CHAPTER - 2
EARLY REFORM TRENDS : A BRIEF SURVEY

The tradition of dissent and protest against social evils in society was not new to Andhra society. Attempts to reform some of the existing and rigid social notions were not foreign to the region and they were witnessed even during the late medieval period in this part of the Madras Presidency. This long standing tradition of internal criticism of Hindu religiosity disapproves of the notion that reform trends in 19th century were a colonial construct and influenced purely by innovations like English education and the influence of Christian missionaries. Nevertheless, these two variables were sure catalysts in enhancing the rate of reaction of reform endeavours in the 19th century. On the other hand, introduction of English education and the influence of Christian missionaries came under severe attack even during the early 19th century. The opposition to these

The protest against the contents of English education and the influence of Christian missionaries thereon date back to early 19th century in Madras Presidency. The Madras Native Community submitted a memorandum to the Court of Directors in 1846 under the title "The Wrongs and Oppressions of the Hindus". It took strong objection to the lack of interest on the part of Madras Government in promoting vernaculars, its enthusiasm in readily extending help to English schools under the guidance of missionaries, its enthusiasm in readily extending help to English schools under the guidance of missionaries and the undue interference of Christian preachers in educational learning. It stated that "the missionaries, having discovered the helplessness of gaining converts from adult population, have lately diverted their efforts to the establishment of schools for teaching the English language" and, warned the Government that "the British empire in India was chiefly maintained by the fidelity and allegiance of the Hindu community without which the foundations of the colonial state would be shaken". The memorial sparked off a great debate among official circles. For details see the Memorial of Native Community, 1846 and Public Department, Consultation Nos., 14 of 31.10.1846; 15 of 6.11.1846; 54 of 22.1.1847 and 31 of 22.5.1847, TNA. Even the low caste converts began to question the paternalist depotic role of missionaries in
extraneous developments itself formed a long saga of protest from the indigenous social segments. The ulterior motives behind these two colonial agencies lie somewhere else and were introduced as a part of cultural transaction with the important objective of circumscribing the budding social consciousness. The efforts of Orientalists probing deep into aspects of Hindu society, introduction of new mode of Western learning and the upsurge of Christian missionaries were related to the colonial interests of ideological superimposition of western ethics on Indian society which, in turn, were directly proportional to the speedy acquisition and safe retention of power by the colonial regime. Barring all these analytical considerations, Western education truly created a socially interactive place for emerging educated sections to see their society in a new light and question some of the socio-religious misconceptions, blind beliefs and social evils in their society. In doing so, they were successful in breaking the ideological influence of long standing Hindu traditions. 

For details see H.Kaveri Bai, Meenakshi’s Memoirs, Madras, 1937, p.124. The opposition to Christian missionaries and their influence on English education was to continue for long till late 19th century. By this time, all these theological controversies increasingly found expression in the columns of vernacular journals.

The role of these colonial agencies was partially realised by vernacular press by late 19th century. It was argued that the translation of (Hindu) books into English (by western scholars) provided ample scope for the Britishers to have a deeper understanding of religion and society in India. With this knowledge, they could identify all the shortcomings in the indigenous socio-religious practices. Taking advantage of this they were successful in proselytising large sections of Indian society and consequently instituting their (political) power:. For details see, Sri Prabandha Kalpavalli (Telugu Quarterly), September - November, 1881, n.p.
through themselves being subject to a 'false consciousness' under powerful colonial influence.

The rise and spread of Veerasaivism and Sri Vaishnavism within Hindu religious structure represented cataclysmic changes in the orthodox society of Medieval Andhra. Whereas Vemana and Potuluri Veerabrahmam were agents of a radical departure from existing social traditions in so far as they questioned fundamentals of Hindu religiosity. Of these two, Vemana was more radical in thinking and, perhaps, the first iconoclast of the tradition of dissent and protest. His deep forays into varna structure and the attendant criticism of the evils embedded in the same are of great significance. He criticised almost every aspect

3 The cultural synthesis that was attempted under the British was more dominated by Western ethics under the guise of civilising mission. The educated sections did not realise the historical role of western ideological invasion and, instead were full of praise for the colonial state. This 'false consciousness' resulted in many ambiguities in the mental make-up of the educated. Raja Rammohan Roy, the pioneer of Indian social awakening, too was not an exception. See Barun De, "A Biographical Perspective on the Political and Economic Ideas of Rammohan Roy" in V.C.Joshi (ed.) Rammohan Roy and the Process of Modernisation in India, New Delhi, 1975, pp.46-89. In case of Andhra, Veeresalingam believed in the "Divine Dispensation" of British Rule and G.V.Appa Rao was given to the impression that the British authority in India was an embodiment of "Dharmaraja". For details see, V.Ramakrishna, Social Reform, op.cit., pp.79-86; K.V.Ramana Reddy (KVR), Veeresalingam - Gurajada, an unpublished manuscript obtained from the author. The general theoretical framework on the concept of 'false consciousness' is discussed by K.N.Panikkar in his Presidential Address (Modern Section), Indian History Congress, 36th Session, Aligarh, 1979.

