CHAPTER VII

FURTHER REFORM ACTIVITIES
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Other issues with which reform movements in Andhra were concerned were reduction of wasteful expenditure on marriages, abolition of taboos on sea voyages and, campaign against corruption in public life. The first two issues had the alleged sanction of popular tradition and the shastras. The third issue was concerned with ethical values and norms to be observed in public life. In tackling these problems the reformers had to fight against both the orthodox as well as those who were entrenched powerfully in positions of Government.

Reduction of Marriage Expenses

This was a part of marriage reform undertaken by the reformers. As it was almost an established practice that certain items of expenditure, which were wasteful, had to be incurred, several poor and middle class families
were becoming bankrupt.\textsuperscript{1} Veeresalingam criticised the custom of performing the marriage for five days, with elaborate ceremonies and grand dinners.\textsuperscript{2} The priestly classes demanded and received heavy amounts as gifts. Veeresalingam, who had no faith in their piety, advised people not to pay them. He held the view that the performance of marriages on a large scale was impoverishing people.\textsuperscript{3} He suggested alternative ways of spending money on the occasions of marriages such as providing for the supply of drinking water in villages and other public

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\textsuperscript{1} This evil has been in practice for quite a long time. See Abbe J. Dubois, \textit{op. cit.}, P.230, wherein he stated that the performance of a marriage was the "most expensive one, and brings many a Hindu to ruin. Some spend on it all they possess, and a great deal more besides, which others, in order to fulfill what is expected of them, contract debts which they are never able to pay". Commenting upon the same subject, 'The Hindu' stated: "It is well known that... marriages, as a rule, necessitate such enormous expenditure that many families involve themselves in debt and even in ruin...we can point to many wealthy families in Southern India who have ruined themselves by borrowing blindly vast sums of money to indulge their vanity of having performed marriages on a grand scale". Cited in \textit{Papers on Indian Reform, op. cit.}, P.74. That the general public in Andhra were much affected and concerned by this evil was established by an anonymous letter published in one of the earliest Telugu journals, \textit{Vrittantini}, February 15, 1841, published from Madras. The letter was captioned "Extravagant Expenditure during Marriages". See for the full letter reproduced in Bangorey, ed. \textit{Brown's Letters: History of Telugu Journalism, 1632-1867} (Nellore, 1973), PP.22-28.

\textsuperscript{2} This aspect, along with other evils connected with the performance of marriages, was subjected to severe criticism by Veeresalingam in his play 'Brahmavivahamu'. See Veeresalingam, \textit{Col.Works}, Vol.II, \textit{op. cit.}

\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Ibid.}, Vol.VIII, P.II, P.93.
benefactions. 4

It is obvious that this problem affected mainly the middle and lower middle classes. 5 Therefore, it immediately caught the imagination of educated middle classes and the enlightened among them like D.V. Suryaprakasa Rao from Kakinada started expressing himself against it. In a tract, "Hindu marriage expenses", he listed five major items of avoidable expenditure in marriages. 6 They were, (1) sending out wedding invitations through messengers, who used to collect presents and cash-gifts from the invitees; (2) distribution of heavy amounts as cash-gifts among the priestly classes; (3) arranging elaborate dinners, (4) presentation of new clothes to pandits, relatives and others, and (5) performances by nautch parties. 7 Suryaprakasa Rao stated that this wicked custom subjected people to untold misery and concluded that it had no shastraic sanction.

4. Ibid., P.98.

5. Quoting The Bengalee, Indian Social Reformer, June 15, 1895 (Vol.5, No.41), declared that the extravagant expenditure of the Hindu marriages was "a source of endless trouble to our society. It is the cause of the chronic poverty from which our middle classes suffer".

6. D.V. Suryaprakasa Rao, Hindu Marriage Expenses (Telugu), (Rajeshmundry, 1892). This small pamphlet of less than 20 pages is highly illuminating and analytical. The author was a close associate of Veeresalingam and was employed as an Accountant in the District Collector’s Office at Kakinada.

7. Ibid., P.4.
The author, like Veeresalingam, suggested several alternative ways of spending the money towards the establishment of hospitals, schools, leprosy-Homes, town halls etc. 8

People with many children were facing innumerable problems in this regard. This reform activity, therefore, though looks insignificant, took an organised form which resulted not only in the reduction of expenses but even in simplifying the marriage ritual. 9 A resolution on this issue found a regular place in all the social reform conferences that met during this period. However, the nature of the reform was such that, beyond educating people through their writings and exhorting them not to indulge in extravagant spending, the reformers could not achieve spectacular results. Success of the reform depended mostly on the preparedness of people to break with custom and defy orthodoxy which in its turn depended upon the growth of knowledge and spread of rational ideas. The change in men's minds, in this regard, was gradually emerging. Also certain objective factors like the spread of education, growth of trade and industry and consequent upon that the establishment of urban centres, emergence of secular professions,

8. Ibid., P.17. The author mentioned a few concrete cases of the families in Rajahmundry which were ruined due to this evil. See Ibid., P.8. Krishnapatrika, in its issue dated January 17, 1909 published an article condemning the evil practice.

