The 1930’s marked a new phase in the nature of women's participation in public affairs. The formation of the Andhra Maha Sabha also led to the formalization of women's political participation with the creation of the Andhra Mahila Mahasabha as a related and yet separate entity from the Andhra Maha Sabha. This has to be seen as an extension of women seeking a forum for themselves, a process that began with the women's organizations dealt with earlier.

With the start of Andhra Maha Sabha in March 1930, the Andhra Mahilasabha was also convened in a neighbouring pandal. For the first meeting arrangements were made for five hundred women participants. The proceedings of 7 conferences of the Andhra Mahasabha and the Andhra Mahilasabha are available in the form of the major speeches and resolutions. While there is little information on the nature of discussions, the speeches enable us to gain an insight into the atmosphere in which the women's issue was being framed by the emerging political leadership. The significance of the Andhra Mahila Mahasabha is in the creation of a public forum
voicing and articulating their concerns, analysing social issues and considering possible solutions. That the Andhra Mahila Mahasabha was seen as a crucial political force is evident from the great care taken in organizing and providing facilities for women to participate.

The first meeting of Andhra Maha Sabha and Andhra Mahila Mahasabha held at Jogipet for three days in March of 1930 was preceded by protracted exchange of letters between the organisers of the Sabha and the Medak Talukdar (collector), for permission to hold the conference. The organisers did not initially get official permission for the meeting since they felt that their conference was not political and did not require any permission to hold it. Gopal Venkat Rao (High Court lawyer) in charge of reception committee reacted sharply to the Nizam's barman that prior permission was required to hold political meetings or meetings in which speeches with a political undertone would be delivered. The organizing committee sought formal permission on the grounds that at the meeting social issues and education would be discussed. The organisers were further pressurised to send in advance the list of speakers, verbatim speeches and resolutions, and any refusal to do so would result in the conference being declared illegal. This issue was taken to the Home
Secretary and finally permission was granted. This whole process took a month and a half. In granting permission the government laid down certain conditions that the president of the conference should not be an outsider but a resident of Nizam’s territory; that the sentiments of other religionists should not be hurt, and third, that political issues should not be discussed.¹

The Jogipet Conference of 1930 was the first in the series of the thirteen such conferences. An analysis of the speeches delivered in these conferences help us to understand the public spaces and roles being defined for women. At the same time it is important to note that what is political was also being defined. In the context of the early 1930’s public declarations against the Nizam’s state would definitely be characterized as political activities and hence illegal. The focus on culture and women during the course of several conferences enabled an articulation which raised fundamental questions of political participation and freedom.² The speakers tried to avoid a direct political critique of the situation in the Nizam’s dominion. Access to education, the issues of women and their education became the crucial windows through which an indirect and large critique was articulated. Along with the criticism there were resolutions passed in every conference and these resolutions covered a wide range of
issues, social, economic to political. An appeal was made to the government through these conferences to respond to various issues, and also stressed that the Nizam's Government had a responsibility to do so. At the same time as in reform movements in other parts of India, women their education and development was seen as a central to change that was being sought. These conferences of men and women give us an opportunity to gain an insight into the ways in which the women were interpreting and responding to women's question which was a focal issue in the larger political process.³

The following is an analysis of the proceedings of the Andhra Maha Sabha and Andhra Mahila Mahasabha. The two have been looked at together in an attempt to identify echoes of male views on women's issues in the Mahila Mahasabha and to see any divergence in the way women articulated their needs.

T. Venkat Rao, a lawyer and Chairman of the Reception Committee devoted considerable time to highlight the conditions of women and women's education, and thereby set the tone of the conference.⁴
In promoting women's education Venkat Rao, like his contemporaries in other parts of India argued that an educated woman would not only be a better manager of the domestic affairs but also a better mother and a more understanding wife. Citing examples from the past he sought to quell any adverse criticism of women's education.\(^5\)

Giving examples of Gargi and Maitreyi who trounced powerful men in discussion and Jijiya Bai who brought up her son Shivaji as a lover of freedom and patriotism, Venkat Rao tried to make a strong case for women's education.

"If women are educated the country would have its cadre of patriots".\(^6\)

He stressed the need for schools for Hindu girls and decried the general indifference of the Government in this regard. He appealed to the participants of the conference to "Free ourselves from dark beliefs and lay the foundations for girls schools... we must establish girls schools with our own money and seek Government help to run them".\(^7\)
Another theme which was to surface repeatedly, raised also in other conferences, was highlighted by Venkat Rao and that was child marriage. He focussed on the misery of young girls forced into early marriage and early motherhood. "The marriages of girls in most cases are being celebrated when the girl is not even 4 to 5 years old. She has no say in the choosing of her husband. He might be a cripple, shapeless fellow, a mad cap. The custom insists on a marriage somehow with the result the girl will have to go through hell of a life for which she never bargained. Maybe she should be cursing her parents for her life which is wasted. Some women end their misery by resorting to suicide. Though child marriages are not approved by the Dharma Sastras, people have been following customs like sheep. People live by following each other and not by following what is sublime. Daughters acquire most of the fruits of this parental "unwisdom" and the result is suicidal to the mature and more suicidal to bear children. We have a number of cases fit for remarriages. But most of the unfortunate women will have to resort to prostitution if they cannot suppress their natural desire and cases of infanticides are common".8

It is to change the above conditions that Venkat Rao advocated girls education. The main agenda of the conference was set out by
Suravaram Pratap Reddy the president of the Maha Sabha. In a wide ranging talk which covered issues of untouchability, alcoholism, the need to providing incentives to peasants, Pratap Reddy focused on two major issues one, the need for education in mother tongue, two, the question of child marriage. Regarding education in one's mother tongue, a need which he linked to the absence of freedom obtaining in the Nizam's dominion, where 90% of the population was non-Urdu speaking. He talked of the oppressive use of Urdu as the official language. To achieve unity and redress social evils, he argued, that this Urdu Pichchi (Urdu madness) had to be reduced.⁹

"Physically one can be bound but no China wall can confine one's thoughts", he said.¹⁰

To dilute the political nature of this demand for Telugu education Pratap Reddy focused considerable attention on the question of child marriage and the need for an act to raise the age of marriage.

