutor to his son, venkatesam. There he takes a fancy for Butchamma, the elder sister of venkatesam. She is a beautiful young lady besides being a widow by qualification according to Girisam. He tries to seduce the innocent girl, proves himself successful in eloping with her and boasts of himself as a social reformer in word and deed. But at the end his wickedness is exposed by Madhuravani herself, who once had a soft corner for him. Girisam having been utterly disappointed, cleverly watched the situation of his evil designs becoming frustrated, suddenly leaves off the scene with a flash of his eloquence saying, “ Dame it katha tirigindi” literally meaning the story has turned across (i.e. the tables are turned). Here the play ends most effectively leaving a green memory of the situation for the reader.<sup>11</sup>

Besides this, there is another interesting story, i.e. the marriage farce of the old Lubdhavadhanulu which comes in the middle and runs parallel culminating in the main current of the great fiasco. Coupled with this, there is also another interesting sub-plot, the affair between Ramappantulu and minakshi, the widowed daughter of Lubdhavadhanulu. The play is full of such merry incidents and moving characters. The social conditions of the day in the village and the town as well, are well delineated by the author with flashes of his characteristic wit and humour.<sup>12</sup>

Maduravani, the heroine of Kanyasulkam is some what a match to kalabhashini of *Kalapurnodayam* a Telugu classic of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. She will remain in the history of Telugu literature like Shakspeare’s Cleopatra in English literature. Girisam, the hero of the play might be a descendant of Nigamasarma of the *Pandurangamahatya*, another

11 Ibid P 62

12 Ibid P 62



Telugu classic of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. But truly speaking, has no match at all. Hail to the genius of Gurazada. The great creator of characters! Suffice it to say, one girisam or one Madhuravni can perpetuate his memory in the great galaxy of the Telugu authors.<sup>13</sup>

After all, the one thing that the play is mostly lacking in, is the thematic unity. On that account, perhaps, some critics think that it is a series of farces knit together. Drama has a specific value of production. But *Kanyasulkam*, first published in 1897, has never been successful production before the demise of the author in 1915. During the later twenties, it was edited, staged several times and greatly applauded by thousands of people. Again, after 1930, nobody took any serious interest in its production, but people in all parts of this vast Andhra Country have begun reading it with great zeal and interest. Some people say that *Kanyasulkam* is the greatest of the Telugu plays, but some hold it is no better than an English comedy of the Restoration period. This divergence of opinion, I think, is inevitable for sometime to come. Two more plays called *Kondubhattiyam* and *Bilhaniyamu* stand to the credit of Gurazada as a play wright, but they are left unfinished:

### Gurazada's Stories:

I think there is hardly any room for two opinions if we voice the universal critical consensus that Gurazada is the father of the modern short-story in Telugu. In his art, he is something of a Bernard Shaw and an Anton Chekhov, his great contemporaries in the west. Unwittingly he has shown the Shavian flourish in his play and the Chekhovian flavour in his stories. He has drawn for his stories current problems from the contemporary society like hot cakes from the frying pan. The cunning trick of a well-bred housewife to teach a lesson to her pro-nautch husband is the theme of his story called

13 Ibid P 62



"Diddubatu". In another story called "*Mi peremiti*" (what is your name) he wisely expounds the absurdity of the relationship between the God-made men and the man-made gods and exposes the exploitation of the credulous common folk by the boorish religious teachers. Amongst his other stories "*Samskartha hridayam*" (the mind of a reformer) and "*Metilda*" are worth mentioning.<sup>14</sup>

He also wrote few essays, small in stature, discussing some controversial issues of the day. He maintained a diary from which it can be gathered that he had contacts with some of his learned contemporaries and used to have a critical eye on men and matters and some good plans in reserve for the future. In his days he was not recognized as he is now, but today many people think of him as a great social reformer and others say that of course he is writer with a reformist outlook but not a field-worker too as Veeresalingam was.

### **Feminism:-**

Kanyasulkam was written in 1892. Now a days Feminism is an issue through out the world. Some ask what is the relation between Kanyasulkam and Feminism. The foundation for Feminism were laid in 1791. By Meri Olympedi Gougas through her declaration of the rights of women. A book named *Vindication of the rights of women* was written by Meri volstan Craft in 1792. the winds of womens freedom were flowing even from the period of French revolution. This movement spread to America, England, Russia, and other European countries. The aim of this movement was to get equal rights for women in all fields of human activity. In the same year when Kanyasulkam was written (1892). Feminist congress was held in France. This movement continued to effect all countries and it became a strong and wide spread movement through out the world.<sup>15</sup>

14 Ibid P 63

15 Kanyasulkam Edited by M Nagabhushana sarma and Y Prasad, Visalandhra publishing house Hyderabad. Year 1919 P 822



### What is Feminism:-

The terms ‘feminism’, ‘new feminism’ and ‘women’s liberation’ are generally used with different connotations. ‘Feminism’ is defined as a position of advocating women’s rights while ‘women’s liberation’ implies advocacy of the full freedom of women. The term ‘women’s liberations’ is popularly used synonymously with ‘new feminism’. The specific term is allegedly coined, either by the students for Democratic society (SDS), or by the women’s groups which began to separate from the new left political bodies in 1966.<sup>16</sup>

Some ask whether Gurazada Appa Rao was aware of the movement. Some scholars feel that nowhere in his writings or in his diaries. Gurazada mentions about feminism. But we can say that he was aware of the early social reform movements and he was conscious of the women’s problems. In 1895, he discussed about the changes needed in women’s dress, the women who were burdened by heavy Jewelry.<sup>17</sup> By the time he published the second addition of Kanyasulkam (1909). He could realize how the women were suffering under the male hegemony.<sup>18</sup>

Apparao was influenced by Ibsen, shelly, George Eliot and their writings. Ibsen said that workers and women will become the givers of human freedom.<sup>19</sup> Shelling and Eliot of criticized the institution of marriage which subordinates women’s position. He felt that modern women will rewrite the human history.<sup>20</sup>

16. Feminist social thought an introduction to six key thinkers, vidyut Bhagwat. P.I, Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi, 2004.

17. Writings of Gurazada Mahakavi diarylu edited by Avasarala Surya Rao. Vialandhra publishers vijawade November 1954. P.67

18. Ibid. lekhalu July 1958. P.90.

19. K.V.Ramana Reddy, Mahodayam. 1969.P.412

20. Gurazada writings, (Lekhalu) P.83.



Influenced by these ideas of humanism some critics consider that Gurazada has revised and brought some changes in the revised addition. Sometimes we feel that some of his ideas appear as if they belong to 21 century.<sup>21</sup>

The reformation movement questioned about the treatment of women but it is not the product of the awareness of women. Their problems their life and their approach was conceived by men but not women. Even the ideas were given by males from their view point. They opposed nautch because they felt these women are polluting men. Gurazada though supported reformation he did not like the spirit behind the reform of those thinkers of his time.<sup>22</sup>

The tradition says that the women whose husband dies should think of him that he will be waiting for her to join the heaven and she should not think of remarrying. So women who become widows should lead a pious life and should not think of remarrying even though they are young.<sup>23</sup>

Through the characters of Butchamma and Meenakshi and their dialogues in the drama Gurazada wants to support the remarriage of widowed women. The early marriages of those times when the girls of 10 or 12 were given in marriage (sometimes second marriage) to men aged 40 or 50 are even old led to a number of cases of women becoming widows even in their teens. This was a problem in many parts of Andhra and mainly in the Brahmin Community.

Though the widowed girls were not allowed to remarry the men in their 50s and 60s were allowed to remarry in the case of demise of their wives. So remarriage for men was allowed, but not to women. Through the character of Meenakshi in the drama some of these issues were discussed.

21 R Ramachandra Reddy

22 Ibid P 64

23 Gurazada through the character Butchamma presents the travails of young widows in his drama Kanyasulkam See, page, Kanyasulkam Edited by Nagabhushan sarma, Atukur Press P 426



### **Nautch Issue:**

Through the character of madhuravani Gurazada has discussed about the problem of prostitution and other issues of women through the character of Madhuravani. Women bound by the institution of the marriage have to follow certain norms regarding the social life. The institution of marriage and family regulates the behaviour of men and women. The norms or not always rational. The patriarchal system is advantageous to the male members of the society and it is the prevailing system almost the world over.

Through the character of Madhuravani, Gurazada Appa rao wanted to discuss about the problems of women. He criticizes the double standards allowed in the society. Madhuravani is a lady with self-respect. She is humane, understanding the problems of the individuals. At the same time she is highly critical of the system, in which she lives. He feels that women whether she is a prostitute or a house wife-both or in a sad and bemoaning plight. She is cultivated and worldly wise. At the same time she has a deep sense of sadness. She wants to change the society she is critical of the situation in a way she is a feminist in the true sense of the term. She feels that women uplift can be done only through women. Gurazada through his characters of Buchamma, Meenakshi and Madhuravani has presented the predicament of women of his times. She also hoped that the society will change in due course and the feminist movement will engulf the society and bring social harmony through an evolution of a better social structure.

### **Gurazada on Modern Telugu (His Philosophy of Language) :**

Gurazada feels that language should change from time to time and it should be understood by the average man. In Indian languages, in the early stages of their development, they used to take much from Sanskrit. Even the Dravidian languages like Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada have borrowed large number of words from



Sanskrit and even grammar was influenced to a great extent by Sanskrit. So the early writers of these languages wrote in highly sanskritised terminology.

In all these languages movements arose to simplify the language, so that it can be understood by the common man. It is generally called as *vyavaharika*, now a days all the Indian languages follow this style. Kandukuri Veeresalingam, Gurazada and Gidugu wanted this change.

Gurazada says that modern telugu has many advantages and it should be propagated. He says the merits of modern telugu (by which I mean, the polite speech of godavari and Krishna) as a literary instrument are great. His arguments are as follows:

1. INTELLIGIBILITY: Intelligibility which the old school claims as the saving merits of the neo-Kavya school is best secured by the employment of modern Telugu in literature. Local variations are slight, and even if they were considerable, they could not prove a bar to intelligibility, as the countless variations from standard speech which the poetic dialect presents. In his defence, Mr.Ramayya mentions that chinnaya suri gives no less than 16 forms of (okadu or one man) and no less than 29 forms of its plural: “we have no less than sixteen forms of this single work (that is, or that is to say), all of which are met within poetry”

Local variations of words are not many, and when they are introduced into literature they are easier learnt than the poetic forms.

2. Literary cultivation of modern Telugu necessitates a study of it, and the study of a refined living vernacular has great cultural value.



"Command of noble vernacular involves the most valuable discipline and culture that a man is capable of receiving. It conditions all other discipline and culture. Reference is not new made, to its scientific study, to its history and phonology, its lexical and grammatical elements; what is meant rather is the man's growing up in the language, so to speak, and using it for all the purposes of his mental life."

3. If school books are written in modern Telugu, vernacular education will improve at one bound. At present elementary school books are written in a bad type of the poetic or kavya dialect and the elementary school teachers who are required to teach those books are as a class ignorant of the literary dialect. To impart instructions to little urchins in an unfamiliar literary dialect contravenes the first principles by educational method. To this fact should be traced the failure of vernacular studies in the Madras University. In this connection, I invite attention to an Article on the Arabic language question in Egypt which appeared in the Asiatic quarterly Review of October 1912 (Appendix H).
4. A study of modern Telugu will prove the best training for a proper study of the language of the poets. A scientific study of Telugu can begin only with the spoken vernacular, and without such a study, a study of the poetic dialect would continue to be irrational and blind. Far from supplanting the study of old literary Telugu, a study of modern Telugu will improve it and strengthen it.
5. If books are written in modern Telugu, both the quantity and quality of literary production will improve. The difficulty of the poetic dialect has discouraged literary composition in the vernacular on the part of intelligent graduates. Who dread violating rules of grammar at every step. They can write correctly in



modern Telugu without fear of violating an imaginary and impossible standard which is fatal to all spontaneity. In Bengal and Bombay persons who have received the best English culture apply themselves assiduously to the cultivation of the vernaculars while the leaders of Madras are content with talking about the improvement of the vernaculars on wrong lines.

6. Modern Telugu is acquired naturally, by the higher castes, and it can be acquired by the natural and direct method by the lower classes. It is so learnt now in towns by domestic servants.

Elementary school-books should be written in modern Telugu without an admixture of poetic forms. Poetic forms may be sparingly used in books intended for higher forms. But it should be borne in mind that the writing of books should not be entrusted to writers who have not cultivated literary art on western lines. That a person has succeeded in securing in/ appointment as pandit in a school or college does not argue sound scholarship or literary power. Good writers alone can decide which poetic forms can be used with effect in prose; but not writers wedded to the Kavya or the Neo-Kavya dialect whose literary sense has been trained to spoken forms.

This repugnance to spoken forms is a feeling of recent growth. Its psychology is simple. Two generations of school-boys were bred up in the grammatical tradition. Those school-boys have grown up to be the men of to-day and the grammatical tradition what is worse, the really ungrammatical tradition of the Neo-Kavya school has grown natural to their tastes, and deviation from it sounds like heresy.

The question of a prose diction which we seek to resolve, now was solved long ago in practice by the ancients, and the tradition of that practice has continued unbroken to the present day. It is the direction of epistles, of popular stories and local chronicles, of



light literature and of learned commentaries. It should not be supposed that this blend of poetic modern forms was the creation of the half-educated. The pandits employed it in learned commentaries on books on grammar, poetics philosophy and the sciences. In inscriptions this traditional prose blend appears side by side into verse in Sanskrit and in literary Telugu. This fact shows that the writers were scholars.

It is essential that we should not lose sight of one material distinction made by the pandits of by-gone day. When verse entered into a work, that work was Kavya or literature. To a pandit an epistle, a commentary, an inscription was not generally literature. When he felt that he was not writing Kavya or literature, he gave full play to his natural tendencies and employed modern form. This gave to his prose a life and a spontaneity, which is always lacking in later poetry in the literary dialect.<sup>24</sup>

What the pandit with his narrow literary standard was unable to recognize as literature, is literature in the view of advanced western nations. A well-written epistle, a diary or a speech is prose and good literature in English.

In his pamphlet entitled "A Defence of Literary Telugu" Mr.Ramayya speaks of the popularity of the literary dialect. The literary dialect was never popular. It was the property of a narrow cult. Some Telugu poetry of a popular character was, no doubt, taught in piai schools in the old days, but students used to "get up" verses without their meaning. The classics were as unpopular in those days as the Honors courses of our university are to-day in the vernaculars. The pial school teachers were poor scholars and could not teach them.<sup>25</sup>

24. Unilit. P.54

25. Ibid. P.54



There was no vernacular education worth the name in the past. British rule with its systems of popular education has brought it into being and there is little sanity in all the talk of present neglect of vernacular education. It is equally absurd to say that the modern school, seeks to supplant literary Telugu by modern Telugu. The position which literary Telugu has acquired in education is quite recent and it was due to the establishment of schools and the university. To prose works in the Kavya and pseudo-Kavya dialect patronage came from the university and the department of education, that is, practically from Boards of studies and Text-Book committees. But for that patronage most of them would not have commanded any circulation. Their existence has been artificial.<sup>26</sup>

Without the advantage of any such adventitious aid, but on the other hand discouraged by the university and by schools, the traditional prose blend has maintained a vigorous life. After the introduction of printing into the country, a vast mass of popular literatures has sprung up in this dialect and appeals to a much larger reading public than prose works in the Kavya dialect<sup>27</sup>

Mr.Ramayya appears to justify the use of the poetic dialect for prose for the following reasons. No spoken dialect of telugu, or several dialects at the same time, should be employed for literary purposes, because there is a tendency in languages everywhere to develop a common uniform literary dialect out of number of heterogeneous local dialect. Where such a literary language already exists as In Telugu, no local dialect should be employed for literary purposes.

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26. Ibid, P. 54-55  
27. Ibid P.55



Mr.Ramayyas general proposition is not correct. Many languages have lived and with out developing literary dialects. There exists even now languages spoken by civilized communities which have not developed a literary dialect. It is the archaic and artificial character of old literary telugu that necessitates the cultivation of modern standard telugu, and it was single favored dialects that developed generally, into literary languages. English and French literary dialects, as well as standard speech, developed mainly out of London and Paris dialects.

As time went, forms from other dialects made their way into the standard owing to causes which it is not necessary to detail here.

Mr.Ramayya says that rao sahib G.V.Ramamurthy misunderstood the case of Italian. Prof. whitney will answer for him. "The Italian was in like manner the popular idiom of Tuscany".

Uniformity is no virtue unless it is accompanied by ease in acquisition. Sanskrit is uniform in the whole of India, but like literary telugu it has to be acquired with great effort. The vernacular on the other hand, is acquired naturally.

### Orderly development of Language:

He says organic growth or orderly development of language is a metaphor, and like most metaphors-introduced into serious discussion, it is misleading. Living languages change, some times for the worse. The forces which are in operation in a living language and the process of operation are very different from the few changes, mostly mechanical which occur in an archaic literary dialect. Telugu poets made a few deviations from literary usage but these were mostly due to metrical exigencies and did not except in rare cases, receiving general acceptance. I may instance, "Khtharthakekera Sandhi"



Gurazada says that as long as a language is alive it changes constantly. He says "so long as a language is alive, it is constantly changing. So that the grammer and the rhetoric of a living language can never be absolutely fixed. It is only when the language has ceased to be spoken-has become as we say, a dead language that fixed rules can be framed which every one who undertakes to write it must observe. The very statement that language is dead implies that hence forward no individual or body of persons has power to change it ..... ("Greenrough and Ketredge).<sup>28</sup>

#### **Views on Patriotism:-**

Gurazada was not only concerned with social reform. He was equally concerned with patriotism and other values which are necessary for strengthening the unity of our people. No Nation can thrive without the unity of its people. He say that we should not only be united but should make ourselves strong and sturdy. He says

If I ask you  
to love your land  
or better what is good  
it is just to say

Waste not your word  
but think of a little good

To strive in the way  
of the golden corn  
for food is blood  
and blood makes the man.

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28. Ibid P.50



The country must fare  
 not on the heaves or sighs  
 of men or their languishing dreams  
 but on that which it can bring  
 from its root.<sup>29</sup>

He further says that India should become rich and prosperous. It should improve its industry and commerce. Though one should be proud of his past one cannot go on ruminating too much. He says

Make commerce of that you can grow  
 and fill your people with pride

Do not look back ward  
 There is little there  
 Do not hesitate your forward foot  
 Behind is beyond<sup>30</sup>

It is no use seeing that we love our country one should try to do some good to the people what you do how you with your neighbour is more important he says

Do not talk of your love  
 for your land, Do  
 a little good  
 that will speak for you

Bear with your neighbour  
 fill your heart  
 with his success  
 Together you are<sup>31</sup>

29. P.1 Unil.

30. Ibid P.1

31. Ibid P.2



One should think less about one self. Our concern should be for others and country means not merely earth. It is the people. One should not give much importance to caste nor religion nor faith. We should all use the resources of our earth for our common well being. He says

Divided your world is nil.

Think a little less of the self

a little more of the next one

This land is not earth not water

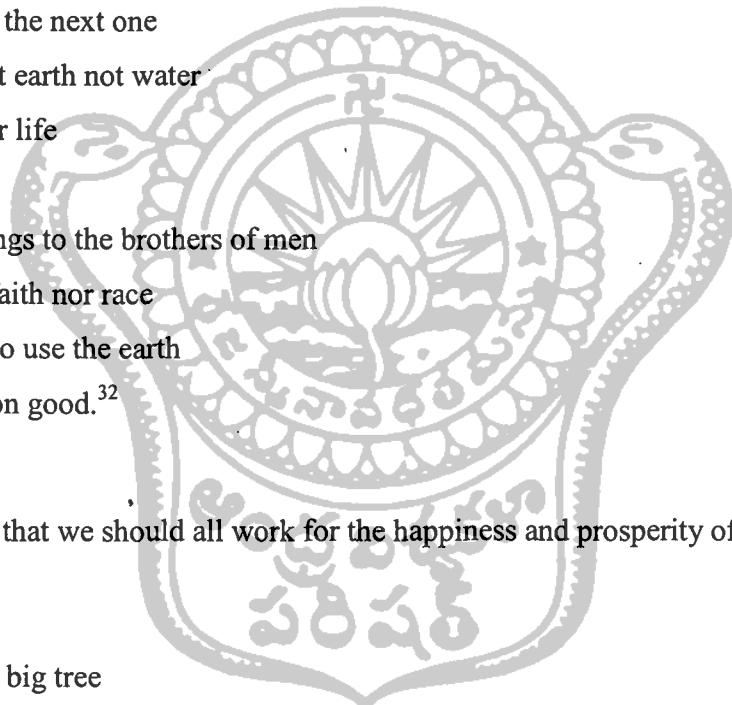
This land is our life

This land belongs to the brothers of men

Not caste nor faith nor race

But of men who use the earth

For the common good.<sup>32</sup>



Gurazada says that we should all work for the happiness and prosperity of our people.

He says

Our land is the big tree

With slender flowers of love

And fruits of our labour and sweat

Your words must stir like leaves

In a land in love with life

Where the harvests have a good heart

And the people are full with

The happiness of being.<sup>33</sup>

32. Ibid P.2

33. Ibid P.2 (Rendered units English by SRINIVAS Rayaprol)



Gurazada Appa Rao exhorts people to stay united and work for the greater glory of the country without work there is no progress and unless one is strong he can not do anything for the country. He says

Your country, brother, shall be your love!

Good into better you shall improve!

Let idle chatter

Get no Quarter!

*Great deeds indeed are needed now!*

Work hard, work long in farm and factory!

Let the land flourish in milk and honey!