9. Chintamani, February-March 1898, a bimonthly journal run by Veeresalingam.
the relative reduction of leisure at the disposal of people and increasing cost of living were some of the factors that contributed to the minimisation of this evil.

As a part of his struggle against the orthodox sections and the superstitious practices associated with marriage ceremonies, Veeresalingam denounced the practice of consulting horoscopes of prospective couples. He pointed out that many of the couples were dying even though their horoscopes were consulted before marriages and despite the fact that priests fixed the auspicious time (Muhurat) for the performance of marriages. 10

**Sea-Voyage Movement**

To undertake sea travel was tantamount to losing one's caste. It was prohibited in the name of Shastras and those who undertook sea voyages were excommunicated. Dining with them was forbidden and anybody violating this would also be faced with excommunication. With the comparative growth of education and new avenues of employment, and the growth of professions like law, a number of people visiting foreign countries increased considerably.

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Several youngmen from Coastal Andhra were proceeding to England to pursue higher studies, particularly in Law. In the wake of the rise of Japan, during the first decade of the present century, educated youngmen preferred to go there to learn industrial skills with a view to start industries in Andhra after their return. However, the fear of losing one's own caste and thus being deprived of his social position inhibited people from undertaking foreign trips. Also the rigours of complete and total boycott frightened the prospective visitors to other countries.

This became a major issue of social reform in Bengal during the 1890's in the name of 'Sea-Voyage Movement' to readmit overseas travellers into their respective castes.

A tract was published by the Standing Committee on the

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11. In this context the case of Tanguturi Prakasam is well known. When he returned after finishing Bar-at-law examination, from England, he was excommunicated and was asked to undergo 'prayaschit'. Veeresalingam and others advised him not to do so and arranged a dinner in his honour which was attended by several reform-loving people at Rajahmundry. This was followed by several other dinners, in honour of Prakasam, arranged by reform minded people at several places. It was done chiefly to undermine the orthodoxy. See for details of the incident in T. Prakasam, op. cit., P.100. Also see Krishnapatrika, November 15, 1905, and December 1, 1905. Also see an article on this in which references were made to the dinners arranged in honour of Prakasam in Ibid., March 29, 1908 and November 19,1909.

12. G. Harisarvoothama Rao, 'An Appeal' in the Krishnapatrika, September 1, 1905. In this brief article Harisarvoothama Rao referred to S.G. Rama Rao of Bellary who visited Japan and learnt the methods of manufacturing matches, glass, pencils etc.
Hindu Sea-voyage question in which it was proved, with the help of the opinions of learned men, that visits abroad were not prohibited by the shastras. The sixth National Social Conference (1892) carried a resolution condemning this practice, "that neither distant sea-voyages nor residence in foreign countries should by themselves involve loss of caste".

The Telugu press in Andhra championed the cause of sea travel and started explaining its advantages to the people. As far back as in 1874 'Andhrabhasha Sanjivani' published the comments of a lady who visited England and stated, "such voyages and journeys may be made without the slightest infringement of the customs and caste-prejudices of the country and she attributed the advanced knowledge and experience possessed by Europeans to their practice of travelling about the world from one country to another..."

13. The tract was called 'The Hindu Sea-Voyage Movement' and was published in 1894. See Sumit Sarkar, Bibliographical Survey of Social Reform Movements, op. cit., P.29. Writers like Pramathanath Bose held the view that sea-voyage was not prohibited in the oldest and authoritative of the Hindu Shastras, except Manu who excluded those that undertake sea-voyage performing 'sraddhas'. See Pramathanath Bose, Vol.II, op. cit., P.104. He also stated that an excommunicated Hindu would be taken back into caste on his "undergoing an expiatory ceremony of which an important part is the swallowing of a little cow-dung", though, probably, not more than one percent in Bengal followed this method to seek readmission into caste. See Ibid., P.105.

14. Cited in Ibid.

'Vivekavardhani' impressed upon the Government to take steps to prevent priests and the caste guilds from discouraging the journey overseas which would benefit both the individual concerned and the nation. The 'Swadesamitran' echoed the same sentiments at a later date.

From the evidence available it appears that in Andhra this issue gained importance during the first decade of the present century. Earlier, reformers were mainly concerned with other issues like the uplift of women, temperance, nautch etc. Moreover, as noticed earlier, by the turn of the century a good number of people were visiting foreign countries. This was due to two factors, namely, (1) the comparative growth of education, and (2) the Swadeshi movement. In the case of the latter, educated young men, imbued with the ideals of the development of the nation through the growth of indigenous industries, were eager to visit countries like Japan and a few European countries like Germany and England. This was evident in the writings of reformers as well as the resolutions of the social conferences. Admitting the

16. **Vivekavardhani**, April 1883. **Ibid.**
18. This opinion is based on the resolutions passed on this problem in almost all the conferences held during this period.
19. See the appeal of G. Harisarvothama Rao in *Krishnapatrika* **op. cit.**, and another by an anonymous writer in **Ibid.**, March 29, 1908 and November 19, 1908. See for resolutions on this issue, **Ibid.**, April 23, 1909.
fact that countries in the West and Japan in the East were more advanced in science and technology and realising the need to develop India on similar lines, the reform conferences pleaded for the removal of restrictions on foreign travel.  