Highlighting the growing problem of Kanya Sulkam (Bride Price) and the emergence of dowry Pratap Reddy said "Some persons have been purchasing girls, often from some distant places. Evidently some parents in those distant places have been selling their daugh-
ters for economic reasons. The need for money makes them blind to the greed of the buyer. This is a case of trade in human flesh. We must be able to eradicate this evil of sale of girls. There are some men who continue to be bachelors for the simple reason that nobody has chosen them as sons-in-law or they have no money to buy a girl. The cost of a girl is generally enormous. Some persons have to lose all their property just to purchase a girl. In fact this practice of selling girls which is in vogue in other regions is being adopted slowly and gradually in our state also. It is our duty to nip this inhuman practice in the bud. Some of the rich people can afford to spend money. But some of the poor are trying to copy rich people and landing themselves in insolvency. Many a parent by copying the rich to show off is reduced to poverty or gets irretrievably indebted by offering dowries and costly presents at the time of marriage. This evil is on increase with the spread of English education. Marriage market is being strengthened with its own dowry tariffs. A bridegroom who had passed "middle' examination should be given a dowry of Rs. 1000. A 'matric', two thousand rupees, an intermediate, four thousand. A'B.A.', ten thousand. It is needless to enumerate the problems and difficulties faced by parents of female children. We must device ways of ridding the society of dowry evils".

Pratap Reddy suggested that the progressive law being passed
in British India like Sarada act, to raise the marriageable age of boys and girls, should also be adopted in Nizam's state. He informed the participants that the similar Bill was being introduced by Justice Vishveswaranath, in the legislature of Hyderabad.¹²

He criticized the Nizam's government for not taking any interest on this Bill to raise the age of marriage "Ostensibly out of respect for the Dharmsastras".³ He went on to exhort people not to follow the Dharmsastras and not accede blindly to the laws imposed by the Government. He argued that the Dharmsastras could be amended, and that several versions of the Dharmsastras prove that changes were made very often.

"Please do not misconstrue that I am opposed to the Dharma Sastras. We must be able to understand the historicity embedded in them. If there are any stipulations of perennial and ethical value, we must be able to retain and follow them but we must understand to what extent Dharma Sastras can be followed in the light of changing circumstances. We must be courageous enough to follow whatever contributes to the welfare of the society and should not hesitate to give up whatever is moribund and outdated".¹⁴

"Among the evils that should be either given up or reformed there
is the Purdah system. Most of the Hindus in British India also and
the Andhras outside the Nizam's dominions do not follow this custom.
Among the Andhras of the Nizam's state there are numerous families
which observe this custom. Some people believe that this custom of
hiding women behind purdahs had devolved on us from the time of
Mughals. It is not a correct belief. Purdah system is very ancient and
it was in vogue in a number of places all over the world. It was in
vogue in Assyria, Babylonia and other countries including ancient
India. Amara Simha, the author of 'Amarakosha' Sanskrit lexicon,
had vividly described the purdah. So, purdah system should not be
ascribed to Muslims in the Nizam's dominions. There are families among
Velama, Reddy and Golconda Vyapari who observe this purdah system
very strictly. Purdah is being discarded gradually in the countries of
Turkey, Afghanistan and Egypt where it was in vogue for centuries
and observed strictly. It is better our purdah addicts reform their ways
as early as possible and show due respect to our women folk”. Pratap
Reddy adverting to the issue of child marriage went on to speak on
the Purdah system and argued that it either be given up or reformed.
It should interest the educated to be told that the Purdah system was
very ancient.¹⁵

In the first conference, 32 resolutions were passed seeking rights
of assembly, Telugu education, support for Library movement, agricultural reforms, more civic amenities. Of these 32 resolutions five dealt directly with women. The demands were that a college for women be established with Telugu medium on the lines of the University established by Maharishi Karve, an appeal was made to discourage "the profession of prostitution which has been assailing the position of women ethically". The Purdah system was sought to be discouraged since it has been "sapping women of their mental and physical energies", child marriage was to be abolished since it was impeding mental and physical progress of people. Finally the conference sought to protect the property rights of children from a second marriage.\textsuperscript{16}

The speeches of the men were followed by the speeches of two prominent speakers of Andhra Mahila Mahasabha. Smt. Vitto Bai, Chairperson of the Reception Committee said:

"Statistics published by our Government reveal that the number of educated women in this state is not even one percent. There are some girls schools in some places in the state and they are all elementary schools. Parents celebrate the marriages of those girls, in most cases, even before they reach the fourth class. Where
is the chance for higher education? There are Andhra girls who would like to go in for higher education. But where are the academic institutions to help them study? Child marriages have been sapping the people of their life force. Many a women is reduced to the position of a living corpse due to forced widowhood. Blind beliefs are allowed. This is the general situation. There are the rich who can afford to be happier but they are condemned to purdah life; freedom is a myth, it is a big zero. We are at the peak of misery.\textsuperscript{17}

Smt. Nadimpalli Sundaramma in her presidential address took the argument a little further and echoed the dominant view that women are responsible for the well being and progress of the state. "The destiny of men is in her hands and hence she needs education". She described the woman as the heroine who "feeds her children with courage, patriotism and discipline".

She cited several examples from the lives of the great women of the past, who were achievers in literature, science, administration and politics. Besides the normal names of Gargi, Maitreyi and Jhansi Lakshmi Bai, she cited the example of a nautch women Muddupalani who had written a great Kavya called 'Radhikaswantonamu'. This last reference is particularly interesting.
since the publication of the Kavya (an erotic treatise) by a woman raised a furore among puritanical reformers like Veeresalingam.\textsuperscript{18} These achievements of women being in the past, Sundaramma demanded education and schools for the present day girls, to enable women to contribute productively to the progress of the society.\textsuperscript{19}

Decrying the dowry system "which is eating into the vitals of society, which is becoming a money society", Sundaramma exhorted the women to prevent such evils. She vehemently criticized conservatives for a misplaced sense of responsibility.

"Some conservative persons are celebrating the marriage of their children in cradle to overcome the law prohibiting child marriages and also to \textit{earn} satisfaction that they have discharged an essential responsibility. The responsibility should have been to undertake education of their children and it should not have been limited to marriages".\textsuperscript{20}

Not surprisingly Sundaramma, while seeking support to prohibit prostitution which was seen as a matter of shame, underlined the social role and duty of women to their husbands. This she argued, could be fulfilled better by women through education.
"Our country is known for women who are religiously devoted to their husbands. Such a devotion is possible only when women are educated. Education gives women a greater strength of devotion. Devotion to husband is an ornament to a woman. Devotion is a perennial ritual and it is not one of those rituals which should be performed once in a way. A woman should be a duty bound life mate to a man. She must be keeping her body clean, clean it with soulful worship of her God like husband". It would appear that Sundaramma was trying to contain some major opposition by talking of women's principal role in society that of commitment to husband and family. She felt it was the duty of the educated and the duty of women's organization to develop purposeful collective strength to free women from meaningless, cruel and outdated practices. She appealed saying that education meant not hankering after jewels and decoration but striving for the uplift of people.