Food is Good

To build brawn and blood!

*No brawn, no man-and man is body!*<sup>34</sup>

Gurazada Appa rao was one of the early propagators of the swadesi movement and pleaded for using country made products and wanted people to create wealth by hard work. He writes

Wisplike, wasplike men are a shame!

With such goes down a country's name!

All arts master

Flood the land with goods, all made at home!

Spread your handiwork all over the world!

Swadeshi every where be sold!

That man is filth

*Who cannot create wealth!*

*He can never hope for glory or gold!*<sup>35</sup>

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34. P.3.Ibid (Desa Bakti)

35. Ibid P.3



Gurazada was not against glorifying the past. Though we had hoary past we should not always look back. We should take all that is great and good and proceed, forward. He says

A little that is good, a lot that is bad,  
 That is what the past is, so do not look back!  
 Do not be a sluggard,  
 Take a step forward!  
*If you fall behind once, them forever you shall bag!*<sup>36</sup>

Gurazada gives importance to cooperation than competition. He pleads for harmony instead of strife. He says

Compete only when knowledge calls;  
 Only in commerce contest at all;  
 Strife is no good,  
 Nip it in the bud!  
 Throw away the sword, it is a total loss.<sup>37</sup>

One should not brag about his patriotism one should do constructive work quietly. He gave importance to silent work. He says

*Are you a patriot? Do not shout it aloud!*  
 Bragging never did anybody any good!  
 Quietly instead  
 Do a fine deed!  
*Let the people see it: it is they that decide!*

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36. Ibid P.3

37. Ibid P.3

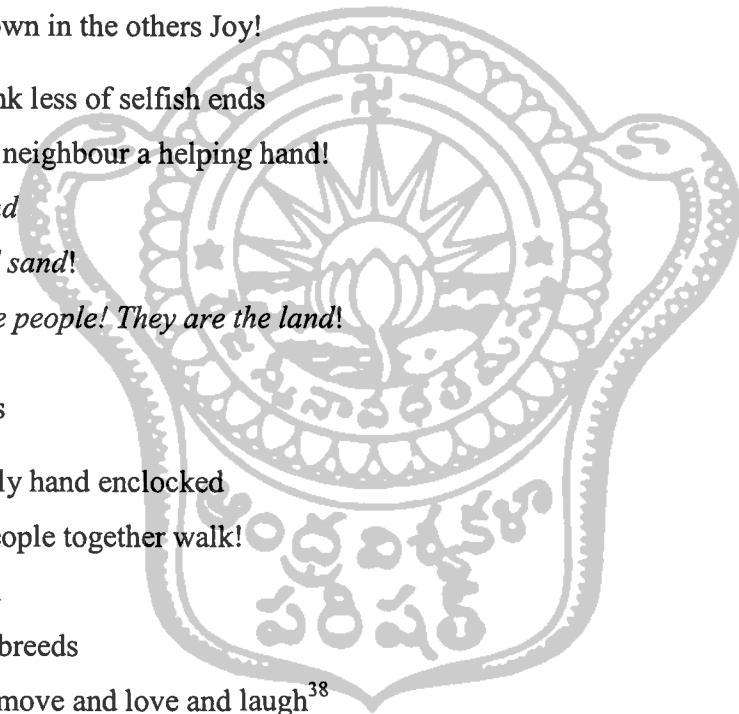


One should think always about the welfare of the society and one should not be jealous of other man's prosperity. One should think more about others than himself and should try to give a helping hand to neighbours and the people.

The sinful wretch who weeps all day  
 Because another is rich, how can he be gay?  
 Always happy  
 Is really he  
 Who sees his own in the others Joy!  
 So friend! Think less of selfish ends  
 And lend your neighbour a helping hand!  
*Never does land*  
*Mean clay and sand!*  
*The people, the people! They are the land!*

He further says

Hand in friendly hand enclocked  
 Shall all the people together walk!  
 In brotherhood  
 All creeds, all breeds  
 Shall live and move and love and laugh<sup>38</sup>



India is a pluralistic society with many religions.  
 This divergence should not effect the brotherhood.  
 "If minds are one" all men or one. He says  
*Faiths may differ but what does it mean?*  
*If minds are one, all men are one!*  
 one day the soul  
 of the human whole  
 shall rise and grow and forever shine!<sup>39</sup>

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38. P.4 Ibid  
 39. Ibid P.4



Gurazada believed in toil and hard work without sweat and toil, wealth cannot be created. He compared the country to a tree and just as we feed the roots of the tree we should toil to make the country prosperous. He says

Like a tree a country shall  
 Put forth its flowers of love and all  
 The toiling peoples  
 Sweat in ripples  
 Shall feed the roots for the tree to yield wealth!<sup>40</sup>

Gurazada says that love for the country should be supreme for any individual and one should not think always about the past glory. The near prattle of patriotism is not sufficient. It should be supported by action. He says

Let love for country.  
 Supreme be,  
 And good ness rule the day.  
 No more of endless babble  
 Thy shoulder to the wheel now!

Let now past glory  
 for the present,  
 go forth to the farthest corners  
 of the globe  
 in search  
 undaunted.

Hey, go ahead, I say  
 murdering morbidity;  
 ere art thou pushed  
 into the abysmal mire.

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40. P.4 (Translated by Sri Sri.)



Now no more  
the mere prattle of patriotism,  
Let action prove intention.<sup>41</sup>

Gurazada pleads for unity of the people and says that country is not made from just a clod of earth. He says that people should march forward shoulder to shoulder.

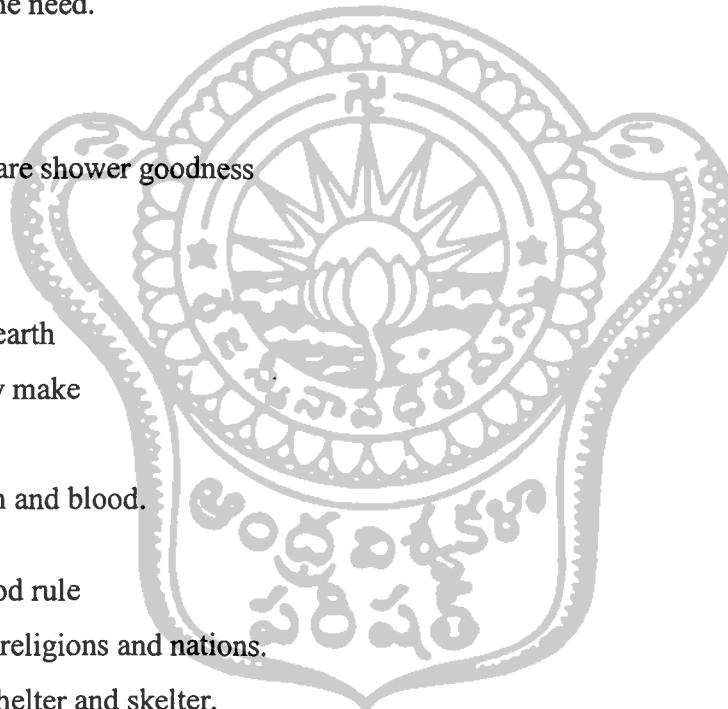
Let tolerance be thy creed  
unity is now the need.

it comes back  
million fold  
to those that care shower goodness  
on others.

Not a clod of earth  
shall a country make  
but men,  
men with flesh and blood.

Let brotherhood rule  
the destiny of religions and nations.

Oh, brethren, helter and skelter,  
Let's march shoulder to shoulder.<sup>42</sup>



41. Ibid P.5

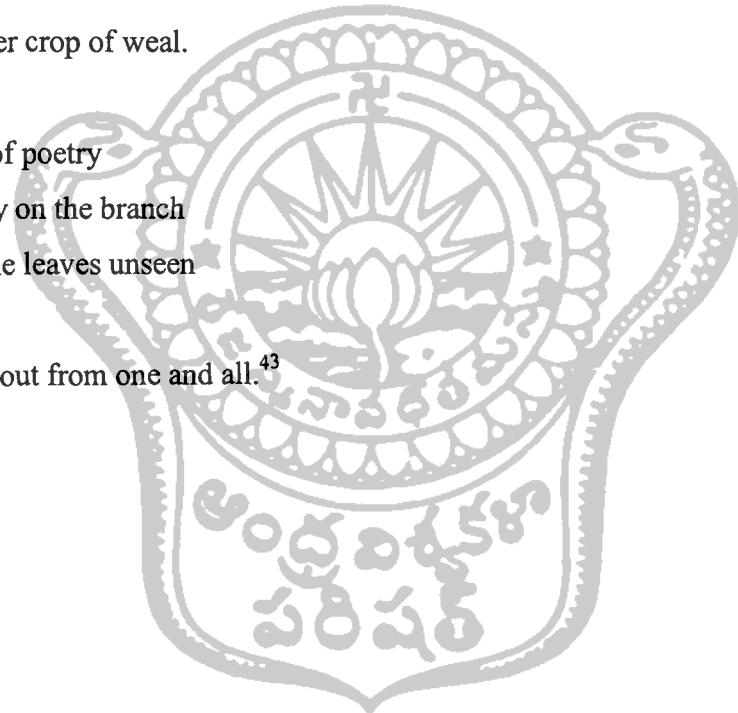
42. Ibid P.6



He wants that country should prosper and wishes for the common wheel and wants that all should live happily. He says

Let flowers of love  
blossom out  
from that giant tree  
the country  
and  
in the sacred sweat of brow  
yield a bumper crop of weal.

Let the koel of poetry  
sitting prettily on the branch  
covered by the leaves unseen  
sing of life,  
and sense sprout from one and all.<sup>43</sup>




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43. Ibid P.6 (Rendered into English by A.Muralidhar)



### Scientific Temper:

**From strings of pearls:**

Though patriotic he has praise for certain aspects of western civilization. He says about comets

“Comets are rare phenomena,  
So wondrous that the minds of old,  
Steeped in gross ignorance believed  
That the trains they trailed brought harm.”

“It’s a pity pundits who lay claim  
To wisdom weave such silly fancies  
About things so sublime which poets  
Should hail as Heaven’s blessings.”<sup>44</sup>

Gurazada praises the western inquisitiveness and their scientific temperament he says  
“Minds English, love, in science versed,  
penetrate to the core of things,  
And fetch forth truth, they will not let  
untruth obscure their vision”.

“I’ve learnt from them that this rare comet  
To this our earth claims some relation  
And gives us sight of its great beauty  
Once in some seventy years.”<sup>45</sup>

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44. Ibid P.12  
45. Ibid P.12



Generally we believe that comet brings illluck and disaster but Gurazada says that it will bring good to the society

“My sweetest love, it is my fancy  
That this great star brings good, not harm:  
It spells great social change, I take it  
As the standard of reform”.<sup>46</sup>

Gurazada was a visionary. He fore saw the transformation and social change in India and he hoped that many of the social ills will be a thing of the past. He visualized a new society and a new world order. He writes

“In days to come reforming men  
Will spring and bring their strength of mind  
To bear up on our social ills,  
And break the chains of caste”

“Caste and colour shall be things  
of the past; all nations will be brought  
Into one fold; the lowliest  
Shall come to man’s estate.”

“The many creeds which now divide  
Mankind shall have been laid to rest:  
To this high end was set in motion,  
A movement in the town.”

“The cream of high society,  
A cosmopolitan dinner held,  
Without observing caste or creed  
The news may have reached here.”<sup>47</sup>

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46. Ibid P.12

47. Ibid P 13 (Rendered in to English by R.Appalaswamy)



### Gurazada - An Estimate

Narla Venkateswara Rao The eminent Andhra Journalist, has paid many tributes to Gurazada. He says contemporary yet timeless, local yet universal such s the art of Gurazada Venkata Appa Rao. With his poor physique and poorer health and his preoccupation with the affairs of the princely house of vizianagaram which he served, he could find little time and energy for sustained literary work.

Inspite of this Gurazada has left us his legacy. A full length play, half a dozen short stories, a bunch of poems and songs, a sheaf of light essays, and his letters, diaries, and notebooks. Though meager in quantity, it is a rich legacy. Its value is to be Judged not by its volume but by its impact. So forceful indeed was its impact, that it brought about a clean break with the dead past with its rigid conventions and stifling taboos. It had also effected a change of direction. The force of that impact is not spent even to day. Can the other hand, it is going stronger with the passage of years.<sup>48</sup>

The honours of pioneering modern Telugu literature are shared by Gurazada and Veeresalingam. So some comparisons are often made between them. According to Narla Gurazada had decidedly a more original mind, A richer imagination and by far greater poetic power “But to rate him higher as a man or a leader of men will be doing Justice neither to Gurazada nor to Veeresalingam. No doubt, Gurazada wrote better poetry, but the life of veeresalingam was by itself a poem; It was indeed an epic of mighty struggles against ignorance, social oppression, religious bigotry and much else that was evil in the society of his day.<sup>49</sup>

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48. Traditional Indian culture and other essays – V.R. Narla, Vizaya Books-Vizayawada – 2. 1969, p.130.

49. P.130



Narla says Gurazada too may have taken part in some, though not all of these struggles, but not as a general in the field. By temperament and training he was averse to the dust and din of battle. He was, primarily an intellectual, and not a warrior. As an intellectual who was also a visionary he saw more deeply into human nature and much farther into the future. But he was not, he could not be, the hero of a hundred fierce battles as Veeresalingam was. The loan fight which he led was purely a literary one.

As one of the two pioneers of modern Telugu literature, Gurazada experimented boldly with style. He invented a new metre and named it *Mutyalasaram* ("a garland of pearls"). And he created two or three new branches in Telugu literature. True; we had poetry earlier, and plenty of it, but he was the first to write lyrical poetry. We had tales (folk tales, moral tales, and others) earlier, but he was the first to write the short story. We had plays earlier, but his *Kanyasulkam* stands apart by virtue of its superb characterization, its sparkling dialogue, and its bubbling humour.<sup>50</sup>

#### Sense of humour:-

Both as a man and a writer what distinguished Gurazada was his sense of humour. Nature had endowed him with a robust sense of humour, and the circumstance of his life sharpened it. A middle-class man with a modern mind and education, he had to spend all his adult life in bolstering up a fast decaying feudal order of society. He came to believe so much in the potency of humour that one of the last entries in his note books reads: "I shall be terrible as I was humorous". Probably to emphasize his faith in his sense of humour, he made this particular entry in what were for him unusually bold letters.<sup>51</sup>

50. P.131

51. P.132



### Gurazada as a humanist:-

Basically, the concern of Gurazada was more with persons than with problems. He was in love with man as man; he loved man irrespective of the fact whether he was educated or illiterate, cultured or boorish, moral or immoral. Indeed, he loved people of the later categories much more than those of the former. All his life he watched from close quarters what is called "high life". It is vulgarities, debauches, and cruelties, hidden behind a façade of respectability, were familiar to him. It is conceivable that this very familiarity with "high life" made him sympathetic to what is despised as "low life".<sup>52</sup>

Humanism was to him more than an intellectual conviction; it was the quintessence of all beauty, charm, and poetry of life. His inner being was so much suffused with the spirit of humanism that it made him a poor hater. One who is incapable of passionate hatred cannot be a crusader for any cause, however worthy. Is it any wonder, then, that Gurazada failed as a crusader for political, social, or religious or any other major reform, while he achieved success as a poet with a vision that stretched to the very ends of the earth, and a love that embraced the whole of humanity?<sup>53</sup>

### Literary style:

Narla says that language is something that is living and growing. The moment it ceases to grow, it becomes a movement; may be a beautiful monument, a precious monument, but still a monument. Even living and growing is not enough; the living should be natural the growth should be spontaneous. For this a language should take its sustenance from the soil, which in its case is the fertile bed of the speech of the common people, the speech which they use as they eat and drink, as they work and play, as they

52. P.132

53. P.132



love and hate, as they laugh and cry, as they dream and despair, in short, the speech of the people as they live their full and eventful lives. When we talk of a spoken language we refer to this speech only. It enriches a language and helps the growth of its literature. Those who oppose it are foolish enough not to realize that their literary Telugu was the spoken speech of an earlier age.<sup>54</sup>

When Gurazada pleaded for spoken Telugu, he urged the use of the living language of the day. He felt that the literary language, with its archaic words, artificial usages, was more a hindrance than a help for a really creative writer. "My own vernacular for me" he declared. "The living Telugu, the Italian of the East, in which none of us is ashamed to express our joys and sorrows, but which some of us are ashamed to write well."<sup>55</sup>

Gurazada wrote generally well and occasionally superbly, in spoken Telugu, thereby setting and inspiring example to all modern writers. Today spoken Telugu is used by the press, the radio, the cinema; it is used by most of our novelists, short story writers, play wrights, as well as others. It is also used by our legislators. Yet it is still kept out of our schools and colleges. There is a ban on text books written in spoken Telugu. Unless the ban on spoken Telugu is removed and it is allowed to enter the portals of our colleges and universities, we will not be doing real honour to the memory of Gurjada.<sup>56</sup>

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54. Ibid P .133

55. Ibid P.133

56. Ibid p.p 133-134



### **Gurazada - Some Critics:-**

Let us see how his works are estimated by some eminent writers and literary critics of our times and how they have assessed his contribution to social reformation and literature.

#### **Gurazada – The poet of the Marrow:- (Kavuri Ramesh Babu)**

Gurazada Apparao is one of the principal architects of modern Andhra and leader of the renaissance movement. He formed a victorious triumvirate with Kandukuri Veeresalingam and Gidugu Ramamuthy, who successfully fought against orthodoxy for social reform, emancipation of women and for breeding new grounds in Telugu literature.

#### **Comparision of the Three:-**

Veeresalingam, the fire-breathing, impatient colossus of a reformer, and Gidugu, the scholar – destroyer of Pedantic literary forms – both needed a Gurazada to give their movements a humanistic touch. Gurazada was indeed a synthesis of Kandukuri and Gidugu, for he powerfully expressed the call for social reform, given by the former in the live idiom of spoken dialect, championed by the latter. A great visionary, he was far taller than his contemporary luminaries by virtue of his qualities of head and heart.<sup>57</sup>

#### **His poem on “Desabhakti”:-**

He had bequeathed us a small bunch of poems. But each one of it is a jewel by itself. The metre he chose is simple, the words he chose are simpler –the live native idiom, but together they blossomed into poems. Whose lyrical beauty is unsurpassed, whose lucidity of expression is unrivalled and whose wealth of imagination

<sup>57</sup> Gurazada commemorative volume Edited M Chalapathi Rao, P 47



and ideas are prodigious. Not only did his literary work leave a lasting imprint on the Telugu world of letters. But it decisively influenced its course.

There are many poems on ‘patriotism; written before and after his time in the world literature, but none rose to these heights. They generated, no doubt, lot of turbulence and forth, but ultimately they petered out into chauvinism-pure and simple or coupled with romanticist mysticism. None of them are replete with ideas so forward-looking. So prophetic and envisage the heralding of a welfare state, even the rudiment of which was non-existent in those days.

#### **Fighter for the cause of the people:-**

The strenuous labours of his bosom friend, Gidugu, in liberating the Telugu diction from the shackles of obsolete literary forms could not have been fruitful so soon without the magic wand of Gurazada’s craftsmanship, which blazed new vistas of vision. A poet of the people in every sense of the word, he mobilized all his literary and artistic resources in fighting for the cause of the people, and successfully too.

#### **Consummate Artist who exploited humour:-**

His masterpiece “Kanysulkam” exposes the social evils of the day, not with the Gargantuan thunders of a reformer, but with the laughter of a consummate artist ‘Hasya rasa’ (humour) has never been exploited, either before him or after him, so dexterously, either in the classical literature or in the modern literature of the world, his doctrine of love transcends all barriers, and humanistic philosophy gets unveiled in all its pristine purity.<sup>58</sup>

58. Ibid 48



### **Exposer of social degradation and hypocrisy:-**

His exposure of the inhuman institutions of child-marriages was no less devastating. This trade ‘in flesh and blood’ was the bane of the society of his day, which derived much of its moral strength apparently from tradition and religion, but Gurazada had torn this garb of respectability asunder and presents the crude materialistic considerations under living it. He proceeded further to show the resultant morbidity in all its horridness in the lives of young widows, that stinked, petrified and what not.

Not only did he depict the duplicity of the false rages, who go on fooling people in days by-gone and present, but did not spare the theosophy also, which tried to rationalize things irrational. The hollowness of the genuine reformers as well as the viciousness of the false ones stood condemned squarely. Notwithstanding his sympathies for the rising nationalism and his respect for the civilized and civilizing rulers from across the seas, he literally showered ridicule on the head of the opportunist politicians and high-handed police officials.<sup>59</sup>

### **With malice towards none:-**

Above all, none of his character, even the villains, does evoke revulsion from us, but only sympathy, pity, understanding, amusement and laughter; not only does it require a keen sense of observation, which he had in abundance, but also an ability to see into the minds of the people, understand their ‘modus operandi’ and draw it in kaleidoscopic colours.

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59. Ibid P.49



The fact that, though he wrote the play 84 years ago (in 1892, but revised in 1909), his characters remain evergreen, further highlights his greatness and his ability y to deep into the future by decades.<sup>60</sup>

The quantum of Gurazada's works is rather microscopic, by the standards of other masters. But the intensity of his work and its efflorescent humanism, makes him stand out head and shoulders above his contemporaries in the sub-continent with his 'Kanyasulkam' not only does he live in the heart of every civilized Telugu, but has carved out a niche for himself in world literature.

The tribute of Matthew Arnold, composed in praise of Goethe, applies with no less Justice to Gurazada.

