CHAPTER VI

PRARTHANA SAMAJ MOVEMENT IN ANDHRA
Prarthana samaj centres in the Districts of Andhra

GODAVARY DISTRICT
1. RAJAHMUNDY
2. KAKINADA
3. PITHAPURAM
4. NARSAPUR
5. ELLORE
6. BHIMAVARM
7. KUMUDAVALLI
8. RELANGI
9. YANAM
10. RAMACHANDRAPURAM
11. MANDAPETA
12. MADHAVARAM
13. PEDdapuram

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11. MANDAPETA
12. MADHAVARAM
13. PEDdapuram

GANJAM DISTRICT
1. BENHAMPORE
2. PARLAKIMIDI
3. BOYAVANI
4. GOLABANDA
5. SURLA
6. GOPALPUR
7. CHATRAPUR

GANJAM DISTRICT
1. BENHAMPORE
2. PARLAKIMIDI
3. BOYAVANI
4. GOLABANDA
5. SURLA
6. GOPALPUR
7. CHATRAPUR

VISAKHAPATNAM DIST.
1. VISAKHAPATNAM
2. VIJAYANAGARAM
3. BHMILIPATNAM

MACHILIPATNAM DIST.
1. MACHILIPATNAM
2. GUDIVADA
3. VJAYAWADA

GUNTUR DIST.
1. GUNTUR
2. E PURUPALEM
3. VETAPALEM

NELLORE DIST.
1. NELLORE

CENSUS OF INDIA, 1931, MADRAS PRESIDENCY VOL XIV PART I,
(MADRAS 1932 BY M.W.M. YEATS)
Social reform in Andhra went hand in hand with religious reform. As social evils had come to acquire the sanction of religion, it was found necessary to reform religious practices also. Religion, as it came to be practiced during this period, was overgrown with rituals and the society was dominated by priests to an extreme.

1. Several leading reformers of the 19th century explained the inter-connection that existed between religion and social usages and pleaded that for the reform of society, religious reform was essential. Rammohun Roy, for example, wrote: "I regret to say that the present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interest. The distinction of castes introducing innumerable divisions and sub-divisions among them has deprived them of patriotic feeling, and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprise .... It is, I think, necessary that some change should take place in their religion, at least for the sake of their political advantage and social comfort". See J.C. Ghose, ed. The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy (Allahabad, 1906), P.929. Mahadev Govind Ranade stated in this context that "...no where were religious practices so much mixed up with social customs as in India". Ranade, Religious and Social Reform, op. cit., P.XIV.

Speaking on the same subject Keshub Chandra Sen stated: "Social reformation must be based upon religion. It is true that the reformation of social customs and usages may, to a great extent, be accomplished independently of religion; but it is not true that social reformation can be thorough and complete without religious advancement....Superstitious customs spring from superstitious ideas; remove those ideas by planting in their place true faith, and you displace those customs by pure and refined ones....Social reformation must therefore be preceded by and based upon religious reformation. This has been adopted by the Samaj as the mainspring of all measures of social reform...." See Keshub Chunder Sen Social Reformation in India (Calcutta, n.d.), PP.6-7.

This small pamphlet was originally the address delivered at the Bhawanipur Brahma Samaj on February 21, 1863 and reproduced in the Indian Mirror under the title: "The Brahma Samaj and Social Reformation".
degree. The urban-based educated middle classes who spearheaded the social reform movements, took the initiative in the field of religious reform too. They felt the simultaneous need to reform religion along with the outdated social customs to consolidate the achievements made in the sphere of social reform. In its essentials the Prarthana Samaj movement in Andhra was a part of religious reform movements like Brahmoism in Bengal. However, these movements went beyond the strict scope of religious reform and strove for the reordering of social institutions and relations. Therefore, social reforms became an integral part of religious reform movements in Andhra as elsewhere in India. For example, the struggle of the reformers against the system of caste inequalities was as intensive as their total condemnation of idolatry. Writing on this, Pandit Sivanath Sastry stated: "In India religion is intimately connected with social life; and you cannot maintain the integrity of the present religious system without

2. A.R. Desai stated that this was due to the fact that religious and social structures in India were "organically interwoven". See A.R. Desai, op. cit., p. 251. Also see K.P. Karunakaran, Continuity and Change in Indian Politics (New Delhi, 1964), p. 24, wherein he stated "...as many leaders of modern India realised, it was also difficult to separate social reforms from religious reforms and...that was why social reforms were often related to religious reforms in modern India and leaders like Raja Rammohan Roy, Dayanand Saraswathi and Syed Ahmed Khan and movements like the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj were concerned with both the social and religious questions of the day".
securing at the same time of the permanence of the old social order.... In tune with the changing conditions in society under the British the reformers attacked the concept of authority and introduced the primacy of the private conscience in matters of religion. Acting under the twin impact of changing social conditions and western liberalism, these reformers did not completely break away from the Hindu Philosophy. What they endeavoured to achieve was to restore Hinduism to its original purity, based on the tenets of the Upanishads and the Brahma-Sutras.

3. Prof. Sivanath Sastry, Theism, op. cit., P.7. He further stated that "Brahmoism is essentially a social religion.... it considers the home as the nursery of human virtue, and as the seat and centre of all moral and spiritual influences", and hence its programme of uplift of women. Ibid., P.34. See also in this connection, Hem Chandra Sarkar, The Religion of the Brahmo Samaj (Calcutta, 1931, first edn. 1906), Chapter IX, "The Social Ideal of the Brahmo Samaj", pp.65-70.

4. Rammohun, for example, never thought of any radical changes in Hindu religion or society. What he wanted to do was to reform the glaring abuses of Hindu society and religion on the basis of rationalism, "The ground which I took in all my controversies was, not that of opposition to Brahminism, but to a perversion of it; and I endeavoured to show that the idolatry of the Brahmins was contrary to the practice of their ancestors and the principles of the ancient books and authorities, which they profess to reverse and obey". S.D. Collet, The Life and Letters of Raja Rammohun Roy (Calcutta, 1962, first edn. 1900), P.498. (Appendix VIII. Rammohun Roy's Autobiographical Letter). Also see Miss Collet's views (mentioned in "Brahmo year Book", 1862) on this. She stated: "The Brahmo idea of Brahmo being substantially the same as that of the Hindu in general, especially as those of the writers of the Upanishads, which every Hindu regards with veneration, and since the Brahmos have a religious manual consisting of selections from the Shastras only, and a form of religious service containing texts from the Vedas, also a ritual containing as much of the ancient form as could be preserved... and moreover, Brahmoism being the legitimate result of the higher teachings of the Vedas, it is evident that while calling ourselves Theists, we can conscientiously call ourselves also Hindus in religious belief". Cited in P.N. Bose, Vol.I, op. cit., P.133.
form of worship, devoid of idolatry and other external forms of religion, both individual and congregational, was advocated by them. In their controversies with the orthodox sections of society they quoted extensively from the Smritis and Shastras to prove that the social evils were later accretions and hence not valid. These new ideas in the sphere of religion gathered strength among the literate sections of the urban society who became the base of the new religious reform movements like the Brahma Samaj.

A beginning was made in this direction at Madras, in the year 1864 when Keshub Chandra Sen visited Madras, in the course of his missionary tour of India, and delivered lectures on Brahmoism. His visit was warmly welcomed and his lectures were eagerly listened to. Under the influence of these lectures which stimulated religious inquiry, the

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5. Sivanath Sastry in his History of Brahma Samaj (Calcutta, 1919), Vol.I, P.150 mentioned that in the beginning of the year 1864 letters were received in Calcutta from Bombay and Madras, with a request to send Brahmo missionaries. He stated further that the news of the Brahmo movement in Bengal spread to the other provinces and they were anxious to listen to the new gospel.
'Veda Samaj' was established in the same year. It held weekly prayer meetings and started a monthly journal called 'Tatva Bodhini'. The leaders of the 'Veda Samaj' were, V. Rajagopalacharyulu (President), and P. Subbarayalu

6. The audience at Madras were so much impressed by his eloquence and dynamism that they called him the "Thunderbolt of Bengal". See P.N. Bose, Vol. I, op. cit., PP.148 and 171. Bipin Chandra Pal wrote in his memoirs that Keshub Chandra Sen was the first educated Bengalee to visit Madras in this regard. That visit was followed by that of Bhai Amritlal Bose who made an extensive tour of the Madras Presidency in connection with the missionary propaganda of the new Brahma Samaj of India, and established a Brahma congregation at Bangalore. See Bipin Chandra Pal's Memoirs, op. cit., P.386. That the Veda Samaj at Madras was established under the influence of the Brahma Samaj was mentioned by several others. See for example Sri Velugoti Sarvagnakumara Yachendra, Sarvamathasarasangrahama (Telugu), (Chennai-puri, Madras, 1889), P.29.

7. Several sources mentioned these facts, of which two deserve mention here. See C. Govindarajulu Naidu, A Short History of the Brahma Samaj (Madras, 1895). Though this is a small book (with no page numbers), it contains a clear account of the Brahma Samaj in the South till the close of the 19th century. The other source is a few verses (16 in number) written by Veeresalingam under the caption 'Brahma Padyachandrika' depicting the beginnings of Brahma Samaj at Madras. These verses are reproduced in his biography written by T. Venkatasubbarao, op. cit., PP.106-107, and they were first published as a supplement in 'Brahmaprakasica' (Brahmo journal published from Madras). The journal, to begin with, was published in Tamil and later on simultaneously in Telugu too.
Chetty (Secretary), the two leading members of the Madras bar. 8 The covenants of the Veda Samaj professed the worship of "the one only without a second" and vowed "to practise a ritual agreeable to the spirit of pure Theism, and free from the superstitions and absurdities which at present characterizes Hindoo ceremonies". 9 While giving up idolatry, however, they did not want to give offence to their countrymen by relinquishing customs which were not directly immoral, though they decided not to observe such as those which were considered as absolutely wrong. 10 The other covenants spoke about discarding of caste distinctions, boycotting mautch parties, promoting remarriage of widows, encouraging female education, and liberally contributing to the publication of tracts and prayer books in vernaculars. 11

As the members of the Samaj still held to the ancient sacred

8. C. Govindarajulu Naidu, op. cit., (no page). The movement thrived during their life time and several other Samajas were founded in towns like Tanjore, Coimbatore, Salem, and Bangalore. It may be noted that not even one Samaj was established in the Andhra region. Also see Vignanasarasvamui, op. cit., Vol. III, P.574. Mary Carpenter, during her stay at Madras, met Subbarayalu Chetty (the Secretary of the Samaj) and his wife Thayarammal. Writing about the Samaj she stated that they had a place "for the worship of the one and only true God", and "held regular religious meetings every Wednesday at six o'clock". See Mary Carpenter, op. cit., PP.155–56.

9. Members of the Samaj were asked to sign a membership form which contained all the covenants of the Samaj. See for full text of the covenants, P.N. Bose, Vol. I, op. cit., PP.171–72.

10. See covenant No.3, Ibid.

11. Ibid.
books, the Vedas and other sacred Hindu literature, they called their Samaj by the name 'Veda Samaj'. Though this Samaj made a good beginning in the sphere of religious reform in the South, it was still an immature attempt. The two prominent members of the Samaj mentioned above died in 1868 and after a while the Samaj was crippled.

Around 1869, Chembeti Sridharalu Naidu of Cuddalore became the Secretary of the Veda Samaj and according to Miss Collet, he "had not the advantages of position and education which had been possessed by his predecessors, but he appears to have had a much stronger grasp of theistic principles, and not feeling satisfied with the half measure of a 'Veda Samaj', he at length succeeded in converting the society into the Brahma Samaj of Southern India".12 He prepared the new covenants, in the true spirit of Brahmoism.

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12. The Modern Review, January 1884 cited in P.N. Bose, Vol. I, op. cit., P.172. Sridharalu Naidu was drawn into the Brahma Samaj. Later on he went to Calcutta (in 1865) and stayed there for about nine months at the Brahma Samaj headquarters and learnt Bengali (he already knew English and Sanskrit) and gained competent knowledge of Brahmosim and returned to Madras in the beginning of 1866. See Sivanath Sastry, History of the Brahma Samaj (Calcutta, 1974, first edn. 1911), PP.109-10. One of the Brahma missionaries wrote about Sridharalu Naidu in 'Sunday Mirror', September 6, 1874: "Those who have once seen him in Calcutta can... never forget him.... He lived with our missionary friends.... We well remember the solemn occasion when... with tears and supplication along with a solemn lifting of our eyes to God we gave him heartiest farewell, and like the apostle of old, we saw him...ship bound for the field of his labour (Madras)". Cited in C. Govinda-rajulu Naidu, op. cit. Except the passing references made to him in a few books and the facts mentioned above, we have no knowledge about his family and educational background. In the book cited above, the author stated that he was a poor man who had to dispose of his small property to meet the travel expenses to go to Calcutta.
which replaced the old ones of the Veda Samaj. The new covenants were:

1. I will worship, through love of Him and the performance of the works He loveth, the Supreme Being, the Creator, the Preserver, the Giver of Salvation, the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, the Blissful, the God, the formless, the one only without a second, and none of the created objects.

2. I will look for Divine wisdom and instruction to the Book of Nature, and to that Intuition and Inspiration of God which give all men understanding. I do not consider any book or any man as the infallible guide in religion, but I do accept with respect and pleasure any truth contained in any book or uttered by any man without paying exclusive reverence to any.