The second Andhra Maha Sabha and Mahila Mahasabha held exactly an year later at Devarakonda reiterated all the resolutions of the previous meet and made a special appeal for the establishment of district Education and Technical Education Councils. Burugula Ramakrishna Rao, the president regretted the opposition to the introduction of the Bill seeking prohibition of child marriage and
the Bill to permit the offspring of remarried women to share in paternal property. Quoting the aphorism that Gods would be pleased if women were respected, he urged that support be extended to the moves of the Maha Sabha to invest women with rights equal with men. The women speakers focused essentially on the abominable conditions in which women live and joined their voices with the men to seek access to technical education.

The third Andhra Maha Sabha was held at Khammam with Pulijala Venkata Ranga Rao presiding. The reception committee chairman was Aitaraju Rama Rao and Yellapragada Sita Kumari presided over the Women's conference. This conference was very important in the history of the Andhra Mahasabha considering the opposition it had to face and the determination with which it faced the opposition from conservatives (Sanatanists) and conducted the proceedings successfully.

The fact that more than three thousand women attended the conference and displayed all signs of a potential women's movement, roused the ire of the conservatives who took the help of the district collector and also the police officials to threaten the organizers of the conference with dire consequences if the women's session con-
continued. They were angered that the women participants were offending religious sentiments and hence the session should be stopped. At a particular stage the leaders of the Maha Sabha had to take a rigid stand to dissuade the conservatives from continuing their menacing postures. The opposition of the conservatives to the Maha Sabha stemmed from their opposition to the very participation of women in the conferences which they considered to be purely a male activity and male speciality.\(^{26}\)

In this conference like the earlier ones the focus continued on the need for state support to educational activities particularly to the establishment of libraries as was done in the Baroda State. In addition, state support was sought for the promotion of indigenous medicine like Ayurveda, which formed an integral part of cultural freedom. The conference though slightly disturbed, had witnessed a degradation which drew men guffaws from all when one conservative offered for the women present Ayurvedic medicine for menstrual problems.\(^{27}\)

The male speakers of the conference tried to contain the conservative opposition to the presence of women.

The president of the Maha Sabha Pulijala Venkata Ranga Rao
in his concluding remarks had referred to the unfortunate incidents created by the Sanatanists to stall the proceedings. He wondered as to why the Sanatanists should oppose reforms which were necessary for people to live in accordance with the spirit of times. He had known that Khammam had been a strong hold of Sanatanists and also reformers. He argued that there should be no friction between conservation and reform as wisdom required a periodic change. "I hope the Sanatanists will not oppose change; the Sanatanist of yesterday must become reformer of today or tomorrow". I do not think any teacher would brand a student who is trying to clear his doubts through a series of questions as an opponent. The Sanatanists whom we have seen here, evidently want to have their doubts cleared. We cleared them" he added.28

In fact Madapati Hanumantha Rao offered to be arrested if law and order agencies insisted on obstructing women from proceeding to the venue of the conference. It was only after this mild rebuke by Madapati Hanumantha Rao that the collector had withdrawn from the scene followed by the conservatives.

Suravaram Pratapa Reddy and Mandumula Ramachandra Rao described the conservatives as absolute minority, bent upon
creating obstructions. They too have a right to express their views but they should have done so without any selfishness and with a pure mind and a sense of democratic-justice. The Andhras of Nizams dominions have yet to go far to call themselves forward. In such a situation the educated elite should act with great understanding of realities, they said. 29

The opposition to women's participation having been quelled the women speakers like Chatrati Lakshmi Narasamma chairperson of the committee reiterated earlier demands for education and for a change in the lives of women who are "living like frogs in the well". She made an appeal for an opportunity to live in human dignity, a dignity and wisdom that can be acquired through education.

"A woman if educated will serve as a minister to the family. Even if a king is efficient and patriotic, he should have a wise minister, as otherwise statecraft could become defective. How can people then be happy? Our scriptures enjoin on us that a woman is an equal partner to a man. It is not the present day that created this adage. There are numerous families in our country where the man is educated and women is not. That explains the backwardness of many families. By ignoring such divine injunctions to educate women and make
them fit to serve the humanity, our people have been serving from the path of divine living. According to our Vedanta, women should not be treated as inferior. By denying education to women, men are inviting troubles and serious problems. Man who is living god to a woman should live as a living God and not like a lifeless doll indifferent to wisdom. Whatever creates intellectual excellence is education. Such an education should not be denied to women. Education to women leads to creation of women patriots.”

Lakshmi Narasamma like many men and women of her time found scriptural sanction for reforms which ensured emergence of patriotic citizens in a changing world.

Perhaps the most outstanding women speaker in these conferences was Yellapragada Sita Kumari, President of the third Mahila Conference.

While the speeches of leaders who participated in the earlier conferences were same, may be scholarly but unimpressive, now and then, the speech of Sita Kumari, the president of the third conference was unambiguous in her criticism though not less scholarly. This explains why the conservative people were incensed on hearing her speech. That she spoke the truth was no excuse for those who
had been thriving on social illusions and religious misunderstandings.

The earlier presidents of the Mahila Mahasabha were aged women who hailed from traditional families. Naturally they were afraid of being harsh. But Sita Kumari was young. She was also a recipient of modern education. In addition, she was baptized into politics by her husband Y. Narayana Rao who was a very active Congress man. Suravaram Pratap Reddy, Andhra Pitamaha Madapati Hanumantha Rao, an all round reformer Madari Bhagya Reddy Varma and a host of other well meaning Andhra leaders, were pleased to see her as a co-worker. It is said they used to issue statements on her behalf, issue rejoinders too on her behalf! Well known persons were encouraged to issue rejoinders and also issue explanations on her behalf. This activity terrified her at first but in a few months she became an adept in politics with great self-confidence.31

Sita Kumari's speech was wide ranging covering issues of education, the need for economic independence, the need for good health and physical exercise and finally for a perception of the low position of women, which she traced to a lack of identity consciousness. She referred to the very low female literacy level in the Nizams
territory which according to 1931 census was 12 per thousand. Sita Kumari drew attention to the support given to women's education in states like Bombay and Madras. She also expressed her pleasure that "some men had come forward to ensure freedom to women and some women were able to come up educationally and compete with men in various spheres of activities. But this progress was not much as rural women were not influenced by this new realization. The majority of women even now did not realize that they were confined to an inferior status in the society and they needed immediate uplift. How can they come up if they did not know that they should come up?".

"If education spreads among women they would themselves be able to assert their freedom but presently the percentage of education among Andhra women in the Nizams dominion is very low. The number of women who can write and read a letter according to 1931 census is 12 per 1000, in Bengal it is 188, Madras, 110, Bombay, 149, Mysore, 174 and Baroda, 331."