Vemana was a poet-philosopher of Medieval Andhra. He hailed from the present day Rayalaseema. He renounced material pleasures and took to ascetic life during which time he composed his famous verses. For details see, V.Ramakrishna, Social Reform, op.cit., pp.42-45. Also see, M.Pattabhirama Reddy, Vemana and His Times, Kavali, 1988.
of Hindu religiosity and disapproved of iconic worship. The
existing notions of salvation, caste rigidities, the pseudo-
religious mystics, pilgrimages and Brahminical world view were
subjected to critical scrutiny in his caustic writings. For him,
religion was a created entity by those who are ignorant of
absolute truth. Advocating monotheism, he disregarded the
practice of idol worship. He lambasts even Veerasaivism and Sri
Valshnavism for their mutual recrimination over religious
practices. He propounds the concept of one god or "Eka Brahma"
and condemns the traditional Brahmin priests for their assumption
of superiority. His views on caste are very significant as he
does not pay any heed to varna hierarchy and, instead proposes
that the attainment of real Brahmanhood is accessible to all
castes. He takes strong objection to the nomenclature of certain
castes as ‘Mala’ (Panchama). He remains a traditionalist as far
as his notions on the status of women and does not entertain any
reformist ideas on the subject. Vemana and his writings have been
alive till date and any reform effort in Andhra is not complete
without a reference to him.

See Bangorey (ed.), Vemana Padyalu (Telugu), Hyderabad, 1980,
Part.I, Verse No.102; Part.III, Verse No.182, 202.
6 Ibid., Part. I, Verse No.87.
7 Ibid., Part.II, Verse No. 96, 142; Part.III, Verse No. 167, 168.
8 Ibid., Part.III, Verse No. 174, 175, 193, 194, 196.
9 Ibid., Verse No.253, 271.
10 Ibid., Part.II, Verse No.371.
11 Ibid., Verse no.189, 221.
12 Ibid., Verse No.221.
13 Ibid., Part.II, Verse No.135; Part.III, Verse No.455.
The dawn of modern age under the British rule resulted in many changes including the spread of reform ideas by new intelligensia. The dissemination of reformist tendencies was effected at two major levels: (a) the spread of reform ideas through writing. The early debates and lectures arranged by early public societies reflect this. This apart, the writings of contemporary intellectuals, educated members of higher learning institutes and contemporary journals performed this historical role. Perhaps, this period may be identified with the immediate pre-Veerasingam era. All these activities formed the real backdrop to the succeeding period. (b) the Veerasingam era. The period represents the material aspects of reformist period. The execution and realisation of reform ideas began with Veerasingam, the pioneer of social reform in Andhra. Our estimate of early reform trends should necessarily consider these variables of spread of reform ideas at ideological level and, the consequent spread of reform activities at the material level. Coupled together, they set the stage for the speedy spread of reform ideas among other non-Brahmin groups in early 20th century and the consequent emergence of political consciousness.

In the modern era, the installation of the British on the firm footing in India and consequent changes in the socio-economic structure had a direct bearing on the indigenous society. Along with them, the introduction of English education had far reaching
effects on the mental make-up of Indians. In the light of new learning, the educated sections were drawn towards issues of social importance. The founding of early literary societies and debating clubs symbolises such a surging spirit among the educated Indians. When the Britishers established The Madras Literary Society at Madras in 1812, there were seven members from Machilipatnam on the rolls of the same. Though the Society represented the intellectual curiosity of the British people, it became recognised as something like a repository of knowledge in contemporary times.

The first major public body established by educated Indians at the Presidential Capital was the Hindu Literary Society. It sprang into existence in early 1830s wielding a greater influence on contemporary society. The Society was, in fact, stirred into action against the Christian missionary activities. Over a period of time, the Society focussed on various other issues and problems confronting people. Contemporary intellectuals like Vembaccam Raghava Charlu, Komaleswarapuram Srinivasa Pillai, Enugula Veeraswamaiah and Vennelacunti Subba Rao formed the backbone of this body. Of them, Komaleswarapuram Srinivasa Pillai and Enugula Veeraswamaiah evinced a keen interest in social problems like spread of English education, women's education and generation of social consciousness in society. The Society was a secular

\[14\] For details see, N.S.Ramaswami; Madras Literary Society, A History: 1812 - 1984, Madras, 1985, p.35 ff.

organisation and admitted members from different social segments. The programmes of Hindu Literary Society included activities like the promotion of female education, uplift of depressed classes and encouraging widow marriages. Enugula Veeraswamaiah was a 'Dubashee' in the Sadr Supreme Court at Madras. He was highly rational in his ideas and his "Kasiyatra Charitra" reflects this. He left traces of social evils in the book and condemned the contemporary evils like Sati. Around the same period, Thomas Munro, the Governor of Madras Presidency, encouraged the formation of Madras School Book Society in 1820 and, Vennelacunti Subba Rao was made a member of it. The Society was a voluntary body and used to publish books for use in English and vernacular schools throughout the Presidency. Soon, Subba Rao was asked to report on the state of education and he prepared a report on the existing educational system. It revealed that knowledge of English was regarded as an important requisite for public employment.