"Goethe has done his pilgrimage  
He took the suffering human race  
He read each wound, each weakness clear  
And struck his finger on the place  
And said – then ailest here, and here–"<sup>61</sup>

**Gurazada said:-**

"I wrote it (Kanyasulkam – Ed.) *to advance the cause of social Reform and to combat a popular prejudice that the Telugu language was unsuited to the stage.*"<sup>62</sup>

Let us see some appraisals of some critics of Gurazada

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60. Ibid P.49

61. Ibid P.49

62. Ibid P.49



### **K.V.Ramana Reddy**

K.V.Ramana Reddy writes Appa Rao was an avid student of philosophy both in and out of school. Text book philosophy apart, he assiduously cultivated a love for the verities of life and, in this process neither utilitarianism nor radicalism of the British variety nor Auguste comte's positivism failed to hold his attention for long. Ibsen was only his last acquaintance in this realm. The important thing that should be noted in this context is that Apparao did not conceive of a philosophy which divorces the human concerns from the divine ones, or slight them preference from unmundane things. What the Buddha in his compassion taught, what Jesus in his pity preached and what shelly even in his wrath and rage sang, was only of love – Love – to Apparao. Platonic or sensual, love was the spirits cement which holds together the individual souls in their mundane relations and erects a social edifice in place of an impossible atomism of the spencerian variety. From this root stems out all that is good and true and beautiful here on this society. Tolerance and good-will, sympathy and charity are only its fruits. Apparao was, thus a philosopher in his own right, though he never lay claim to that high title.<sup>63</sup>

### **H.V.Sarma:-**

H.V.sarma writes about the verses of Gurazada the subject matter in the chosen verses expresses the poets longing to out grow the unmeaning rigidities reached by the imposter maintainers of culture. Shri Gurazada seems to have intellectually and emotionally reacted to the evils in the society. The divisions and subdivisions in caste an unthinking assertions of authority worked against National unity. Men and women as parents had turned merciless towards their young daughters by entertaining child

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63 Ibid P 34



marriage and ‘Kanyasulkam’. Consequent to which the remaining life of the girls was rendered pathetic. Shri Gruajada was an eye-witness to such atrocities which ostensibly went in the name of respectable convention.

His interest in literature was independent of his negative experiences. The important matter is that he utilized his literary talent as a weapon to fight against ignorance and bigotry in social life and their timely, unrectifiable after-effects. All of his works bear evidence to these facts.<sup>64</sup>

### **Gurazada and Veeresalingam:-**

It is not known whether shri Gurazada was inspired by sri Kandukuri Veeresalingam panthulu whose views, were similar to the former or sri Gurazada acquired support from the later. But shri Gurazada had immense respect for shri Veeresalingam Panthulu. The fact, however, remained that sri Veeresalingam Panthulu was, the first man to react to the plight of the women and to boldly convert his views into practical terms. Sri Veeresalingam pantulu's literary events also were equally forceful. Again, his literary endeavours included both social reformation and language reformation, separately. He had no disregard, however, for conventional literary language and literature in which he was also efficient.<sup>65</sup>

Sri Gurazada viewed that literary faculty was only a means to an end. He is basically a social reformer and he utilized his faculty to express his preparatory views alone. He also had to (or felt the need to) simplify language in order to publicise his opinion. It would not be out of place to compare him to Bertolt Brecht of Germany who

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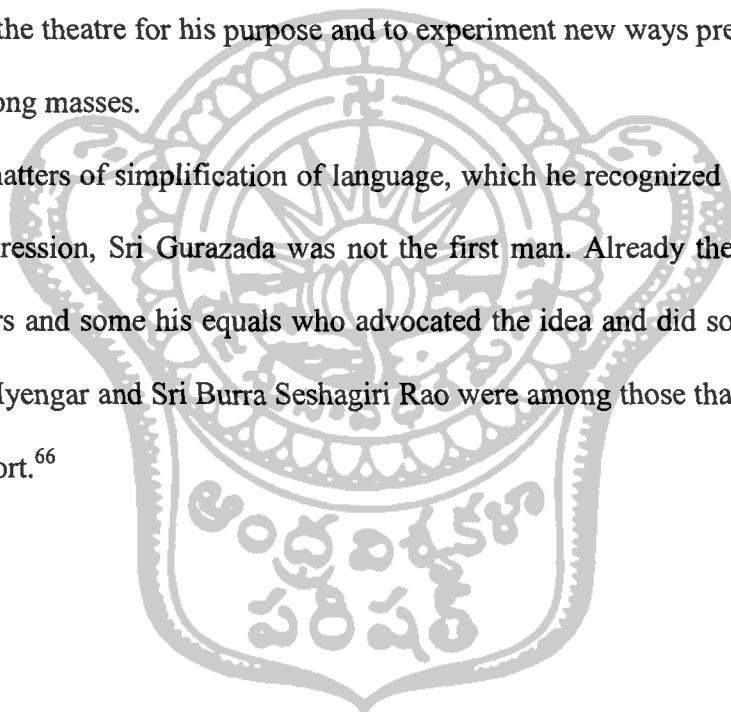
64. Ibid P.40

65. Ibid P.40



was basically a poet but, charged with the permanent mood to reform the unthinking masses, took to theatre. Through the theater he attempted to provoke thinking among the masses against military influence in social matters. He had to break through the conventions in the theatre for his purpose and to experiment new ways precisely to infuse rationalism among masses.

In the matters of simplification of language, which he recognized as the universal medium of expression, Sri Gurazada was not the first man. Already there were others, some his seniors and some his equals who advocated the idea and did some good work. Shri Sreenivas Iyengar and Sri Burra Seshagiri Rao were among those that greatly helped him in such effort.<sup>66</sup>




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66. Ibid P.40,



### **Achanta Janakiram:-**

The famous writer Achanta Janakiram says, Apparao's love for man was so great and his sense of Justice so acute that he could not tolerate class-discrimination in any form particularly against the Harijans. He sought every opportunity to condemn it. He says:

I see only two classes among men;

The good and the bad.

If good men are classed as untouchables,

I myself would fain be an untouchable.<sup>67</sup>

In a very powerful poem entitled "MAN" the poet says

You who prostrate before man-made gods

endelessly propitiating as stone or a shrub,

Why are you so blind to real god – hood

resplendent in every man?

Why do you treat some men as worse than

stones and shrubs?

You who search over hills and dales,

through hot deserts and fair valleys,

for a god a deep hidden in some remote

retreat,

Open your eyes and see;

Your god is by your side!

He walks with you in the shape of every man!

Know that salvation comes to man

Only through service of fellow-man.<sup>68</sup>

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67. Ibid P.27

68. Ibid P.27



### **Ronanki Appala Swamy:**

R.Appala swamy says the fact of his having left behind him no large body of work has long delayed his inclusion among writer of the highest rank. We don't Judge a writer by bulk, but by the social, moral and spiritual value of his work in the longrun, by the purification that is wrought in dialect of the tribe to which a poet belongs and the subtilization of sensibility of the people. He frees from the inertial of custom. What wonder if Gurazada has at last clicked with the public and has captured the hearts and imaginations of all classes and conditions of the population.

About Desabhakthi Appala swamy says I have never in all my reading, in several European languages, both ancient and modern come across a song which expresses the sentiment of patriotism like this, Andhra poet's love of country. It gives no quarter to aggressiveness, makes no boastful gestures, recognizes the equality of all men and women and envisions a world of collective effort, of peace, plenty and prosperity.<sup>69</sup>

To day Gurazada's Telugu is the Telugu of our newspapers, magazines, novels, and pamphlets and even of original verse. Gurajade's skit upon the Board of studies in his own day still holds. 'Thou shalt read!' it commands and straight thousands of unfortunate youngmen read books that no mortal can read with profit or with pleasure. "Youngmen still read the old books for their examinations, but turn to the new books for pleasure, self culture and self-improvement."

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69 Ibid P 23



About his achievement he says. The poet's dream of political independence has come true, untouchability has been abolished and economic equality for the sexes and social Justice are in process of realisation. His dream of one world still remains a dream in a war-torn world. Let us hope that a seer's words cannot go in vain.

Caste and colour shall be things of  
Of the post; all nations shall be brought  
Into one fold; the lowliest  
Shall come to man's estate.

These lines occur in the title poem of "Mutyala Saralu" what a limpid compendium they compose of the new humanism!

#### Sarvepalli Radha Krishnan:-

About Gurazada Radhakrishnan, addressing the century celebrations of Mahakavi Gurjada Appa Rao. New Delhi, 5<sup>th</sup> May, 1963. He said "I had the privilege of meeting him once or twice in Madras. During the period on which he lived there was a ferment in the social life of the Andhra Country. There were Kandukuri Veeresalingam pantulu, Ragupati Venkataratnam Naidu and others who were deeply interested in ridding our society of the social evils which afflicted it. Gurazada Appa Rao took up his powerful pen in vindication of the rights of the common people and condemned unequal marriages, child marriages, etc., His prose and the few poems which he wrote are simple and lucid. I remember reading a small work called 'Kanyaka' – I do not know how people know about it now, but I read when I was a student; then his play Kanyasulkam. I have seen it staged. Here was a man who stood for individual freedom and human fellowship. He tried to break down all walls of prejudice built by caste, race, religion, and wanted every human being to feel that he belonged to the one tribe of the human race. That was the great contribution which he made."<sup>70</sup>

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70 Gurazada commemorative vol. South Delhi, Andhra Association, October 1976 P 17



# APPENDIXES



## APPENDIX - I

### **Some Important Events In The Life of Gurazada**

21.09.1862, Appar Rao Birth in Rayavaram of Yalamanchili Taluk of Visakahapatnam District

1882, passed matriculation.

1882, written a poem “cuckoo”

14.08.1883, the famous editor Sambhu Chandra Mukharjee of the journal reese and rayyat (Culcutta) praising Gurazada’s “Saranghadhara”

01.04.1884, joined as 10<sup>th</sup> assistant lecturer in M.R.College V.Z.M. salary of 25/- Rupees Per month

1885, Marriage with Appalanarasamma

1.1886, Awarded B.A. Degree with Sanskrit as second language, and philosophy as optional

January.1886, promotion as 8 assistant lecturer

3.3.1887, Appointed head clerk in the office of General Deputy Collector, Vizianagaram, having lien on his post in the college

27.10.1887, Addressed Indian National Congress Meeting at Vizianagaram

October, 1887 promoted as 4 assistant lecturer on a salary of 100/-

1887, Birth of Daughter (Oleti Lakshmi Narasamma)

1887, Acquaintance with Anandagajapathi

27, 1888 membership in the voluntary organization in Visakhapatnam.

22.06.1889, Elected as Vice President for Vizianagara Samsthanam Debating Society

1890, Birth of the second child – son – Venkataramadasu

1891, promoted as third lecturer

1892, Demise of his brother Syamala rao who was studying in Madras Law College



1892, Kanya Sulkam staged (first edition)

1894, Criticism of Sanskrit drama Sri Rama Vijayam

5.06.1896, Appointed Epigraphist of Vizianagaram Estate

1896, Declaration as editor of Prakasika

01.01.1897, introduction to Kanyasulkam and dedication to Anandagajapathi

1897, writing introduction to his English drama Harischandra

06.1898, Appointed private secretary to Reevamaharani, the sister of Anandagajapathi

1902, Birth of third Child (Daugther) Puligedda Kondayamma

24.04.1905, demise of his father.

1906 discussions with Gidugu Ramamurthy beginning of vyavaharika bhasha udyamam(a movement for the use of ordinary language for the literary purposes.)

1906finished writing Kondu Bhattiym(play).

1907 publication of Neelagiri songs.

1908 English poem on Madras congress.

1909 change in kanyasulkam and the revised publication on may '1 and writing of introduction in English.

11.03.1909revised some scenes of kanyasulkam.

01.05.1909preface to the second edition of kanyasulkam.

21.05.1909letter to muni subramanyam, explaining the characteristics of realism in literature.

1910 participation in the inter caste dinner at Berahampur.

1910 muthyala saralu.(strings of pearls)

1910 Revison of kondu battiyam.

21.04.1910 Publication of the act of Bilhaniyam.

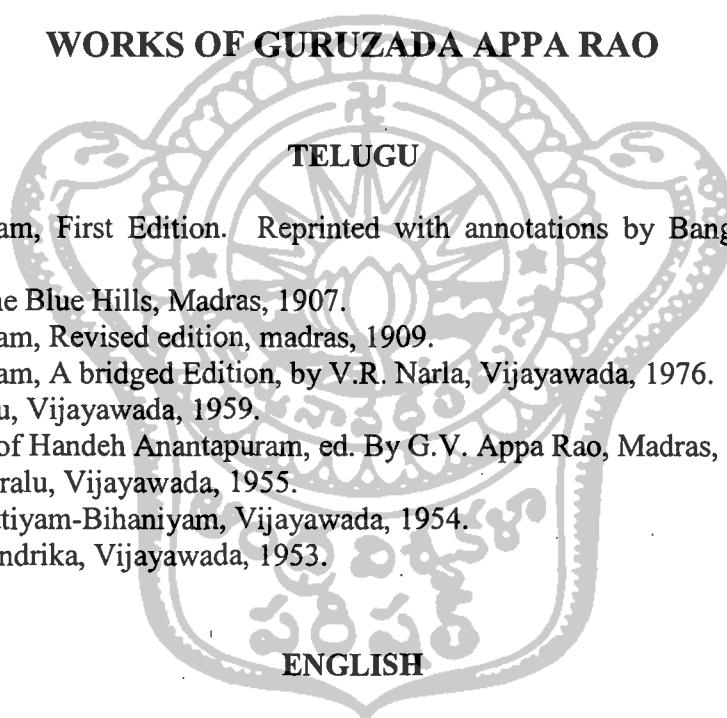


- 24.11.1910 Essay on spoken dialect.
- 29.12.1910 Reply to adverse criticisms by anonymous writer.
- 27.03.1911 Declaration of the poets magna carta “my cause is peoples cause and cultured opinion is at my back”.
- 04.1911 Publication of the second act of Bilhaniyam.
- 1911 Board of studies member Madras University.
- 1911 founding Andhra sahitya parishat.(for using ordinary language)
- 23.01.1912 “at home” by the bangiya sahitya parishat at Calcutta in honour of the poet.
- 16.05.1912 lecture on the usefulness of the spoken dialect at the meeting of Andhra sahitya parishat at madras.
- 27.06.1912 attempts at a compilation of the glossary of technical terms in telugu.
- 15.11.1912 Publication of “kanyaka”.(poem)
- 12.1912 Meeting Rabindranadh tagore in Calcutta.
- 1913 writing of “subadra”(poetry).
- 30.01.1913 offer from the madras governor of the fellowship of the madras university.
- 12.02.1913 retirement pension rupees 140/-
- 20.04.1914 publication of “the minute of dissent to the report of the telugu composition sub committee.
- 30.10.1915 publication of the “dinchu langaru”.(poem)
- 1915 House warming.
- 30.11.1915 demise of the poet in vizayanagaram at 8:25.A.M.



## APPENDIX - II

### WORKS OF GURUZADA APPA RAO



1. Kanyasulkam, First Edition. Reprinted with annotations by Bangorcy, Madras. 1969.
2. Songs of the Blue Hills, Madras, 1907.
3. Kanyasulkam, Revised edition, madras, 1909.
4. Kanyasulkam, A bridged Edition, by V.R. Narla, Vijayawada, 1976.
5. Animutyalu, Vijayawada, 1959.
6. the annals of Handeh Anantapuram, ed. By G.V. Appa Rao, Madras, 1920.
7. matyala Saralu, Vijayawada, 1955.
8. Kondubhattiyam-Bihaniyam, Vijayawada, 1954.
9. Vyasa Chandrika, Vijayawada, 1953.

1. The minute of dissent to the Report of the Telugu composition Sub Committee, Madras, 1914.
2. Introduction to Sri Ramavijaya, Bombay, 1901.
3. Introduction of Harischandra – The Martyr to Truth, Madras, 1897.



**APPENDIX – III**

**CHILD MARRIAGES IN A.P. VILLAGE**

**KAKINADA, April 17.**

During his recent visit to Nagulapalli village 32 kms. From here in connection with opening of a Balavadi, Mr. Mala kondayya, collector, East godavari shocked to find a number of girls below eight wearing thalis symbolizing their married status on enquiry he learnt that in a particular community in the village child marriages were in vogue and even one year old babies were married.

To express his strong disapproval, of the practice the collector refused garlands and declined to speak at the function. He left the meeting and asked one of the officials to explain to the assembled villages that he would not participate in any function in the village till they gave up the evil practice.

(The Hindu, April 18, 1972)



## APPENDIX - IV

**HINDU'8-12-79**

### **BABES IN ARMS MADE BRIDES AND GROOMS**

**VIJAYAWADA, Dec, 6.**

Breast-fed babes who cannot as yet crawl a few feet or lisp a few words are made wives and husbands under a strange marital practice in vogue in nagulapalle and half a dozen other villages in a cluster near pithapuram in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh.

With parents holding the babies in their laps, the rituals are gone through amidst the chanting of mantras by the purohit in the presence of the invited relatives and friends.

Your reporter on a visit to nagulapalle found scores of toddling female children sporting the 'mangala sutras' made of gold or consisting of a piece of turmeric knotted to a cotton thread. The mission to ascertain the number of the married among children had to be abandoned and converted into one of finding as to how few among the children still remain to be married.

Nagulpalle is neither remote Gilly area nor is populated by illiterate and ignorant tribals cut off from the mainstream of society. It is a rich and prosperous village with a population of 9.500 in the Godavari delta. It is linked to nearby towns by R.T.C bus service and has postal, telegraphic and telephone facilities.

There are as many as 900 children on the rolls in the two school in the village, one of them having facilities up to the ninth standard.

About 200 young men of the village strut the coastal Andhra districts from srikakulam to Krishna either as partners or as employees in arrack business. A majority of the villagers has taken to sterilization, limiting the number of children just to two.

It is in this otherwise progressive and enlightened village child marriages are common.

Nagulapalle and the six other villages – Isukapalle, mallavaram, ramanakkapet, komaragiri, pallipalem and Bhimakrosupalem – are populated mainly by pakanati reddis, who say they have little in relation to the reddis in other districts of coastal Andhra. The pakanati reddis marry only among themselves.

Enquiries show that child marriage has taken deep roots in the last two generations. Sixty - eight year - old. Anisetty Narayana murthy says his father married when he was around 20, But Narayana Murthy's marriage was performed when he was



12. Narayana murthy performed the marriage of his son. Tatabbai just when he was 10. now, tatabbai has performed the marriage of his only child just 18 – month – old.

Narayana murthy recalls that prior to 1930 the parents used to wait until the girl was 10 or the boy 12 for performing the marriage when the British implemented the sharda act prohibiting child marriages, the villagers used to go to Yanam then under French rule to beat the law.

Thirty – two years after independence, the villagers still perform child marriages.

Why are the parents of girls eager to perform their marriages even in child hood ? is it because the girls out number boys in the community ? certainly not, reply the villagers by pointing out that in such a case many girls should have gone unmarried. Not a single girl has gone unmarried for want of a suitable boy.

Is there no danger of early married girls becoming widows. The answer is if it had been the case, the practice of child marriages would have died long ago.

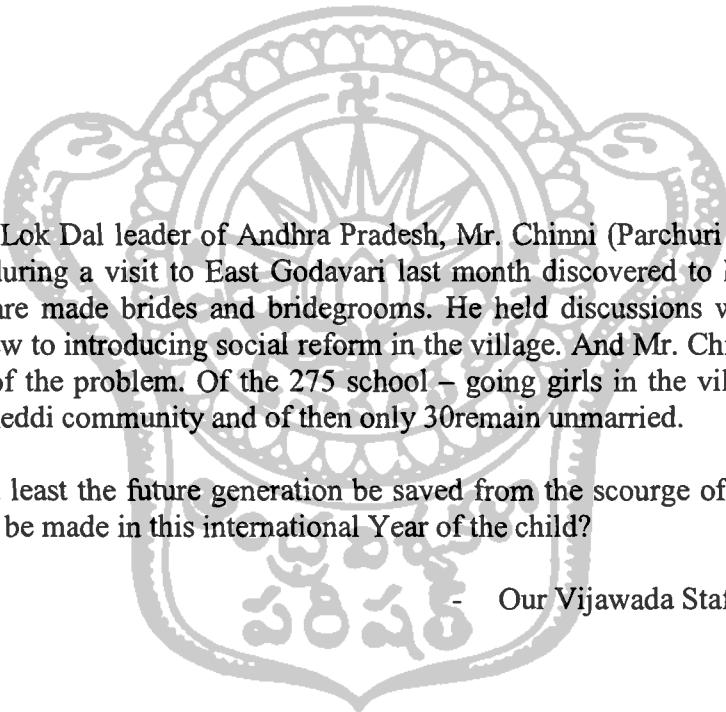
Narayana murthy, who performed the marriage of his 18 – month – old grand – daughter, asserts the practice had its origin in the parents' desire to see their daughter happily settled in life. The farmers in the area cultivating pithapuram estate lands became patta holders after the Estates Abolition Act in early 1900's. it was around that period that parents began to see the virtues of early marriage of their children. The parents of a girl were eager to give their daughter in wedding to a boy who is to inherit land. The boys parents were lured by the offer of dowry. It all started as a race with the girls parents hunting for suitable boys. No parent would like to be left behind in the race.

Even if the male child's parents are bit reluctant the girl's parents would not mind kidnapping the 'boy' and performing the marriage, which is irrevocable.