This 12 women literates per thousand is in a downward trend. There are 691 schools in the Nizam's dominions. The total number of women students is 45,560. Ninety nine percent of the women
students stop with primary education. Most of the schools teach in Urdu. A few do so in English. Our Government has not begun yet to teach in Telugu. To our appeals for help to run schools with Telugu teaching facilities, Government is not at all favourable. In states like Bombay and Madras, training is being given to women to teach various crafts. In Hyderabad too there is an institution to teach crafts to men. We appeal to the Government to extend this facility to women. We have a very small number of girls schools but we do not have enough teachers to teach local languages. So an earnest attempt should be made to train teachers in the local languages. 32

To meet the problem of lack of teachers, Sita Kumari suggested that women organisers have to undertake girls education. She stressed the entitlement of women to educational opportunities. 33

"If we do not have enough number of schools to teach girls, women's associations can be entrusted with the task of organizing teaching. Such an arrangement would go a long way by attaching even housewives to the schools. This is a good method of extending educational facilities. All this depends on the realization that women need education as much as men and that they are entitled to receive education. Nobody has the authority to ordain that women should be
educated only in certain disciplines. They can have education in whatever discipline they choose. Text books suitable for women's education must be written. If need be, such books should be translated from other languages".33

Exhorting women to read serious books and not novels and short stories, Sita Kumari drew the attention of women participants to the problems of widows in society. She underlined the way in which marriage and widowhood has been effecting women.

"To those women who can read and write, may I appeal that it is not enough to read novels and short stories. They must read all social sciences and religious books. All these outdated customs and practices of Hindu society are aimed against women. The freedom of men is not much eroded either due to marriage or due to the death of the spouse. It is always the woman that is affected. She is the target of all unreasonable traditions and customs. It is the woman that suffers as child mother. As a child mother she would be automatically condemned to bring up an unhealthy child. There are a number of women who do not have the right to remarry because widowhood was forced on them. In most cases widowhood is the
result of mismatched marriages. While men have right to remarry, women are arbitrarily denied this right. Even an 80 year old man can remarry and no law stands in his way of marrying a teenage girl. He only helps increase the number of widows in the state. Our young men generally don't come forward to marry widows. To improve the social conditions of women there must be widow remarriage associations in various places so that the benefits of the widow remarriage act can reach the unfortunate widow. But much remains to be done.  

Sita Kumari in discussing the need for economic freedom for women sharply highlighted the subordinate and dependent position of women in society. Her analysis of the problem was far ahead of the times. She recognized that owning and having access to jewelry meant nothing substantial since women have no control over them, no power to dispose off or donate. She also recognized that the dependence on the male was much more among women who are not engaged in productive work.

"Economically women are in a miserable condition now. In this wide world, a woman does not have anything of her own. She does not get even a pie either from her parental home or from her husband normally. A liberal husband buys for an obedient wife saree
and jewels but she does not gain anything with such acquisitions. She is at best useful to keep them safe, so that they can be used when needed. The husband alone can sell them! Women do not have money to buy books and magazines which they like but have no money to become members of women’s associations or to spend on any other activities. They have to be totally dependent on husbands. In this creation of God there is no living creature which is so dependent on its male partner as an Indian woman. No other living creature places the burden of life on the male spouse as much as Indian woman does. A working class woman does not depend on her husband for her food. It is only the so called women of upper class and the civilized classes who depend so meanly on their men. That is the reason for most of these women, losing love and respect of their men, their parents dole out huge amounts of money by way of dowry to secure husbands for them. Women who should have been living as the very embodiments of power and courage lost their individuality and are dependent on men, satisfied with being mere shadows of men.35

As to why this situation had risen Sita Kumari’s explanation was that woman did not enjoy any worthy status of her won.”A woman has no caste, religion or Gotra and all these are acquired through
man and not through her own efforts or birth".36

"Women need individuality and economic freedom, she needs access to religious books, to knowledge, to understand why restrictions are placed on her conduct".37

Recognizing perhaps that the majority of the women participants in the conference were upper class and upper caste. Sita Kumari talked of the need for the middle class Indian women to change.

"The present day women have no need to earn money. So they have become lazy. Most women do not have any direction for their lives. Her life is an example of dependence. It is a case of utter uselessness. Women in Burma are more useful to their families and society than men. Women of Holland are known for their superior participation in farming and they also run their homes more efficiently. A number of woman in the European countries are known to be competing with men in the field of science and technology. The world is changing but Indian woman doesn't change. She lives in her home, a home of a thousand meaningless customs. But the Indian women lives with greater satisfaction than women elsewhere! She is unable to realize her inferiority and pettiness. Let alone
science and technology the Indian women can't serve her society. She cannot prevent the operation of outdated and meaningless customs and practices. She cannot help the poor. She can not educate herself. She can not learn anything, nor forget anything. She cannot shed her laziness. She cannot improve the conditions of health and sanitation and hygiene. In addition to these built-in disabilities some women drink and of course there is untouchability which can not be violated! These realities should enable us to realize that we have much to do for ourselves".  

Sita Kumari added yet another dimension when she started that "All creatures in creation enjoy light and air except Indian women. Purdah and traditions are two enemies to healthy living".  

"With no useful work to do and depending totally on traditional laziness, the Indian women can not maintain her health. Most Indian women are unhealthy, their life span is less than that of men. There are numerous such malpractices assailing the health of women. They repose their confidence in village Deities, Devils, Ghosts, Swamijis and a number of other evils. They become laughing stock in the eyes of civilized people".
Lack of education, economic freedom and good health, Sita Kumari felt, contributed to a general cowardliness among women. Right from childhood women's minds are filled with stories of ghosts and a morbid fear. She felt this fear existed because: "most women are trusted with jewels for the satisfaction of men. It is these jewels that create the fear of thieves. It is advisable to invest this money spent on jewels, wisely and for a better purpose. The third is the fear from men with questionable character. This fear inhibits women to move freely in the society. How can such women give birth to heroes and saints? They must shed fear, suspicion and meaningless customs". 40

"To become good housewives, they must have health as otherwise they cannot do any useful service. They must remain spinsters at least until their twentieth year. But our society is very cruel to them and totally opposed to their well-being. Women should realize this". She added,

Besides seeing education as a means to overcome these fears, Sita Kumari like others of her like recommended physical exercise as a prerequisite for developing mentally and for better health. She urged that marriage be post-phoned till the age of twenty. Reacting sharply
to male opposition, she referred to the instances of men evincing interest in the status of women of remote past. She continued "Our elders are suspicious of freedom of women. They believe that the tradition of devotion to husband has earned for our country a great name but what is the use of unhealthy uneducated cowardly women remaining devoted to their husbands. It will be like a prisoner pleading with co-prisoners that he had not committed any crime. A woman must live as an equal to all the other living beings. She must be able to protect herself. Until then there is no point in priding ourselves that there were some heroines and saints in the ancient times. We must strive to keep up that pride".41

The Fourth Mahasabha was held at Sirsilla in Karimnagar district in January 1935. Strengthened by the experiences gained from the earlier three conferences, foolproof arrangements were made under the leadership of Avunune Venugopal Rao, chairman, reception committee and Smt. Joginepalli Radha Bai, chairwomen of the reception committee for the Mahila (women) Session. The venue of the conference was named after Vemulavada Bheemakavi, a great Andhra poet of 9th or 10th century.42

Arrangements were made specially for women in purdah to be seated. There were separate gates for men and women and sepa-
rate lodgings too. This time even conservatives were invited to participate in the conference. Among the resolutions that were adopted were organizing night schools for both boys and girls to help spread literacy among the working class. They stressed the need for establishing a high school for girls at Warangal to teach in Telugu. The Government was also requested to extend monetary help to a Telugu high school which had been working for the past 8 years in Hyderabad.  