For details see, Vennelacunti Soob Row, *The Life of Vennelacunti Soob Row (Native of Ongole)*, Madras, 1873, p.64.

18 The list of the books prepared by the Society was printed and circulated to various towns in the Presidency. The books were supplied on order from schools. See *Vizagapatnam District Records*, Vol.4751, pp.229-33 and *Cuddapah District Records*, Vol.4604, pp.9-10, APA.

19 V.Soob Row, op.cit., p.64. The report throws light on the deficient mode of education in society and the learners were alleged to learn lessons by rote without a knowledge of the meanings. There was no sound instruction in grammar and moral lessons to the students. The knowledge of English was highly unsatisfactory and its teaching "is inconsistent with just principles of affording education". The report recommended immediate publication of grammar books, vocabularies and moral lesson text books, both in English and Vernaculars. It emphasised that English grammar books should contain necessary explanations in regional tongues which, the author believed, would definitely improve the knowledge of learners.
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Ibid. Also see, R.Suntharalingam, Politics and Nationalist

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The trend of liberal disposition was to continue uninterrupted into middle of the century and later. When the Government of Madras conducted an open competition to award Elphinstone Prize on the subject viz., "The Probable Effect of the Introduction of Railways on the habits and Manners of the Hindoos", the prize winning essay by V. Sanjiva Rao (a student of Madras University) contained advanced views on caste and inter-caste relations. The essay said that, "Experience has shown that (existing) social structure is quite incompatible with national prosperity, and advancement. Caste structure proved a drawback upon nation's progress. If India is to be ever independent and rank herself among the civilised nations of the world, an effacement of all her caste distinctions must be a grand step towards this object. Railways would effect this system...Railways will bring all classes of people together (into contact) and thus assuage or prevent ill feeling among the people. Inter-marriages and contacts may take place between inhabitants of the remotest provinces...Such a revolution must undoubtedly go far in extinguishing all national and provincial apathies amongst the Hindus and producing a national unity amongst them.”

Around the same time in the mofussil towns of the Presidency, Samineni Muthunarasimha Naidu published Hltasoochanee, the pioneering book with highly critical insights into the existing social practices.

The Fifth Annual Report from the Governors of the Madras University, 1845-46, Madras, 1847, p.42.


Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{23} Vide \textit{Report on Public Instruction, 1859-60, Appendix.C, pp.cxx-cxxiii.}
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid
The first journal in Telugu to have paid attention to existing social evils in society was *Vrittantini*. It was published in 1838 and edited by Mandigala *Venkataraya* Sastry. It was reported that the journal used to publish letters, highly critical of social maladies like nautch problem. Though the journal had a little lease of life, it was popular during the days of its publication. The Government of Madras instructed its Telugu translator to prepare and send reports on the journal and its contents. It became defunct by 1841. The next journal of repute in Telugu was *Vartamanatarangini* and was published in 1842 from Madras. In the early days of existence, it was a weekly and printed by K. *Sitayya* Naidu at Vartamanatarangini Press. It was edited by Puvvada Venkata Rao and used to contain articles by Telugu pandits like Ravipati Gurumurthy and Chinnaya Suri. The journal was a landmark in the history of Telugu Press and a few copies along with extracts have been preserved to posterity by C.P. *Brown*. They throw light on the nature and critical tone of

26  

27  

28  
Ibid.

29  
Ibid., pp. 12-14.

30  

31  

32  
C.P. Brown was officiating as the Postmaster General at Madras between 1848 and 1853. In the present capacity, he had a direct access to various journals despatched through the Post Office. Being a literary genius in Telugu, he collected and preserved a few extracts from the journal. On the break down of his health in 1853, he was replaced in the post by R.H. Williamson. For details see, *Pub.Dept.*, Consol.No.11, 15.2.1853 and No.43, 14.3.1854, TNA.
the articles, letters and, other correspondence published in its columns. The journal was in active circulation in various parts of the Madras Presidency. The figures of circulation were, perhaps, highest in the entire century in comparison with other Telugu journals published from Madras as well as mofussil regions of Andhra. The figures are available today and this was possible due to a contemporary directive from Imperial Government to all the provincial governments in the three principal Presidencies.