The villagers see nothing wrong in the custom of early marriages. The only trouble they experience relates to the 'honouring' of the son – in – law on the occasion of three to four festivals every year from the time of marriage to the time he sets up his own family in adult hood. Besides new clothes for the child son – in – law (which cost in a pittance), the female child's parents have to make cash gifts of Rs 500 to Rs 1000 during the specified festivals to the son – in – law's parents. The cost of looking after the son – in – law from the time of marriage till he attains say 20 years has become prohibitive. Complain the villagers. But they laugh away saying they can make good the loss through their sons.

Mr. P. Surya Chakram, a 27 – year – old graduate doing arrack business, points out there is the risk of young girls becoming widows early, though their number is little. But pitiable is the ease of girls after marriage because their freedom is stifled. They are forced to drop out of school and confined to homes once they attain puberty. There after they are made to lead a secluded life.





A Yuva Lok Dal leader of Andhra Pradesh, Mr. Chinni (Parchuri Kutumba Rao) of vijayawada during a visit to East Godavari last month discovered to his dismay that babes in arms are made brides and bridegrooms. He held discussions with the village youth with a view to introducing social reform in the village. And Mr. Chinni is aware of the magnitude of the problem. Of the 275 school – going girls in the village about 175 belongs to the Reddi community and of them only 30 remain unmarried.

Could at least the future generation be saved from the scourge of child marriage and a beginning be made in this international Year of the child?

- Our Vijayawada Staff Reporter.



## APPENDIX - V

### G. O. Ms. No. 13, dated 1- 1888

'Kanyasulkam Bill' Introduced in the Madras Legislative Council by Puspati Ananda Gajapathi, the Maharajah of Vizianagaram in February 1888.

Bill to be introduced into the council of the Governor of Fort Saint George for making laws and Regulations1888.

A bill to discontinue the sordid practice of selling girls in marriages among Brahmins under the guise of relegation.

Freamble: whereas it is expedient to discourage and put down

The barbarious practice of selling girls to persons for marriages under the colour of the forbidden from of marriage called 'Asura' which appears to be very prevalent among Brahmins in Southern India

It is here by enacted as follows:

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Short title:                  | 1. This act may be called the 'Kanyasulkam act of 1888'   |
| Local extent and application: | 2. It extends to the presidency of Fort Saint George and to all Brahmins governed by Mitakshara Law   |
| Commencement:                 | 3. It shall come into force from such date as the governor in council may notify in the Fort St George Gazette.   |
| Interpretation clause:        | 4. In this act, 'Kanyasulkam' means money or any other property which is given to the guardian of a girl for her purchase in the marriage, though not sanctioned by religion, but without which the marriage could not have been brought about. |

Guardian means father, mother or any other person who has a legal right to give a girl in marriage.

5. Whatever 'Kanyasulkam' is received by the guardian of the girl shall be deemed to be the property of the girl, and in shall be obligatory on such guardian to convert the same into government security bonds in her name, and on his failing to do so, her husband or other next best friend shall be at liberty to recover the same from him with interest at 12% per annum by suit in a competent court, and invest the same as above directed and the girl, on attaining majority, shall be entitled to recover her property from the aforesaid persons, their successors or assignees as the case may be.



### Statement of objects and reasons:

By no other people is greater importance attached to marriage than by us the Hindus, as it partakes more of a religious sacrament than a civil contract.

One of the eight forms of marriage which according to Hindu sastras seemed to have been once in existence, as far as I can see two forms of marriage called Brahmo and Asura are at present in vogue, the former being one of the approved and then latter the prohibited form. The gift of a daughter clothed only with a single rope to a learned man whom her father voluntarily invites and respectfully receives is the nuptial rite called Brahmo, when the bridegroom giving away as much wealth as he could afford to the father, the paternal kinsman and the damsels herself, takes her voluntarily as a bride that marriage is termed Asura,

It is laid down in Smriti Chandrika that the term 'Patni' means a wife lawfully wedded in one of the approved forms of marriage capable of conferring upon the wife a power to associate with her husband in the performance of religious sacrifices and that therefore a wife bought as in the Asura form of marriage is not a patni, and that the learned call her to be a slave or 'daasee' and the children begotten to her are unfit to perform the funerals of their parents. Hence Manu says 'Let no father who knows the law receive a gratuity for that purpose is the seller of his offspring'.

A practice obtains in many districts of Southern India (for example) Ganjam, Vizagapatnam, Godavari, Nellore, Guntur & C and in the town of Madras itself, for Hindu parents of all castes to sell for money their infant daughters in marriage. The price of each bride is called as 'Kanyasulkam'. This practice is becoming, it is found, more common year by year.

The Hindu law does not forbid the giving and receiving of a dowry. Manu says 'when money or goods are given to damsels whose kinsmen receive them not for their own use, it is no sale it is merely a token of courtesy and affection to the bride'. It is only the sale of the girl for considerations, that is considered to be a sordid proceeding and as such constantly forbidden by our law. It appears simply to be a survival but in a milder form of that iniquitous traffic in human beings or slavery which has been put down so gloriously benign rule of the British Government. It is, I regret to submit, growing first not only on the lower but also in the provision not being made for her by her parents or by the husband or his relations.

Generally the old and the sick who of course cannot be chosen as proper objects of brahmo marriage resort to the avaricious men who hold out their daughters as valuable commodity for sale to the highest bidder without the least regard to imminent misery and irreparable widowhood which their innocent girls are exposed to. These unnatural parents tempt not unfrequently many a poor family into ruin by drawing out all that they have and sometimes even by forcing them to borrow to pay for their daughters.

The husband often becomes helplessly involved in a debt mortgaging his property to raise the necessary 'Kanyasulkam' and is deprived of the chance of making any



provision against death or accident while the parents desirous of seeking only their own profit send forth a dowerless bride to wed an insolvent bridegroom and become the mother of a family of paupers.

I believe there are many instances of such marriages which have generally resulted in great misery.

Under the present law the sale by parents of their daughters in marriage is not a crime in penel code. Under the 'contract act' money paid as 'kanyasulkam' cannot be recovered by the payer although probably a suit upon a promise to pay would be dismissed on the consideration of the promise being immoral. So the present Bill while being entirely clear of any religious interference on the one hand, and on the other being quite within the jurisdiction of the Madras Government, cannot fail to be in my humble opinion of some use as it will not only have a whole some effect in mitigating the wide spread evil, but will also entirely remove the stigma of British Government tolerating the sale of human beings in how so mild a form it be.

**Letter to the Hon'ble H.E. Strokes,  
Chief Secretary to Government:**

Sir,

I beg most respectfully to bring under the considerations of the Legislative council the Bill, a copy which together with the statement of objects and reasons, I have now the honour to enclose in here. The object of the Bill is put a stop to the increasing employment of the Asura form of marriages, which in purchase of a wife by a payment to her parents it is obvious that this form of marriage is irreligious for Brahmins will be seen from all the most authoritative Hindu Sastras existing, and most of which have been quoted in the appended paper. That this form of marriage is iniquitous is self evident because to parents as the proper guardians of the child by receiving money of some other consideration corresponding to it, for their own interest instead of that of their girl, add to the many inexpressible miseries of Hindu girls under the existing Hindu marriage laws instead of mitigating them. Again it is amounting to slavery easily found by the fact of the parents receiving money or its equivalent for their benefit instead of that of their charge, which at once makes marriage as above mentioned irreligious and then shorn of its false religious cloak. It must be admitted that it naturally covers under the slavery act in one form or another if not in letter at least in the spirit of the code. Therefore, and, as the English were the first among the natives of the world, to put down this immoral practice, I think it is the all the more sad to allow the irreligious, iniquitous and illegal practice, to go on any further. The other essential point to be considered is whether the evil is of such a nature and extent as would necessitate Legislative interference. I can almost say with certainty that not less than one thousand such marriages take place annually in Northern Circars alone. As the Bill stands clear of interference either with Hindu religion or its rites, or which the Indian penal code, the concluding para in the statement of objects and reasons will clearly show. Thinking in activity in not bringing to light the fact of this deplorable traffic being carried on with every show of impurity under the debasing false parents of religion would be unpardonable omission in my part, I have



intruded on the valuable time of H.E. the Governor in council for which all the same, I beg to be excused.

17<sup>th</sup> January 1888  
 Egmore  
 Madras  
 Appendix

I have the honour to be  
 sir  
 Your most obedient servant  
**Sd. Ananda Gajapathy**

**Native members opposed the Bill.**  
**S. Subramanya Aiyar and P. Chantsal Row.**

**S. Subramanya Aiyar**  
 Kodaikanal

5<sup>th</sup> June 1888

I am unable to give the government any useful opinion on the Bill referred to me. The subject of the Bill treats of is no doubt of some importance to a section of the Hindu community, but I have no reliable information as to the real extent of the evil which is sought to be removed. In the southern part of the presidency, it is difficult to say whether the practice is so prevalent as to call for Legislative interference, as to what it may be in the Northern parts I have authentic information.

**Sd. S. Subramanya Aiyar.**

**P. Chantsal Rou**  
 The Grove, Mylapore  
 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1888

I beg to state that I am unable to support the Bill proposed by the Hon'ble the Maharajah of Viziamagaram.

In the first place what the Bill proposes to enact is already the Hindu law. Kanyasulkam is 'sridhana' of the girl in whose account it is taken (vide paras 566 and 574 Mayo's Hindu law) and if it is misappropriated by the father there is nothing to prevent the girl or some one interested in her bringing a suit against him but such suits or seldom or never brought because money is given and taken with the parties consent.

**Sd. P. Chantsal Row.**



**Note on the file:**

Both the Hindu non – official members of the Legislative Council who were consulted.....are opposed to the proposed legislation. Both point out that the evil affect of the Bill as directed is a result of the custom of early marriage and will diminish as that disappears. Mr. Chantsal Row shows that the Bill will be useless and its provisions easily evaded.

The Maharajah's views do not therefore appear to be shared by other intelligent respectable Hindus, therefore will hardly be prefered adopt the measure. It is not yet before the Council. The question is how best to dispose the matter.

The maharajah of Vizianagaram informed that the members of whom the above Bill was referred for option are opposed to its introduction to proceed with the Bill.  
Dated: 25<sup>th</sup> June 1888.



## APPENDIX - VI

**G.O. Ms. No. 55, 57 10<sup>th</sup> August, 1898 of G.O. No. 65, 19<sup>th</sup> October, 1898.**

**The Mysore Infant Marriages Prevention Regulations.**

**Regulation No.X of 1894 of the Government of Mysore (passed on the fifth day of October, 1894.)**

**A regulation to prevent infant marriages in the territories of Mysore.**

Preamble: where as it expediter to prevent infant marriages in the territories of mysore; his highness the maharajah is pleased to enact as follows

Short title: 1. This regulation may be called the mysore infant marriages prevention regulations.

2. It shall extend to the whole of the territories of Mysore but it shall apply only to marriages to among the Hindus. It shall come into operation at the expiration of six months from the date of its publication in the official gazette. For purpose of this Regulation, an infant girl means girl who has not completed eight years of age.

3. any person who causes the marriages of an infant girl, or who knowingly aids and abets within the meaning of the Indian penal code such a marriage, and any man who having completed eighteen years of e marries an infant girl shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months or with fine or with both.

4. Any man who having completed fifty years of age marriages a girl who has not completed fourteen years of age shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine or with both.

5. Any person who causes the marriage of a girl who has not completed fourteen years of age, and any person knowingly aids and abets, within the meaning of the Indian Penal Code, such a marriage shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months or with fine or with both.

6. No offence punishable under the regulation shall be tried by any court inferior to that of a Magistrate of the district.

7. No marriage which has actually taken place shall be deemed to be invalid, on the ground of the penalties provided by the Regulation,

8. No prosecution under the regulation shall be instituted without the previous written sanction of the Government may deem fit to make.



(Proceedings of Assembly of Representative Raiyats and Merchants of the Province of Mysore-Held at Mysore in October 1893 – subject No.10)

## APPENDIX - VII

### GOVERNAMENT OF MADRAS 1898

#### LEGISLATIVE

##### The Madras age of Marriage Act

Draft Bill introduced by P. Ratnasabhapati Pillai 28<sup>th</sup> January 1898.

**Draft Bill:**

To – fix the marriageable age limit of boys and girls. Where as it is expedient to fix the age limit for the marriages of boys and girls in the presidency of fort St George and its dependencies in view to preventing infant marriages and the attendant evils result therefrom.

It is here by enacted as follows:

1. (1) This act may be called the Madras age of Marriage Act.  
 (2) It extends to the territories for the time being administered by the Governor in council of Fort St George and its Dependencies.
2. This Act shall come into force on such date as may be specified by the Local Government in a modification published in the Fort St George Gazette.
3. (1) No boy who has not completed his sixteenth year and no girl who has not Completed her tenth year can be married.  
 (2) But marriages performed in contraventions of the age limits prescribed above Shall nevertheless be valid as regards civil rights.
4. In cases of marriages performed in transgression of the age limit laid down above, the Parents or guardians of the bride and bridegroom and, where the bride or bridegroom is A major, such major shall be liable to criminal prosecution.  
 Provided that no such prosecution shall be instituted without the previous sanction of The Local Government, and before notice to show cause against such prosecution has Been issued to the party's concerned.
5. In cases of bonafide disputes on the question of the age of the contracting parties, the District Magistrate, under the orders of the Local Government, shall summon five Jurors from the list of jurors in force for the time being in the court of sessions and Obtain their verdict. Such verdict shall be final, and binding on the Local Government.
6. Offences under this Act shall be triable by Magistrates of the First Class, and are Punishable with fine
7. Rules for carrying out the provisions of this Act shall be framed by the Local Government, and after publication in the Fort St George Gazette shall have the force of Law.

Sd. P. Ratnasabhapati pillai  
28<sup>th</sup> January 1898.



### **Statement of Objects and Reasons:**

The object of this Bill is to fix a limit for the marriageable age of boys and girls in this presidency. The subject of infant marriages has been before the public for upwards of two decades. It has formed the subject of sympathetic controversies all over India social reform associations are to be found in important centres of the empire, and journals denied to the cause have been working side by side. The intelligent public opinion has been long ago a wakened to the evils of the existing marriage systems. The consequences of child marriages are disastrous. The evils are of a manifold character affecting the social, moral, intellectual and physical well-being of society. Child marriages are the greatest curse of the country. As morality among infants is larger, the system results in increasing quantities of the widow population, and among Hindus parents deplore widowhood with all its attendant misery. There is no misfortune which the Hindu parents deplore so much as the widow hood of a young daughter in their household. The physical defects or moral taints among children may be imperceptible. They may grow with age, and 'the husband may become fit for the grave when the wife becomes fit for home'. The practice leads to the deterioration of the race. The boy becomes the father and the girl becomes the mother very often when they are scarcely sixteen and thirteen and they grow old and decrepit almost in youth. The state has to face a grave economic problem in the shape of over – population steeped in poverty.

Some idea may be formed of the extent of the misery caused by the practice of infant marriage. When it is remembered that, in the presidency one of 5 females 1 is widow; whereas in England, there is 1 widow in 13 females. This high percentage in our midst is very largely brought about by child marriages. According to the census of 1881, the number of widows under 10 years of age in the Madras presidency was about 5,600. the percentage of child widows is largest among the Brahman community among whom infant marriages are largely practiced.

The following extracts from the Madras census report are very suggestive:- "This gives us roughly an estimate of the age at which the Brahman girls married. Some are married before 7 years of age, nearly all are married before 10. the figures suggest that between 6 and 7 is the average age of marriage for females among Brahmins. This has the natural result of a high percentage of widows, and we find that nearly one – third of the Brahman women are widows".

"There are proportionately fifty per cent more widows among Brahmins than among other castes, and thus surplus may be wholly attributed to the greater extant to which infant marriages occur among Brahmins than is the case with other castes. Certainly one – third probably a larger proportion of the number of Brahman widows are widows owing to their custom, that is to say if Brahmins countenanced infant marriage only to the extent that other castes do, there would be nearly 60,000 fewer figures show that there are 80,000 widows under 20, and the foregoing remarks suggest that the Brahman custom is responsible for three- fourths of these".



Komatis and high cast vellalas among Hindus have followed the example of the Brahmans in practicing infant marriages. The practice is not confined to Hindus. It obtains among Muhammadans and even Parsees.

The present measure does not seek to effect any violent change opposed to the time – honoured instincts of the Hindus. It only seeks to discard the puranic period, which have been still further corrupted by mercenary motives on the part of parents with recent times.

Sd. P. Ratnasabhapati.

23<sup>rd</sup> January 1898.

### The Madras Infant Marriage Prevention Act Introduced by C. Jambulingam Mudaliar

Draft Bill:

An Act to prevent infant marriages in the Presidency of Madras.

*It is expedient to prevent infant marriages in the presidency of Madras, it is here by enacted as follows:*

1. This Act shall be called the ‘Madras Infant Marriage Prevention Act’
2. (a) It shall extend to the whole of the presidency of Madras, and shall apply to marriages among Hindus only. Provided that the local Government may be notification exempt any district or part of a district, or any class or classes of people from the operation of this Act for such time as it may deem fit, and may in like manner alter or cancel such notification.  
(b) It shall come into operation at the expiration of six months from the date of publication.

Section 2, Mysore Infant Marriages  
Prevention regulation X of 1894

Section 3, Mysore Infant Marriages  
Prevention regulation X of 1894

3. For the purpose of this Act ‘Infant Girl’ means a girl who has not completed 8 Years of age.
4. any person who causes the marriage of an infant girl or who knowingly aids and abets Such a marriage within the meaning of the

Indian Penal code. and any man who, having Completed eighteen years of age, marries an infant girl shall be punished with simple Imprisonment for a term which may extend to Rs. 500 or both.

5. (1) Notwithstanding anything contained in the last preceding section, the marriage of a girl, who has completed her sixth year, may be performed, provided that the sanction



of the District Court, having jurisdiction in the place where the girl and her guardians are resident or if they are resident within the limits of the city of Madras, the sanction of one of the judges of Her Majesty's High Court of Judicature at Madras, has been previously obtained.

(2) Such sanction may be granted by the said court or judge, after due enquiry only if the following conditions are satisfied.

- (a) The absence of a proper guardian to attend to the comforts of the girl and administer her property, or the serious illness or expected death of the father or mother of the girl .
- (b) And also the immediate prospect of getting a suitable husband in a respectable family. In dealing with an application under this section, health, character and other particulars of the proposed husband, and may prescribe a time within which, if it approves and sanctions the proposed marriage it shall be performed.
- 6. (1) The Court competent to take cognizance of, and to try an offence under this act shall be that of a District magistrate or the chief presidency Magistrate.
- (2) And if a District Magistrate or the Chief presidency Magistrate deems it necessary to direct any investigation by a police officer of a rank below that of a police inspector shall be employed either to make or to take part in the investigation.
- 7. No Court shall take cognizance of an offence under this act after the lapse of two years from the date of marriage.
- 8. No marriage which has actually taken place, shall be deemed to be invalid on the ground of the penalties provided by this Act.

Section 2, Act X of 1891  
new section 561, of the  
Criminal Procedure code.

(Section 7, Mysore Regulations X of 1894)

9. Every village headman or other Revenue Officer and every police officer shall forthwith communicate to the nearest police station, which is nearer the performance of, or the intention, or the preparation to perform an infant marriage punishable under this Act, and such Magistrate or officer in-charge of the police station, shall without delay submit the said information with a report there on to the District Magistrate.

(Section 45, Cr. PC Act X of 1882)

Sd. C. Jambulingam Mudalir.



## APPENDIX-VIII

(ఆంధ్రజ్యోతి, దినపత్రిక 21.12.1977)  
కట్టాల నిషేధ చట్టంవల్ల పోలీసులకు లాభం

కట్టాల నిషేధ చట్టం వచ్చినందువల్ల ఉత్తర ప్రదేశ్‌లో కట్టాలు తీసుకోవడం ఇంకా ఎక్కువయింది. ప్రస్తుతం కట్టంతో బాటుగా పోలీసులకు కూడా కొంత తప్పనిసరిగా ముట్టచెప్పవలని వస్తున్నది. ఆంధ్రప్రదేశ్ జైల్ ఇన్‌సెప్ట్‌కర్ శ్రీ టి.యస్.రావు ఈ విషయాన్ని నిన్న ఇక్కడ చెప్పారు. అదే విధంగా గుజరాత్‌లో బాల్య వివాహ నిషేధం వల్ల పోలీసు బాగుపడుతున్నారని ఆయన చెప్పారు. బీడ్లుపుట్టకముందే పెల్లి నిర్ణయాలు జరుగుతున్నాయని కూడా ఆయన అన్నారు.

(ఆంధ్రజ్యోతి దినపత్రిక సంపుటి 18 సంచిక - 282 విజయవాడ ఏప్రిల్ 26-1978 - బుధవారం 5వ హజి)

వాయల్చుడులో కోదండరామస్వామి ఉత్సవాల్లో సంఘర్షణలు

144వ సెక్షన్ విధింపు

("ఆంధ్రజ్యోతి" విలేబురి)

మదనపల్లి, ఏప్రిల్ 25 - గత సోమవారం రాత్రి వాయల్చుడు వద్ద దేవదాసీల నృత్యాలతో కోదండ రామస్వామి రద్దోత్సవం జరిపారు. ఆ విధంగా దేవదాసీలను ఉపయోగించడం చట్ట విరుద్ధమని ఒక పార్టీకి చెందిన ప్రజలు ఫీర్యాదు చేశారు.

అనంతరం సబ్ కలెక్టర్ కుమార్తా జానకీ కృష్ణమూర్తి జోక్యం చేసుకుని పోలీస్ బందోబస్తుతో ఉర్కేంపు జరపవలనిందిగా ఆదేశించేరు.