3. I believe in the immortality and progressive state of the soul and in a state of conscious existence succeeding life in this world and supplementary to it.

13. According to Sivanath Sastry the change was mainly due to the visit of P.C. Mozoomdar, the well-known missionary of the Brahma Samaj of India, to Madras in 1870 who roused a fresh interest in the Brahma Samaj by his sermons and discourses and under his influence "the old compromising covenant of the Veda Samaj was changed for a new one, binding the new-comer to give up idolatry and also to cultivate the habit of daily prayer". See Sivanath Sastry, History of the Brahma Samaj, op. cit., PP.460-81. See for the full text of the new covenants, P.N. Bose, Vol.I, op. cit., PP.172-73.
4. I will daily direct my mind in prayer with devotion and love unto the Supreme Being.

5. I will endeavour strictly to adhere to the duties and virtues of humanity, justice, veracity, temperance, and chastity.

6. Believing as I do in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, I will discard all sectarian views and animosities, and never offer any encouragement to them.

7. Should I through folly commit sin, I will endeavour to be atoned unto God by earnest repentance and reformation.

8. Every year, and on the occasion of every happy domestic event of mine, I will bestow gifts upon the Southern India Brahma Samaj."

The above covenants are religious in their nature and scope and the early emphasis in the covenants of the Veda Samaj on social reform was conspicuously absent here.14 Sridharalu Naidu was deeply engaged in the activities of

14. As these covenants were prepared by Sridharalu Naidu, a devoted Brahma trained at Calcutta, they reflected, perhaps, his theistic bias, even though it was never stated that he or the South Indian Brahma Samaj was indifferent or opposed to social reforms.
the South Indian Brahmo Samaj. Naidu produced Brahmo literature within the reach of his countrymen. He translated Debendranath Tagore's standard work, the 'Brahmo Dharma', into Telugu and Tamil and published a Tamil translation of Keshub's 'Model Form of Divine Worship'. He revived the Brahmo monthly journal, 'Tatva Bodhini', and conducted it as "the organ of all the Brahmoists in Southern India".

Naidu was the first 'amushtanic' Brahmo in South India. He undertook missionary tours to several towns in South India like Bangalore, Mangalore, Tanjore, Trichnopoly and many other towns "sowing quietly and perseveringly the seeds of Theism". Throughout this period he suffered greatly from penury. Nevertheless he never complained nor informed his friends at Calcutta about his predicament. He died in an

15. There was, besides Sridharalu Naidu, another active member of the late Veda Samaj who took a leading part in Brahmo Samaj activities during this period. He was Casi Viswanatha Mudelian, a retired judge, and author of many Tamil plays and other writings through which he exposed the superstitions and vices prevalent in Southern India. He also edited a small vernacular journal called the 'Brahmo Dipika'. However, he turned into a pantheist before his death (October 1871) discarding Brahmoism. See for particulars, C. Govindara-julu Naidu, op. cit.

16. The translation of Brahmo Dharma was the first book published in Telugu on Brahmoism, Ibid.

17. Ibid.
accident in January 1874.\textsuperscript{18} Again the Samaj went into
oblivion till 1878 when it was revived after the split in
the Brahma Samaj. The South Indian Brahma Samaj at Madras
was affiliated to the Sadharana Brahma Samaj and was forma-
ally inaugurated on June 17, 1882. Its Secretary was Manava
Butchaiah Pantulu who imbued the Samaj with life and dyna-
mism.\textsuperscript{19} His ambition was to give the Samaj a local habita-
tion and to start a journal. He started the journal, the
'Brahmo Public Opinion' and published it in English, Telugu
and Tamil.\textsuperscript{20} Butchaiah Pantulu was helped in his efforts

\textsuperscript{18} It may be noted that the funerals of the previous secre-
taries of the Veda Samaj were conducted with traditional
rites where as Sridharalu Naidu left instructions before
he died that, "My funeral should be simple, with only
Brahmic prayers....I die a devoted Brahma". Cited in
Ibid.

\textsuperscript{19} Butchaiah Pantulu, a Telugu scholar, belonged to Krishna
district in the Northern Circars of Andhra. Probably
by reason of the humble circumstances of his family he
had not received the benefit of higher education. He
was a teacher in a Government school at Madras and he
gave up this post when he was drawn towards the Brahma
Samaj and became a full time worker of it. See for an
account of his life and achievements, the article "The
lato M. Butchaiah Pantulu" by R. Venkatasivudu in the
Indian Social Reformer, Vol.XII, No.28 (1901-1902).
Bipin Chandra Pal met him during his trip to Bangalore
via Madras. He wrote that, "There was already a small
Brahmo Samaj at Madras. A Telugu Brahmin of exceptionally
simple habits and devout soul was the principal member
of this Samaj. He was its Secretary and minister. Pandit
Shivanath Sastry knew this gentleman very intimately.
His name was Butchaiah Pantulu (sic)". Bipin Chandra
Pal's memoirs, \textit{op. cit.}, P.393. Sivanatha Sastry stated
that Butchaiah Pantulu was "unflinching in his courage,
and true to his convictions. He was the first man in
Madras who discarded his sacred Brahmoical thread...
and exposed himself to terrible persecution". See
Sivanath Sastry, \textit{History of the Brahma Samaj, op. cit.},
PP.463–84.

\textsuperscript{20} R. Venkatasivudu, "Butchaiah Pantulu", \textit{op. cit.}
by people like Raghupati Venkataratnam, who was then a
student at Madras and who was actively drawn towards the
Brahmo Samaj through the efforts of Pantulu. They got up
a regular congregation in the city of Madras. To fulfil
his other ambition of providing a 'mandir' (building) to
the Samaj, he undertook a tour to Calcutta, Bombay and
other parts of India and with the help of collections he
made, purchased a building in Black Town (later called
George Town), Madras, and the same was consecrated in
January 1885 and the consecration service was conducted by
Sivanath Sastry. The membership of the Samaj, including
that of mofussil areas, was 90. The Samaj took up social
work by maintaining the Brahmo Ragged School for orphans,
Ammon Roy Night School, and a Theistic Library. The
'Fellow Worker' and the 'Brahmo Public Opinion' were the
two monthly English journals of the Samaj and it owned a
printing press called "The Brahmo Orphan Asylum Press".

21. The Indenture of the 'mandir' was passed by the South
Indian Brahmo Samaj on December 23, 1884 and the same
was registered on the next day. The document clearly
spelt out the rules and regulations in relation to the
organisation of the 'mandir'. See for example, The
Trust Deed of the Madras Brahmapasanamandir (Madras,
1885), PP.5-7.

22. The building cost nearly Rs.6,000/- . Divine service was
held every Sunday evening. Tamil or Telugu was genera-
ly the language used, even though English sermons were
occasionally delivered. See C. Govindaraju Naidu,
op. cit. Veeresalingam, when he was at Madras (1897-
1904), provided the Samaj at Parusuwalkam, a suburb of
Madras, with a building.

23. Ibid. Besides the main Samaj in George Town, there was
a Samaj in Parusuwalkam and a Prayer Union in Triplicane,
both being suburbs of Madras.
Besides Madras, Samajas were reported to have been established at Bangalore,²⁴ Coimbatore in Tamilnadu, and a few places in the Andhra area.²⁵

Thus the combined efforts of Telugu and Tamil workers at Madras contributed to the origin and growth of Brahmo Samaj in South India in the last two decades of the 19th century. Butchaiah Pantulu translated the 'Brahmo Dharma' of Devendranath Tagore and took in hand the laudable work of translating and publishing in Telugu all the important Upanishads and Dharma Shastras. Being a Telugu man he toured Andhra and established contacts with reformers like

²⁴ According to Bipin Chandra Pal the first Brahmo congregation at Bangalore was established by Bhai Amritlal who visited the South after Keshub Chandra Sen's visit. Rao Bahadur Aroot Narayanaswamy Mudaliar was one of the early associates of the Brahmo Samaj at Bangalore. Sivanath Sastry, a friend of Narayanaswamy, recommended Bipin Pal to the post of headmaster of his High School to train young men along the lines of reform. See Bipin Chandra Pal's Memoirs, op. cit., pp.386-88. During Veeresalingam's stay at Madras, he paid regular visits to Bangalore in the capacity of the President of the South Indian Brahmo Samaj and even provided a building for the Samaj there from out of his personal earnings. See Veeresalingam, Sweeya, P.II, op. cit., P.130.
In 1922, after the death of Veeresalingam, a hall was built by Bangalore Brahmo Samaj in the cantonment area and was dedicated to his memory and came to be known as Veeresalingam Memorial Hall. See Indian Social Reformer, Vol.XXXXII, No.5.

²⁵ C. Govindarajulu Naidu, op. cit. No details are mentioned about these centres. Also no Andhra reformer referred to the existence of the Samaja's prior to 1878, the year during which the first Prarthana Samaj was established at Rajahmundry.
Veeresalingam and preached Brahmo ideas in Andhradesa. 26

The preceding account has shown that the Brahmo ideals which took root in Madras city began to spread to several parts in South India including a few places in Andhra. In the Andhra region, as in Maharashtra, it took the name of the Prarthana Samaj. 27 The reasons for this were not spelt out by the initiators of the Prarthana Samaj movement like Veeresalingam and Venkataratnam.

Though attempts at religious reform were made in Madras from 1864 onwards it was not until 1878 that the

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26. However, owing to differences with the other members of the Samaj at Madras over financial matters, he broke away from it and remained independent. He edited and published a bilingual journal 'Hindujana Samakarini' a friend of reform movements and owned a press which he named after Ram Mohun Roy. Subsequently, Veeresalingam, a close friend of Butchaiah Pantulu, made attempts to bridge the differences among the members of the Madras Samaj, but they yielded no fruit. See R. Venkatasivudu, "Butchaiah Pantulu", op. cit. Even though he broke off officially from the Madras Brahma Samaj, he kept himself in touch with the Andhra reformers and was extending a helping hand, both through the columns of his journal and personal efforts, to the social reform activities in Andhra. This fact was illustrated with examples earlier. In this connection See R. Venkatasivudu, Samasriti, op. cit., PP.23-28.

27. Several Samajas that were established were called by the name Prarthana Samajas, though one or two Samajas like the Kakinada Samaj changed its name into Kakinada Brahma Samaj in 1910.
first Prarthana Samaj was started at Rajahmundry by Veerasingam. The year 1878 witnessed the second split in the Brahmo Samaj and Sivanath Sastry led the group which formed into the Sadharana Brahmo Samaj. The schism, the religious controversies and the exclusiveness of the Brahmos in the Bengal Society, discarding their caste and coming to be considered a separate 'sect' might have prompted the Andhra reformers to adopt a different name, though in essential religious principles and faith it was the same as Brahmoism. In this they followed the example of Maharashtra. Mahadev Govind Ramade gave expression to this when

28. See Kakinada Brahmo Samaj Sixtieth Year Special Number 1888-1949 (hereafter referred as Kakinada Brahmo Samaj History), (Kakinada, 1949), P.11. The souvenir contains a detailed account of the history of Brahmo Samaj of Kakinada town. As Kakinada became, after 1905, when Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu became the Principal of the Pithapur Rajah's College there, the centre of Andhra Brahmo Samaj movement, this account covers the general history of the Andhra Brahmo movement as well. Even the Kakinada Samaj was called the Prarthana Samaj till the year 1910. Nevertheless the movement came to be known, for all practical purposes, as the Brahmo Samaj in Andhra. However, I would like to adopt the name of Prarthana Samaj in my thesis as it was known officially as Prarthana Samaj only. The account on Kakinada Samaj, I was told by Sri Tarakam alias Sri K. Ramasastry, a contemporary and close follower of Venkataratnam at Kakinada and one of the few leading and living Brahmos in Andhra today, was prepared by K. Suryanarayana, the Secretary of the 60th year celebrations, who was also the author of the biography of Raghupati Venkataratnam, (in English and Telugu). Minutes of the interview with Tarakam at Kakinada on 27-12-78. I am extremely thankful to Tarakam for sparing me rare and valuable materials concerning the Andhra Brahmo Samaj movement including the old numbers of the 'Dharmasadhani' and the 'Dharma-jyothi', the journals published on behalf of the Samaj.

29. For details that led to the split in the Brahmo Samaj, See Sivanath Sastry, History of the Brahmo Samaj, op. cit. PP.256-74.
he stated that the Brahmos of Bengal, by not being a part of the Hindu society, could not achieve all that they could otherwise have done, in the field of social reform.30

Therefore, the Maharashtra Prarthana Samaj, launched in 1867, with men like Atmaram Pandurang and R.G. Bhandarkar under the leadership of Ranade, decided to make religious reform the basis of their programme of social reform and to organise the pure worship of the one true God.31

The Prarthana Samaj in Andhra, which was started much

30. C.Y. Chintamani, Part II, op. cit., P.68. Ranade made these remarks in the course of his Presidential address delivered at Poona in 1895 on the occasion of the Ninth Social Conference.