These figures provide us direct hints to the popularity of *Vartamanatarangini*. Pursuant to the order in 1843, the Madras Postmaster General used to send the circulation figures of various journals despatched through the Post Office. For two years till 1844, the Postmaster General despatched the circulation figures in bulk for English and vernacular journals without a mention to individual circulation figures. From 1845 onwards, the figures for each journal were submitted to the Government. For example, A.J. Bruce, the then Postmaster General in 1844, mentions in his despatch that following the "directions contained in a letter (30th September 1843) from the Officiating Secretary to the Government of India, I have the honour to transmit, herewith, for submission to the Government of India, a statement exhibiting the number of Newspapers, of all descriptions, which were, daily despatched from this office, distinguishing the Native from English language, and to observe that pamphlets and periodicals, though forwarded at the Newspaper rate of postage, are not included in the statement". See *Ibid.* No.33, dt. 23.1.1844.

The table excludes the number of copies distributed in Madras town and, counter sales, if any. The table is compiled on the basis of Pub.Dept., Consultation Nos. 58, 17.4.1846; 35, 27.4.1847; 23, 28.3.1848; 10, 8.5.1849; 30 and 31, 8.4.1850; 21, 14.10.1851; 11, 15.2.1853; 43, 14.3.1854. During this period one Persian journal (*Auckbar*) and three Tamil journals (*Desabhimani*, *Rajathany* and *Dravida Deepika*) were in circulation. While *Auckbar* continued till 1853, the Tamil journals ceased their publication at different points of time - *Desabhimani* in 1850, *Rajathany* in 1848 and *Dravida Deepika* in 1852. Of these three, *Desabhimani* was highly popular in the early days and its circulation figure crossed even 3000.
Vartamanatarangini touched upon a number of aspects of contemporary society, customs, traditions and political affairs of the country. It used to regularly publish letters from readers and, one such letter in February 1841 critically viewed the unnecessary and extravagant expenditure during the time of Hindu marriages. In course of time, the journal grew highly critical of the activities of Christian missionaries and accused them of subverting Hindu religion unscrupulously. It called upon journalists to express their views in a candid manner and enlighten people on the attitudes of British rulers. It asked people to abstain themselves from the Christian missionary activities and their educational institutions. In the history of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Copies despatched</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1845</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1846</td>
<td>1331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>1554</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1852</td>
<td>1026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1853</td>
<td>1661</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
Telugu Journalism, for the first time, it initiated a full length discussion on social evils, reform ideas and, political affairs. The Madras Government grew highly cautious of these tendencies and used to obtain information about the activities of the journal. Another credit of the journal was the introduction of spoken dialect in its columns. The dissemination of all these reform ideas was much vigorous in the post-1850 period. The later part of 19th century symbolised a break with the past. The spread of ideas was substituted by the material manifestation of the same in the form of reform activities. Kandukuri Veeresalingam emerged on the scene as the unquestioned champion of social reform activities.

The reform campaign in later part of 19th century has been best represented by Veeresalingam. The role of Veeresalingam was attested by a number of contemporary intellectuals of Andhra. He was influenced by the prevailing social conditions, the reform efforts of people like Raja Rammohan Roy and, the Brahmo Samaj movement of Bengal. He evinced a keen interest in the spread of scientific knowledge and the growth of rational thinking. He pleaded for mass education, uplift of women and spread of vernacular education. Before Veeresalingam took up the cause of women's education, missionaries and private individuals were operating in the field. The efforts of neither of these agencies were conducted, as a part of reform drive. On the part of the


Madras Government, it did not show much enthusiasm in the field of education and, the early history of educational developments in the Presidency have been marked by constant shifts, experiments and official apathy. Even by 1850’s, the sanction of Madras Government for the cause of mass education was depressingly low at Rs.43,588. while it was Rs.3,87,110 in Bengal, Rs.1,33,251 in North Western Provinces and Rs.1,50,408 in Bombay. The number of female scholars under instruction was highly dissatisfactory by 1850's and the following table is an indication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of Institutions</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ganjam</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>2965</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vizagapatnam</td>
<td>914</td>
<td>9412</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajahmundry</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>4075</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masulipatnam</td>
<td>538</td>
<td>5249</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guntur</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>7622</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nellore</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>7563</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bellary</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>6581</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuddapah</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>5892</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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For more details see, Y.Vitta Rao, *Education and Learning in Andhra under the East India Company*. Secunderabad, 1979, Appendix.IV.

Most of the institutions were traditional vernacular schools and, the learning methods were not in tune with the changing demands. However, some of them have been organised on scientific lines with facilities of instruction in English as well as vernaculars. For details see, Edward Balfour, "Remarks on the amount of education in Madras" in the *Madras Journal of Literature and Science*, Vol. XVI, 1850, pp.394-395.
The Company government did not attach much significance to education even afterwards. By 1870, there were more non-governmental schools run by missionaries and private individuals. More students were instructed in the Christian missionary educational institutions. Most of them had an ulterior motive of introducing Biblical morals into classroom teaching and this drive was consciously supported by the Government. While not belittling the missionary efforts in the field of education, it becomes necessary to state that they were neither completely altruistic nor reformative. Spread of Christianity was an unwritten wish of missionaries in all their educational endeavours. This motive has been regarded by scholars as an attempt at cultural appropriation by the colonial masters. It is true that the educational endeavours of missionaries, though religiously motivated, helped the spread of enlightenment among some sections of contemporary society by dispelling the age old superstitions.