On the need for girls school at Warangal, a number of speakers expressed regret that despite the existence of number of rich people, the establishment of a girls school had not materialized. They thanked Rajabahadur Venkata Rama Reddy for starting girls high school in Hyderabad and also thanked Sri Bansilal for his magnificent donation of Rs. 5000 to the high school. Yet another resolution condemned the indifference of the society in allowing the profession of prostitution. The spirit of the resolutions revealed the aversion of members towards the active connivance of men in such a heinous activity. An appeal was made to the people to discourage this profession and encourage youth to marry the children of the prostitutes.

The conference resolved to request the Government to enforce
an enactment prohibiting marriages of girls below 17 years and boys below 20 years.\textsuperscript{44} This was a theme raised in the 1st conference itself. There was an interesting discussion on this resolution in the men's section of the conference.

Suravaram Pratap Reddy argued that the practice of child marriages which resulted in girls of 12 or 13 becoming mothers had been leading to either premature deaths or unhealthy deliveries. Child marriages had been responsible for keeping an average life span of an Indian pegged down to 23 years while it was 55 years in Europe. Pratap Reddy cautioned people not to ascribe religious importance to marriages. It was purely a social problem. Even assuming it was a religious problem it must be tackled as a non-religious one, because the Hindu scriptures never encouraged child marriages. Dharma Shastras which hampered social progress should be given up, he pleaded. He pointed out that Yajurveda prohibited marriages to girls below 16 years and boys below 25 years.\textsuperscript{45}

T. Venkata Rama Rao supporting the resolution opined that whatever these Dharma Shastras had said or not said, the people would have to adopt whichever practice was reasonable and beneficial.
The conservatives too had their say in the matter of marriageable age. Chivukula Appaiah Sastry, a leader of the conservative section countered the argument of Pratap Reddy saying that marriage was a totally religious tradition. He reminded the participants that Muslims and Christians also construed it as a religious function.\textsuperscript{46}

Yet another conservative Madiraju Ramakoteswar Rao opined that conferences like this should not meddle with religion as the Nizam also did not interfere in this affair because it pertained to religion. He regretted that inexperienced youngsters had been egging on elders to make such resolutions. But this remark drew derisive laughter from most of the members.\textsuperscript{47}

The women's section of the conference passed resolutions requesting the Government to clarify through an enactment the rights of inheritance of women in properties, to introduce compulsory elementary education in all districts, to prohibit untouchability, to establish health centres in villages and to start training centres for nurses and midwives. They also appealed to the populace to desist from consuming liquor, to avoid dowry and purdah, to use only products of cottage industries and to help the widows
A. Venugopala Rao, the chairman of the reception committee condemned the tendency among the people to spend beyond their means at the time of marriage. He wondered whether it was a desirable attitude among people to remain indifferent to the presence of child widows amidst them with some of the widows aged below 5 years! He stated that the number of child widows in the state was 5,365. He asked the members to find out for themselves whether they could do anything to free these unfortunate women from this misery.

Madapati Hanumantha Rao the president of Andhra Mahasabha in his long speech spent considerable time and space to describe the condition of women. Describing education as a panacea for all ills and evils, he said: "Our education department has been spending at the rate of Rs. one crore per annum". In their magnanimity they have been hoping to make every citizen literate and they have been doing so for the last 50 years! Statistics show that their efforts have not been successful. This chart gives its own story.
This chart proves that in our state the increase in literates is one per hundred in every ten years. At this rate it takes 950 years for all the people of the state to become literates”.50

He appealed for a continued effort in the area of primary education though the Government has not responded to the request over the past 15 years. He saw no point in demanding schools for girls in districts when such facilities were not available in urban and metropolitan areas. He said "In the last 15 years a number of girls whose mother tongue is Urdu had the benefit of higher education and some of them had their education in foreign countries too. But such a fortune has not favoured the Andhra girls. Let us appeal to the Osmania University authorities and Government to extend the same facilities to Andhra girls. We must be prepared to pool our resources and create funds to help educate our young women”.51
In the women's conference the reception committee chairperson Joginapalli Radha Bai continued with the theme that there were no scriptural sanctions for the present condition of women.

"Some people give respect to women, may be in their dream world. Woman is great in the poetic world. Such a woman who is born to suffer and serve is the object of unreasonable pity. Some men say that a woman's nature is destructive while the truth is only where money is concentrated, these destruction is possible. Even religions which were founded to enforce ethics have become slaves to money".  

She quoted Rabindranath Tagore to point out the narrow sphere of a woman's life, "Man having the advantage over woman in a comparative freedom from biological obligations could devote his unhampered leisure in constructing civilization, which naturally followed in a large measure his own temperament and tendencies. And woman for ages was constrained to adjust herself to a narrowness of sphere allowed to her".

Radha Bai deplored the static nature of society. She argued that the traditions which were binding women were not divinely sanctioned but were made by men. "We still believe in the letter and spirit
of dead scriptures. Do our women believe in them strongly? It is obligatory on the part of the society to change with the times. We are still following practices which are centuries old. All tradition is man made. Tradition does not come from heavens. We must learn to change".54

She appealed to the upper castes, the Velamas and the Reddys to abolish prostitution in their Jagirs and help the children of prostitutes to get married. The leadership of the conference both men and women strongly urged marriage as a solution to the problem of prostitution. To the elders who questioned why women needed education and why they wanted to behave like men, Radha Bai poetically answered "Education is a sculpture which sculpts a stone in whatever fashion it could conjure up. I fail to understand how a man can imagine that a cart would proceed properly if one bullock is intelligent and the other, dull. How can a family in which the man is intelligent and the woman is not, progress?"55

She drew attention to the world context and to the Russian revolutions, where tremendous changes were brought about in the lives of women and argued that every woman who cooks must learn to rule.56
She felt that conferences like the Mahila Mahasabha were meaningless unless people took a vow to work for women's education.