31. In matters of social reform the Maharashtra Prarthana Samaj declared its objects as: (1) the disapproval of caste system, (2) the promotion of widow remarriages, (3) the encouragement of women's education, and (4) the abolition of child marriages. See D.S. Sarma, Hinduism Through the Ages (Bombay, 1956), P.83. On religious worship and the question of God, Ranade stated "There are not many Gods, nor a hierarchy of Gods, nor deified good and bad powers, nor principles of light and darkness, of matter and spirit, of Prakriti or Maya and Purusha. God is one and without a second and not many persons - not a triad nor a duality of persons". Mahadev Govind Ranade in "A Theist's Confession of Faith", cited in Ravinder Kumar, op. cit., P.292. Similar considerations must have weighed with Veeresalingam and Venkataratnam who held fast to the essence of Brahmoism, scrupulously avoiding the pitfalls of sectarianism and internal squabbles of the Bengali Brahmos.
later, professed, more or less, the same principles as above. Members were not asked to discard their caste before they became members of the Samaj and hence they maintained their respective castes. In addition to the teaching of the theistic principles the Prarthana Samajas in Andhra actively undertook the social reform activity. However, the Andhra region differed with Maharashtra in one aspect, namely, separate social reform associations were formed in Andhra to carry on the social reform activities whereas in Maharashtra both the religious and social reform activities were undertaken by one organisation, the Prarthana Samaj. It was noticed, that despite the separate existence of the two associations in Andhra, membership was almost the same and both the organisations generally worked in harmony with each other. Another feature of the Andhra

32. Channels through which the diffusion of ideas from Maharashtra to Andhra took place are, in the absence of any concrete proof, difficult to establish. It was after the founding of the Indian Social Conference that regular contacts between Maharashtrian reformers like Ranade and the Andhra reformers were established and mutual visits took place. However, the existence of a reform group in Madras from 1864 onwards and the journals they published might have carried articles containing information in this direction.


34. This can be illustrated by the example of Rajahmundry town where both the Social Reform association and the Prarthana Samaj were started under the leadership of Veeresalingam and both of them worked unitedly in the implementation of their programmes like promotion of widow remarriages, spread of women's education and theistic principles etc. Same was the case with Kakinada Samaj too.
Prarthana Samaj movement was that though its theological position was akin to the Sadharana Brahma Samaj and also gradually came to be aligned with it, there were no divisions or quarrels or controversies as the movement itself had its birth in 1878 when the second split took place in the Brahma Samaj. Moreover, in the initial stages, (from 1881 onwards) the visits of Sivanath Sastry to the Andhra region strengthened these contacts and thus the Andhra Prarthana Samaj movement developed as one unit. 35

The factors that led to the spread of the Brahma ideas in Andhra were many and varied. The proximity of the Northern Circars to Bengal made them appreciate the new currents of thought and action in that Presidency. It was especially so among the new elite which was urban based and western educated. A kindred spirit led them to initiate similar movements of reform in this part of the country. This is borne out by the existence of several reform trends among the

35. The first visit of Sastry to Andhra was in 1881 and from then onwards he visited the region several times, sometimes the tour extending to two weeks also. For details regarding these visits see Sivanath Sastry's Atmacharit (Autobiography in Bengali), op. cit. The first visit was to Kakinada at the invitation of Pyya Ramakrishnaiah who, Sastry stated, was conducting debates to prove the legitimacy of widow marriages. See Ibid., PP.304-307.
urban-based educated classes who professed through their writings ideas of reform not only in social matters but also in the field of religion. Furthermore, it was also observed earlier that there were a few Brahmos in Andhra like Atmuri Lakshminarasimham, a teacher who came to Rajahmundry from Machilipatnam. The Brahmo ideas came to Andhra through the Telugu leaders of the Madras Brahma Samaj like Butchoiah Pantulu and Venkataratnam. Moreover the Brahmo journals like 'Tatvabodhini' (published in Telugu too) along with the other religious texts (Upanishads, Brahma Sutras, Brahma Dharma) translated and published in Telugu, should have accelerated this process.

36. In this context people like Enugula Veeraswamy, Vennalacuntu Soobrow, Samineni Muthumarasimha Naidoo, Jiyyar Suri may be mentioned. See for their views on matters of religion and society, the last section of chapter II.

37. Veeresalingam was his student. This teacher of Veeresalingam started a small discussion group comprising of local students and started discussing, behind closed doors, social and religious problems for which they were strangely looked upon by the people in Rajahmundry town. These meetings, perhaps, continued till 1871, when Lakshminarasimham was transferred on promotion as Deputy Inspector of Schools in Ganjam district. See Veeresalingam, Sweeya, P.I, op. cit., P.60. Also see G.V. Subbaraya Gupta, op. cit., PP.20-21. This short biography does not contain the early influences and education of Lakshminarasimham and also the activities he undertook in Ganjam district. At about the same time Veeresalingam got a copy of the speeches of Keshub Chandra Sen from Challapalli Rangaiah, who was his co-worker later. See Veeresalingam, Sweeya, P.I, op.cit., P.60

38. It was mentioned earlier that Veeresalingam consulted 'Tatva Bodhini' in preparing his speech on the issue of widow remarriages, which means that Rajahmundry town should have been getting this journal and a few other Telugu towns like Machilipatnam also might have been on its mailing list.
and social evils and numerous superstitions connected with them were considered by the reformers as serious obstacles to social progress and this in its turn might have acted as an important factor in initiating the religious reform and hence the response shown to the Brahma ideals here. 39

Both Veeresalingam and Venkataratnam condemned idolatry which reached such absurd limits as the worship of animals, birds, trees, snakes, stones and other inanimate objects. Venkataratnam wrote a tract on idolatry condemning it. He wrote: "That system is, in our humble opinion, at the root of every evil-political, social or moral - that has ever smitten India. It has been the veriest pandora box....By corrupting and materialising men's views of religion, by narrowing the love that true belief always tends to beget and propagate, by confining religious ideas to the sacred surroundings of a shrine, by setting up one sect against another, by reducing faith — soul stirring faith — and regenerating worship into rites and formalities, idolatry has supped upon the very vitalities of the Hindu nation. It has transferred religion from... pure worship... to the hollow externalities of clothing, dressing, adorning, feasting, bedding, marrying, may, even pimping to an idol." 40

39. A detailed picture of the condition of religion and society that existed in Andhra during the 19th century was presented in Chapter I.

40. R. Venkataratnam, Idolatry (Coimbatore, 1916), P.5. More or less similar views were expressed on this issue by Veeresalingam when he condemned the degeneration that set in Hinduism with its meaningless rituals and dressing and decorating God and taking idols in procession in streets. See Veeresalingam, Col. Works, Vol.VIII, op. cit., PP. 144-48.
Even before he started the Prarthana Samaj (1878), Veeresalingam was writing in 'Vivekavardhani' right from its first issue, opposing idolatry and in support of one God. He expressed his faith in God who is one without a second, who is omnipresent, birthless, eternal and pure. 41 Venkataratnam also gave expression to the same idea about God when he stated:

"God is one; creation is one; and thus every integral part of creation is one with God and the universe. In his household there is no other enumeration than "One"."

Veeresalingam asked the religious heads to state "Whether it is not decidedly much easier to instil into a man the pure and noble attributes of God, by showing and explaining those eternal witnesses of his glory — the beauty of trees and plants, the myriads of stars which, pendant like mercury balls of diverse hues and radiance...in all countries, to the noble qualities of the Almighty creator and Governor,

41. He expressed these ideas in the first three issues of his journal 'Vivekavardhani' in the form of verses which are reproduced in Veeresalingam, Sweeya, P.1, op. cit., pp.81-83.

42. R. Venkataratnam's teachings in English are translated into simple Telugu verses by D.V. Krishnasastry in Nungvedhi (Kakinada, 1967, first edn. 1944), P.2. Venkataratnam believed that salvation lay in living a life of meditation, prayer and service to one's neighbours.
than it is to ask a man to imagine God's attributes in lifeless, motionless images of stone. 43

The Prarthana Samajists had no faith in the incarnations of God and they also condemned polytheism and Varnasrama dharma. Veeresalingam declared that "Vedas, Bible and Koran are not true. The miracles therein are unbelievable". 44 Caste and sub-caste divisions were discountenanced by them. 45 They professed 'Theism', 46 and the form of worship was congregational, with songs followed by sermons and prayers.

43. Cited in R. Venkataratnam on Idolatry, op. cit., P.4. It is interesting to note that Veeresalingam was echoing in an elaborate form, the views expressed earlier by Ram Mohun Roy who observed: "The attainment of perfect knowledge of the nature of Godhead is certainly difficult or rather impossible; but to read the existence of the Almighty Being in his works of nature is not...so difficult to the mind of a man...unfettered by prejudice, as to conceive artificial images to be possessed at once of the opposite nature of the human and divine beings, which idolaters constantly ascribe to their idols...." Cited in Ibid.


46. The concept of Theistic faith was explained by Venkataratnam in the following lines: "It was a faith to which the universe was a consecrated temple, the soul a holy shrine, the imperishable gospel, love the perfect rule, life a progressive pilgrimage, humanity an abounding grace...." See D.V. Krishnasasstry, op. cit. P.86.
delivered in simple chaste vernacular. They emphasized the
congregational aspect of Brahmoism to the detriment of in-
tellectual element of Theism. As this method was new and
different from that of Hinduism it caught the imagination of
the people. To the orthodox sections, all this appeared as
irreligious and Veeresalingam was even dubbed as an atheist. 47

It is worth noting in detail at the spread of the
Prarthana Samaj in the districts of Andhra and the special
activities of the branches.

GODAVARY DISTRICT

Rajahmundry

The earliest Prarthana Samaj in Andhra was established
at Rajahmundry in 1878. Veeresalingam and a few of his
friends came together and formed the Samaj with the main aim
of worshipping one God and practise pure theism. 48 The
Samaj initially met at Veeresalingam's residence until it
had a building of its own. 49 The visit of Pandit Sivanath

47. R. Venkatasivudu, Samsmriti, op. cit., P.142.
mentioned names of the other members who were his associ-
ates in the Social Reform Association which was also start-
ed simultaneously in 1878. Others were B. Gavarraju, P.
Venkatappaiah, C. Rangaiah, E. Lakshminarasimham, all
except one (Venkatappaiah was a Government employee) were
in the teaching profession.
49. For sometime the meetings were held in the Vizianagaram
Maharajah's Girls School and from there its venue was
changed to the town hall which Veeresalingam built at his
expense. Finally, Veeresalingam built a prayer hall and
donated it to the Samaj. Ibid. The need to have a town
hall for Rajahmundry town was felt by him when, during the
days of the widow remarriage controversy, he was denied a
venue to hold meetings to explain his point of view.
Sastry to Rajahmundry in 1881 and his lecture on Brahmo Samaj and its ideals inspired the young men of the place and enthused them to take up social work and also practise theistic principles. Students formed a separate Prarthana Samaj to practise Monotheistic worship. Night schools were conducted as in Maharashtra, to provide free education to the poor and the illiterate. Some of the members were visiting the nearby towns like Narsapur to teach and spread the Brahmo ideals. Weekly prayer meetings were held which were attended by some of the general public also. Veeresalingam was the President of the Samaj from the beginning, until he left for Madras in 1897. The Samaj started a monthly Anglo-Telugu journal 'Satyasamvardhini', which was "mainly devoted to religious, social and moral topics" and the news regarding reform activities. Initially the activities of the Prarthana Samaj produced a negative attitude in the younger generation because, in their first flush of enthusiasm, those young men acted in the same manner as the

50. See the article by T. Prakasarayudu, "Half century celebrations of Dharma sadhani" in Dharma sadhani (Golden Jubilee number), January 1964 (Vol.51, No.1), the Andhra Brahmo Journal (Monthly, Telugu) which was started on January 1, 1914.

51. Ibid. Prayers were followed by brief lectures on religious topics delivered by some of the members.

52. It was edited by Veeresalingam and published from Rajahmundry. Ibid.
Derozian Young Bengal group. They removed their sacred threads and hung them on the branches of trees outside the college premises and they also made fun of the orthodox sections, carrying it to extreme lengths of insulting them brazenly.53 A separate Samaj for women was also started at Rajahmundry but we do not have details regarding this except that Rajyalakshamma, the wife of Veeresalingam, took an active part in its functioning and weekly meetings were held where the same procedure as that of the Prarthana Samaj for men was followed. Again in 1889 Sivanath Sastry visited Rajahmundry which further inspired the youth there.

According to one of the available annual reports of the Rajahmundry Samaj for the year 1892-93, published in 'Satyasamvardhanî', the membership of the Samaj numbered 30. The report stated that "the resident members alone attend the weekly prayer meetings held every Sunday evening in the town hall. Along with the divine service a sermon is preached. The members who thus undertake sermons, oral or written, are mostly students or otherwise persons holding

53. This was mentioned by two persons who were active in the reform movements and who earlier were students at Rajahmundry. See R. Venkatasivudu, Samsmriti, op. cit., P.22 and V. Suryanarayana Rao, op. cit., P.167.
secular appointments. There is evidence that even after Veeresalingam left for Madras in 1897 the same programme was continued by the Samaj at Rajahmundry.

After returning from Madras in 1905, Veeresalingam started making efforts to establish a theistic high school in Rajahmundry, which finally took concrete shape in 1908. The Rajah of Pithapur donated Rs. 70,000/- and thus provided the school with a spacious premises and permanent building. According to the wishes of the Rajah of Pithapur the school was called Kandukuri Veeresalingam Theistic High School and the school buildings were opened by Herambachandra Maitra.