A few contemporary Minutes on Education by Colonial officials attest this. For example, Tweedale, the Governor of Madras Presidency (1842-1848), openly supported the activities of Christian missionaries and the plans to introduce Bible into school syllabus. For details see his Minute on Education, Pub. Dept., Consil. No.29, dated 15.9.1846. However, Controversial Minutes like the present were carefully excluded from the books on education published by Colonial government. One such book is by J.F.Richey, *Selections from Educational Records, Part.II*, 1840-59, Calcutta, 1922.

This is discussed in great detail in Aparna Basu, "Colonial Education : A Comparative Approach", Presidential Address, Section.IV, Indian History Congress, 50th Session, Gorakhpur.
Veeresalingam's earliest concentration, hence, was on mass education and, in particular, women's education. In fact, the central concern of Veeresalingam's reform campaign was emancipation of women from the clutches of rigid traditions, diehard customs and religious impositions. It was generally felt that unless the status of women, who constituted half of the population, was reformed, the society wouldn't register any progress. Veeresalingam, being himself a great literary figure in Telugu, began writing a number of satires to draw public attention to social evils and expose the steady fall in social and individual values. The areas of major concentration for him were female education, bride price, infant marriages and widow marriages. Emancipation of women occupied a pivotal role in the activities of social reform movement initiated by Veeresalingam. This was understandable in the light of women being subject to age old bondage and ignorance.

In the field of women's education, the contemporary society held the notion that female education was meant for devadasis only. Such a deep rooted prejudice could not be uprooted in a dramatic manner. Added to this, the efforts of colonial government in this direction were almost non-existent till at least middle of nineteenth century. It was only Christian missionaries who pioneered initial efforts in the field of women's education in Madras Presidency. London Missionary Society, the American Missionaries and, the Church Missionary Society established
various boarding homes and day schools. A separate girls' school was opened in 1867 at Visakhapatnam and, this was soon followed by the establishment of a few other girls' schools at Vijayanagaram in 1868, Kakinada in 1868 and Dhavaleswaram in 1874.\

Of all efforts in the field of women's education, the efforts by Veeresalingam opened a new leaf in the chapter of female education in Andhra. Veeresalingam established a journal, Vivekavardhani in 1874 and it was meant to be an exclusive instrument for the propagation reform ideas. In its columns, Veeresalingam unleashed a campaign advocating the cause of women's education. The movement soon picked up necessary momentum. The echoes of Veeresalingam's efforts at Rajahmundry were soon heard at farther places of Andhra region. The campaign promoting the cause of female education spread to areas like Masulipatnam, Visakhapatnam and Bellary where separate societies were carved to cater to the needs of women's education. Local leaders and liberal-minded educated people readily joined the movement and were instrumental in spreading the message of Veeresalingam. For instance, Dasu Sriramulu of Machilipatnam was an enthusiastic supporter of the present drive.

For details see, Results of Educational Census : Madras, 1871 : A report.

47 V.Ramakrishna, Social Reform, op.cit., pp.90-91. The Vijayanagaram school was meant for Brahmin and Kshatriya girls of the Zamindari town. The Dhavaleswaram school was founded by Veeresalingam and there were no such restrictions on admission as in the case of Vijayanagaram school.

48 Ibid, pp.94-95.
By 1905, Veerasingam started a lower secondary school for girls and it was an appendage to the widows home at Rajahmundry. The school at **Bhimavaram** (Estd. 1889) became highly popular around this time and was giving instruction to girls in various subjects. Under the speedy spread of reform **activities**, various local organisations were motivated to take up the cause of women's education. The local women's organisation at Guntur established a girls’ school by 1908. The Women's Conferences too were active in propagating the cause of women's education. The proceedings and resolutions of different women's associations, both in the pre and post Veerasingam period, attest this. An association with the exclusive objective of the spread of education among women was established in 1907 and, it served the needs of aspirants in Godavari and Krishna districts in the Coastal Andhra region. Sarada Mandiram of Anantapur (Estd. 1909) was another such body endeavouring for the speedy spread of education among women. Along with all these efforts, local level social conferences, the budding caste associations and journals paid greater attention and discussed in detail the need for the growth of female education. For example, the Godavari District Social Conference, the Kurnool District Social Conference and, the Bellary District Social Conference had female education on their agenda. All these intense reform endeavours were responsible for the growth of

49 Details are discussed in the next chapter.

51 Pub. Dept., Consol. No.517, dt. 28.4.1914, TNA.

52 Ibid., Consol. No. 1298, dt. 8.10.1914.

53 Ibid., Consol. No.130 dated 27.1.1915.
proper awareness among women and instilled a greater confidence in them. The proliferation of women's journals run by women and the growth of women's associations in the early 20th century owe a lot to the earlier efforts initiated by Veeresalingam in this direction. Apart, the rate of literacy among women slowly began to register a satisfactory progress.