Smt. Madapati Manikyamma wife of Madapati Hanumantha Rao in her presidential address advised women to establish women's associations in every village to improve their knowledge. She urged women to have a meeting at least every week. "Discuss, let those educated read out magazines and books for the benefits of the members and create enough enthusiasm among them". She exhorted.57

Manikyamba felt that in the contemporary times a person was respected on the basis of money, Jewels should be treated as women's property and only her daughters should inherit them. This right of daughters, she regretted was being systematically violated by the society. A daughter AADA PILLA or the girl "over there" should be treated as EEDA PILLA, the girl "over here", she pleaded, playing on the Telugu word "Ada" which means there".58

In wide ranging talks which continued which appealed for educational facilities, Vernacular education, establishment of women's
university, establishment maternity and child care centres and widow homes.

She also appealed for educational facilities, telugu education, establishment of women's university, establishment of maternity and child care centres and widow homes.

Manikyamma focused on two major issues, one was the system of aadapapas (women slaves) and an act similar to the Sarada Act. With regard to the aadapapa system she said, "In the British India in some places some rules are made to check the freedom of prostitution but in our Nizams dominions the landlords and jagirdars are employing women slaves or AADAPAAPAS to do all sorts of jobs. These girls cannot marry. They can only prostitute. How can respectable people and family women tolerate such profession to exist amidst them? It is dangerous for respectable family women to allow this evil. So I appeal to them to free their adapapas and help them marry".59

Manikyamma picked up the theme of education in mother tongue, a contentious political issue and cited the examples of England, Germany and Japan where education in the mother tongue
had shown great results. She urged the women to address themselves to the issues of untouchability saying that "If one part in the body was damaged we will not cut off the part but we try to improve it with proper nursing".60

She was followed by several other speakers like T.Varalakshmmamma, Nadimpalli Sundaramma, Indira Devi, Y. Sita Kumari and Saraswathi among others. This was followed by a play by girls and veena recital by Sundaramma. Radha Bai the chairperson reported the achievements of some of the women present.

Sita Kumari who was president of Third Mahila Sabha was elected as a representative to the All India Women's Conference. She also wrote a monograph on women's property rights. Indira Devi wrote a note on indigenous industries and Lakshmi Bai had written about establishment of village schools.

Radha Bai reiterating the various problem and solutions pertaining to women's life, exhorted the women to change according to times as otherwise they would be crushed by the wheels of time.
The fifth Andhra Mahasabha was held at Shadnagar and Venkatnarayan Reddy was chosen as the chairman of the reception committee. Smt. M. Raghavendra Bai was the Chairwoman of the reception committee for the Mahila Mahasabha session. Cutting across linguistic barriers the reception committee had named the venue of the session as "Deshabhakta Vaman Naik Nagar". Konda Venkat Ranga Reddy was elected as the president of the Mahasabha and Smt. Burgula Ananthalaxmi Devi as president of the Mahila Mahasabha. 61

The first resolution was about the need for physical education to boys and girls. One of the speakers Narsa Reddy felt that a pattern of education and also physical education which was adopted to train boys in the schools was being extended to girl students also. It only meant that wrong training imparted to boys was prescribed for girls too. Whatever weakened the boys was without a thought being prescribed for girls. Instead there must be real useful physical training. He cited the case of a raid by Sadhus on the camp of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya at Kashi when a physically trained person single handed could keep the entire mob of Sadhus at bay. He wondered whether the introduction of physical education at schools would result in real physical health because most of the parents were
unable to provide nutritious meals to their children every day.  

Ravi Narayana Reddy echoed the same views but Adipudi Somanatha Rao had a different explanation to give. He opined that whatever food was eaten it must give strength commensurate with its nutritional value and most people do benefit by that nutritional value. He cited the case of a Japanese girl trouncing an American. A hefty American dashed into a group of persons and tried to push down a short Japanese girl. The girl somehow managed to push him down and his hand was fractured. Nobody then understood the physical trick played by that girl. The American filed a case against her in a court that she had pushed him resulting in a fracture. He also claimed considerable monetary compensation. But the Judge wondered as to how such a smallish girl could push down a hefty person so effectively. The girl demonstrated for the benefit of the judge how mere physical strength could not prevail against physical skill. So the judge ordered the hefty American to pay a monetary compensation of three thousand Yen to the girl immediately. Somanath Rao pleaded that even a physical training should be carefully patterned to include intelligence in its operation.

The necessity of introducing compulsory education for women
throughout the state was once again reiterated. Government was also requested to sanction requisite grant for the management of the girls high school started in Hyderabad.  

Smt. Yallapragada Sita Kumari introduced a resolution demanding inheritance rights to women in family properties so that women would be spared from the possibility of becoming beggars when the husband passes away. "Our society has been respecting only people with properties. Most women, without properties were being treated as non-entities. An agitation for a similar provision in the law of inheritance had been going on for the last 20 years in British India also. This year notice of such a bill by a private member was accepted in the central legislature". Smt. Sitakumari appealed to the members of the state legislature to give a similar notice.

Pulijala Venkata Ranga Rao asked the members to realize that this resolution was intended to help" mothers and sisters". He warned the members that if they do not extend this property right to women now, the women would in future fight for it and wrench the right from the Government.

The members had a good laugh when he appealed to them to get all the credit instead of the credit going exclusively to women.
of future.⁶⁵

Venkata Rajanna Avadhani simplified the purport of the resolution stating that it sought to free women from age old economic slavery, "free our Mothers, Sisters and Wives from slavery", he pleaded.

Batchu Venkateswara Gupta through an amendment sought to convey to the members the fact that any further slicing of landed and other immovable properties of the Hindu family in the name of doing justice to women, would only result in further impoverishment of the families without securing any perceptible or substantial benefit to women. He pleaded for protection to the movable property or stree dhana so that the Hindu family would not loose the property.⁶⁶

Rama Reddy opined that a Hindu woman enjoyed the property along with her husband and when the husband dies she would be the proprietor of the property. So there was no need to give her a share in the property.