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54. The 15th anniversary of the Samaj was celebrated from 1st to 4th of April 1893 and the report was submitted by S. Mrityunjaya Rao who was a graduate. The report stated that the annual income of the Samaj for the year under review was Rs. 222-12-9, out of which Rs. 50/- were transferred to the library fund and Rs. 150/- for charity, like poor feeding etc. The Samaj was maintaining a theistic library which was housed in the Town Hall. One significant feature that was mentioned in the above report was that its members were mostly students and people with secular appointments. This gives us a distant clue with regard to the nature of the composition of the Prarthana Samaj movement in Andhra. In the absence of the records of minutes of the Samajas in Andhra and paucity of material to find out the socio-economic background of the membership, hints like this coupled with the known background of the leadership would help us in the final evaluation of this movement in particular and social reform movements as a whole, as the two movements were not only started at one and the same time but their respective membership was also almost the same. See Satyasamvardhani, 1892-93.

55. See Satyasamvardhani, April 1899 (Vol. 8, No. 1) wherein the annual report of the Samaj for the year 1898-99 was published. It mentioned that the total membership was 60 (20 resident members and 40 were mofussil members) and Peddada Sambasiva Rao was the Secretary.
the Principal of city college, Calcutta. 56 The teaching staff were the former students of Veeresalingam who were members of the Prarthana Samaj and prayer on theistic lines became a regular feature of the school routine. The school was co-educational (perhaps first of its kind in Andhra) and girl students were exempted from the payment of fees. The most significant aspect of the school was its admission of scheduled castes' children who were also exempted from the payment of school fees. 57 The school curriculum, in addition to the subjects on general education, included fine arts like music and painting and sewing and other household crafts useful for girls.

Veeresalingam became 'amushtanic' Brahmo only in 1906. Though he was closely associated with the activities of the Brahmo Samaj at Rajahmundry and also at Madras he delayed his decision to become 'amushtanic' Brahmo. He explained this delay in his autobiography saying that such a decision would jeopardise the reform activities which he had undertaken. 58 His decision to become 'amushtanic' in 1906 was taken as he noticed by this time an imperceptible decline of the reform movements. Thus the cause for which he had sacrificed.

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56. Particulars regarding the establishment of the school are furnished in the autobiography of Veeresalingam, op. cit., P.II, P.352.
57. Its features like co-educational nature and admission of scheduled castes' boys and girls were later introduced into the Pithapur Rajah's College at Kakinada. The later aspect (admission of scheduled castes' children) created a stir in society as it was not done by even the missionary schools in those days.
what was spiritually dearer to his heart was now gradually fading out. However, his decision was strengthened by his association with Desiraju Pedabapaiah who came to Rajahmundry to help Veeresalingam in his activities. This was the time when Veeresalingam was feeling unassisted in his activities. Pedabapaiah was associated, while he was a student at Madras, with the Andhra leaders of the Madras Brahmo Samaj, Butchaiah Pantulu and Venkataratnam. He was well versed in Western liberal thought as well as Brahmo scriptures and had twice visited Calcutta, the home of the Brahmos. 59 He was easily one of the great Brahmos of Andhra among the younger generation. He gave up sacred thread and became an 'amushtanic' Brahmo in 1905. This incident had a significant impact on Veeresalingam. Pedabapaiah after becoming an 'amushtanic' performed his mother's 'Sraddha' according to the Brahmo 'paddhati' (ritual) and the ceremony was conducted by Veeresalingam. It was followed by a cosmopolitan dinner. Veeresalingam attended it. It created such a great stir in Rajahmundry as was evidenced by the comment that it set the river Godavari on fire. 60 The consequences of this were far reaching. Pedabapaiah faced total social boycott, lived for some

59. Pedabapaiah came from Baptla (Guntur district) which became one of the important centres of the Prarthana Samaj movement in Andhra about which details will be presented in the following pages. Pedabapaiah's life and writings (edited) are published by K. Hanumantha Rao, Desiraju Pedabapaiah Jeevana Smriti (Telugu), op.cit., P.67.

60. This comment was noted down by Pedabapaiah in his dairy. See Ibid., PP.100-101.
time with Veeresalingam and when he died in 1908 at Madras, prematurely at the age of 30 of consumption, he had none, except two Brahmos, to nurse him.

Veeresalingam acknowledged the lead given to him by Pedabapaiah in becoming 'amushtanic'. He too performed his father's 'Sraddha' according to Brahma 'paddhati' and arranged a cosmopolitan dinner and gave up his sacred thread. As a result the two Brahmin widows of the 'Home' left it. This gave handle to the orthodox sections to launch a vituperative campaign against Veeresalingam. A fortnightly journal 'Hindu desabhivardhani' was started by them which alleged that he let down the Hindu widows who joined the 'Home' with high hopes and aspirations. Veeresalingam was unmoved by all this and stuck to his original decision.

Kakinada

After the establishment of the Rajahmundry Prarthana Samaj (1878), it took ten years to start a similar Samaj at Kakinada. Earlier a Social Reform Association was started, the first meeting of which was attended and blessed by Veeresalingam. The work of Rajahmundry Samaj, in which students played a major role, was the motivating factor for


62. Ibid., P.29.
the establishment of Kakinada Samaj in 1888. Duggirala Suryaprakasa Rao, a disciple of Veeresalingam at Rajahmundry, was one of the founders of the Samaj at Kakinada.\(^63\) A few notable events of the Samaj, of this period (before 1905) were: (1) the visits of Bengal Brahmos like Sivanath Sastry (1889), Bipin Chandra Pal (1901) and Hemachandra Sarkar (1904), and (2) the establishment of a 'social purity' association by Venkataratnam.\(^64\) The Kakinada Samaj members visited the neighbouring villages preaching the Brahmo faith and took the initiative in starting a Samaj at Pithapuram (Godavari district) in 1897.\(^65\) During the same period a Samaj was started at Peddapuram (Godavari district) which according to Hemachandra Sarkar was more active than the

\(^63\) About 15 members were there in the beginning. The other two founders of the Samaj mentioned were Thayi Suryaprapakasa Rao Naidu, Diwan Bahadur Pillarisetty Narayana Rao Naidu, Government employees like T. Kodandaramaiah (District Registrar) joined the Samaj in 1890. The regular 'Upasanas' were attended by several non-members too. See Kakinada Brahmo Samaj History, op. cit., P.13.

\(^64\) Ibid., PP.14-16 and 20-21.

\(^65\) Ibid., P.19.
The year 1905 was very significant in the history of the Prarthana Samaj movement in Andhra. It witnessed three events, namely, (1) Venkataratnam assuming the principalship of the Pithapur Rajah's College, Kakinada, 67 (2) the Yuvaraja of Pithapur (Godavari district), R.V.K.M. Surya Rao Bahadur coming back to Pithapur after his education at Madras, and (3) return of Veeresalingam to Rajahmundry after his stay at Madras. From now onwards till 1919 when Venkataratnam retired from the principalship, Kakinada became the centre of the Andhra Prarthana Samaj under the leadership of Venkataratnam with Rajahmundry (Veeresalingam) and

66. Hemachandra Sarkar's comments are translated and published in Ibid., PP.22-26. He stated that the Kakinada Samaj had 23 members. Many of them were non-students with social status. Most of them were Government employees and a few were lawyers. Writing about Duggirala Suryaprakasa Rao, the founder member, Sarkar stated that he was occupying a high position in the District Collectorate and was a rich landholder too. The Samaj was not holding regular service and there was opposition to it especially among the staff of the local college. Kakinada was not considered, before 1905, as an important Brahmo centre. Sivanath Sastry mentioned in his history of Brahmo Samaj that during this period three centres were prominent in the Brahmo movement. He spoke of them as follows: "Rajahmundry has been for long the centre of Brahmo activity, Masulipatam the centre of Brahmic thought, Bapatla of Brahmic action." See Sivanath Sastry's History of the Brahmo Samaj, op. cit., P.500.

67. The appointment of Venkataratnam to the Principalship was a sensational affair. The two applicants for the post were - Venkataratnam and V.S. Srinivasa Sastry (Later Rt. Honourable). Though some members of the college committee opposed his selection as Principal, he was finally appointed. See, in this regard, K. Suryanarayana, op. cit., PP.35-36.
Pithapuram (Raja Surya Rao) as the two other important centres in the Godavari district.

Kakinada Samaj was actively working with regular 'Upasamas' and also family 'Upasamas', a novel feature introduced in 1905. In 1906 a separate Youth Prarthana Samaj was established with B. Pavakeswara Rao as the Secretary and it held 14 meetings. This was a clear sign of a favourable change in the attitude of the students at Kakinada who were earlier not favourably disposed to such ideas. This change was attributed to the influence of Venkataratnam. He presided over the All India Theistic Conference at Calcutta in 1905 and spoke on Rammohun Roy.

In 1907 Sivanath Sastry arrived at Kakinada to preside over the Andhra Theistic Conference. During this visit Sivanath Sastry consecrated a house donated by one of the members (Nalam Ramalingayya) as Brahma mandir. The affiliated organs of the Samaj like Theistic school, Night school, library and reading room, magic lantern, Ladies' Prarthana Samaj, Youth Prarthana Samaj, 'Social Purity'

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69. Ibid. The report mentions the names of a few others who also attended the conference. Delegates from Andhra were regularly attending the All India Theistic Conferences. To the conference at Surat (1907), from Kakinada alone four delegates attended. Ibid., P.41.

70. Ibid. P.40. The total membership of the Samaj in 1908 was 42. The names of the members are mentioned in the book. However, no particulars of their social background are given.
Association were functioning regularly.

The Rajah of Pithapur (1865-1965) rendered invaluable services to the Brahmo movement in Andhra. Two major influences worked upon his mind which drew him closer towards the Brahmoism. Firstly, while he was a student at Newington, Madras, he was initiated into the Brahmo philosophy by his teacher Mokkapati Subbarayudu who was earlier a disciple of Venkataratnam at Machilipatnam. This casual relationship between a pupil and a teacher developed into a lifelong attachment for a common cause when the Maharajah appointed his former teacher first as his Private Secretary, and later as Dewan. It was through Mokkapati that the Maharajah came to know of Venkataratnam. However, the second decisive influence on him was the result of his decision to resolve the vexed question of the Principalship of the Pithapur Rajah’s College in favour of Venkataratnam. From that time (1905) till the death of Venkataratnam (in 1939), the Rajah

71. Newington College, situated at Madras, was exclusively meant for the aristocratic families.

of Pithapur was drawn into his magnetic fold. It was a filial love that existed between both of them. Venkataratnam described it thus: "My first-born was a boy. He was resumed to the Divine Mother's bosom as yet a child here. But just then was born another son in 1885, a prince, there in distant Pithapuram....Turning to the inter-relation between Sri Maharajah garu and myself...that he and I have been drawn intimately together so much so that it is not common sentimental indulgence but the bare simple reality that he has been unto me a child of my heart...that our strings have come to be inextricably interwoven. No one can probe into the depth, the profundity, of that relationship.

73. The relationship between Venkataratnam and the Rajah of Pithapur was compared by Tarakam to a similar relationship that existed between Maharshi Devendranath Tagore and the Rajahs of Burdwan and Krishnagar as narrated by Maharshi in his autobiography. See Tarakam's article "Theism in Andhra and Maharajah Surya Rao Bahadur" in Shestipuriti Souvenir, op. cit., pp.24-26. The author described the relationship between Venkataratnam and the Rajah of Pithapur as "a marvellous spiritual romance". The Madras Mail brought out the significance of their relationship in the following terms: "In the Maharajah of Pithapuram he (Venkataratnam) met with an enthusiastic patron who seconded his efforts especially where work connected with Social Reform was concerned, so that it might in one sense be said that the further recognition now of his work is shared to some extent by the Maharajah of Pithapuram as well". Cited in Message and Ministrations of R. Venkataratnam, Vol.III, op. cit., p.XXV.
All that I hold is dear to him, and all that he holds is dear to me".\(^{74}\) The Rajah expressed similar feelings when he said, "God has vouchsafed unto me a great preceptor in Brahmaramshi Venkataratnam Naidu garu. To me the message and ministration of this great soul, in matters material and spiritual, have been invaluable. An embodiment of all graces, a saint with pure life, a prodigious intellectual... a staunch promulgator of all beneficient causes.... If I could do any little service to humanity, it is preeminently owing to his influence....This greatest man of the great and his good compeer and reputed patriot, Sri Veeresalingam Pantulu garu, have been the beacon-lights of my life".\(^{75}\)

The Rajah liberally donated huge amounts to the practical work taken up by the Kakinada Samaj and thus demonstrated clearly his ardent interest in the Brahma movement in Andhra. He had faith in the philosophy of Theism and in the concept of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. He read extensively in the Sufi literature (Saadi and Rumi), writings of the Christian mystics like Dean Inge,

\(^{74}\) Cited in Ibid. That the relationship was influenced mutually from both the sides could be seen from the fact that Venkataratnam in his later years joined the non-brahmin movement under the influence of the Rajah of Pithapur who identified himself with it. This aspect will be elaborated while dealing with the decline of the Brahma movement in Andhra.

\(^{75}\) See the speech of the Rajah in Shastipurti Souvenir, Vol.II, op. cit., P.84.
Evelyn Underhill and Maurice Maeterlinck and the Hindu Rishis of the past. With this background, the first act he did after he ascended the 'gadi' was to ban the tapping of palm trees in his Estate incurring thereby a heavy loss of revenue. Furthermore, he resolved not to serve liquor or beer in parties, even when Governors were invited.