The other major reform activity that engaged the attention of contemporary reformers was marriage reform. This sphere of activity included three major components viz., infant marriages, **Kanyasulkam** (bride price) and widow marriages. Opposition to infant marriages and bride price was on constant rise. According to 1921 census, Ganjam, Visakhapatnam, Godavari, Krishna and Guntur districts reported maximum number of child marriages in Andhra region of Madras Presidency. For example, there were 11,904 married girls below the age of four years in these districts when the total number of such girls in the entire Presidency was 24,257.\(^{54}\) Likewise, 72,102 married girls in the age group of 5-9 years were reported from the above districts while the corresponding figure was 1,44,482 for the entire Madras Presidency. Under these conditions, a fight against the evil of child marriages was imperative for the social reformers. It was observed that infant marriages were rampant among traditional Brahmin families. It was but natural that the problem assumed dangerous dimensions as traditional and orthodox Brahmin families

\(^{54}\)Census of India, 1921, Vol. XIV, Madras.

\(^{55}\)Ibid.
had a blind devotion to some of the outdated practices like infant marriages. They always defended the practice on some religious grounds without any respect to human emotions and wishes. The protest against this was observed even before 1850. There were a few solitary voices which condemned the system of child marriages. The earliest public protestation against this practice was given due expression in a contemporary journal viz., *People’s Friend*. The journal was established by a Madras-based Telugu teacher, **Dampuru Narasaiah**, and he extensively quoted scriptural evidence in his arguments against child marriages. His efforts were soon followed by Veeresalingam who conducted the campaign against infant marriage in an organised manner. The Rajahmundry Social Reform Association soon championed the cause and conducted a vigorous movement against infant marriages. The Association fixed the marriageable ages for girls as well as boys, 14 years and 18 years respectively. Various contemporary social reform conferences that met in Andhra gave priority status to the issue of child marriages and waged a relentless struggle against this evil.

The problem of child marriages was closely related to **Kanyasulkam** or bride price. This inhuman practice could be traced to medieval times in the history of Andhra. Poverty and exacting domestic economy were the major causes for the sale and purchase of young girls. Under this practice, infant girls were given away

Cited in V.Ramakrishna, *Social Reform*, op.cit., p.104.

Ibid., p. 107.
to elderly men in the form of marriage. The natural concomitant of this practice was early widowhood for infant girls. Veeresalingam and other contemporary reformers condemned the practice in every possible way and voiced their protest in society as well as contemporary press. The Rajahmundry Social Reform Association took up the issue and made strenuous efforts to drive the evil from the society. At the another level, liberal minded intellectuals like Maharaja Ananda Gajapati of Vijayanagaram initiated serious efforts to stem down the tendency with the help of legislative measures. He moved a resolution on the floor of Madras Legislature with a passionate appeal to the Government to contemplate serious measures to curtail the practice. But, the Government acted otherwise and declined to legislative on the sensitive issue fearing that any initiative in this direction would boomerang in the face of severe opposition from the orthodox elements in the contemporary society. The reaction of the colonial government was normal and was on expected lines. The initial enthusiasm of colonial state in promoting indigenous social reform drives was gradually lost in more compelling political realities and exigencies of contemporary era which became their sole concern and, hence they were no more prepared to extend their helping hand to any effort on the part of Indians. Though devoid of support, the efforts in fighting the issue of bride price continued without any interruption. The evil was attacked from all directions and the magnum opus of Gurajada Appa Rao, *Kanyasulkam* (Telugu play), was published by late 19th century
which was a direct attack on the practice. The play and its continuous stage performances created a historical awareness among people against the inhuman practice.

The problem of young widows was another social evil that attracted the attention of reformers. It was more confined to upper castes of Hindu society and, in particular, Brahmins. The problem was, with less intensity, visible in other non-Brahmin castes like Kshatriyas, Velamas, Vaisyas and Viswabrahmins. As stated earlier, infant marriages served as a potent reason for the growth of young widows in society. Steeped in poverty, the sale of young girls (Kanyasulkam) was rampant and most often infant girls were married to elderly people. These unequal marriages soon resulted in the growth of infant widows whose plight was miserable. Subject to domestic impositions, these young widows were given to household drudgery and were not allowed to take part in any worldly affairs. Gurajada Appa Rao described their plight in his Kanyasulkam:

"She leaves her bed at A.M. four,
And sweeps the dust from off the floor,
And heaps it all behind the door, The Widow!"

It has been reviewed by one of the outstanding literary figures in Telugu, Sri Sri that Kanyasulkam is, perhaps the first of its kind in the history of Indian literature which reflected contemporary social realities and devoted to the cause of reform. For details see G.V.Appa Rao, Kanyasulkam (Telugu), Jayanti Publications, Vijayawada, Eleventh Edition, 1995. See the Review article by Sri Sri, p.13.