Madiraju Ramakoteswara Rao commending the spirit of the
amendment questioned the mover of the resolution whether he would like a women to share the liabilities and responsibilities inherent in property right. He added: "We have been although wishing a women to be happy and be free from liabilities and also hard responsibilities. Why is such a chivalrous attitude given up to saddle the beneficiaries with avoidable responsibilities. The benefactors must be heartless calculators! The entire Hindu law would have to be rewritten if women and men are equated with each other in matters of property rights, which are steeped in practicality". He felt.67

B.S. Devendra Gupta wondered whether the members opposing the resolution had ever bestowed thought over the frequent changes that were taking place in Hindu tradition and practice over the past so many years. Marriage laws were changed. Widows were acquiring the right of remarriage. But with all this, Hindu tradition has been continuing. By merely conferring the right to property on women, Hindu tradition would not collapse. Let us realize, he pleaded, that a woman would secure an additional social importance both in her parental home and in the home of her in-laws, if only she is vested with property rights.68

The well known Shaivite scholar Chidirematham Veerabhadra
Sharma wondered whether the mover of the resolution intended that women should be conferred with double advantage through her own and through her husband’s property. Sharma opined that the resolution was wanting in clarity and finality.\(^{69}\)

A.B. Narsa Reddy questioned the mover of amendment whether he would like to continue the dowry system which ensures the custom of stree dhana to continue. It is undisputed fact that women needed greater freedom and property right would give her freedom he said.

Polkampally Venkat Rama Rao in a hard hitting speech appealed to the members not to lose sight of realities in their anxiety to be religiously sincere. He said he knew the case of a women and her daughters reduced to the position of beggars after the death of her husband when his brothers took over his property as lawful heirs. His property was worth Six lakhs. But still tradition had to operate at the behest of the cruel society. He said he could multiply instance like this and he wanted all to know that the spirit of Hinduism would not be impaired by merely conferring property rights on women.\(^ {70}\)

Pulijala Venkata Ranga Rao winding up asked the opponents
whether Hinduism would be a totally changed faith if these resolutions were accepted. He likened this fear to the paranoid belief that since there were too many train and bus accidents, it would be advisable to walk. The whole fear stems from a misunderstanding of the concepts of Dharma Sastras. Dharma Sastra is a considered belief of the wise elders for the well being of the society. There would be wise people in every generation. Dharma Sastras are bound to change. Sastras cannot be permanent. They change from generation to generation. He asked the opponents to think for themselves what the woman would have thought of this bill if there was no such intervention of men.\textsuperscript{71}

He appealed to the members not to assume the role of guardians to women when dealing with a resolution like this.

After considering this resolution the conference had taken up another resolution which was a mere endorsement of a resolution already sent to the Government by the Hyderabad Womens Conference requesting the Government to prohibit child marriages and make a suitable enactment in that regard.

Suravaram Pratapa Reddy opening the discussion on the
resolution reminded the members that Begum Durreshawar, the wife of Prince Azam Jhah and also the president of Women's Conference had condemned the practice of child marriages. And so members should approve the same resolutions of women's conferences with the realization that marriage is not a religious affair. He also reminded them that our ancient Rishis never had a uniform opinion about marriages, Yajurveda did not approve of child marriage - Sushrutha made this point clear, he reminded.  

A.B. Narsa Reddy reeled out statistics pertaining to the ages of various married couples and proved that early marriages proved detrimental and fatal to the girls.

Madiraju Ramakoteswara Rao opined marriages should not be considered as profit and loss propositions. They depended on the personal desires and the conveniences of the individuals. The members would not be justified in interfering in the personal freedom of individuals. He brought to the notice of the members the fact that the stipulation of marriageable age was causing numerous problems in British India. Countering the argument that child marriages would lead to widowhood, he questioned whether a legislation could stop widowing. He was strongly of the view that if the Government decided
to interfere in the marriage traditions of the people, it would surely amount to interference in religion.\textsuperscript{73}

Bachu Venkateshwara Gupta wondered whether the movers of the resolution had ever realized that the marriages to which they were objecting were not consummations.

Smt. Yellapragada Sita Kumari appealed to the members not to be lost in rhetoric but to consider such proposals with the requisite understanding. It was true that marriage was not consummation. But consummation itself was performed while the girl was still young with the result she would become weak and would beget weak children. Hence the need for fixing the marriageable age.

Pratap Reddy winding up the debate asked the members to realize that law and enforcement of law were necessary only when people did not know law and were not law abiding. While it was a healthy practice for the Government not to interfere with religious affairs it was necessary for Government to interfere when people are demanding. There were occasions when Government interfered. That was when they made a law validating widow marriages. Government banned burning of widow on the pyre of her husband and
nobody could grudge that the Government had interfered in religious freedom. Pratap Reddy expressed regret that Venkateshwara Gupta did not know the obvious practice of performing consummation even before the girl attained maturity. The conference also resolved to request the Government to introduce compulsory elementary education throughout the state. They reminded the Government the need to expedite the consideration of a bill in this regard which was already introduced in the state legislature. They wanted that elementary education should be imparted through mother tongue and Government should encourage establishment of schools for girls.74

The conference while reiterating all the resolutions that were passed in the previous conferences added one more. They adopted a resolution which was already passed by the Hyderabad Women’s Association appealing to parents of girls not to give their daughters in marriage to men who were already having a wife. They condemned the evils of polygamy which was widely prevalent in the state.75

The sixth Andhra Maha Sabha was held at Nizamabad, the editor of the Urdu daily ‘Rayyat’ Mandumula Narsing Rao presiding. The women’s session was presided over by the well known
Telugu story writer Smt. Nandagiri Indira Devi.

The conference considered the same resolutions that were being considered since its inception. The secretaries of the conference were promptly sending the Government such resolutions which needed immediate administrative action or legislative consideration.\footnote{76}

It must be noted that there was a vocal but small section of conservatives who were opposed to reforms which most members were demanding. This conservative section was responsible for disturbing the Third Andhra Mahila Mahasabha at Khammam and stalling the proceedings for about seven hours alleging that the women’s section of the Mahila Mahasabha was adopting stances opposed to the spirit of Hinduism and religion in general. The Mahasabha thereafter admitted all such people into the conference as members, making way for free discussion on various issues that come up before conference. This generous gesture of the organizers of the conference had prevented the unseemly emergence of opposition to the conference and also the emergence of a democratic method which ensured acceptance of progressive resolutions by majority of the members. No point of view was shut out. All view points
were accommodated.\textsuperscript{77}

The main thrust of the conference was on convincing people about the need to change voluntarily, unlike the changes enforced by possible Government regulations.

Communication facilities were not as widespread as now and resolutions of the conference were taking quite some time to reach the people of various places. The members of the conference had been showing considerable interest in reaching the people to explain the resolution.

It must be realized that the rules and regulation of the Government were very stringent. To obtain the permission of the Government to hold a meeting, the organizers had to approach a number of agencies and 'license' was given only on condition that copy of the proceedings was sent to the law and order departments in Urdu. One can understand easily as to how difficult it must have been to translate the whole proceedings into Urdu.\textsuperscript{78}

Funnily the insistence on Urdu being given prominence always yielded to usage of English. If the organizers were thorough with
English and approached an influential officer who knew English, licenses were easily secured.

Expression of loyalty to the ruler was a sine qua non at every conference.