ఆ మరునాడు వారు ఉలు తిరునాళ ఉత్సవానికి ఆటంకం కలిగించడానికి ప్రయత్నించగా పోలీసులు 144వ సెక్షన్ విధించారు.

దేవాలయం ధర్మకర్త ఇంటివద్ద రెండు చిన్న చేతిబాంబులు ఉంచినట్లు, ఒక గడ్డివామును తగలబెట్టినట్లు కూడా తెలియవచ్చింది. మదనపల్లి నుంచి షైర్ ఇంజను వచ్చి మంటలను అదుపులోకి తెచ్చాయి. 144వ సెక్షన్ ఇప్పటికీ అమలులో ఉన్నట్లు తెలుస్తోంది.

ఈ సంఘటనలకు గత ఎన్నికల సమయంలో ఏర్పడిన రాజకీయ విభేదాలు కారణం.



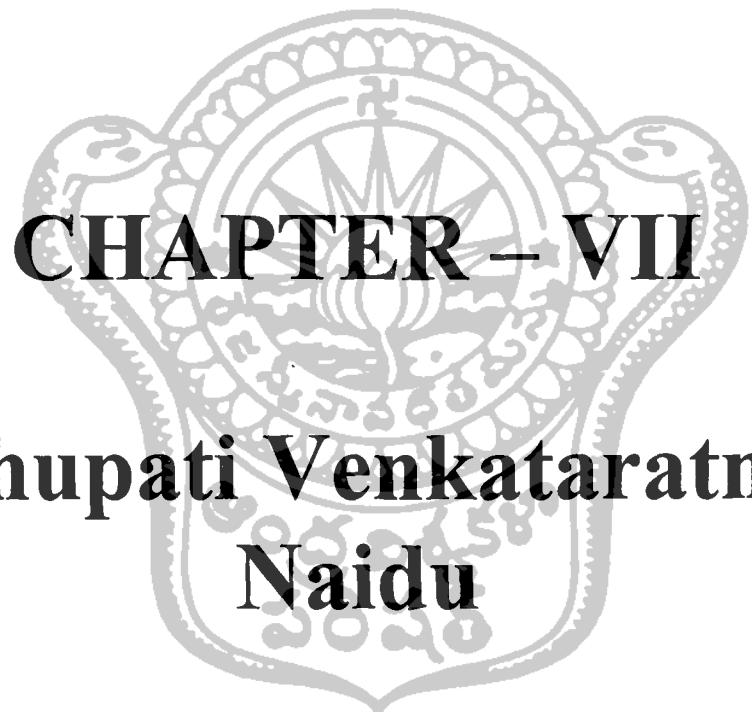
(“ఈ:నాడు” 15-2-1979 గురువారం మొదటి పేజీలో వారు)

ఎనిమిదేళ్ళ అమ్మాయికి అయిదు రోజుల పెల్లి!

నరసరావు పేట, ఫిబ్రవరి 14 : న్యాయశాస్త్రంలో నిష్టాతుదయిన ఒక న్యాయవాది మూడుచారాల ప్రభావం వల్ల చట్టాలను సైతం కాలదన్ని ఊహకూడా తెలియని పసికందులకు వివాహం జరిపించిన ఉదంతం ఒకటి తెలియవచ్చింది. స్థానిక న్యాయవాది శ్రీ లంకా రామనాథం ఈ నెల 7వ తేదీన తన మనుమరాలు చిరంజీవి రాజ్యలక్ష్మికి తెనాలి వాస్తవ్యాలు శ్రీ భూగవతుల ఆంజనేయశాస్త్రీకుమారుడు చిరంజీవి విద్యారణ్యశాస్త్రీకి ఆర్ధధర్మశాస్త్రప్రకారం అయిదు రోజుల వివాహం ఘనంగా తన స్వగృహంలో జరిపించారు. కానీ ఈ వివాహ విషయం గోప్యంగా ఉంచడానికి చేసిన ప్రయత్నాలు విఫలం అయ్యాయి. ఈ వివాహ విశిష్టత వధూవరుల ఇద్దరి వయస్సు కలిపినా 20 సంవత్సరాలు నిండకపోవడం. చిల్లా వల్ల రాజ్యలక్ష్మికి స్థానిక పెనుగొండ బ్రహ్మరాంబా బాలీకా పారశాలలో నాగ్లవ తరగతి చదువుతోంది. వయస్సు కేవలం 8 సంవత్సరాలు కాగా వరుడు చిల్లా విద్యారణ్యశాస్త్రీకి 12 సంవత్సరములు మాత్రమే. ఇటీవల జరిగిన పార్లమెంటు సమావేశంలో వివాహ వయస్సు పెంచుతూ చట్టాలను సవరించారు. చట్టాలను ఉల్లంఘించిన వారిని కరినంగా శిక్షిస్తామని పేర్కొన్నా, అంతర్ జాతీయ బాలల సంవత్సరం జరుగుతున్న ఈ సమయంలో ఈలాంటి బాల్య వివాహం జరగడం శోచనీయం. అందుకే పెద్దల ఛాందస మూడుచారాల బలిపీరంపై పసుపు వస్త్రాలతో కూర్చున్న ఆ పసికూనలను చూసిన అనేక మంది విజ్ఞల హృదయాలు భగ్నమన్నాయి. అమ్మతో ఏదో మారాం చేస్తూ పెండ్లి పీటల పైనే విలపించిన ఆ పసికందు రాజ్యలక్ష్మిని ఎలాగయితేనేమి అనేకులు ఆశ్చర్యపడున్నారు. ఆశీర్వదించారు. అక్కింతలు విసిరారు.

వివాహ చట్టాలకు వ్యాతిరేకంగా 5 రోజులు ఈ వివాహం జరిగినా పోలీసులకు ఈ విషయం తెలియకపోవడం విడ్డురంగానే ఉంది. పట్టణంలో ఎవరూ ఈ విషయంపై తెలియజేయకపోవడం ఫిర్యాదు చేయకపోవడం వల్లనే మేము ఏమీ చేయలేక పోయామని పోలీసులు తమను తాము సమర్థించుకున్నారు. ఈ వివాహానికి తరాలుగా తరగని వరుని ఆస్తి కారణమని ఇక్కడ భావిస్తున్నారు.





## CHAPTER—VII

**Raghupati Venkataratnam  
Naidu**



## CHAPTER - VII

### RAGHUPATI VENKATARATNAM NAIDU

Sir. R. Venkataratnam was born on Maharnavami 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.

<sup>1</sup>. R. Venkataratnam Message and Ministrations Vol.I. P.XXII



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

<sup>4</sup> Ibid P XVIII  
<sup>5</sup> 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.

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 confidently 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,

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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 Narsarao peta 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>

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10. Vol I. R Venkataratnam message and Misistration P XcIX



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 varid 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>

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13. Ibid. XXXVII

14. R. Venkata Ratnam naidu. Messages and ministration Vol. P. 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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16 R Venkataraman message and ministrations, Vol II P 14  
17 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

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 one 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 hand-maid 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 Antinautch 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

21 Vol II P 20  
22 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 brethren – 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 –

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23. R. Venkataratnam message and ministrations Vol.IV P.73



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 songstress 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 recommended, 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 seized 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

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

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

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33 Vol II P 48



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

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 low 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>

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>

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 “procureress 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 inchastity; and what is public recognition given to social impurity by state or by society but this culpable prescription of inchastity”.<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

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 together 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>”

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 vaidyasagar, 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.29



be said of Veeresalingam pantulu garu. His several achievements have been recalled either in detail or in allusion by the proceeding 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 off 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 or 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

60 Vol VI p 335-336

61 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 itself 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

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62 Vol II p 64



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

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63. Vol.IV,p.318



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 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 warning 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 – wearning 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>

67 Vol V p 28-29



### 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 feet 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 block 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

69 Ibid P 175



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, Amalapuram 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 Dalits 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 everymonth – 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 prophecy 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.

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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 joing 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 attachment 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, unmainly. 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, devotes 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 ovedue, 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 anadherent 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 Veerasingam 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

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 upholders 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 require 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

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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>

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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 vouches 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, Muhammad 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

88 Vol VI, p 357-358



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 Brother hood:-

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.

89 Ibid p 369

90 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 Bénarjee 2) Gangadhar Mukherjee
- Passed in Metric under the guidance of Aghorinath Chattopadyaya
- 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 dimond Jubilee
- 1825-28
  - 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 nautches 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

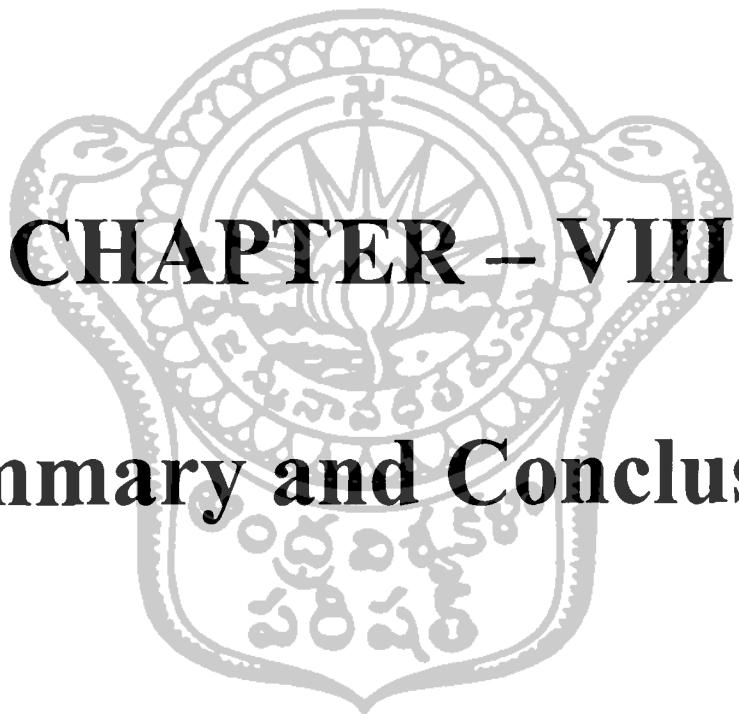
Venkata Ratnam says addressing the legislative council madras on 1-4-1921.  
 Mr. President,

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 phycological 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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# **CHAPTER – VIII**

# **Summary and Conclusion**



## CHAPTER VIII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

During the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the society in Andhra underwent a process of regeneration, in spite of the constraints imposed upon it by colonial domination. A part of the general social phenomenon in India, it led to certain changes in the existing social values and practices and to the spread of modern ideas. This was not simply a result of the cultural – ideological and institutional changes introduced by the British or was an immediate consequence of the enlightenment of an educated stratum through the agency of western ideas with their rationalism and scientism<sup>1</sup>. The long tradition of dissent and protest that existed in society also contributed to its making. This could well be traced back to vemana, if not to the religious and social upheaval called Veerasaivism. Veerasaivism and Sri Vaishnavism which spread across the borders of the present Tamilnadu opposed caste exclusiveness and Brahminical ritualism and gave rise to new sub-castes such as Jangams, Setti-Balijas, Aradhya Brahmins and the like, while Sri Vaishnavism led to the rise of Satanis and Dasaris. An intermixture of Hindu and Muslim populations like wise produced Dudekulas or pinjaris. Vemana and Several other comparatively unknown religious leaders, like Nasarayya in guntur district and pothuluri Veerabrahmam in cuddapah district, exposed the evils of social and religious life.

The reform efforts in Andhra Pradesh is best represented by the movement initiated by Kandukuri Veeresalingam. He was influenced by the prevailing social

1. Charles H. Heimsath attributed the rise of social reform movements in India to the impact of both the proselytising activities of Christian missionaries and the western ideas disseminated through the English education. See for example his book *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, pp 46-47. And also John G. Leonard in his biographs of Kandukuri Veeresalingam, cited earlier, put forward the same challenge and response theory while explaining the origins of social reform movements.



conditions and also by the Brahmo Samaj Movement of Bengal. He evinced, like other reformers of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, a keen interest in the spread of scientific knowledge and the growth of rational thinking. Being a great literary figure, he made use of literature to spread reform ideas among his people. Literature, to Veeresalingam, was the means to an end. He pleaded for the spread of mass education in vernaculars and opposed a purely literary education. He championed a system of education which would liberate the reform-oriented mind from the shackles of tradition and bring about regeneration in society. Being a moderate in politics, he extolled the virtues of British rule and was thus a victim of a false consciousness as were the other reformers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century who believed in the instrumentality of British rule for the transformation of Indian society. Yet he was not an advocate of status quo; He believed in the organic theory of progress and in the given situation in India championed the cause of social reform as the immediate task.<sup>2</sup>

Veeresalingam was no mere preacher or theorectician. He was a practical reformer. Ideas for him were not ends in themselves and their worth had to be tasted in the field of practical action. In short, his ideas were enriched by the movements he started and from the experiences of his movements his ideas drew their sustenance. If need be, he would even revise his ideas in the light of concrete practice. His reliance on youth as an important element in society to carry forward the ideas of reform was unwavering. Judging from the immense cooperation extended by students of Rajahmundry, the home town of Veeresalingam, to the success of reform measures initiated by him, his faith in them was well – grounded. In a society which was tradition-bound and which opposed

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2. V.Ramakrishna Social reform in Andhra (1848 – 1919) p.206



change in matters of social reform, students happened to be the real hope with their idealism, youth fullness and their receptivity to new ideas. Veeresalingam appeared to be a far – sighted leader in this regard.<sup>3</sup>

### **Emancipation of women:-**

The central concern of social reform endeavours was the emancipation of woman. It was generally felt that unless the status of women, who constituted more or less half of the population, improved, society would not be able to register any noteworthy progress. Humanitarian consideration, though an important factor was not the only motive force for reform. The reformers perspective was clearly focused on social transformation and progress. Their efforts however had limited success. This was true in the field of girls, education, infant marriage and widow remarriages, which was the main areas of reform activity. Unable to influence the state policy, they tried to promote these causes through personal endeavour. Girl's schools were founded, widow remarriages were conducted, rescue homes were opened and institutions for training girls in music and dance were founded. But these efforts only focussed attention on these problems and did not really solve them. Their success is not to be measured in terms of the actual achievement. Their contribution was more significant in creating a social climate which recognized the harmful effects of these social practices. In this respect their achievement was of a very high order. Through lectures, conferences and Journals they tried to spread enlightenment among the people which helped the growth of a consciousness in society against customs and practices which were against human dignity. Many of the questions raised by the reformers later became part of the national movement.<sup>4</sup>

3. Ibid

4. Ibid p.207



### **Religion and Society:-**

An important realization of Andhra reformers was the connection between the social and religious question in India. The social reformers, therefore, could not be effective unless their religious dimensions were also taken into account. It was this perspective which was at the root of religious reforms. In other words religious reforms were not purely religious, they had important social implications. The movements against idolatry, polytheism and a host of other rituals bear out this contention. The religious reform as represented by the Brahmo Samaj was almost an off – shoot of the Bengal Brahmo movement. The activities of the samaj also closely followed the Bengal Samaj. Yet it did give to the members of the educated middle classes, uprooted from their old surroundings and in search of new identities, a new way of life. The emphasis on rationalist ways of thinking and anti-idolatrous and theistic ideas particularly attracted their attention.

The Brahmo Samaj movement in Andhra was also the first to champion the cause of the ‘depressed classes’ and work for their amelioration through schools, colleges, ‘hostels’, ‘lodges and ‘orphanages’. The first generation of ‘Harijan’ leaders were the alumni of these institutions. Besides paving the way indirectly for the spread of social reform movement, the samaj created a liberal and broad out look among the people in general.

The reasons for the limited success of the socio religious movements have been a matter of debate. Some of the contemporaries of Veerasingam has attributed it to his over bearing attitude, distrust in the capacity and sincerity of his friends and followers and his tendency to interfere in the work of others. But there were deeper causes inherent in the very nature of the movement. The middle classes drawn from the upper castes



formed the main social base of these movements with traders and middle peasants involved in certain areas. The programme of the movement was oriented to the needs of the reformer. Therefore, the reform ideas never reached the lower layers of society as they did not concern them. Inevitably the reform movement was to remain a limited phenomenon. Issues like welfare of the 'depressed classes' and concepts like 'national education' were taken up actively only after the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by which time the reform movements showed clear signs of decline due to a number of factors.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Impact of Politics on Social Reform:**

The swadeshi movement and its repercussions in Andhra in the year 1907 acted as a major set back to the reform movements. Students who formed the major part of the following of Veeresalingam at Rajahmundry and Kakinada, Joined the Swadeshi movement. Events that followed 1907 hastened the declining trend of the reform movements. Veerasalingam became an anushtantic Brahmo, gave up his sacred thread and performed the Sraddha of his parents according to Brahmo rites and arranged an inter – caste dinner on the occasion.

The increasing appeal of the national movement sharply posed the question of priority, whether the social or political reform should have precedence. The district social conferences that met after 1907, to deliberate on political and social issues, passed resolutions favouring precedence to political reform over the social. This was a reversal of the earlier stand. It showed that political matters claimed the first place in the society's priorities. Though need for social reform was accepted in general and the national movement tried to integrate it with the political movement the reform activists were, slowly but steadily, absorbed by the more powerful political struggles.<sup>6</sup>

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5. Ibid p 209,

6 Ibid p.209



The rise of revivalism as a back lash against the reform movements also contributed greatly to the process of decline; Even during the hey – day of the reform movements orthodox sections in society continuously opposed them by delivering lectures and publishing books decrying the reforms.

The theosophical society founded by Annie Besant at Madras championed social reforms on national lines and attacked the social reform movements and their objectives.

Annie Besant and Col. Olcott toured Andhra extensively and visited Rajahmundry, Kakinada, Masulipatnam and other important reform centres. Starting of the Madras Hindu Association in 1904 at Madras with the blessings of Annie Besant and Nyapati Subba Rao, one of its ardent advocates, the visits of Vivekananda to Madras and his speeches, the founding of *Varnasram Dharma Samrakshna Mandali* in Madras during this period with its virulent propaganda against social reforms weakened the reform movements. Reformers in Andhra started defending their programme proclaiming that their reforms were not opposed to national heritage. Moreover, the emergence of caste association also affected the reform movement.<sup>7</sup>

The impact of the reform movements was confined mainly to the sections of literates residing in towns and a few villages around. A very small number of petty traders and educated farmers were also influenced by these movements, especially in the two districts of Godavari and Krishna. However, it should be made clear that keeping in view the limited spread of education and the few changes that were brought about in society's economic relations, social mobility was extremely limited. In the absence of a developing capitalist economy and the growth of social layers associated with such

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7. Ibid p.209



development, there from movements could not draw continuous sustenance for their growth and success. That is why the much desired social or the so – called renaissance of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had to be an incomplete measure of social change which stopped half way.

### **The Reforms and the National Movement:**

The dissemination of enlightened ideas about man and society was the main contribution of the reform movement. Caste restrictions were loosened even though caste itself remained intact. An awareness of the need to reform the old society with its out dated customs and practices was created. This could be seen, besides the reform movements, in the rise of caste associations which introduced a host of reform measures to ensure the uplift from the social and economic morass they had fallen into. Along with the cry for social justice, there also went up the cry for social reform as far as non-Brahmin castes were concerned. Resolutions on inter – sub – caste marriages, fusion of sub – castes, denunciation of the evils of dowry and infant marriages can be found in the conferences of these caste associations. Persons like Raghunatha varma of Vayalpadu in chittor district, Tripuraneni Ramaswamy Chowdary of Guntur district and Darisi Chenchaiah of the gadhar party fame were but a few instances of such isolated individuals who carried on the work of social reform movements in their own way, but to the best of their capacity. This indicates the steady rise of the rural gentry into positions of social prominence which was just a step short of political dominance.

Reform movements were urban – based while these caste associations were centred mostly in the country side. It is true that some of these associations at times were falling a pray to the traditions of the upper castes and their ways of life. Taking an overall view. One must conclude that they could achieve only a part of the aims of the reform



movements. Caste associations had the necessary homogeneity and the strength of purpose to achieve this whereas the reform movements with their upper caste and upper class basis could not percolate down to the masses and create in their minds conviction of ideas, or commitment to reform programmes.

The reform movements provided the back – drop to the nationalist movement in Andhra. The first generation of national leaders in Andhra, Tanguturi prakasam. Bhogaraju Pattabhi Seetha Ramaiah, Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao, Unnave Lakshminarayana, Gadicherla Harisarvothama Rao, to mention only a few, and several others happened to be the active participants of reform movements.

The decline of the reform movements in Andhra does not necessarily imply that its impact on men's minds ceased after 1907 or 1919. On the other hand, it became part of the intellectual, climate, imperceptibly and silently, the very stuff of which the later generation was made, just as sunlight is absorbed by the plants. If the communist movement of Andhra paid homage to Veeresalingam and sought to emphasise the importance of social reform in the late thirties and the early forties, the permeative influence of Veeresalingam movement cannot be doubted. That the social and intellectual make – up of modern Andhra draws heavily upon this influence is perhaps the most important legacy of the nineteenth century reform movements.<sup>8</sup>

The impact of these three thinkers namely Kandukuri Veeresalingam, Gurazada Appa rao and Raghupathi Venkataratnam Naidu is found in the later reformation activities of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. All the issues about which they struggled were taken up by many social activities. The freedom movement also took up not only political issues but also the social problems and in a way political and social struggle joined together.