G.V.Appa Rao, op.cit., p.69.
Of wondrous size she makes the cake,
And takes much pains to boil and bake,
And eats it all without mistake, The Widow!

Through fasts and feasts she keeps her health,
And pie on pie she stores by stealth,
Till the town talk of her wealth, The Widow!

According to census figures, widows accounted for 217. of female population in the Madras Presidency and, 127. of these widows were reported to be under the age of thirty years. The problem of these young widows attracted the attention of all rational and liberal elements from different caste groups. They initiated an intense campaign against the problem of widows. Kandukuri Veeresalingam gives a vivid description of young widows in his novel *Rajasekhara Charitramu*. Prior to Veeresalingam, a few others made sincere attempts in attacking the problem. People like Raghunatha Rao and Chentsal Rao put in their humble efforts at Madras and worked hard to generate necessary awareness in society. Soon the Widow Remarriage Association was established and published a few pamphlets including a tract on the desirability of widow re-marriages.

The significant contribution to widow marriage campaign was made by Veeresalingam in the Madras Presidency. He delivered a critical and comprehensive lecture on the issue of widow marriages at Rajahmundry in 1879. The lecture was symbolic of the actual beginning of reform activities. During the same year, Veeresalingam organised Widow Marriage Association and embarked upon an intensive tour of different places in Andhra. One of the most significant aspects of the present drive of Veeresalingam was the participation of students on a large scale throughout his campaign. Following all these initial endeavours, he performed the first widow marriage in 1881 and the second marriage also was performed during the same year. The performance of these widow marriages resulted in a great stir and created commotion among the orthodox sections of society. On the eve of widow marriages at Rajahmundry, 500 students of Veeresalingam were on constant vigil throughout the night fearing physical assault on him. These instances indicate the strong and pervasive influence of contemporary social reform activities of Veeresalingam. On the other hand, the orthodox sections in society began a social boycott of all those connected with the widow marriage movement. The strength of their opposition paled into insignificance very soon before the rapidly spreading influence of Veeresalingam's campaign. By 1903, there were 63 widow marriages reported from

Ibid., pp. 156-160.

For details vide, Valluri Suryanarayana Rao, Suryanarayaneeyamu (Autobiography in Telugu), Kovur, 1936, pp. 165-167. Suryanarayana Rao was a student of Veeresalingam at Rajahmundry. Though the present number of students may be an exaggerated figure, it is a proof to the slow spread of reform activities among students.
Andhra. Of these marriages, 57 were among Brahmins, 3 each among Vaisyas and other castes

Social Purity Movement formed an important stream of social reform activity during 19th century. Raghupati Venkata Ratnam was instrumental in the growth of the movement. The central concern of social purity campaign was Devadasi or Nautch problem. Devadasi system had been long associated with temples in south India. The loss of feudal or royal patronage in course of time resulted in some undesirable developments among Devadasis. The system has been gradually reduced into prostitution under the new socio-economic conditions created by the colonial rule. Nautch parties became an order of the day at the time of festive occasions, social gatherings and marriages. The upper echelons of society patronised this practice. Gurajada Appa Rao vividly potrays how upper castes in society were passionately drawn towards a nautch girl in his *Kanyasulkam* and ends the play with a positive note showing the impact of reform campaign of contemporary social reformers on the system of nautch. The problem of nautch girls has two internal dimensions. On one hand, all the upper castes were attracted towards nautch girls without any major differences of opinion among them like in the case of child and widow marriages. This had a necessary implication for contemporary reformers that they had to effect a radical change in the perception of those people and drive them away from the present social evil. On the other hand, reformation and

Cited in V.Ramakrishna, *Social Reform, op.cit.*, p.123.
rehabilitation of nautch girls. While Raghupathi was successful in effecting a change in the mental attitudes of the people, Muthulakshmi Reddy and Yaminipurna Tilakam championed the cause of their reform and rehabilitation in the early 20th century. The campaign against Devadasi system was given a firm shape by Raghupathi during his student days at Madras. Like Veeresalingam, he too undertook a rigorous tour of various parts of the then Andhra region and exhorted people on the necessity to curtain the evil. He gave a clarion call to uproot the system to lead a decent life. On his part, Veeresalingam provided the support of this pen to the social purity drives of Venkataratnam Naidu. He published a chain of articles in his journal, Vivekavardhani. Other contemporary journals too extended their moral support to the reform campaign and propagated, in their columns, the necessity to address the problem.