In addition to the liberal help the Rajah rendered to the Veeresalingam Theistic High School at Rajahmundry, to the High School and College at Kakinada, a number of choultries and hospitals for women, he started two 'lodges' for 'scheduled castes' boys and girls at Pithapur and provided them with food, shelter and clothing to pursue their studies. This was unique since this took place before 1910. These two 'lodges' were the first of their kind in Andhra and the inmates were studying in the Rajah's High Schools and the College where untouchability was discarded and free education for them was provided. The organisers of the 'lodges' were Brahmans and the students of these 'lodges' became the first generation Harijan leaders in Andhra. Another great


77. This Act, it was said, deprived the Estate five per cent of its total revenues. See the article "The Maharajah - A Tribute" by J. Gangamma in Shastipurti Souvenir, Vol.II, op. cit., P.5.

78. For a detailed account of his philanthropic activities See A. Narayana Rao, Vishalandhramu (Madras, 1940), in which a separate article on the Rajah of Pithapuram is published, PP.1-13.

79. One such prominent Harijan leader mentioned in this regard was Venula Kurmayya, who played a prominent role in the freedom struggle. Minutes of the Interview with Y.V. Ramana, at Kavali on 15-12-1975, a student and later a colleague of Venkatataratnam in Pithapur Rajah's College, Kakinada.
service rendered by the Rajah was the establishment of an orphanage at Kakinada in 1909. It was called 'Kuru
malyam' (Abode of kindness) and it admitted orphan children without any distinction of caste and religion.

The orphanage was looked after by the Superintendents some

60. The genesis of the orphanage was touchingly narrated by Venkataratnam. "On a certain occasion, as I was having a familiar friendly talk with our good Maharajah Saheb of Pithapuram on the possibilities of human sympathy in various directions expressing itself in definite institutions, such as hospitals, nursing homes, asylums for the aged and the decrepit, when we came to the subject of an orphanage, he exclaimed "I would do anything for that. I know what it is to be an orphan". R. Venkataratnam, "Gleanings: Autobiographical", in K.V. Gopalaswamy, ed., Grace Abiding, op. cit., P.413. The institution was named after the father of the Rajah of Pithapur and was called R.V.M.G.Rama Rao Bahadur Orphanage. The twin objects of the institution were: (1) to provide basic necessities to destitute children of both the sexes, and (2) to give them such education as will enable them to enter into independent and useful life. The orphanage opened with six children on 13th November 1909. A school and two workshops were attached to the orphanage. See Sivanath Sastry, History of the Brahma Samaj, op. cit., P.509.

61. Venkataratnam never called it an orphanage and always mentioned it as the 'Home'. The Rajah and Venkataratnam took personal interest in its maintenance. The inmates used to call the Rajah 'Nayana' (father) and Venkataratnam 'Pedanyana' (father's elder brother). Huge buildings were built for the 'Home' in which the Medical College is housed today. Minutes of the Interview with Y.V. Ramana, op. cit.
of whom were the leading Brahmos of the day.  

The Rajah of Pithapur was responsible, for initiating the 'Andhra Brahma Pracharaka Trust' with one lakh of rupees to train workers for the Samaj and to translate Bengali Brahma works into Telugu.  

He was also responsible for the construction of Brahma Mandir at Kakinada.

82. V.P. Raju Naidu was the first Superintendent. A student of Madras Christian College and an associate of Venkataratnam at Madras, he was specially requested to be the Superintendent and in which capacity he served for 17 years. Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan visited it in 1926 and paid a compliment to the services of V.P. Raju. He stated that greatness lay not in the "hugeness of the buildings nor in the lengthiness of the purse but in the personality that presides". See R. Kousthubham, V.P. Raju Naidu's Jeewithamu (Telugu), (Kakinada, n.d.), PP.1-4. Pillarisetty Seetharamaiah, another great Brahmo, was for some time the Superintendent of the 'Home'.

83. Maharshi Devendranath Tagore's 'Brahmo Dharma' and Seethanath Tatvabhusan's works were translated into Telugu. The Rajah was a great patron of Telugu classical literature also. He rendered liberal aid for the publication of several Telugu classics and the 'Telugu lexicon' - 'Suryarayandhra Nighantuva'. A remarkable achievement in this direction was the foundation and endowment of the Andhra Sahitya Parishat, an institution for the collection, the preservation and publication of old and rare manuscripts in the Telugu literature. It made a collection of 5,000 manuscripts of unpublished Telugu works. However, unlike in social matters, his attitude towards modern Telugu literary movement was conservative. See the "Presentation address" to Rajah of Pithapur on the occasion of awarding of D.Litt. degree by the Andhra University (Waltair), in Shastipurthi Souvenir, op. cit., Vol.I, P.18.
spending a few lakhs of rupees. The Rajah was in contact with Sivanath Sastry and whenever Sastry visited Andhra, he used to visit Pithapuram.

**Other Samajas in Godavari District**

After 1905, when Kakinada became the centre of the Andhra Brahmo Samaj (the Kakinada Prarthana Samaj assumed the name of Brahmo Samaj in 1910), the movement began to spread to several parts of Andhra. In the Godavari district Prarthana Samajas were started — (1) at Pithapur (1907) under the influence of Mokkapati Subbarayudu, Dewan of the Rajah of Pithapur, and Koka Venkatasubba Rao; (2) at Narsapur.

| 84. The Mandir was consecrated by Hemchandra Sarkar. It is a piece of architectural excellence. The Brahmapasan Mandir was designed by Venkataratnam as a monument of diverse religions. It has the 'gopuram' of the temple, the minarets of the mosque, and the arches of the Church symbolising the religious unity of India. See for a comprehensive account of Pithapur Rajah's services to the Brahmo Samaj in Andhra, "Pithapuram Maharajah — Brahmo Samajam" in Dharmasadhani, April 3, 1964 (Vol.51, No.4). |
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| 85. Unless otherwise stated information given with regard to the spread of the movement in the districts is taken mainly from the two articles, (1) Peddada Ramaswamy, "The Brahmo Samaj in Andhra", published in the Annual Number of the Andhra Association (Calcutta, 1958). The author was a close follower of Venkataratnam and an 'anuashtanic' Brahmo who became the Principal of the Pithapur Rajah's College, Kakinada after the retirement of V. Ramakrishna Rao (who earlier succeeded Venkataratnam as the Principal), and (2) Tarakam's (alias K. Ramasastry) article "Brahmo Samaj in Andhra Pradesh", presented to the Andhra Pradesh History Congress held at Kevadi on 1st and 2nd May 1976. Also scraps of information about the Prarthana Samajas in Andhra are taken from the back numbers of 'Satyasamvrdhani' (journal of Rajahmundry Prarthana Samaj), and 'Chintamani', both the journals edited by Veeresalingam and 'Dharmasadhani' and 'Dharmajyothi', the journals published by Andhra Brahmo Samaj (to begin with from Kakinada and then from Guntur) during the present century. |
in 1906, a Samaj was started by Pavakswara Rao, earlier a student of Venkataratnam at Kakinada; (3) another was started at Ellore in 1906 under the initiative of Nalam Krishna Rao of Rajahmundry. A Brahma mandir was built there. In 1910 a separate Samaj for women was started by the initiative taken by two women, Syamalamma and Pitchamma; (4) at Bhimavaram, it was stated that a Samaj was started back in 1890 and attempts were made by people like Peddada Sambasiva Rao to build a "mandir"; (5) at Kumudavallii, a small village near Bhimavaram, a Prarthana Samaj and Veeresalingam Theistic Library were established. (6) Through the efforts of Vempalli Satyanarayana a number of Samajas were started at places like Relangi, Yanam, Ramachandrapuram, Mandapeta with Madhavaram as the centre. 86

86. These centres, according to Tarakam, were mainly organised by the inmates of the 'Theistic Lodges' at Pithapur and the Orphanage at Kakinada, and the students of Kakinada College during the peak period of the Brahma activity in Andhra i.e., from 1905 to 1909. The membership of each Samaj was, on an average, ten. They mainly belonged to the class of poor and middle peasants including in some cases a few members belonging to the scheduled castes. They used to have regular 'service' meetings in addition to social work like organising night schools, rendering health service etc. Most of these members married and also got their children named on Brahma lines and Tarakam stated that he officiated as marriage registrar at several of such marriages. The couples were generally educated, at least up to the secondary level. Minutes of the Interview with Tarakam, op. cit.
Machilipatnam Samaj

The first Prarthana Samaj to be started in Krishna district was at Machilipatnam in 1882. It had, to start with, 8 members of whom Koka Venkataram Naidu was the Principal founder. The report stated that the members were meeting to conduct prayers at the members' residences by turns, and a promise was "taken from every member that he would be regular in attendance...and this promise shall be taken on a Samaj day during service; and the promiser

87. Chronologically speaking this was the second Samaj to be established in Andhra, the first being at Rajahmundry. Machilipatnam was one of the important reform centres in Andhra, outside the Godavari district. It was the area covered by the Krishna anicut and one of the earliest towns that had the benefit of modern education with its well known Noble College. Also being the district headquarters and a port town, it came to play considerable role in the process of the awakening in Andhra.

88. The source of information regarding the Machilipatnam Samaj is the Half-century Report of Machilipatnam Brahma Samaj (Machilipatnam, 1932). The publishers stated in the foreword that the report was prepared on the basis of the original reports, minutes and other documents of the Samaj. As this report was published more than 40 years ago, my attempts to get at the originals proved futile. There exists today a Brahma Samaj and none of its members are informed of the details regarding the background of the early or later members of the period of my study. The names of the founding members were:

1. Koka Venkataram Naidu,
2. Guduri Subrahmanyan,
3. M. Jagannatha Rao Naidu,
4. P. Mangapati Rao Naidu,
5. A. Narasimba Hanum Naidu,
6. D. Subrahmanyan,
7. Munnangi Ramayya Pantulu,

Ibid., p.3. However, Sivanath Sastry in his History of the Brahma Samaj, op. cit., p.500, stated that the Machilipatnam Samaj was started in 1875 and V. Damodararaya's name was associated with it. There is no evidence to support this view.
shall sign to this effect in a special register". The Samaj was holding regular 'Upasanas' during which the translations of the discourses of Mahershi Devendranath Tagore and Raj Narain Bose were read. The Samaj grew in strength and its membership exceeded 20 by the year 1886. The fourth annual report, presented in 1886 by the Secretary, B. Venkata-tappaiah, stated its progress in an optimistic tone. "Masulipatnam is a town as you are well aware where no society can exist for more than a few months. But Brahmaiism that Heaven born religion founded by the most illustrious Rajah Rammohun Roy cannot share the fate of other societies, so long as God is the Truth. I, therefore, feel great joy to state that our Samaj...shall exist and I hope will exist hereafter. True it is, that the Samaj has suffered many difficulties. Yet, I am glad to state that the members are so adherent that they take great interest in supporting it." 90

The activities of the Samaj, among other things like prayers etc., included the conducting of a manuscript journal called 'Brahmo Dharmopadesini' and of a society to train workers to spread the Brahmo ideals. 91 The Samaj undertook the cause of widow remarriages and four such marriages were performed under its auspices between 1899 and 1910. 92

89. Ibid., P.5.
90. Ibid., P.6.
91. Ibid., PP.10-11.
92. Ibid., P.18.
members were visiting the villages around Machilipatnam town, once in a month, to spread the Brahma ideals and Sivanath Sastry's works on Brahmoism were reprinted for circulation.

Venkataratnam's services to Machilipatnam Samaj are worth noting. He was a member of the Samaj during 1887, and he left for Madras in 1888. However, he came back, in 1894, as a lecturer in the Noble College, and stayed there till 1899. This was an eventful period in the history of the Samaj at Machilipatnam. Through his personal example and charisma Venkataratnam left a lasting impression on the minds of a number of young men who were drawn towards the Brahma ideas. Among them mention may be made of a few prominent persons like, Bhogaraju Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Mutnuri Krishna Rao, Vemuri Ramakrishna Rao, Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao, Desiraju Pedabapaiah, Duggirala Ramamoorthy and others.

During this period a new Samaj was started at Balaramunipet.

93. Ibid., P.14. During this period he was a teacher in the local Hindu High School.

94. These were the people who were associated with several social and political movements in the northern circle. Everybody was a stalwart in his own field. Pattabhi Sitaramayya later became the President of the Indian National Congress and was its official historian. Mutnuri Krishna Rao was the renowned editor of 'Krishnapatrika' which became a centre of social, religious and political enlightenment in Andhra. Vemuri Ramakrishna Rao was the intellectual successor to Venkataratnam and he also succeeded to the principalship of the Pithapur Rajah's College at Kakinada when Venkataratnam retired. Reference has already been made to Kaleswara Rao and Pedabapaiah.
near Machilipatnam which was totally organised by students.95 The services rendered by Venkataratnam to the Machilipatnam Samaj were described thus: "In particular under the auspices of the local Social Purity Association, he opened a memorable campaign for Purity and against Nautch and soon enlisted the sympathy and support of influential and promising spirits and, with signal success, extended the crusade far and wide over the Telugu country. The Machilipatnam Brahma Samaj, which had been in existence for over a decade and of which he had been a member since the days of his teachership in the Hindu High School, had been keeping up a languid life at the time through the devotion of a few old adherents. Now he threw himself whole-heartedly into the work of this little straggling Samaj and soon strengthened it and spread its beneficial influence for social and religious reform among the educated public and particularly student section of the Town. The vicissitudes of fortune of an unwelcome Theistic worker amid evangelical Christian surroundings took Mr. Venkataratnam away to another latitude in 1899, even before his influence was proved to have been too strong and sound and sober".96 This passage is significant as it not

95. Names of the students who organised this Samaj were: J. Venkatanarayana, Pillarisetty Seetharamaiah (a prominent Brahma missionary of Anhla who will be referred to in the following pages in connection with Bapatla taluk Samaj movement), Koka Venkata Subba Rao, Pillarisetty Raghunatha Rao, Varada Rao, Ranga Rao, Akunuri Suryanarayana Rao, Koka Fundarikashudu and Marakani Vithal Rao. See Ibid., P.17.

only gave an account of the work of Venkataratnam at Machilipatnam but also threw light on how the work of the Samaj was carried out "among the educated public and particularly student section of the town". This gives us an idea of the base of the movement at Machilipatnam. As has been noticed earlier, while discussing the Rajahmundry Samaj, students and people with secular appointments formed the base there. Here too the same sections of society were drawn towards the movement.