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8. Ibid p.211



### Progress of Women:-

In the eloquent speech to the Andhra Women's Conference held at Vijayawada in 1929, Dr.Muthulakshmi Reddi said: "The ancient Hindu legislators realized that the both sexes were equal and said before the world that women have equal rights with men. So the laws depriving the Hindu woman of her rights and privileges and assigning her an inferior place in society must be only of recent origin. I feel sorry to observe that the Hindus in particular have become creatures more of custom or habit than of reason or true religion. No enlightened women with any self-respect can put up with one-sided laws which have placed us in an inferior position even to our Muhammadan and Christian sisters. To modify such unjust laws and to make it suitable to the needs of the present day society, a reformed society should be started for the uplift, protection and help of the Hindu women.<sup>9</sup>

This awakening magnified itself in the new women's association organized by women themselves. The earliest was the women's association at Rajahmundry organized in 1902 by Kotikalapudi Sitamma, who displayed commendable keenness in the need for educating women. In November of the same year Bandaru Atchamamba and Oruganti Ratnamamba started a women's association at Masulipatnam. It's declared objective was to get together educated women at one place as frequently as possible and persuade them to deliver a series of lectures to the illiterate on topics like the management of household affairs and the life and work of women who consecrated their lives for the country's cause.

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<sup>9</sup> B Kesavanarayana, Political and Social factors in Andhra (1900-1956), Vijayawada, 1976, p 194



Another important feature of this awakening among women was the organization of ladies conferences at almost every important town in Andhradesa to voice their grievances and aspirations. Women began more and more to participate in the conferences where their advocacy of reform of evil social customs was more effective than that of the speeches of men in influencing the Hindu public opinion in favour of social reform. These conferences helped to direct the course of women's movement in its formative stages. Issues that concerned women in general were freely discussed and resolutions passed at the conferences. The Andhra ladies conference held at Masulipatnam in March 1913 passed the following resolutions:-

1. That this conference is of opinion that the higher education of women should be promoted in all parts of the country,
2. That this conference prays the Government to multiply girls schools so as to establish one in every town and village.
3. That an asylum be established in the centre of the Andhra country duly equipped for the imparting of technical instruction to widows and rescued women so as to enable them to obtain free lodging and boarding and acquire means of livelihood.
4. That it is desirable to have as teachers women, preferably widows, in girls schools.
5. That Government be pleased to establish training schools for women of advanced education in Telugu.
6. That girls who have attained puberty be sent to girls schools.
7. That women should relax their fondness for jewellery and seek to acquire 'Streebharanam' in immovable property.



8. That the curriculum of girls studies should comprise study of music, knitting, sewing, domestic economy, the care of the infant and of the invalid.
9. That early marriages should be prohibited.
10. That girls should not be married before attaining puberty or before the age of 16.
11. That kanysulkam (bride's price) and varasulkam (bridegroom's price) be regarded as objectionable.
12. That girls below 16 should not be given in marriage to men over 40.
13. That foreign travel should not be regarded as prohibited.
14. That caste distinctions should be removed and unity should be strengthened by promoting inter-caste marriages and inter-dining.<sup>10</sup>

The appearance of Mrs. Besant on the Indian political arena was an important landmark in the development of public consciousness towards women's education and their emancipation. Her vigorous campaign to redeem girls from illiteracy and to stop the pernicious practice of early marriages gave a fresh stimulus to the women's movement. The Women's India Association was started in 1917 with headquarters at Madras with Mrs. Besant as its president and Mrs. Cousins as secretary. Their extensive tours in Andhra resulted in the establishment of branches of the women's association at places like Rajahmundry and Vijayawada.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid p 198

<sup>11</sup> Ibid



### **Social evils:-**

An important aspect of the women's movement was the agitation against certain obsolete social customs and practices which stood in the way of advancement of women. As a result of the spread of new progressive social outlook following the impact of western ideals, an irresistible urge developed among educated Indians to rescue women from the social evils.

The Hindus regarded marriage as an inescapable sacrament for girls and to keep a daughter unmarried was regarded as a sin and a neglect of a sacred obligation. It was believed that girls should be married before they attained puberty and therefore parents were anxious to get their daughters married as early as possible. Thus the practice of child marriages became common among Hindus.

With the general awakening, especially among the English educated, a new class of social reformers made sustained efforts to put an end to early marriages, for, this practice sometimes resulted in weak progeny, infantile mortality, material mortality, death of the girl during child bearing age, early widowhood, general illness and debility of mothers. The educated public was chiefly prompted by these considerations in starting an intense campaign against early marriages.

Early social reformers like K.Veerasingam were able to draw public attention to the evil consequences of early marriage through the press and platform and created the necessary atmosphere for legislative measures against the practice. But the British Government, for a long time, followed a policy of non-interference out of fear of wounding the religious feelings of the orthodox Hindus. Though efforts were made in the Indian Legislative Assembly once in 1922 and again in 1925 towards raising the age of marriage of girls through legislation, they proved abortive as the official members either



remained neutral or strongly opposed them. However, in 1927 Sir Hari Singh Gour introduced a bill in the Assembly to raise the age of consent in marital cases of 14 and in extra-marital cases to 16. On this the government appointed a committee to seek public opinion in the matter. A little later Rai Sahib Harbilas Sarda also introduced a bill to check child marriages. The final passing of the bill was deferred till the recommendations of the committee were known.<sup>12</sup>

Alongside the agitation against early marriages, propaganda for encouraging marriages of child widows was carried on. Child widows were, in fact, a natural concomitant of early marriage. Orthodox parents cared little for age and gave their daughters even of eight to ten years to very old men. Many husbands died before their wives attained maturity and these little girls were subjected to lifelong enforced widowhood. Stringent prohibition was imposed upon marriage of widows especially among the Brahmins and the Vysyas. Other communities also copied this.

As a result of these circumstances there was a large number of widows in Hindu society. There was hardly any home which did not have at least one widow. According to the Census Report of India, 1901, the number of widows whose age was below 5 was 408 and of those between 6 and 9 was 2,984. Altogether 13,722 girls were widowed before they attained the age of 16. By 1931 their number increased enormously.

It is pertinent to mention that the legality of widow marriages was a bone of contention between the conservatives and social reformers. These two schools of thought presented their own points of view quoting extensively from Hindu religious authorities and each claiming that their arguments were correct.

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12 Ibid p 201



The orthodox school asserted that widow marriage had no sanction of the sacred texts. In this connection they quoted from various Hindu religious and legal works such as those of Manu, Vasistha, Parasara, Vishnu, Narada and Angeerasa. They said that if widow married, her husband and the off-spring, if any were debarred from participating in any sacramental performances (Manu V, 16), and that nowhere a second husband was permitted to a respectable woman. They went to the extent of saying that even if a woman remarried because her husband turned out to be a eunuch or mad, she became 'Punurbhuvu' and as such was liable to be banished from the country and that person marrying a widow became a 'chandala' (out-caste).<sup>13</sup>

Against such frightful dogma wearing the complexion of religiosity social reformers had to strive hard and they in turn drew authority from the Vedas, Smritis and some other works to prove that widow marriage did have 'shastraic sanction. Some of the passages supporting widow marriages are given below:

"A widow can remarry if the husband and wife give an Ajapanchodana that they shall not separate" (Atharva Veda, IX, 527).

"If a woman is abandoned by her husband and has had no liaison with him, she can remarry as also virgin child widow: (Manu IX, 176).

"Get up, oh woman, you who lie down by the side of this your lifeless husband, Come to this crowd of living people about you here, and may you become the wife of some person desirous of taking the hand of a widow in remarriage". (Yajurveda, Taithariaya Aranyaka, VI, 4).

"A woman is entitled to remarry if her husband disappeared, died, became an ascetic or a eunuch or afflicted with chronic malady". (Parasara, 415).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid p 204



The reformers referred to the stories from the Puranas which illustrate the story of a widowed daughter of the king of Benaras marrying, the story of Nala and Damyanti in which the second ‘swayamvara’ of the later was announced and the story of the wife of Sambara who was remarried to Pradyumna.

It would appear that it was a fact that widow marriages were in vogue in early times. Remarriages ceased to be popular during the period 300 B.C. to 200 A.D. and marriage even of child widows were prohibited from the eleventh century onwards.<sup>14</sup>

The spread of western education and culture, the growing popularity of humanitarian ideals, and the development of rational outlook created an urge for social reform. Further, the spirit of revivalism which was sweeping over the country as a reaction to the condemnation of Hindu culture and tradition by Christian missionaries and other Europeans led to a thorough study of Hindu scriptures and other works. It was clear to many of the reformers that many of the social evils had no sanction at all in Hindu scriptures. To social reformers with this new outlook enforced widowhood seemed to be a cruel practice which had come into vogue in later times. The Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 which allowed widows to marry if they so desired was symptomatic of this new outlook. Though under this enactment widow marriages were permissible, the legislation remained a dead letter because traditional ideas of marriage and duties of wife made women reluctant to resort to remarriage.<sup>15</sup>

### **Anti-Nautch Movement:-**

K.Veerasingam was the first social reformer in Andhra who started an intense agitation against the continuance of this custom. Referring to the effects of Veerasingam’s agitation, C.Chakradhara rao, president of the eleventh Andhra

14. Ibid p 205

15 Ibid p 206



Provincial Kalavanthula Social Reform Conference held at Gudivada in 1945, observed:

"One effect of his destructive criticism was that some enlightened members of Hindu society gave up engaging nautch parties and extending their patronage to the prostitutes of this caste. His propaganda was not entirely lost on the members of our caste. The eyes of some of them were opened and they began to realize the harmful character of the custom. Gradually, though very slowly, some unmarried mothers began to get their daughters married; a few male members of our caste were given English education and some others were trained to professions other than that of being associates of nautch parties, which meant abject dependence on the nautch girls".<sup>16</sup>

R. Venkataratnam Naidu carried further the work initiated by Veeresalingam. Moralist as he was, Naidu's social purity and anti-nautch movement roused public enthusiasm and hastened reformation. He felt that purity in personal, domestic and social life constituted "the keystone of moral strength and national greatness" and stressed that the sine qua non of the reform movement were "good manners" and "pure-living". Though comprehensive in nature and based on a higher level, Naidu's work was more of a preventive nature than remedial.<sup>17</sup>

### Harijan Uplift:-

The large scale conversion of the depressed classes to Christianity was viewed with deep concern by Hindu reformers, a majority of whom were sympathizers or supporters of the Indians National Congress. They felt that the problem of the depressed people was more political rather than a mere social reform and further, argued that Muslims and Christians would sow seeds of discord between caste Hindus and depressed

16. Ibid p.219

17. Ibid p.220



classes people by exploiting the latter's grievances. These reformers were of the opinion that one of the reasons why the depressed classes did not side with the Hindus when Hindu women were molested by the Muslims at the time of the riots in Bengal was that they did not have any sympathy for the Hindus.<sup>18</sup> It was also said that until and unless the evil of untouchability was eradicated and the depressed classes, who formed a large percentage of the Hindus, were made to feel that they formed an indissoluble fraternity with the caste Hindus, India would not be fit for Swaraj.<sup>19</sup> Thus humanitarian ideals, political interests and religious considerations served to quicken the zeal of the educated Hindus to work for the improvement of the down-trodden classes by removing their disabilities.

A majority of these reformers in the earlier stages of the movement were followers of the Brahmo Samaj. They applied themselves with great devotion to mitigating social inequalities by spreading education among the depressed classes. The Christian missionaries also worked in that direction. But these pioneering efforts to improve the lot of the depressed classes did not produce any striking results.

#### Efforts to uplift Harijans:-

Among the ameliorative measures instituted, education gained priority because it was thought that the surest way of elevation of the depressed classes lay in their education. Once they were educated and well settled in life, earning a decent living, they would be accorded equal status by the orthodox sections also. The first beginnings had been in Rajahmundry where K. Veeresalingam, while consistently emphasising the need to remove disabilities under which the Panchamas were suffering, started a school which

18 Venkata Sarma, M , "Amelioration of the depressed classes", Andhrapatrika Annual, 1919, P.173.



19 Suryanarayana V , "Temple Entry", Andhrapathrika Annual, 1927, P 246 admitted even the Panchama boys and gave them free education.<sup>20</sup> For the construction and management of this school, the Raja of Pithapuram donated Rs.70,000. Being an eminent and resourceful social reformer himself, the Raja of Pithapuram established, on his own initiative, two hostels for boys and girls of the Panchama community at Kakinada and exempted them from payment of fees in his college and high school.<sup>21</sup> Ch.Lakshminarasimham also took up the task of educating these classes and established, with the assistance of active friends like the Raja of Pithapuram, the 'Ram Mohan School' for Panchama boys at Rajahmundry in February 1909 with both English and Telugu as media of instruction. This institution offered free tuition to the Panchama children. It rendered valuable service for thirteen years. Some citizens of Rajahmundry formed themselves into an association and built up by years of quiet work a net work of schools for Panchamas in or around the town of Rajahmundry. After 1922 they were all converted into national schools. These institutions were responsible for turning out leaders of the next generation of these classes who were imbued with a spirit of service.

The Christian missionaries also did sustained and effective work in educating and uplifting the depressed classes. The latter being economically backward and socially degraded constituted a discontented group among the Hindus who could be easily converted to Christianity. The Christian zeal for humanitarian service induced some of them to take up Harjan uplift work.

#### Untouchability:-

The urgency of eradicating the evil of untouchability, which drove a wedge between Harijans and caste Hindus, out of the body politic of Hinduism was realized by

20. Veeresalingam, K., Autobiography, Vol, II, P 352

21 Lakshmi Narasimham, Ch , Autobiography, PP 362-363.



enlightened Hindus. These leaders made sustained efforts for the removal of untouchability from considerations purely of social justice and humanity. But their work in this respect was limited to carrying propaganda against untouchability which did not cut much ice in the face of mounting resistance from the orthodox.

R.Venkataratnam Naidu was one of the early social reformers who carried on a ceaseless propaganda against untouchability. The depressed classes, in his opinion, were ‘the kith and kin, the flesh and blood’ of caste Hindus. He zealously advocated the removal of the age-long offence of untouchability, not in a spirit of patronage, not even from its necessity for the political advancement of the country, but “wholly and essentially on the basis of the righteous dispensation of God, which treats all as the equal enjoyers of His blessing.<sup>22</sup> Once four Harijan girls, between 3 and 11 years, some of them stark naked, happened to be begging at the Ponneri railway station near Madras. The pitiable plight moved Naidu who got them removed to Secunderabad in 1904 with the help of Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Subbarayudu and thenceforward brought them up as his own daughters, gave them liberal education and eventually got them decently married.<sup>23</sup>

Such instances were only exceptional. It was Gandhiji’s personal efforts and the intense propaganda through the Congress organization that stirred the people’s conscience and gave a fillip to the reform movement for removing the ‘excrescence of untouchability’. The removal of untouchability was made an integral part of the famous Bardoli programme of 1922 and the Congressmen were asked to value it as a necessity for attaining Swaraj and ceaselessly strive for raising the down-trodden Harijans from social degradation in order to win their sympathy and support for the movements launched by the Congress.

22 Venkataratnam Naidu, R. Message and Ministrations, Vol.V., P.107

23 Raghupati venkataratnam Naidu Birth centenary souvenir 1962, P 45



The Government of India passed the Untouchability Offences Act, 1955, applicable to the whole of India, in supersession of all State Acts in this respect. The Act provided that every person was free to enter any place of public worship, which was open to other persons professing the same religion, to worship, offer prayers, bathe and use the waters of any stream, tank, well, spring or watercourse, and to have access to shops, hotels, restaurants, places of public entertainment, hospitals, dispensaries and educational institutions. The Act specified that persons violating these rules would be liable to punishment with imprisonment for 6 months or fine up to Rs.500 or both.<sup>24</sup>

#### Temperance Work:-

A widespread social evil particularly among the lower classes which defeated all efforts at raising the standard of life and condemned them to a state of gruelling poverty was consumption of intoxicating drinks. A drunkard squandered much of the hard-earned money at the toddy shop and set apart only a fraction of his earnings for maintaining the members of his family who were compelled to drag on a miserable existence in a state of half-starvation and half-nakedness. In many cases excessive indulgence in drinks ruined health and at the same time made such drunkards indifferent to morals and social etiquette. Some of the drunkards in an intoxicated state picked up quarrels easily with others and often behaved with the members of their families in an inhuman manner, thus rendering their life wretched.

During 1916-17 the government encouraged the setting up of many tea and coffee stalls to attract and divert people from arrack shops. But this did not yield expected results and the policy was soon abandoned. Other measures included reduction of the

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24 B Kesavanarayana, political and social factors in Andhra (1900-1956) p 292



alcoholic content of the arrack by adding more water and fixing an upper limit to the quantity of arrack and toddy which one could hold either in rural or in urban areas.

### **Temperance work from 1926-1937:-**

When the Justice Party came to power in Madras in 1920 it did not do anything to give the public an effective voice in the matter of the drink habit. However, after the Independent Ministry was formed 1926 a resolution was introduced in the Madras Legislative Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 1929, recommending to the government that total prohibition of drink in Madras Presidency within the course of twenty years be declared to be their goal. Accepting the resolution the government appointed an excise advisory committee to recommend measures to implement the resolution. The committee unanimously recommended that the first essential step was the creation of an active public opinion against drink by educating the masses about its evils. The government accepted the recommendations and provided a sum of Rs.4 lakhs in the civil budget estimate for 1929-30 and set up a central propaganda board and district propaganda committees to do temperance propaganda.<sup>25</sup> But the work of these bodies was not very fruitful and an official report recorded: "It is not surprising that many officers sympathetically disposed towards a legitimate temperance movement have not noticed so far any tangible result of this propaganda."<sup>26</sup> Therefore these committees were wound up in August 1931 as a measure of economy, but non-official organizations dedicated to temperance work continued to obtain financial assistance from the government. The same policy was adhered to by the Justice Party also when it came to power in 1930 for another term. To help the temperance movement in an effective manner some arrack and toddy

25 Proceedings of the Madras Legislative Council, Vol LIV, 1930-31, .583

26. Report on the Administration of the Excise Revenue in the Madras presidency, 1930- 31, P 17



shops were shut down and marking of trees within five miles of the shops closed was restricted to the average of the previous five years. These steps had little effect and an official report expressed the opinion that "the result so far observed show that unless real efforts are made and made with success by temperance workers to create genuine revulsion from drink in the classes that drink, the experiment cannot succeed.<sup>27</sup>

The social reform work was initiated and vigorously carried on by such distinguished leaders as K.Veerasingam, R.Venkataraman Naidu and so on. They were not alone in the field. Political workers were also involved in the tasks of social change and reconstruction. When they were fighting against the injustices of an alien government, they could not passively submit to social injustices from their own countrymen. The intimate connection between political and social progress became more evident after 1920. The Justice Party was in power for over a decade since 1920 and during this period it was primarily concerned with improving the lot of non-Brahman sections. Gandhi put the Congress through a revolutionary programme. Departing radically from its earlier lukewarm policy towards social reform, the Congress included in its constructive programme such popular issues as the removal of untouchability and the prohibition of the use of alcoholic drinks. The significance of the programme was of a two-fold character. Politically, it provided an opportunity to the Congressmen to carry the Congress ideology and programme to the rural areas and mingle with the masses. Socially, the work of Congressmen provided a great fillip to the social reform work. This attracted many more stalwarts to its side, popularized social reform and helped to reduce effectively the opposition of reactionaries to social reform. Thus the movement for

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27. Report on the Administration of the Excise Revenue in the Madras Presidency, 1931- 32, P,19.



political emancipation went hand-in-hand with the movement for the eradication of social evils and each received strength and sustenance from the other.

### **Progress in Social Reform:-**

Before independence, social reformers looked to the British Government for support in the form of legislative measures. But the British shrank from interfering in social customs. They made no real attempts for the reform of evil practices existing in the Hindu social system particularly after 1857. Nor they openly encouraged social reformers for fear of estranging the orthodox sections. If their interference could be avoided they did so conveniently. Therefore the progress achieved in the field of social reform before 1947 owed chiefly to the efforts of individual reformers, local associations and political organisations. After the attainment of national freedom the mantle of rule-fell upon Congress leaders. They continued to support radical social changes as they did before and carried out reform work expeditiously by passing a number of legislative measures removing legally and technically social inequalities.

The progress of women's education, the eradication of social evils like child marriages and enforced widowhood, the prohibition of bigamy and dowry, the legal provisions that ensured equality to women with men in the matter of their eligibility for jobs, their earnings and property and the facility for the dissolution of marriage, enabled women enjoy untempered individually. The crusade against untouchability and the revolt of the non-Brahmins tended to remove social inequalities and to create a homogeneous population. The temperance campaign and enforcement of prohibition improved the economic condition of the poor and illiterate masses and created a happy atmosphere at home. These changes were an index of the progress made during the last six decades.<sup>28</sup>

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28 B Kesavanarayana, political and social factors in Andhra 1900-1956 p 336



Thus the stage was set for progress on all fronts. As such it is hoped that the Andhras, with their intense patriotism supported by broad-based homogeneous culture provided by the formation of Andhra Pradesh, blessed with abundant man-power and material resources besides its size, would march forward to greater heights of glory. And for this the role of K.Veerasingam, Gurazada Appa rao and Venkataratnam is significant and great.

During the last 100 years we have made a good progress in all fields from the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the struggle for Indian Independence gained momentum under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi. The influence of the moderates and the revolutionaries became weak and almost the whole of India followed the leadership of Indian National Congress led by Mahatma Gandhi.

The Indian National Congress wanted to fight for freedom through Satyagraha and Non-Violence and they were successful in gaining freedom. The congress fought for freedom and at the same time gave importance to social reformation. In a way reform and freedom movement went hand in hand.

Mahatma Gandhi gave importance to women's education and strived for women progress. He also fought against untouchability and preached Temperance. He was both a social reformer and freedom fighter. He wanted both social and political progress at the same time.