The reform efforts during the period of Veeresalingam were operating under many constraints. At the outset, most of the reform efforts were confined to orthodox Brahmin families as the Brahminical households served, over a period of time, as ideal breeding grounds for various blind beliefs and social evils. Once adopted in their households, they gradually spread to other social segments in Hindu society. Hence, the concentration of people like Veeresalingam on Brahminical households. Even literary works like Kanyasulkam projects the same state of affairs. The reform
activity was largely confined to urban areas covering small percentage of urban population, mostly drawn from upper castes and, in particular, Brahmins. The rise of revivalist backlashes against social reform endeavours and the blind opposition from orthodox sections of society checked the pace of reform activity. Orthodox and traditional elements always created hurdles in the path of reform endeavours. These interruptions and interferences necessitated a strong line in defence as well as offence from the side of reformist leaders. Though Veeresalingam provided a dynamic leadership to the entire campaign, his absence from the field badly effected the same and there was no second line of leadership to shoulder the responsibility. For instance, the reform movement slackened when Veeresalingam was away at Madras between 1897 and 1904. Again, the movement displayed signs of relaxation when he diverted his attention to the organisational aspects of Hitakarini Samaj after 1910. All these contemporary developments hint us at one important aspect that the movement always centred round dynamic leadership. In the absence of alternative line of leadership, the vigour of the social reform activity was gradually lost. Until the early decades of 20th century, when many of Veeresalingam’s students and others influenced by his reform endeavours, took up the cause of reform among different caste groups, the reform activity of Veeresalingam era was lying low.

The presence of colonial regime and its efforts in legitimising their power in India served as a major hurdle to the activities of educated intellectuals. In the initial phase, the
colonial state extended its helping hand to reform activities and tried to impress on Indians that social reform was their cup of tea too. The colonial initiative had a different motive. It was to circumscribe the newly emerging social awareness into an orbit of colonial cultural ethics. The state readily assumed a historical role of a good Samaritan. Under this influence the early reformers, though represented a break with the traditional values of indigenous society, were invariably subject to a 'false consciousness'. The implication of colonial role in the entire process was to be realised only during the course of developments in 20th century.

Acting under all these constraints, the reform efforts of early social reformers might appear insignificant and halting in their nature. These efforts had to contend with changing attitudes of colonial regime and its cultural hegemony as well as the indigenous orthodox sections. The partial success of early reform campaign was due to these constraints. Yet, the reform efforts left behind them a great legacy. It was a legacy of the spread of social awareness throughout the society. It was a legacy that instituted ideas of self-respect and self-confidence on a firm footing in the minds of people. It was a legacy that provided motivating zeal and driving force to later day developments in early 20th century. That the first generation of leaders in Andhra, both reform and political, were either direct students of Veeresalingam or influenced by his reform campaign, is a fitting tribute and a token of success to the developments in 19th century.
The course of events during early 20th century presented a different social set up to the progress of reform activities of early period. They were overshadowed by the surging national movement. It can be seen that reform drives remained strong undercurrents throughout the period of our present study. The indomitable presence of freedom struggle did not leave an exclusive social space for reformers. In fact, people with social reform background were in the forefront of freedom struggle. The two activities were so complementary in their roles that any water-tight compartmentation between the two is not possible. Yet it was a positive interaction. Unlike the colonial intervention, it was reform-friendly. Despite the sweeping influence and emotional appeal of freedom movement, the reform endeavours in the early 20th century were more organised. The following developments are noteworthy:

a) The spread of reform ideas was equally evident in all sections of society unlike the 19th century efforts which, most often were confined to upper castes.

b) The reform endeavours were given a solid organisational shape and firm social footing. The growth of caste associations and their intense intra-caste reform activity is a clinching evidence.

c) The growth of alternate leadership in the reform campaign. The democratic decentralisation of leadership was a major development. Leaders from different caste groups emerged on the social scene and shoudered the responsibility of effecting a change in the mental make up of people in general and particularly
those belonging to respective castes. For instance, the activities of Atmuri Lakshminarasimham and Darisi Chenchaiah (Vaisyas), Kumara Yachama Naidu (Velama), Suryadevara Raghavalah Choudari and Tripuraneni Ramaswami Choudari (Kammas), Chinta Raghuunatha Reddy and C.R.Reddy (Reddy), Dommeti Venkata Reddy (Setti Balija) and Kondiparthi Veerabhadracharyulu (Viswabrahmin) symbolised the multi-dimensional aspect of reform leadership. The monolithic nature of leadership of reform campaign during the 19th century paved the way for a smooth emergence of plural leadership in early 20th century. This decentralisation helped in the consolidation of reform endeavours during the period of our study.

d) the growth of women's movement, separate women's associations and the intense struggle against all social evils confronting women in society is a significant historical development. Leaders from among women emerged on the scene and concerned themselves with issues like education, infant and widow marriages, bride price, nautch problem and dowry. The central concern of Veeresalingam's reform campaign has been consolidated in the present period.

The foregoing developments in the 20th century provided solid strength to reform activities conveying an unmistakable impression that the zeal for reform was not lost. The national movement overshadowed it, but did not devour the same. The reform activities and the awareness generated from it were, in fact, instrumental in creating the necessary political consciousness in contemporary society.