The College authorities brought pressure upon Venkataratnam to resign as the orthodox sections of the town raised a hue and cry that "Hinduism was in danger" and appeals were sent to the higher missionary authorities to relieve him of his lecturer's post in the Noble College. After having been made to resign,97 Venkataratnam went to Secunderabad to become the Principal of a college there.

Machilipatnam Samaj had contacts with Rajahmundry, Kakinada and other Samajas. It had the benefit of visits by Brahmos like Veeresalingam and Butchaiah Pantulu of whom the latter was a "benevolent patron" of the Samaj, besides being responsible for arranging the visit of Sivanath Sastry

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97. Moreover, the Noble College, where Venkataratnam was working, was a Trinitarian institution. His influence with the students in favour of Brahmoism clashed with the proselytising zeal of the college authorities who compelled him to resign. See Sivanath Sastry, History of the Brahmo Samaj, op. cit., P.500.
to Machilipatnam in 1889. Hemachandra Sarkar visited Machilipatnam thrice in 1904, 1905 and 1906. Amritlal Bose visited it in 1908 while Bipin Chandra Pal paid a visit in 1902. Pal's visit was mentioned in the annual report of the Samaj of 1902. It stated: "General enthusiasm was aroused in the public mind, on which he made a powerful impression by his magnificent exposition, in a series of discourses, of the principles of national regeneration as they found expression in the Brahma Samaj". Others who visited the Samaj included V.R. Shinde (Bombay) in 1903, and Sudhir Chandra Banerjee in 1912.

By 1910 the Samaj acquired a 'mandir' (building) to conduct prayer and other activities and the same was consecrated by Veeresalingam. Of the other prominent members of the Samaj mention should be made of Kavikondala

99. Ibid., P.50.
Kavikonda Sambasiva Rao went to Machilipatnam after receiving training for three years in the Brahmo theological institution at Calcutta. Machilipatnam Brahmo Samaj Report stated: "Brahmasri K. Sambasiva Rao came here...after a stay of about 3 years at Calcutta.... He took up the work of the local Brahmo Samaj in great earnestness, and conducted the weekly services and Bhajanast... He opened a class for student inquirers and regularly taught them "the Religion of Brahman" by S.N. Tatvabhusan.... He has also been imparting religious instruction to the students of the Masulipatam National College.... Friends from different quarters in the Telugu country have been pressing him to pay a visit to them.... We earnestly hope, that his visit to the several Samajas in the Telugu country will prove highly beneficial." *Ibid.,* P.22.

T. Rajagopala Rao (1876-1938) was the author of the book "Social Reform Movements in India during the 19th century" (Telugu) which was referred to earlier in the thesis. A student of Venkataratnam and Miller, he was associated with the founding of Prarthana Samajas at Vijayawada (Krishna district), Peddapuram (Godavari district) and for some time was a co-worker of Veerasingam at Rajahmundry. He worked as a teacher at Gooty (Anantapur district) and later joined the Madras Christian College as a lecturer. He was the author of several books in English and Telugu like "Life of Buddha", "Historical Sketch of Telugu Literature", "Comparative Prosody of Dravidian Languages" and published a journal in English called "South Indian Research". See the article "Late Tekumalla Rajagopala Rao Sata Jayanti" by K. Durga Mallikarjuna Rao in 'Andhra Prabha' (Telugu daily published from Vijayawada), January 18, 1976. Also see the foreword in *Sri Tekumalla Rajagopala Rao Centenary Number* (Vijayawada, 1976), PP.9-11 and 34-36. Rajagopala Rao also wrote a book for women, 'Strichecharitra Kadambamu' in Telugu and edited the journal, 'Satyasamvardhani' of Veerasingam for three years when he fell ill.

Hanumaiah and Gnanamba were the two Brahmo preachers maintained by the 'Brahmo Dharma Pracharanidi' at Kakinada.
Besides Machilipatnam, two other somewhat major Samajas that existed in Krishna district were, (1) at Gudivada, and (2) at Vijayawada. The Vijayawada Prarthana Samaj was started in 1881 by B. Gogi Suryaprakasa Rao. D. Balaramamoorthy, R. Venkatasivudu, T. Rajagopala Rao were its active members and patrons. Regular 'Upasanas' were held at the members' residences. It had a Theistic library named after Ram Mohun Roy. Its primary aim was to strive for social and religious reform. Its main activities were to conduct a night school for the 'depressed classes' and to run a free dispensary.\(^{103}\)

In Guntur town the Samaj was started in 1898 under the inspiration of Pillarisetty Seetharamaiah, the voluntary missionary and 'bhagavatar'. With his charming personality and sweet voice Seetharamaiah spread the principle of theistic worship and was instrumental in starting Samajas at Epurupalem, Vetapalem, Chirala and other places.\(^{104}\) Particularly the uplifting influence he exerted among the weaving community in these areas was noteworthy. He went round

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\(^{103}\) In 1915, on the birth day of Rammohun Roy, May 22, 'Rammohun Mission' was established at Vijayawada. The mission was conducting Prarthana Samajas at Vijayawada and its suburbs, Tadepalli, Pedamatalanka and Vidhyadharapuram. The 'Mission' organised two night schools of which one was for 'untouchables'. See Dharmasadhani, August 16, 1916. Dharmasadhani was a fortnightly Brahma journal in Telugu. Also see, for particulars of its activities, ibid., February 1, 1917.

\(^{104}\) See A. Chalamayya, Pillarisetty Seetharamaiah Samgraha-charitra (Biography in Telugu), (Kakinada, 1934), P.20.
several places in Andhra detailing the life of Rammohun Roy through the traditional devotional vehicle of 'Harikatha' performance. Mixing the gospel of a great soul with songs, anecdotes and quotations, he succeeded in making people receptive to the theistic ideals of non-idolatrous worship and the concept of one God and a spirit of social service. 105

He arranged Hemachandra Sarkar's lectures around Chirala area and thus attracted more people towards the Samaj.

With his personal earnings a 'Mandir' was raised at Spurupalem. 106 In his efforts Seetharamaiah was assisted by Akurati Chalamayya, a student of Tagore at SanthiNiketan and a Brahma missionary and also P. Narasimham. 107

Bapatla, like Chirala, was a taluk centre in Guntur

105. He took up the cause of widows and 'social purity'. Two widow marriages were performed in the weaving community around Chirala and a change was brought about in the life of a number of nautch girls. He was feeding poor and helpless patients by going around collecting food and was for some time associated with the Orphanage at Kakinada. He used to visit several places to collect orphan children and took them to Kakinada. See A. Chalamayya, op. cit., PP.11-15.

106. Ibid., P.9. He visited Calcutta in 1907 and became an 'amushtanic' there.

107. Chirala is one of the few Brahma Samaj branches that are functioning today with some semblance of organisation.
district. A Prarthana Samaj was started there as far back as 1888 by B. Venkatappaiah and it became one of the important theistic centres in Andhra.\textsuperscript{108} The combined efforts of Pillarisetty Seetharamaiah, Adipudi Somanatha Rao\textsuperscript{109} and Desiraju Pedabapaiah were responsible for the building up of the Samaj here. A separate Samaj, 'Bala Bhakta Samajam' was organised for the youth. Pedabapaiah belonged to Bapatla and he was a student of Venkataratnam at Machilipatnam and later studied at the Madras Christian College. From his student days he was drawn towards the theistic church and was widely read in the western liberal thought and the Brahma Philosophy.\textsuperscript{110} Pedabapaiah was an intellectual and spiritual stalwart among the younger Brahmos in Andhra. He carried on a relentless campaign for 'Social Purity' in Bapatla and surrounding places and was thus able to draw

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Desiraju Pedabapaiah Jeevanasrtriti, op. cit.}, P.43.

\textsuperscript{109} Adipudi Somanatha Rao was a missionary and like Seetharamayya adopted the technique of spreading theistic ideas through the medium of 'Harikatha' performance.

\textsuperscript{110} Reference has already been made to Pedabapaiah in this chapter. An entry in his dairy indicated that he studied the works of John Stuart Mill, Charless Beard's, 'Martin Luther and Reformation', Plato's 'Republic', Carlyle's 'French Revolution', Theodore Parker's 'Sermons', H.J.S. Cotton's 'New India', the works of Brahmos like Keshub Chandra Sen and others. Cited in \textit{Desiraju Pedabapaiah, Jeevanasrtriti, op. cit.}, P.67.
the youth towards the Samaj.\textsuperscript{111}

At Nellore a Prarthana Samaj was started when R. Venkatasivudu was the Principal of the local college and during the stay of Tarakam there (as the Assistant in the Training School) the Samaj functioned regularly. However, the Prarthana Samaj movement was not active in Nellore district.

Ganjam and Visakhapatnam districts

Berhampur in Ganjam district became an active centre of Brahmo Samaj during the first decade of the present century. Jayanti Venkatanarayana, a Brahmo missionary, was the founder of this Samaj. A number of Brahmo activists like V. Jogaiah Pantulu (father of V.V. Giri, the former President of Indian Republic), D. Sitaramaswamy, W. Venkayya, K. Ramamurthy, N. Jagannatha Rao, were associated with the Samaj. Sir A.P. Patro built a Brahmo Mandir and Rokkam

Balakrishna Rao was attached to it.\textsuperscript{112} Besides them

\textsuperscript{111}\hspace{1em}See K. Hanumantha Rao, Sveeyya Jeevitha Sameeksha, op. cit., P.50, wherein he stated that a number of students under the inspiring leadership of Pedabapaiah signed the pledges of 'social purity' and joined the Samaj. For a brief but brilliant estimate of Desiraju Pedabapaiah's services to Brahmoism in Andhra, see Sivanatha Sastry, History of the Brahmo Samaj, op. cit., PP.505-506.

\textsuperscript{112}\hspace{1em}Rokkam Balakrishna Rao was the mission worker of the Sacharana Brahmo Samaj for a long time. A.P. Patro gifted away a building for Samaj mandir which was spacious enough to hold meetings as well as for the resident mission worker to live in a part of it. See for particulars of activities of the Samaj of Ganjam district The Report of the Brahmo Samaj in the Andhra country by P. Narasimham submitted to the Andhra Brahmo Sabha in 1946. The report (a typed copy) is in the possession of Tarakam (Kakinada).
Jayamangal Ratho and Y. Sannayya were devoted workers. Endowed with such rich talent and devotion, Berhampur became a strong Theistic centre around which a number of Samajas were started at Boyrani, Golabanda, Surla, Gopalpur and Chatrapur. The Samaj at Parlakimidi was publishing 'Ganjam News' edited by P.V. Krishna Rao which helped to spread Brahmoism. Chatrapur Samaj was founded by Nemachandra Sarkar, and a house was given by W. Venkayya for the use of the Samaj. At Visakhapatnam, in 1904, a Samaj was started by Namassivaya. Besides this, there were two Samajas at Vizianagaram and Bhimilipatnam in Visakhapatnam district.

As the movement was spreading, a need was felt to bring various Samajas together under the banner of one centralised Samaj to coordinate their activities. The first attempt in this direction was made in 1916 when

113. All these places are now a part of Orissa. The existence of a number of Samajas in these parts may be due to their proximity to Bengal. Also one does not know whether during this period Brahmo Samaj was widely prevalent in Orissa or not. It may also be due to the Brahmo missionaries who went to these parts from Kakinada to organise Samajas. However, as it was mentioned earlier in Chapter III, Berhampur was the centre of the social reform activities. It may be stated, in this connection, that wherever the social reform movements were active religious reform also found a strong base and vice versa.

the Andhra Brahmo Mandali was formed.\footnote{115} But it soon became defunct and not until the middle of the present century was the attempt renewed to merge all the Samajas to form one Andhra Brahmo Sabha. In between the two came the Maharaja's Trust ('Brahmo Pracharanidhi') of one lakh of rupees which was managed by an Advisory body. An attempt was then made to bring all the Samajas and workers attached to them under its auspices. Again it proved futile. Organisationally the movement seemed to be never on a sound footing.