### **Progress Through Legislation:**

After great struggle for freedom India got Independence in 1947 and it has adopted a constitution of its own in the year 1950. It is considered as one of the best constitutions in the world, giving great importance to human rights. It has adopted the



provisions of the universal declaration of human rights (1948)<sup>29</sup>. Similarly it has also accepted the provisions of International Covenant on Civil and political rights, 1966, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966. and International convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, 1966.

Our National parliament has enacted some other Acts for the welfare of the people. Some of them are:

1. The National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992 (Act No.19 of 1992)
2. The Scheduled castes and the schedule Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.
3. The protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 (Act No.22 of 1955)
4. The Bonded labour system (Abolition) Act, 1976. (Act No.19 of 1976).
5. The child labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 (No. 61 of 1986)
6. The Juvenile Justice Act, 1986 (Act No.53 of 1986)
7. The persons with Disabilities (Equal opportunities, protection of Rights and Full participation) Act, 1995. (No.1 of 1996)
8. The Indecent Representation of women (prohibition) Act, 1986. (No. 60 of 1986)
9. The National Commission for women Act, 1990. (No.20 of 1990)
10. The Family courts Act, 1984 (Act No.66 of 1984)

To reform Hindu society and to protect the girl child and the widow the following Acts are enacted. They are:

1. Hindu marriage Act, 1955
2. Hindu Succession Act, 1956
3. Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act 1956

<sup>28</sup> General Assembly Resn 217-A(III), dt, 10-12-1948, U.N.General Assembly official Records, 3<sup>rd</sup> Session, supp No.13, page, 71- 77.



4. Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956
5. Dowry prohibition Act, 1961
6. Child marriage Restraint Act, 1929
7. Hindu widows Remarriage Act, 1856
8. Special Marriage Act, 1954
9. The commission of Sati (prevention) Act, 1987.

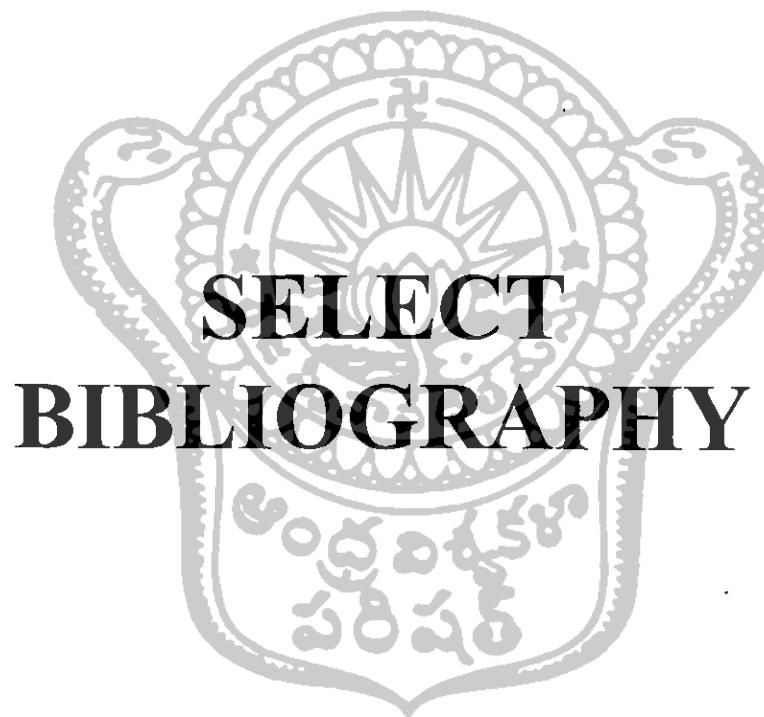
These acts remove the drawbacks in the Hindu Society will help to make the Hindu society, a Just progressive and Modern.

Other progressive Acts are the law relating to free Legal Aid & Lok Adalats called as the legal services authorities Act 1987. and the Right to Information Act of 2005. Which makes the Administration accountable and transparent.

As we are a free Nation there is immense possibility to find out the weaknesses and the drawbacks in the socio political Economic life of the people and to regulate and enlighten them. Through proper legislation, information and awareness and social Engineering and thus make India a prosperous. Harmonious, and modern society with a due place in the comity of Nations.

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# **Social Reformation in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Andhra - A Socio Philosophical Study**

**(With Special Reference to K. Veeresalingam, Gurazada and  
R. Venkataratnam Naidu)**

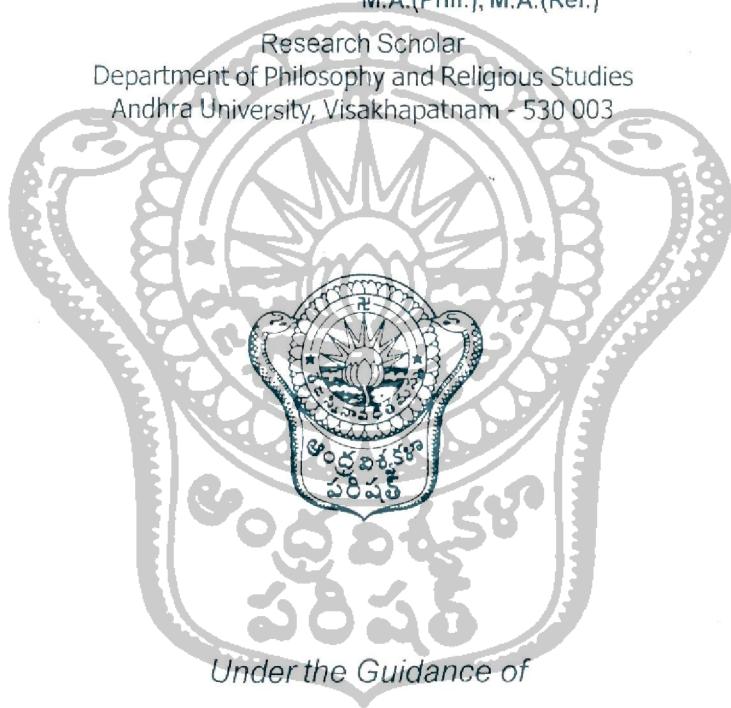
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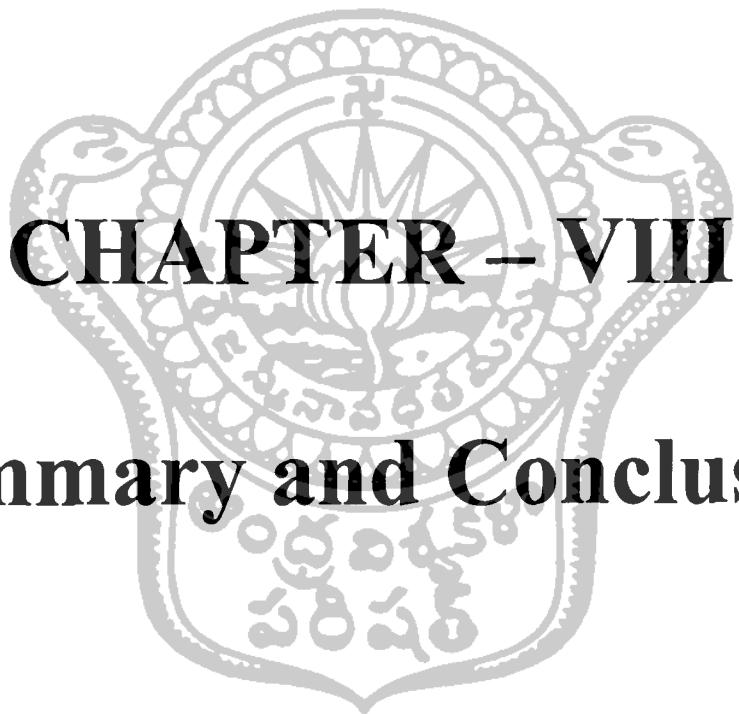
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FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN PHILOSOPHY**





# **CHAPTER – VIII**

# **Summary and Conclusion**



## CHAPTER VIII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

During the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the society in Andhra underwent a process of regeneration, in spite of the constraints imposed upon it by colonial domination. A part of the general social phenomenon in India, it led to certain changes in the existing social values and practices and to the spread of modern ideas. This was not simply a result of the cultural – ideological and institutional changes introduced by the British or was an immediate consequence of the enlightenment of an educated stratum through the agency of western ideas with their rationalism and scientism<sup>1</sup>. The long tradition of dissent and protest that existed in society also contributed to its making. This could well be traced back to vemana, if not to the religious and social upheaval called Veerasaivism. Veerasaivism and Sri Vaishnavism which spread across the borders of the present Tamilnadu opposed caste exclusiveness and Brahminical ritualism and gave rise to new sub-castes such as Jangams, Setti-Balijas, Aradhya Brahmins and the like, while Sri Vaishnavism led to the rise of Satanis and Dasaris. An intermixture of Hindu and Muslim populations like wise produced Dudekulas or pinjaris. Vemana and Several other comparatively unknown religious leaders, like Nasarayya in guntur district and pothuluri Veerabrahmam in cuddapah district, exposed the evils of social and religious life.

The reform efforts in Andhra Pradesh is best represented by the movement initiated by Kandukuri Veeresalingam. He was influenced by the prevailing social

1. Charles H. Heimsath attributed the rise of social reform movements in India to the impact of both the proselytising activities of Christian missionaries and the western ideas disseminated through the English education. See for example his book *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, pp 46-47. And also John G. Leonard in his biographs of Kandukuri Veeresalingam, cited earlier, put forward the same challenge and response' theory while explaining the origins of social reform movements.



conditions and also by the Brahmo Samaj Movement of Bengal. He evinced, like other reformers of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, a keen interest in the spread of scientific knowledge and the growth of rational thinking. Being a great literary figure, he made use of literature to spread reform ideas among his people. Literature, to Veeresalingam, was the means to an end. He pleaded for the spread of mass education in vernaculars and opposed a purely literary education. He championed a system of education which would liberate the reform-oriented mind from the shackles of tradition and bring about regeneration in society. Being a moderate in politics, he extolled the virtues of British rule and was thus a victim of a false consciousness as were the other reformers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century who believed in the instrumentality of British rule for the transformation of Indian society. Yet he was not an advocate of status quo; He believed in the organic theory of progress and in the given situation in India championed the cause of social reform as the immediate task.<sup>2</sup>

Veeresalingam was no mere preacher or theorectician. He was a practical reformer. Ideas for him were not ends in themselves and their worth had to be tasted in the field of practical action. In short, his ideas were enriched by the movements he started and from the experiences of his movements his ideas drew their sustenance. If need be, he would even revise his ideas in the light of concrete practice. His reliance on youth as an important element in society to carry forward the ideas of reform was unwavering. Judging from the immense cooperation extended by students of Rajahmundry, the home town of Veeresalingam, to the success of reform measures initiated by him, his faith in them was well – grounded. In a society which was tradition-bound and which opposed

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2. V.Ramakrishna Social reform in Andhra (1848 – 1919) p.206



change in matters of social reform, students happened to be the real hope with their idealism, youth fullness and their receptivity to new ideas. Veeresalingam appeared to be a far – sighted leader in this regard.<sup>3</sup>

### **Emancipation of women:-**

The central concern of social reform endeavours was the emancipation of woman. It was generally felt that unless the status of women, who constituted more or less half of the population, improved, society would not be able to register any noteworthy progress. Humanitarian consideration, though an important factor was not the only motive force for reform. The reformers perspective was clearly focused on social transformation and progress. Their efforts however had limited success. This was true in the field of girls, education, infant marriage and widow remarriages, which was the main areas of reform activity. Unable to influence the state policy, they tried to promote these causes through personal endeavour. Girl's schools were founded, widow remarriages were conducted, rescue homes were opened and institutions for training girls in music and dance were founded. But these efforts only focussed attention on these problems and did not really solve them. Their success is not to be measured in terms of the actual achievement. Their contribution was more significant in creating a social climate which recognized the harmful effects of these social practices. In this respect their achievement was of a very high order. Through lectures, conferences and Journals they tried to spread enlightenment among the people which helped the growth of a consciousness in society against customs and practices which were against human dignity. Many of the questions raised by the reformers later became part of the national movement.<sup>4</sup>

3. Ibid

4. Ibid p.207



### **Religion and Society:-**

An important realization of Andhra reformers was the connection between the social and religious question in India. The social reformers, therefore, could not be effective unless their religious dimensions were also taken into account. It was this perspective which was at the root of religious reforms. In other words religious reforms were not purely religious, they had important social implications. The movements against idolatry, polytheism and a host of other rituals bear out this contention. The religious reform as represented by the Brahmo Samaj was almost an off – shoot of the Bengal Brahmo movement. The activities of the samaj also closely followed the Bengal Samaj. Yet it did give to the members of the educated middle classes, uprooted from their old surroundings and in search of new identities, a new way of life. The emphasis on rationalist ways of thinking and anti-idolatrous and theistic ideas particularly attracted their attention.

The Brahmo Samaj movement in Andhra was also the first to champion the cause of the ‘depressed classes’ and work for their amelioration through schools, colleges, ‘hostels’, ‘lodges and ‘orphanages’. The first generation of ‘Harijan’ leaders were the alumni of these institutions. Besides paving the way indirectly for the spread of social reform movement, the samaj created a liberal and broad out look among the people in general.

The reasons for the limited success of the socio religious movements have been a matter of debate. Some of the contemporaries of Veerasingam has attributed it to his over bearing attitude, distrust in the capacity and sincerity of his friends and followers and his tendency to interfere in the work of others. But there were deeper causes inherent in the very nature of the movement. The middle classes drawn from the upper castes



formed the main social base of these movements with traders and middle peasants involved in certain areas. The programme of the movement was oriented to the needs of the reformer. Therefore, the reform ideas never reached the lower layers of society as they did not concern them. Inevitably the reform movement was to remain a limited phenomenon. Issues like welfare of the 'depressed classes' and concepts like 'national education' were taken up actively only after the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by which time the reform movements showed clear signs of decline due to a number of factors.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Impact of Politics on Social Reform:**

The swadeshi movement and its repercussions in Andhra in the year 1907 acted as a major set back to the reform movements. Students who formed the major part of the following of Veeresalingam at Rajahmundry and Kakinada, Joined the Swadeshi movement. Events that followed 1907 hastened the declining trend of the reform movements. Veerasalingam became an anushtantic Brahmo, gave up his sacred thread and performed the Sraddha of his parents according to Brahmo rites and arranged an inter – caste dinner on the occasion.

The increasing appeal of the national movement sharply posed the question of priority, whether the social or political reform should have precedence. The district social conferences that met after 1907, to deliberate on political and social issues, passed resolutions favouring precedence to political reform over the social. This was a reversal of the earlier stand. It showed that political matters claimed the first place in the society's priorities. Though need for social reform was accepted in general and the national movement tried to integrate it with the political movement the reform activists were, slowly but steadily, absorbed by the more powerful political struggles.<sup>6</sup>

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5. Ibid p 209,

6 Ibid p.209



The rise of revivalism as a back lash against the reform movements also contributed greatly to the process of decline; Even during the hey – day of the reform movements orthodox sections in society continuously opposed them by delivering lectures and publishing books decrying the reforms.

The theosophical society founded by Annie Besant at Madras championed social reforms on national lines and attacked the social reform movements and their objectives.

Annie Besant and Col. Olcott toured Andhra extensively and visited Rajahmundry, Kakinada, Masulipatnam and other important reform centres. Starting of the Madras Hindu Association in 1904 at Madras with the blessings of Annie Besant and Nyapati Subba Rao, one of its ardent advocates, the visits of Vivekananda to Madras and his speeches, the founding of *Varnasram Dharma Samrakshna Mandali* in Madras during this period with its virulent propaganda against social reforms weakened the reform movements. Reformers in Andhra started defending their programme proclaiming that their reforms were not opposed to national heritage. Moreover, the emergence of caste association also affected the reform movement.<sup>7</sup>

The impact of the reform movements was confined mainly to the sections of literates residing in towns and a few villages around. A very small number of petty traders and educated farmers were also influenced by these movements, especially in the two districts of Godavari and Krishna. However, it should be made clear that keeping in view the limited spread of education and the few changes that were brought about in society's economic relations, social mobility was extremely limited. In the absence of a developing capitalist economy and the growth of social layers associated with such

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7. Ibid p.209



development, there from movements could not draw continuous sustenance for their growth and success. That is why the much desired social or the so – called renaissance of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had to be an incomplete measure of social change which stopped half way.

### **The Reforms and the National Movement:**

The dissemination of enlightened ideas about man and society was the main contribution of the reform movement. Caste restrictions were loosened even though caste itself remained intact. An awareness of the need to reform the old society with its out dated customs and practices was created. This could be seen, besides the reform movements, in the rise of caste associations which introduced a host of reform measures to ensure the uplift from the social and economic morass they had fallen into. Along with the cry for social justice, there also went up the cry for social reform as far as non-Brahmin castes were concerned. Resolutions on inter – sub – caste marriages, fusion of sub – castes, denunciation of the evils of dowry and infant marriages can be found in the conferences of these caste associations. Persons like Raghunatha varma of Vayalpadu in chittor district, Tripuraneni Ramaswamy Chowdary of Guntur district and Darisi Chenchaiah of the gadhar party fame were but a few instances of such isolated individuals who carried on the work of social reform movements in their own way, but to the best of their capacity. This indicates the steady rise of the rural gentry into positions of social prominence which was just a step short of political dominance.

Reform movements were urban – based while these caste associations were centred mostly in the country side. It is true that some of these associations at times were falling a pray to the traditions of the upper castes and their ways of life. Taking an overall view. One must conclude that they could achieve only a part of the aims of the reform



movements. Caste associations had the necessary homogeneity and the strength of purpose to achieve this whereas the reform movements with their upper caste and upper class basis could not percolate down to the masses and create in their minds conviction of ideas, or commitment to reform programmes.

The reform movements provided the back – drop to the nationalist movement in Andhra. The first generation of national leaders in Andhra, Tanguturi prakasam. Bhogaraju Pattabhi Seetha Ramaiah, Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao, Unnave Lakshminarayana, Gadicherla Harisarvothama Rao, to mention only a few, and several others happened to be the active participants of reform movements.

The decline of the reform movements in Andhra does not necessarily imply that its impact on men's minds ceased after 1907 or 1919. On the other hand, it became part of the intellectual, climate, imperceptibly and silently, the very stuff of which the later generation was made, just as sunlight is absorbed by the plants. If the communist movement of Andhra paid homage to Veeresalingam and sought to emphasise the importance of social reform in the late thirties and the early forties, the permeative influence of Veeresalingam movement cannot be doubted. That the social and intellectual make – up of modern Andhra draws heavily upon this influence is perhaps the most important legacy of the nineteenth century reform movements.<sup>8</sup>

The impact of these three thinkers namely Kandukuri Veeresalingam, Gurazada Appa rao and Raghupathi Venkataratnam Naidu is found in the later reformation activities of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. All the issues about which they struggled were taken up by many social activities. The freedom movement also took up not only political issues but also the social problems and in a way political and social struggle joined together.

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8. Ibid p.211



### Progress of Women:-

In the eloquent speech to the Andhra Women's Conference held at Vijayawada in 1929, Dr.Muthulakshmi Reddi said: "The ancient Hindu legislators realized that the both sexes were equal and said before the world that women have equal rights with men. So the laws depriving the Hindu woman of her rights and privileges and assigning her an inferior place in society must be only of recent origin. I feel sorry to observe that the Hindus in particular have become creatures more of custom or habit than of reason or true religion. No enlightened women with any self-respect can put up with one-sided laws which have placed us in an inferior position even to our Muhammadan and Christian sisters. To modify such unjust laws and to make it suitable to the needs of the present day society, a reformed society should be started for the uplift, protection and help of the Hindu women.<sup>9</sup>

This awakening magnified itself in the new women's association organized by women themselves. The earliest was the women's association at Rajahmundry organized in 1902 by Kotikalapudi Sitamma, who displayed commendable keenness in the need for educating women. In November of the same year Bandaru Atchamamba and Oruganti Ratnamamba started a women's association at Masulipatnam. It's declared objective was to get together educated women at one place as frequently as possible and persuade them to deliver a series of lectures to the illiterate on topics like the management of household affairs and the life and work of women who consecrated their lives for the country's cause.

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<sup>9</sup> B Kesavanarayana, Political and Social factors in Andhra (1900-1956), Vijayawada, 1976, p 194



Another important feature of this awakening among women was the organization of ladies conferences at almost every important town in Andhradesa to voice their grievances and aspirations. Women began more and more to participate in the conferences where their advocacy of reform of evil social customs was more effective than that of the speeches of men in influencing the Hindu public opinion in favour of social reform. These conferences helped to direct the course of women's movement in its formative stages. Issues that concerned women in general were freely discussed and resolutions passed at the conferences. The Andhra ladies conference held at Masulipatnam in March 1913 passed the following resolutions:-

1. That this conference is of opinion that the higher education of women should be promoted in all parts of the country,
2. That this conference prays the Government to multiply girls schools so as to establish one in every town and village.
3. That an asylum be established in the centre of the Andhra country duly equipped for the imparting of technical instruction to widows and rescued women so as to enable them to obtain free lodging and boarding and acquire means of livelihood.
4. That it is desirable to have as teachers women, preferably widows, in girls schools.
5. That Government be pleased to establish training schools for women of advanced education in Telugu.
6. That girls who have attained puberty be sent to girls schools.
7. That women should relax their fondness for jewellery and seek to acquire 'Streebharanam' in immovable property.