With all these handicaps the Andhra Mahasabha and the Andhra Mahila Mahasabha could function regularly and they organized dissemination of their views among the populace quicker than the Government agencies.\(^79\)

The seventh conference of Andhra Mahasabha held in 1939 at Malkapuram once again expressed its support to the draft bill introduced in the state legislative Assembly seeking a ban on child marriage. Bachu Venkateshwara Gupta, Chidirematham Veerabhadra Sharma, Madiraju Ramakoteshwara Rao, quite in keeping with their beliefs, as expressed in the earlier conferences, opposed the motion.

Smt. Burgula Anantha Laxmi and Smt. Illendula Saraswathi Devi supported the motion. Suravaram Pratapa Reddy the mover of the resolution explained once again the ethical and social importance of the resolution. Except the three members who
opposed the resolution all others supported it.80

The conference regretted that despite sufficient funds being allotted under the head "education", the Government had not been evincing interest in the spread and development of elementary education. Additionally Government's insistence on compulsory study of Urdu had been proving a hindrance to the spread of education among women. Government was again requested to arrange for the spread of education among women "through their mother tongue81".

The complicity of women in perpetuating their own subordination was raised by Smt. A Savitramma, chairwoman of the reception committee of the women's conference. She posed a question to the women to realize for themselves as to what extent they are themselves responsible for their backwardness which she described as a continuation of an outdated social belief and practice. She was sure that without the co-operation of women however much men try to improve the facilities for women's education, women would remain blissfully limited to the four walls of the home. She appealed to the few educated women who were taking interest in the Sabha to help spread literacy among women in the neighborhood of their resi-
Smt. Savitramma exhorted the women to discourage in their homes the use of foreign goods, purdah, child marriages, dowry and many other evil practices whose continuation did not speak well of the attitude of women at home. She also highlighted the troubles and tribulations experienced by the women as a result of polygamy among men. But she was averse to demand right of divorce to women merely to overcome this evil practice. Divorce she felt was not conducive to Indian conditions. So she pleaded that women should support the prohibition of polygamy.82

Smt. Savitramma advised women not to rely on mere annual conferences for any effective change in their pattern of living but to propagate these among the not so fortunate women in their areas. Women should remove from their psyche the beliefs that they would not be effective because they are women and that they would not be able to do anything effective, because they are women. "We have individuality. Believe it, we are responsible for half of what all is happening in the country and for what does not happen in the country" she exhorted.83
Smt. Yogyashila Devi the president of the Mahila Mahasabha had, in conformity with an "unwritten formality", catalogued the handicaps suffered by women and the efforts made in vein "to remedy them".

"There is no sanitation in villages. There are no dispensaries. Hospital is a great rarity. Midwives are never available. It is difficult to get a doctor. The cumulative effect of all these inconveniences is heightened by our ignorance and indifference and our outdated beliefs. The paradox is our people do not support and encourage a doctor or midwife who volunteers to serve us. It is necessary that the local fund department of Government should undertake to organize medical services and young women should be given training in midwifery" she said.

She wondered as to why people who believe in scriptural stipulations that man and women should live together as friends to get healthy and good natured children and serve the society, should degenerate into adoption of evil practice like child marriages, ill balanced marriages, denial of education to women, denial of freedom to women and practice of male chauvinism.  

While marriages for widowed young women were denied, the
society had been taking undue interest in fixing the marriage of an old man with a young girl with whom marriage is an assurance that she would become young widow. Yogyashila Devi informed the members that Deccan Seva Sadan, an institution to train and rehabilitate such helpless women was founded in Secunderabad just two years ago and all those who are magnanimous should start similar institutions. She made it a point to drive home the fact that women belonging to the so-called untouchable community were found to be in no way inferior to the so-called touchable communities and it should be the duty of all women better placed in life to help untouchable women and their children.85

The eighth conference was held at Chilkoor in 1941, and it was presided over by Rangamma Obul Reddy. In this conference women demanded economic freedom and equality. In the Mahasabha there was a difference of opinion between the moderates and communists and likewise in the Mahila Mahasabha also some fundamentalists disliked the idea of freedom and economic independence being given to women.

The ninth Mahasabha was held at Dharmavaram in 1942, and it was presided over by Rangamma Obul Reddy.86
The Tenth Mahila Mahasabha held at Hyderabad in 1943 was presided over by Yellapragada Sita Kumari. From this conference onwards the women decided to hold their conferences separately totally disassociating themselves from the Mahasabha of men, in order to acquire and preserve their individuality.

The Eleventh conference was held at Bhuvanagari in 1944. In the eleventh conference resolutions were passed to stop the practice of "Adapapalu" and slavery. Sri Raja Venkata Rama Reddy gave a monthly amount of Rs. 100 to start a women's paper. This was a significant contribution. The twelfth conference was held at Madikonda in 1945. The thirteenth conference was held at Kandi in 1946. After conducting 10 Mahasabhas together, women wanted their separate Mahila Mahasabha, so from the eleventh conference onwards women organized their conferences separately. But, the combined sabhas were very useful to men and women. The women who had come forward were encouraged. The participants used to bring their families to the sabhas where an uninhibited and friendly atmosphere prevailed. The interaction between prominent personalities helped to develop the perspective of women and helped in their development. They were aware of national problems, with special reference to women problems. After separating themselves
from men, the Mahila Mahasabha faced some problems and the Mahasabha also lost its charm. In 1939, Ravi Narayana Reddy, an influential young leader, came under the influence of the Communist Party of India and became its member. He was an active member of the Andhra Mahasabha and also took part in the Congress led Satyagraha in 1938. In the seventh annual meeting of the Andhra Mahasabha held in 1939, for the first time, speeches were made on national and international politics and resolutions were passed to boycott the pro-Muslim and pro-landlord political reforms proposed by the Nizam's government. These resolutions which were moved by Ravi Narayana Reddy created a controversy between the elders and youngsters who in a way represented the conservatives and radicals. The eighth meeting of the Andhra Mahasabha was presided over by Ravi Narayana Reddy himself. He talked at the meeting about capitalism and its problems and also the problem of the Muslims and the Ittehad-ul-muslimeen which had never been discussed before. It was soon after this meeting that a section of the Andhra Mahasabha identified itself with Ravi Narayana Reddy and his ideas. They began to visit the villages in the interior parts of Telangana and discuss the economic and political problems of the day.\textsuperscript{89}

The same ideological differences occurred in the women's
wing of the Mahila Mahasabha and also in the case of the women who were very seriously involved in the nationalist struggle. This naturally led to a diversion of ideas, towards the Communist movement. The subsequent annual Mahasabha witnessed the emergence of different factional groups and by 1942 the inevitable split had taken place.
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