General features of the Movement

The creation of Brahmo literature in Telugu was one. Part of it was direct translation of Brahmo works in Bengali into Telugu. Even though rest of the Telugu Brahmo literature were called originals, they were more or less

\footnote{115. The Mandali was established on August 19, 1916, at Rakinoda. Delegates came from several towns in Andhra such as Rajahmundry, Vijayawada, Machilipatnam, Guntur, Vinukonda, Epuripalem, Ongole, Tenali, Visakhapatnam, Pithapuram, Peddapuram and also from Calcutta and Madras. Veeresalingam presided over the meeting. Venkataratnam proposed the resolution establishing the 'Mandali'. Nearly sixty members joined it and Venkataratnam was elected its Secretary. See \textit{Dharmasadhani}, September 1, 1916.}
adaptations of the Bengali works. A few Telugu Brahmos like Palaparti Narasimham, Akurati Krishnamurthy, Ippagunta Subbu Krishnaiah, Kamaraju Hanumantha Rao, Kavikondala Sambasiva Rao, Pillarisetty Seetharamaiah, to mention only a few well known names, learnt Bengali and translated the Brahma scriptures into Telugu. Among them special mention should be made of Sridharulu Naidu and Butchaiah Pantulu, the earliest Brahmos who translated Maharshi's 'Brahmo Dharma'. This basic work on Brahmoism was also translated, at a later date by Palaparti Narasimham116 and Palavazula Lakshminarayana.117 Kavikondala Sambasiva Rao translated Keshub Chandra Sen's 'Jeevana Veda' and 'Brahma Gitopanishad' into Telugu.118 Kamaraju Hanumantha Rao published considerable theistic literature through his 'Prakpratichi Grandhamala' (a series of booklets). Tarakam and several others published a number of short biographies on almost all the Brahma leaders of Bengal. Quite a good number of hymns were written during this period and they were published under the title "Brahma Dharma Gitanjali". A lyric poet, D.V. Krishnasastry,

116. Narasimham spent one year in Calcutta Brahma Sadhanasramam. He learnt Bengali and made a study of Brahma literature in Bengali. He also wrote a few more books in Telugu like 'Bhaktanjali' (Brahmo Upasana Prayers), 'Bhagavat-katha', 'Brahmo Dharma Anushtanapaddhati', 'Matamu - Viesavanu', 'Brahmo Marriage Service' and 'Brahmamatam'. The history and teachings of Brahmoism were presented in Brahmanatamu (Telugu), (Rajahmundry, 1913). See Dharma-jyothi (Brahmo monthly journal in Telugu, edited by T. Prakasaratayadu), June 1965 (Vol.15, No.3). Also see an article "Brahmopasana" in Andhrapratiika 1917 (Annual number).

117. See Tarakam's article, op. cit.

118. Ibid.
on whom the influence of Rabindranath Tagore’s poetry was considerable, was a student of Venkataratnam at Kakinada and later as a Brahmo wrote a number of devotional poems, which were popularly rendered in the Samaj prayers. 119

The second feature was the regular contacts that the Andhra Samajas had with the movement at Calcutta and Bombay and the mutual visits of Brahmos, from time to time. As already mentioned a number of Andhra Brahmos paid visits to Calcutta which they considered their spiritual headquarters, and in reality was so. They looked towards Calcutta for inspiration and welcomed a number of prominent Bengali Brahmos who toured Andhra extensively. Prominent among those who visited Andhra were Sivanath Sastry, Sitanath Tatwa Bhushan, Hema Chandra Sarkar, Bipinchandra Pal, Ramananda Chatterji, Brajagopal Niyogi, Pramodalal Sen, Devendranath Mitra, Miss Nirbharapriya Ghose, Jamini Kantakar, Rev. M.N. Bose and others. From Bombay came V.R. Shinde. 120 These visits primarily helped in boosting up the morale of the leaders here and also to inspire devotion among the individual members, in addition to the strengthening of the missionary work of the movement.

119. The poems were collected and published in a book form. See D.V. Krishnasastri, Mahati (Guntur, 1949). Himself a melodious singer Krishnasastri popularised the Brahmo ideals through his songs.

120. P. Ramaswamy’s article, op. cit.
Thirdly, perhaps more importantly, the establishment of the Andhra Brahma Sadhana Ashramam, on the lines of Calcutta Ashramam, was a unique feature of the movement.\textsuperscript{121} Its twin aims were to practice and propagate Brahma dharma in Andhra. It took a definite shape in February 1913 and the Ashram came into existence at Kakinada.\textsuperscript{122} To practise Brahma dharma collectively they installed the 'Ashram' in a rented house and four of the founder members were enrolled as whole time 'pracharaks' of Brahma Dharma.\textsuperscript{123} They conducted their activities by lecturing in the towns and villages and also through Postal Mission\textsuperscript{124} and Brahma 'Sammelans' (Conferences). The 'Ashram' conducted a Harijan hostel (Valmiki Ashram) and Vidyarthi Niketan a hostel for

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{121} The preparatory meeting was convened at Kakinada on 25-12-1912 at the initiative taken by Venkataratnam. Among others it was attended by Kavikondala Sambasiva Rao, I. Subbukrishnaiah, Palaparthi Narasimham, Jayanti Venkatanarayana, Pillarisetty Scetharamalah, Kanaraju Hanumantha Rao, V.P. Raju, Akurati Krishnamurthy, representing several Samajas in Andhra. All these founder members were earlier connected with the Calcutta Ashram. See K. Hanumantha Rao, \textit{op. cit.}, P.142.
  \item \textsuperscript{122} It was patterned after Calcutta Ashram the constitution of which was adopted with minor alterations. See \textit{Ibid.}, P.143.
  \item \textsuperscript{123} The first 'pracharaks' of the 'Ashram' were I. Subbu-krishnaiah, K. Hanumantha Rao, A. Krishnamurthy and P. Narasimham. Hanumantha Rao's wife, Sundaramma, an inmate of Veeresalingam's Widows' Home who had married Hanumantha Rao according to Brahma 'paadhati', first of its kind in Andhra, joined the 'Ashram' as a part-time 'pracharak'. See for a detailed biographical study of Sundaramma, K. Hanumantha Rao, Matrudevileela (Telugu), (Rajahmundry, 1955).
  \item \textsuperscript{124} Books and pamphlets were being sent by post to those who asked for them. \textit{Ibid.}, P.147.
\end{itemize}
caste Hindu students where daily prayers were held. A journal, 'Dharma Sadhani', was started and an English journal called 'Sadhana' was also published though it did not continue for long. Venkataratnam looked after its finances and it is encouraging to note that the visits of the 'pracharaks' to villages were financed by those villagers who were sympathetic to the Samaj. To encourage the study of Brahma literature, examinations in Brahma theology were conducted, on behalf of the 'Ashram', for college and High school students. This was one of the indirect methods adopted by the 'Ashram' to propagate Brahmoism.

Fourthly, the Theists from all over Andhra were meeting occasionally for a period of few days where divine services were conducted and lectures delivered. This encouraged corporate spirit among them and strengthened their determination. The first such Theistic Conference was held at Rajahmundry in 1897. The next conference met

125. Ibid.
126. 'Dharma Sadhani' a fortnightly in Telugu, was edited by P. Narasimham for nearly 40 years and 'Sadhana' was edited by Kalyanaswamy, an ardent Brahma and a retired judge. See N. Jagannatha Rao's article "Andhra Brahma Sadhanasramamu" in Dharma Jyothi, Diamond Jubilee Number of Andhra Brahma Sadhana Ashram, February 1973, (Vol.22, No.11).
127. Examinations were conducted annually at a few selected centres in a prescribed syllabus containing portions from 'Brahmo Dharma', History of the Brahma Samaj, works of Veeresalingam and Venkataratnam, biographies of eminent Brahma leaders and prizes were awarded. Minutes of the interview with Tarakam, op. cit., Tarakam was responsible for the conduct of these examinations for a considerable period.
at Kakinada in 1898 and again at Rajahmundry in 1905. It held its meetings at Guntur, Kakinada, Machilipatnam in 1906, 1907 and 1908 respectively. However, the idea of conference was abandoned as there was no central organisation to implement the decisions taken at these conferences. From 1910 onwards the annual Theistic camps were organised where the Samajists would exchange their views, conduct prayers and preach the faith. 129

Spread of the Movement

The spread of the Prarthana Samaj movement could best be indicated in the words of Venkataratnam who was candid and balanced in his estimate. "Speaking however, of Andhra-desa, I believe it may be observed that there is a wide spread interest in the Brahma Samaj than elsewhere in Southern India, thanks to the devoted labours of some selfless souls, the foremost amongst them being my honoured leader, Veeresalingam Pantulu garu... Almost all Samajas are comparatively small in size, and many of them pivoted on single individuals. But geographically they form a net-work, beginning from Ganjam district and stretching right down to Nellore. And spiritually, by God's grace, they have produced and nurtured a certain number of earnest and devout souls believing in, and deriving strength and comfort

129. Ibid.
from, the message of the Brahma Samaj.... We, in the Andhra districts, have been endeavouring to give some stability to the Movement by ensuring permanence to it in particular localities by means of 'Mandir' constructions.... Thus, the Telugu country is dotted over with Brahma 'Mandirs' beginning with the northern-most at Berhampore.... We have amongst us a set, a small band, of young men consecrated to the gospel work of the Brahma Samaj. Their field of work ranges over a fairly large area between Ganjam and Nellore districts. And these young men form connecting links between the several Samajas".

Venkataratnam's assessment of the spread of the movement was broadly correct. The Samajas were small and dependent upon a few dynamic individuals. Nevertheless he was overgeneralising the fact that the movement spread all along the Coastal belt, from Berhampur (Ganjam district) to Nellore. For, a careful examination of the above account would show that though the movement spread into the countryside in Ganjam district, it did not in the district of Visakhapatnam. Again, the movement was fairly well spread in Godavari, Krishna and Guntur districts, whereas in Nellore district (except in Nellore town) it has no influence.

Another notable feature was the total absence of the movement in Rayalaseema area, where there were a few active centres of social reform like Bellary and to a lesser extent in Anantapur. Therefore, it has to be concluded that the movement was mainly confined to the four Coastal districts of Ganjam, Godavari, Krishna and Guntur. The popularity of the cause in Ganjam district, could perhaps be attributed to two factors, its proximity to Bengal,\textsuperscript{131} and the presence of a fairly sufficient number of dedicated workers.\textsuperscript{132}

The remaining three districts, Godavari, Krishna and Guntur could be formed into a close geographical unit as these three are bordering upon each other. Of the three districts, Godavari and Krishna were delta areas where, during the last three decades of the 19th century, urbanisation was taking place with the simultaneous growth of

\textsuperscript{131} A fair guess may be made, in the absence of any materials on the spread of Brahmo movement in Orissa, that a good number of educated Bengalis who were influenced by Brahmo Philosophy and general reform ideas of Bengal of this period might have been occupying jobs in the Government service especially in inter-state services like the Railways and Postal departments. In this connection it should be noted that the East Coast Railway was formed connecting Calcutta with Madras before the turn of the 19th century.

\textsuperscript{132} P. Narasimham, \textit{The Report of the Brahmo Samaj in Andhra, op. cit.,} mentioned that besides the presence of a number of workers, there were three full-time mission workers at Berhampore, all connected with the Sadharana Brahmo Samaj, Calcutta, viz., (1) Jayanti Venkatanarayana (2) Jaya Mangala Ratho and (3) Roktam Balakrishna Rao.
education and general prosperity of the people there.¹³³

They are also the rice-bowl of Andhra. In these two districts the movement was largely confined to towns like Rajahmundry, Kakinada, Peddapuram, Narasapur, Bhimavaram, Ellore, Pithapuram, Vijayawada, Machilipatnam, Gudivada and the like.

Those who embraced the movement came mainly from professions like teaching, public service, and law. Not even a handful of people were landholders or owners of any other property. Thus the movement could broadly be classified as urban based, educated, lower middle class in its nature. Once they were uprooted from their rural and hereditary professions and from the joint family background and conservative social set-up they were searching for a new identity and new ways of social and religious life. Also, they were striving to adopt a wider view of the world in tune with the life they were leading in the new surroundings. Thus they were drawn closer to the Prarthana Samaj ideals which suited their new thinking of breaking with the past, though in a cautious and guarded manner. Another significant factor was the presence of the leaders of the movement like Veeresalingam and Venkataratnam and the munificence of the Rajah of Pithapur.

¹³³. This has been explained in Chapter I.
With regard to Guntur which was not covered by either Godavari or Krishna anicut, the availability of services of Brahmo stalwarts like Desiraju Pedabapaiah and popular and magnetic Brahmo workers like Pillarisetty Seetaramniah, Akurati Krishnamurthy, Palaparti Narasimham was largely responsible for the growth of the movement, particularly among the weaving communities of Chirala taluk. Guntur was an important centre of social reform also. Furthermore, from the point of view of economic prosperity, Guntur district was not altogether backward as it was mainly of fertile black soil, producing cash crops like tobacco, cotton, groundnut and chillies.

In terms of the total membership of the Samaj in Andhra, the number of those who were officially enrolled perhaps did not exceed a few hundreds. However, there were some thousands of associate members "as worshippers with the various congregations" and they were in agreement with "the principles of the Samaj and give effect to them in life so far as circumstances permit it".\(^{134}\) This gives us a clue to the existence of a good number of non-members (associate members) who evinced

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134. V. Ramakrishna Rao, *op. cit.*, Vol.V, P.99. Details of membership figures cannot be given in the absence of any written records. However, during the personal interviews with Tarakam and Y.V. Ramana, I gathered in terms of families, who were following Brahmo principles and conducting themselves according to Brahmo rites, there used to be about 100 each in Kakinada and Machilipatnam and twenty each in Rajahmundry and Pithapur.
peripheral interest in the movement's prayer meetings and other social activities. The ambition of making it a mass movement "has not been realised...it was just able meagrely to get into touch with but a very small fraction of the educated classes". A good number of students were brought under

135. The number of such non-members might have been a few thousands. For example, according to Tarakam, at Kakinada the prayer meetings were very well attended. Most of them who were present were non-members. Tarakam attributed this to two reasons. Firstly, Venkataratnam's personal charm and his brilliant exposition of Brahma ideals and secondly, people had an eye on some personal gains like securing employment. Venkataratnam's social status as the Principal of the College, his intimacy with the Rajah of Pithapur and contacts with the local officials contributed to this feeling. These prayer meetings in Kakinada used to be like social gatherings attended by the local officials, some of whom were Christians and Muslims. Minutes of the Interview with Tarakam, op. cit.