8. That the curriculum of girls studies should comprise study of music, knitting, sewing, domestic economy, the care of the infant and of the invalid.
9. That early marriages should be prohibited.
10. That girls should not be married before attaining puberty or before the age of 16.
11. That kanysulkam (bride's price) and varasulkam (bridegroom's price) be regarded as objectionable.
12. That girls below 16 should not be given in marriage to men over 40.
13. That foreign travel should not be regarded as prohibited.
14. That caste distinctions should be removed and unity should be strengthened by promoting inter-caste marriages and inter-dining.<sup>10</sup>

The appearance of Mrs. Besant on the Indian political arena was an important landmark in the development of public consciousness towards women's education and their emancipation. Her vigorous campaign to redeem girls from illiteracy and to stop the pernicious practice of early marriages gave a fresh stimulus to the women's movement. The Women's India Association was started in 1917 with headquarters at Madras with Mrs. Besant as its president and Mrs. Cousins as secretary. Their extensive tours in Andhra resulted in the establishment of branches of the women's association at places like Rajahmundry and Vijayawada.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid p 198

<sup>11</sup> Ibid



### **Social evils:-**

An important aspect of the women's movement was the agitation against certain obsolete social customs and practices which stood in the way of advancement of women. As a result of the spread of new progressive social outlook following the impact of western ideals, an irresistible urge developed among educated Indians to rescue women from the social evils.

The Hindus regarded marriage as an inescapable sacrament for girls and to keep a daughter unmarried was regarded as a sin and a neglect of a sacred obligation. It was believed that girls should be married before they attained puberty and therefore parents were anxious to get their daughters married as early as possible. Thus the practice of child marriages became common among Hindus.

With the general awakening, especially among the English educated, a new class of social reformers made sustained efforts to put an end to early marriages, for, this practice sometimes resulted in weak progeny, infantile mortality, material mortality, death of the girl during child bearing age, early widowhood, general illness and debility of mothers. The educated public was chiefly prompted by these considerations in starting an intense campaign against early marriages.

Early social reformers like K.Veerasingam were able to draw public attention to the evil consequences of early marriage through the press and platform and created the necessary atmosphere for legislative measures against the practice. But the British Government, for a long time, followed a policy of non-interference out of fear of wounding the religious feelings of the orthodox Hindus. Though efforts were made in the Indian Legislative Assembly once in 1922 and again in 1925 towards raising the age of marriage of girls through legislation, they proved abortive as the official members either



remained neutral or strongly opposed them. However, in 1927 Sir Hari Singh Gour introduced a bill in the Assembly to raise the age of consent in marital cases of 14 and in extra-marital cases to 16. On this the government appointed a committee to seek public opinion in the matter. A little later Rai Sahib Harbilas Sarda also introduced a bill to check child marriages. The final passing of the bill was deferred till the recommendations of the committee were known.<sup>12</sup>

Alongside the agitation against early marriages, propaganda for encouraging marriages of child widows was carried on. Child widows were, in fact, a natural concomitant of early marriage. Orthodox parents cared little for age and gave their daughters even of eight to ten years to very old men. Many husbands died before their wives attained maturity and these little girls were subjected to lifelong enforced widowhood. Stringent prohibition was imposed upon marriage of widows especially among the Brahmins and the Vysyas. Other communities also copied this.

As a result of these circumstances there was a large number of widows in Hindu society. There was hardly any home which did not have at least one widow. According to the Census Report of India, 1901, the number of widows whose age was below 5 was 408 and of those between 6 and 9 was 2,984. Altogether 13,722 girls were widowed before they attained the age of 16. By 1931 their number increased enormously.

It is pertinent to mention that the legality of widow marriages was a bone of contention between the conservatives and social reformers. These two schools of thought presented their own points of view quoting extensively from Hindu religious authorities and each claiming that their arguments were correct.

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12 Ibid p 201



The orthodox school asserted that widow marriage had no sanction of the sacred texts. In this connection they quoted from various Hindu religious and legal works such as those of Manu, Vasistha, Parasara, Vishnu, Narada and Angeerasa. They said that if widow married, her husband and the off-spring, if any were debarred from participating in any sacramental performances (Manu V, 16), and that no where a second husband was permitted to a respectable woman. They went to the extent of saying that even if a woman remarried because her husband turned out to be a eunuch or mad, she became 'Punurbhuvu' and as such was liable to be banished from the country and that person marrying a widow became a 'chandala' (out-caste).<sup>13</sup>

Against such frightful dogma wearing the complexion of religiosity social reformers had to strive hard and they in turn drew authority from the Vedas, Smritis and some other works to prove that widow marriage did have 'shastraic sanction. Some of the passages supporting widow marriages are given below:

"A widow can remarry if the husband and wife give an Ajapanchodana that they shall not separate" (Atharva Veda, IX, 527).

"If a woman is abandoned by her husband and has had no liaison with him, she can remarry as also virgin child widow: (Manu IX, 176).

"Get up, oh woman, you who lie down by the side of this your lifeless husband, Come to this crowd of living people about you here, and may you become the wife of some person desirous of taking the hand of a widow in remarriage". (Yajurveda, Taithariaya Aranyaka, VI, 4).

"A woman is entitled to remarry if her husband disappeared, died, became an ascetic or a eunuch or afflicted with chronic malady". (Parasara, 415).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid p 204



The reformers referred to the stories from the Puranas which illustrate the story of a widowed daughter of the king of Benaras marrying, the story of Nala and Damyanti in which the second ‘swayamvara’ of the later was announced and the story of the wife of Sambara who was remarried to Pradyumna.

It would appear that it was a fact that widow marriages were in vogue in early times. Remarriages ceased to be popular during the period 300 B.C. to 200 A.D. and marriage even of child widows were prohibited from the eleventh century onwards.<sup>14</sup>

The spread of western education and culture, the growing popularity of humanitarian ideals, and the development of rational outlook created an urge for social reform. Further, the spirit of revivalism which was sweeping over the country as a reaction to the condemnation of Hindu culture and tradition by Christian missionaries and other Europeans led to a thorough study of Hindu scriptures and other works. It was clear to many of the reformers that many of the social evils had no sanction at all in Hindu scriptures. To social reformers with this new outlook enforced widowhood seemed to be a cruel practice which had come into vogue in later times. The Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 which allowed widows to marry if they so desired was symptomatic of this new outlook. Though under this enactment widow marriages were permissible, the legislation remained a dead letter because traditional ideas of marriage and duties of wife made women reluctant to resort to remarriage.<sup>15</sup>

### **Anti-Nautch Movement:-**

K.Veerasingam was the first social reformer in Andhra who started an intense agitation against the continuance of this custom. Referring to the effects of Veerasingam’s agitation, C.Chakradhara rao, president of the eleventh Andhra

14. Ibid p 205

15 Ibid p 206



Provincial Kalavanthula Social Reform Conference held at Gudivada in 1945, observed:

"One effect of his destructive criticism was that some enlightened members of Hindu society gave up engaging nautch parties and extending their patronage to the prostitutes of this caste. His propaganda was not entirely lost on the members of our caste. The eyes of some of them were opened and they began to realize the harmful character of the custom. Gradually, though very slowly, some unmarried mothers began to get their daughters married; a few male members of our caste were given English education and some others were trained to professions other than that of being associates of nautch parties, which meant abject dependence on the nautch girls".<sup>16</sup>

R. Venkataratnam Naidu carried further the work initiated by Veeresalingam. Moralist as he was, Naidu's social purity and anti-nautch movement roused public enthusiasm and hastened reformation. He felt that purity in personal, domestic and social life constituted "the keystone of moral strength and national greatness" and stressed that the sine qua non of the reform movement were "good manners" and "pure-living". Though comprehensive in nature and based on a higher level, Naidu's work was more of a preventive nature than remedial.<sup>17</sup>

### Harijan Uplift:-

The large scale conversion of the depressed classes to Christianity was viewed with deep concern by Hindu reformers, a majority of whom were sympathizers or supporters of the Indians National Congress. They felt that the problem of the depressed people was more political rather than a mere social reform and further, argued that Muslims and Christians would sow seeds of discord between caste Hindus and depressed

16. Ibid p.219

17. Ibid p.220



classes people by exploiting the latter's grievances. These reformers were of the opinion that one of the reasons why the depressed classes did not side with the Hindus when Hindu women were molested by the Muslims at the time of the riots in Bengal was that they did not have any sympathy for the Hindus.<sup>18</sup> It was also said that until and unless the evil of untouchability was eradicated and the depressed classes, who formed a large percentage of the Hindus, were made to feel that they formed an indissoluble fraternity with the caste Hindus, India would not be fit for Swaraj.<sup>19</sup> Thus humanitarian ideals, political interests and religious considerations served to quicken the zeal of the educated Hindus to work for the improvement of the down-trodden classes by removing their disabilities.

A majority of these reformers in the earlier stages of the movement were followers of the Brahmo Samaj. They applied themselves with great devotion to mitigating social inequalities by spreading education among the depressed classes. The Christian missionaries also worked in that direction. But these pioneering efforts to improve the lot of the depressed classes did not produce any striking results.

#### Efforts to uplift Harijans:-

Among the ameliorative measures instituted, education gained priority because it was thought that the surest way of elevation of the depressed classes lay in their education. Once they were educated and well settled in life, earning a decent living, they would be accorded equal status by the orthodox sections also. The first beginnings had been in Rajahmundry where K. Veeresalingam, while consistently emphasising the need to remove disabilities under which the Panchamas were suffering, started a school which

18 Venkata Sarma, M , "Amelioration of the depressed classes", Andhrapatrika Annual, 1919, P.173.



<sup>19</sup> Suryanarayana V , "Temple Entry", Andhrapathrika Annual, 1927, P 246 admitted even the Panchama boys and gave them free education.<sup>20</sup> For the construction and management of this school, the Raja of Pithapuram donated Rs.70,000. Being an eminent and resourceful social reformer himself, the Raja of Pithapuram established, on his own initiative, two hostels for boys and girls of the Panchama community at Kakinada and exempted them from payment of fees in his college and high school.<sup>21</sup> Ch.Lakshminarasimham also took up the task of educating these classes and established, with the assistance of active friends like the Raja of Pithapuram, the 'Ram Mohan School' for Panchama boys at Rajahmundry in February 1909 with both English and Telugu as media of instruction. This institution offered free tuition to the Panchama children. It rendered valuable service for thirteen years. Some citizens of Rajahmundry formed themselves into an association and built up by years of quiet work a net work of schools for Panchamas in or around the town of Rajahmundry. After 1922 they were all converted into national schools. These institutions were responsible for turning out leaders of the next generation of these classes who were imbued with a spirit of service.

The Christian missionaries also did sustained and effective work in educating and uplifting the depressed classes. The latter being economically backward and socially degraded constituted a discontented group among the Hindus who could be easily converted to Christianity. The Christian zeal for humanitarian service induced some of them to take up Harjan uplift work.

#### Untouchability:-

The urgency of eradicating the evil of untouchability, which drove a wedge between Harijans and caste Hindus, out of the body politic of Hinduism was realized by

20. Veeresalingam, K., Autobiography, Vol, II, P 352

21 Lakshmi Narasimham, Ch , Autobiography, PP 362-363.



enlightened Hindus. These leaders made sustained efforts for the removal of untouchability from considerations purely of social justice and humanity. But their work in this respect was limited to carrying propaganda against untouchability which did not cut much ice in the face of mounting resistance from the orthodox.

R.Venkataratnam Naidu was one of the early social reformers who carried on a ceaseless propaganda against untouchability. The depressed classes, in his opinion, were ‘the kith and kin, the flesh and blood’ of caste Hindus. He zealously advocated the removal of the age-long offence of untouchability, not in a spirit of patronage, not even from its necessity for the political advancement of the country, but “wholly and essentially on the basis of the righteous dispensation of God, which treats all as the equal enjoyers of His blessing.<sup>22</sup> Once four Harijan girls, between 3 and 11 years, some of them stark naked, happened to be begging at the Ponneri railway station near Madras. The pitiable plight moved Naidu who got them removed to Secunderabad in 1904 with the help of Pattabhi Sitaramayya and Subbarayudu and thenceforward brought them up as his own daughters, gave them liberal education and eventually got them decently married.<sup>23</sup>

Such instances were only exceptional. It was Gandhiji’s personal efforts and the intense propaganda through the Congress organization that stirred the people’s conscience and gave a fillip to the reform movement for removing the ‘excrescence of untouchability’. The removal of untouchability was made an integral part of the famous Bardoli programme of 1922 and the Congressmen were asked to value it as a necessity for attaining Swaraj and ceaselessly strive for raising the down-trodden Harijans from social degradation in order to win their sympathy and support for the movements launched by the Congress.

22 Venkataratnam Naidu, R. Message and Ministrations, Vol.V., P.107

23 Raghupati venkataratnam Naidu Birth centenary souvenir 1962, P 45



The Government of India passed the Untouchability Offences Act, 1955, applicable to the whole of India, in supersession of all State Acts in this respect. The Act provided that every person was free to enter any place of public worship, which was open to other persons professing the same religion, to worship, offer prayers, bathe and use the waters of any stream, tank, well, spring or watercourse, and to have access to shops, hotels, restaurants, places of public entertainment, hospitals, dispensaries and educational institutions. The Act specified that persons violating these rules would be liable to punishment with imprisonment for 6 months or fine up to Rs.500 or both.<sup>24</sup>

#### Temperance Work:-

A widespread social evil particularly among the lower classes which defeated all efforts at raising the standard of life and condemned them to a state of gruelling poverty was consumption of intoxicating drinks. A drunkard squandered much of the hard-earned money at the toddy shop and set apart only a fraction of his earnings for maintaining the members of his family who were compelled to drag on a miserable existence in a state of half-starvation and half-nakedness. In many cases excessive indulgence in drinks ruined health and at the same time made such drunkards indifferent to morals and social etiquette. Some of the drunkards in an intoxicated state picked up quarrels easily with others and often behaved with the members of their families in an inhuman manner, thus rendering their life wretched.

During 1916-17 the government encouraged the setting up of many tea and coffee stalls to attract and divert people from arrack shops. But this did not yield expected results and the policy was soon abandoned. Other measures included reduction of the

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24 B Kesavanarayana, political and social factors in Andhra (1900-1956) p 292



alcoholic content of the arrack by adding more water and fixing an upper limit to the quantity of arrack and toddy which one could hold either in rural or in urban areas.

### **Temperance work from 1926-1937:-**

When the Justice Party came to power in Madras in 1920 it did not do anything to give the public an effective voice in the matter of the drink habit. However, after the Independent Ministry was formed 1926 a resolution was introduced in the Madras Legislative Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> October, 1929, recommending to the government that total prohibition of drink in Madras Presidency within the course of twenty years be declared to be their goal. Accepting the resolution the government appointed an excise advisory committee to recommend measures to implement the resolution. The committee unanimously recommended that the first essential step was the creation of an active public opinion against drink by educating the masses about its evils. The government accepted the recommendations and provided a sum of Rs.4 lakhs in the civil budget estimate for 1929-30 and set up a central propaganda board and district propaganda committees to do temperance propaganda.<sup>25</sup> But the work of these bodies was not very fruitful and an official report recorded: "It is not surprising that many officers sympathetically disposed towards a legitimate temperance movement have not noticed so far any tangible result of this propaganda."<sup>26</sup> Therefore these committees were wound up in August 1931 as a measure of economy, but non-official organizations dedicated to temperance work continued to obtain financial assistance from the government. The same policy was adhered to by the Justice Party also when it came to power in 1930 for another term. To help the temperance movement in an effective manner some arrack and toddy

25 Proceedings of the Madras Legislative Council, Vol LIV, 1930-31, .583

26. Report on the Administration of the Excise Revenue in the Madras presidency, 1930- 31, P 17



shops were shut down and marking of trees within five miles of the shops closed was restricted to the average of the previous five years. These steps had little effect and an official report expressed the opinion that "the result so far observed show that unless real efforts are made and made with success by temperance workers to create genuine revulsion from drink in the classes that drink, the experiment cannot succeed.<sup>27</sup>

The social reform work was initiated and vigorously carried on by such distinguished leaders as K.Veerasingam, R.Venkataraman Naidu and so on. They were not alone in the field. Political workers were also involved in the tasks of social change and reconstruction. When they were fighting against the injustices of an alien government, they could not passively submit to social injustices from their own countrymen. The intimate connection between political and social progress became more evident after 1920. The Justice Party was in power for over a decade since 1920 and during this period it was primarily concerned with improving the lot of non-Brahman sections. Gandhi put the Congress through a revolutionary programme. Departing radically from its earlier lukewarm policy towards social reform, the Congress included in its constructive programme such popular issues as the removal of untouchability and the prohibition of the use of alcoholic drinks. The significance of the programme was of a two-fold character. Politically, it provided an opportunity to the Congressmen to carry the Congress ideology and programme to the rural areas and mingle with the masses. Socially, the work of Congressmen provided a great fillip to the social reform work. This attracted many more stalwarts to its side, popularized social reform and helped to reduce effectively the opposition of reactionaries to social reform. Thus the movement for

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27. Report on the Administration of the Excise Revenue in the Madras Presidency, 1931- 32, P,19.



political emancipation went hand-in-hand with the movement for the eradication of social evils and each received strength and sustenance from the other.

### **Progress in Social Reform:-**

Before independence, social reformers looked to the British Government for support in the form of legislative measures. But the British shrank from interfering in social customs. They made no real attempts for the reform of evil practices existing in the Hindu social system particularly after 1857. Nor they openly encouraged social reformers for fear of estranging the orthodox sections. If their interference could be avoided they did so conveniently. Therefore the progress achieved in the field of social reform before 1947 owed chiefly to the efforts of individual reformers, local associations and political organisations. After the attainment of national freedom the mantle of rule-fell upon Congress leaders. They continued to support radical social changes as they did before and carried out reform work expeditiously by passing a number of legislative measures removing legally and technically social inequalities.

The progress of women's education, the eradication of social evils like child marriages and enforced widowhood, the prohibition of bigamy and dowry, the legal provisions that ensured equality to women with men in the matter of their eligibility for jobs, their earnings and property and the facility for the dissolution of marriage, enabled women enjoy untempered individually. The crusade against untouchability and the revolt of the non-Brahmins tended to remove social inequalities and to create a homogeneous population. The temperance campaign and enforcement of prohibition improved the economic condition of the poor and illiterate masses and created a happy atmosphere at home. These changes were an index of the progress made during the last six decades.<sup>28</sup>

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28 B Kesavanarayana, political and social factors in Andhra 1900-1956 p 336



Thus the stage was set for progress on all fronts. As such it is hoped that the Andhras, with their intense patriotism supported by broad-based homogeneous culture provided by the formation of Andhra Pradesh, blessed with abundant man-power and material resources besides its size, would march forward to greater heights of glory. And for this the role of K.Veerasingam, Gurazada Appa rao and Venkataratnam is significant and great.

During the last 100 years we have made a good progress in all fields from the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the struggle for Indian Independence gained momentum under the guidance of Mahatma Gandhi. The influence of the moderates and the revolutionaries became weak and almost the whole of India followed the leadership of Indian National Congress led by Mahatma Gandhi.

The Indian National Congress wanted to fight for freedom through Satyagraha and Non-Violence and they were successful in gaining freedom. The congress fought for freedom and at the same time gave importance to social reformation. In a way reform and freedom movement went hand in hand.

Mahatma Gandhi gave importance to women's education and strived for women progress. He also fought against untouchability and preached Temperance. He was both a social reformer and freedom fighter. He wanted both social and political progress at the same time.

### **Progress Through Legislation:**

After great struggle for freedom India got Independence in 1947 and it has adopted a constitution of its own in the year 1950. It is considered as one of the best constitutions in the world, giving great importance to human rights. It has adopted the



provisions of the universal declaration of human rights (1948)<sup>29</sup>. Similarly it has also accepted the provisions of International Covenant on Civil and political rights, 1966, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966. and International convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, 1966.

Our National parliament has enacted some other Acts for the welfare of the people. Some of them are:

1. The National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992 (Act No.19 of 1992)
2. The Scheduled castes and the schedule Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.
3. The protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 (Act No.22 of 1955)
4. The Bonded labour system (Abolition) Act, 1976. (Act No.19 of 1976).
5. The child labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 (No. 61 of 1986)
6. The Juvenile Justice Act, 1986 (Act No.53 of 1986)
7. The persons with Disabilities (Equal opportunities, protection of Rights and Full participation) Act, 1995. (No.1 of 1996)
8. The Indecent Representation of women (prohibition) Act, 1986. (No. 60 of 1986)
9. The National Commission for women Act, 1990. (No.20 of 1990)
10. The Family courts Act, 1984 (Act No.66 of 1984)

To reform Hindu society and to protect the girl child and the widow the following Acts are enacted. They are:

1. Hindu marriage Act, 1955
2. Hindu Succession Act, 1956
3. Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act 1956

<sup>28</sup> General Assembly Resn 217-A(III), dt, 10-12-1948, U.N.General Assembly official Records, 3<sup>rd</sup> Session, supp No.13, page, 71- 77.



4. Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 1956
5. Dowry prohibition Act, 1961
6. Child marriage Restraint Act, 1929
7. Hindu widows Remarriage Act, 1856
8. Special Marriage Act, 1954
9. The commission of Sati (prevention) Act, 1987.

These acts remove the drawbacks in the Hindu Society will help to make the Hindu society, a Just progressive and Modern.

Other progressive Acts are the law relating to free Legal Aid & Lok Adalats called as the legal services authorities Act 1987. and the Right to Information Act of 2005. Which makes the Administration accountable and transparent.

As we are a free Nation there is immense possibility to find out the weaknesses and the drawbacks in the socio political Economic life of the people and to regulate and enlighten them. Through proper legislation, information and awareness and social Engineering and thus make India a prosperous. Harmonious, and modern society with a due place in the comity of Nations.

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