136. K. Kalyanaswami's article, "The Brahma Samaj — Its scope and programme", in Kakinada Brahma Samaj History, op. cit., P.219. Tarakam too agreed that the movement never percolated down to the level of the masses and, however, ascribed two reasons for it, namely: (1) the grip of tradition, and (2) lack of resources — in terms of both men and money. In his account of its limited spread, Tarakam was perhaps analysing its decline too. Speaking about the grip of tradition for the slow growth of Brahmoism in the South as a whole Manilal Parekh stated: "The feeling cannot be restricted that, somehow or other the work of the Brahma Samaj has not grown in this Presidency as it should have. In the people of Madras there is excellent material whether from the point of view of subtlety of intellect or tenderness of heart, but whether it be due to the extreme orthodoxy of the people or to the very strict caste system prevailing there, the message of the Brahma Dharma has fallen more or less on deaf ears". See Manilal C. Parekh, The Brahmo Samaj (Hajkot, 1929), P.230. Writing about the Andhra, however, Parekh held a somewhat different view that "The situation among the Telugu people on the whole has been more hopeful. Several men have devoted themselves to the work of the Brahmo Samaj and their work has not been without response from the people". Ibid.
the influence of Brahmo Samaj at several centres, as a substantial number of its leaders and workers were teachers by profession. Realising its failure to reach the masses it was advocated that, "It would, therefore, be in the fitness of things that hereafter and in view of its past experience, it should confine its work mostly to the educated classes, abstaining to flirt (sic) away its slender resources...." 137

Estimate

The Brahmo movement in Andhra was thus limited in its scope and spread and looked insignificant in terms of numbers. Nevertheless it was not a mean achievement when we take into consideration the fact that it was started only during the last two decades of the 19th century with slender resources and lack of sufficient trained and dedicated personnel. By 1920s the movement was on the decline losing much of its earlier vigour and direction. And also its organisation was weak. In the absence of a strong central organisation the local branches pulled in different directions. Moreover, no significant attempt was made to organise and consolidate the movement from below. Several Samajas depended wholly

137. K. Kalyanaswami, op. cit., P.220. He pointed out the need to give the Samaj a new orientation to the manner and method of its work, after carefully formulating to itself the limits within which it has to carry it on.
upon a few individuals which proved detrimental to the movement on two counts. Firstly, in a number of cases, the Samajas became less active after the retirement or death of such members. Secondly, such Samajas failed to develop the method of democratic functioning which was essential for the growth of any movement. 138

The movement was also handicapped by the lack of sufficient number of 'pracharakas' who could spread the philosophy of the Brahma Samaj effectively among the people. 139

Even though a 'Sadhana Ashram' was established, its limited resources and poor organisation failed to achieve the desired results of producing trained 'pracharakas' and 'sadhaka' to take up the missionary activity on behalf of the Samaj.

However, the two main causes that cut at the roots of the Brahma movement were, (1) the Nationalist Movement which became vigorous after 1920, and (2) the non-brahmin movement. On account of the overriding influence of the former movement almost all other movements got submerged and their issues and problems got absorbed into its programme

138. P. RamaSwamy in his article, op. cit., referred to this aspect when he stated: "Democracies in name and form but not in spirit and outlook, will soon become vitiated; where individuals, even from the best of motives, dominate and dictate and decide, the constituent units will gradually come to feel a sense of frustration and futility".

139. This was acknowledged and also mentioned by many Brahmans in their writings. See for example, P. Narasim- ham, "Neti Kartavyam" in Kakinada Brahma Samaj Charitra, op. cit., pp.230-31. Also see Tarakam's article, op. cit.
of action. The non-Brahmin movement perhaps did more damage as Venkataratnam joined the Justice Party which was the political expression of the non-Brahmin movement. It was a rude shock to the Brahma movement. Prominent members of the Samaj protested and appealed to Venkataratnam to reconsider his decision, but it was in vain.\footnote{The appeal dated December 4, 1917 was signed by 17 members of the Kakinada Brahma Samaj including his close associates like V. Ramakrishnarao, V.P. Raju, Peddada Ramasvamy, Kamaraju Hanumantharao. They stated that non-Brahmin movement with its basis on caste discrimination was narrow in its nature and scope and thus incompatible with the Brahma Samaj which rose above the distinctions based on caste and creed. See for the text of the letter in Dharmasadhani, March 1, 1918. Venkataratnam convened an informal meeting of the Kakinada Brahma Samaj, of which he was the President, and tried to convince its members that by joining the non-Brahmin movement he did not intend to observe the caste distinctions. Not as a non-Brahmin he joined Justice Party, as it is reported of him, but as a Brahma, since the party stood for 'social justice' which was dearer to the heart of the Bramhas. The members, by that time, came to know that he was a member of the caste association of the Telagas. This invited sharp criticism from the members and led to further dissensions in the movement. \textit{Ibid.}, p.181. Venkataratnam attended the non-Brahmin conference held at Dikkavole (East Godavari district) on October 27, 1917, which was attended by leading non-Brahmin leaders of the day including P. Theagaraya Chetty, K.V. Raddi Naidu, P. Ramarayningar and A.P. Patro. He was also a member of the reception committee. The conference, among other things, recommended a scheme of reforms for communal representation in the provincial sphere. See B. Kesavanarayana, op. cit., p.300. Also see Dharmasadhani, November 1, 1917, which demanded an explanation from Venkataratnam keeping his Presidentship of the Kakinada Brahma Samaj in abeyance. Venkataratnam referred the above letter to the Working Committee for discussion. See also the letter of R. Venkataratnam, February 2, 1918 Private Papers of Raghupati Venkataratnam.}
However, it should be noted that the Brahmo movement did not impose any restrictions on its members asking them to keep themselves aloof from any of these movements. The unwritten understanding was that members had the option either to join any of the movements or to keep away from them, even though it preferred the later possibility. Nevertheless there was an irreconcilable contradiction between the anti-British nationalist movement and the pro-British Justice movement which Venkataratnam failed to realise. Thus the dissensions among the Brahmos caused by the factors mentioned above brought about an invisible break in the ranks of the Samaj. However, the movement did not break up totally as the personal attachments were stronger. The serious damage caused by these dissensions gave birth to strong communal feelings. This incident brought the communal feelings into the open and created dissensions which threatened to ruin the movement as a whole at least for the time being.

141. Interview with Tarakam, op. cit. Tarakam stated that a good number of Brahmos in Andhra were in the vanguard of the Freedom struggle even from the days of 'Vande-mataram' movement. People like Venkataratnam, according to Tarakam, justified their identification with the Justice Party on the ground that it stood for the uplift of the weaker sections in society. However, Tarakam admitted that the communal politics of the Justice Party surely retarded the progress of the Brahmo Samaj.
The Prarthana Samaj movement in Andhra contributed to the growth of monotheistic ideas and catholicity of outlook primarily among its ranks and also among men outside its fold. As claimed by one of its leaders there were many Brahmos "outside the Samaj than inside it". This was due to the flexible approach adopted by the movement towards its members who retained their moorings in the broad spectrum of Hindu religion. They retained their caste and did not like to form into an exclusive group away from that of the Hindus as it happened in Bengal. Their main stress was on the principle of the 'Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man' and also on the form of worship devoid of idolatry, rituals and ceremonies. Therefore, its novel method of congregational form of worship, coupled with melodious songs of devotion in Telugu followed by a sermon, appealed to the imagination of a number of educated professional classes who came under its influence.

Hence the somewhat wide diffusion of its ideology in Andhra

142. V.P. Raju in the History of Kakinada Brahmo Samaj, op. cit., P.197. He stated that "this familiarization with our ideas partly accounts for very slow denominational progress".

143. Sivanath Sastry, during one of his visits to Andhra, fell ill with typhoid fever at Kakinada. The local Brahmos were afraid to nurse him and a 'low caste' person (Sastry mentioned him as person belonging to 'sweeper caste') was entrusted to his welfare. This, as well as other experiences during his earlier visits when he observed the grip of caste over the local Brahmos, made Sastry state: "Brahmos in Andhra were still a part of Hindu society". See Sivanath Sastry, Atmacharit, op. cit., P.425.
that contributed to a liberal outlook among the people. The special feature of the movement in Andhra was that it attracted many young men into its ranks who helped in its growth in their respective areas.

Socially speaking it reduced the power of old traditions and superstitions on the minds of men and thus indirectly paved the way for the progress of social reform movements. This is where, though lacking in depth and strength, the influence of the movement permeated through a large section of the society thus loosening the grip of the social customs.

As proudly claimed by the Brahmösa, the movement did pave the way, in a very general manner, for the progress of the national movement through it, creating an enlightened climate and social awareness. 144

144. See for example the articles of Tarakam, Ramaswamy and the History of Kakinada Brahma Samaj, op.cit., pp.226-27. Bar-ring the first generation leaders like Veeresalingam and a few other Brahma missionaries and 'amuchanakas', the young men who joined the Samaj later and formed the second generation participated in the freedom struggle. Examples are many in this regard. In the home town of Veeresalingam and the centre of the reform movements, Rajahmundry, during the Swadeshi movement of 1907, a good majority of students who were members and sympathisers of the Prarthana Samaj and social reform movements joined the freedom struggle. Prominent among them were G. Harisarvathama Rao and B. Narayana Rao. In Machilipatnam also the former students of Venkataratnam and active workers of the movement like Mutnuri Krishna Rao, B. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, A. Kaleswara Rao joined the freedom struggle. At Guntur Unnava Lakshminarayana and at other places people like T. Prakasam, K. Nageswara Rao and several others were in the vanguard of the freedom struggle. However, this is only a tentative hypothesis which has to be substantiated by further research to establish precisely to what extent the Prarthana Samaj helped in providing a background as well as leadership to the freedom struggle in Andhra. Also, paradoxically enough, as mentioned earlier, the freedom struggle was one of the causes for the fading away of the Brahma movement in Andhra.
The Brahmo movement was the first to start constructive work for ameliorating the conditions of the 'depressed classes'. Veeresalingam's Theistic High School admitted them into his school. Chilakamarthi Lakshminarasimham started a school exclusively for the scheduled castes. The Pithapur Rajah's college at Kakinada admitted them and exempted them from college fees etc. In addition to this, the Rajah of Pithapur organised separate 'lodges' for them at Kakinada and Pithapur. It was only a beginning in this regard and the example was followed by several others. 145 The Brahmos were thus instrumental in moulding several Harijan leaders. A number of them were educated in schools started by the Brahmos. So by the time when Gandhiji took up their cause at the national level, an awareness was already widespread among them in Andhra.

Another aspect that attracted the attention of some writers was that Brahmoism offered an effective alternative to Christianity and checked to a great extent the conversions of caste Hindus into it in the Coastal districts. 146 Pattabhi

145. It is significant that this work of uplift of Harijans was started by the Brahmo Samaj much earlier than the efforts initiated by Mahatma Gandhi as well as the Government. Following the above example, institutions for Harijan uplift were started by V.Ramajee Rao at Machilipatnam, G. Ramachandra Rao at Gudivada, Rayudu Gangayya at Eluru, Unnava Lakshminarayana at Guntur, Eli Vadapalli at Ramachandrapuram, G.Chandrayya at Razole and several others. See Tarakam's articles, op. cit.

146. A.Kaleswara Rao in his autobiography, op. cit., P.42, mentioned the names of 12 brahmin youngmen who got converted into Christianity at Kakinada. Several such conversions among the Reddys, Kammias and other caste Hindus also took place at Guntur, Machilipatnam and other places in the Coastal Andhra.
Seetharamayya, a well known congress leader, speaking of Machilipatnam, wrote: "Masulipatam (sic) was a place noted for conversions of Hindus into Christianity. Those conversions became rather few and far between after a bumper crop which was harvested in the seventies of the 19th century. Thereafter between 1890 and 1895 there were only two conversions of Brahmins... and the higher authorities of the Church Mission Society of England (C.M.S.) took stern notice of this failure in crop. A certain missionary of dynamic personality - the Rev. G.S. Eddy - was sent to Masulipatam (sic) in the years 1897 and 1898 to look into the matter. On a close survey of the conditions prevailing in Masulipatam (sic), Rev. Mr. Eddy came to the conclusion that the heterodoxy which was widely prevalent in the town did not mature into conversions because of the halfway house between orthodoxy and conversions to Christianity, through Brahmoism taught and practiced by Sri R. Venkataratnam Nayudu. Brahmoism was indeed a half-way house, because it failed to please either orthodox Hindus or the foreign missionaries. The former clung to their conservatism as evidenced in the organization of 'Hindu Matha Bala Samaj' in Machilipatnam. Christian missionaries saw a rival in Brahmoism since it took away many of the potential converts to Christianity.

147. B.Pattabhi Seetharamayya, "Memoirs", in Homage to Sir Nakhupati Venkataratnam Naidu (Birth Centenary Celebration Souvenir), (New Delhi, 1982).

148. It is interesting to note that Eddy demanded Venkataratnam's dismissal. Clarke, the Principal of the Noble College where Venkataratnam was working, took him into his confidence and explained the situation. Venkataratnam had no alternative except to resign.