Discussions were held on this issue and a tract was published by A. Mahadeva Sastry in English. He argued that, nowhere in the Vedas, sea-voyage, of any kind, was prohibited. He declared that "the present muddle was created by the unbending attitude of the leaders of the orthodox section who are not prepared to admit the foreign travelled Hindu to the community of his birth under any circumstances". However, the shastras condemned only the prolonged or frequent sea-voyages or the sea-faring profession. Even the Smritis like that of Manu enjoined

20. See the address of K. Ramakrishna Rao, President of the reception committee of the 17th Guntur District Social Conference held at Ongole in 1914, wherein he pleaded for the removal of restrictions. He mentioned that this issue was discussed by fifty pandits at Kanchipuram in 1912. Out of fifty pandits, thirty were of the view that sea-travel was not objectionable while eighteen held the view that it was sinful and two remained neutral. K. Ramakrishna Rao, 17th Guntur District Social Reform Conference Welcome Address (Ongole, 1914), PP.17-18.


22. Ibid., P.10.

23. Ibid., P.3.
only a partial exclusion of those who undertook sea-travel where as custom insisted upon their total exclusion from caste. Sastry, however, did not suggest people to undergo the ceremony of 'prayaschit', whereas some of the reformers favoured it in some way or other.

The 'upper castes' were evidently more affected by this problem. For, it was from these castes that most of the educated people came and hence more foreign visits by them. Also they were occupying superior positions in the social hierarchy and thus more concerned about their castes.

The Vaisyas in Andhra were divided into two groups over this issue; one was pro-sea travel (called foreign group) and the other was anti-sea travel (native group). Sami Venkatachalam Setty was the leader of the group that favoured sea-travel under whose leadership sea-travel was accepted after much deliberation, in the Vaisya Conference held at Madras in 1911. The Conference also decided to grant fellowships to those Vaisya students who were studying abroad. This was an instance where caste associations

24. Ibid., Appendix.

25. For example, K. Ramakrishna Rao, op. cit., P.19, suggested a brief expiatory ceremony. But, on the whole, the Andhra reformers were against this.

26. The whole controversy was sparked off by the issue of readmitting a Vaisya youngman into their caste when he returned from England in 1910. For particulars on this, see D. Chenchaiah, op. cit., P.48. Also see D. Chenchaiah, Na Divyasamritulu (Telugu), (Vijayawada, 1961), P.48.
were endeavouring to eradicate social evils among their members.

**Corruption in Public Life**

Reformers like Veeresalingam played a significant role in purifying public life in Andhra. Feudal customs and age long traditions still reigned supreme over the Andhra society during the 19th century. As a consequence of the spread of western knowledge and the development of society along the path of western civilisation, new vistas of opportunities were opened in public life. Educated Indians were increasingly recruited into courts and Government offices. The lure of position and patronage led to evils in public life such as nepotism, corruption and the like. Indians, who were occupying subordinate positions and on whom the British officials, at the higher level, depended, became generally corrupt. Local self-governing bodies like municipalities, district boards and taluk boards were not functioning properly even within their limited jurisdiction of power and autonomy. The natives who were elected to these bodies did not evince adequate interest in improving the general welfare. Consequently their style of functioning was not improved. This was not to be tolerated by reformers. One of the aims of 'Vivekavardhani', the journal started by Veeresalingam,
was to combat the evils in public life and purify it. 27

Explaining the objects of his journal, Veeresalingam stated: "In those days it was a very common practice among officials to take bribes, and not to accept them was dishonour. All were under the belief that bribery, far from being immoral, was the natural function of the official. Therefore, one object of the journal was to stop bribery among the officials. But bribery cannot cease without the moral standard being raised both among the people that offer bribes and the officials that accept them. Hence to infuse a moral tone among the people was a second object of the journal..." 28

Facing several odds and defying many people Veeresalingam carried on a struggle against these evils. An instance may be given in this connection. The district munsiff at Rajahmundry, in 1878, was P. Sriramulu. He was notoriously corrupt. Vakils (advocates) in his court adopted a novel method of quoting sections by which if one vakil mentioned 'section 200', it suggested an amount of two hundred rupees to be paid to the munsiff as a bribe. The other vakil might mention 'section 300' which meant

28. Ibid., PP.80-81.
that he was prepared to pay an amount of three hundred rupees. In this manner the bidding would continue until the munsiff declared in favour of one section. Furthermore, this munsiff was not in the habit of writing judgements. Instead he made the Government vakil C. Kamaraju, who happened to be his brother-in-law, write them. As this became a public scandal Veeresalingam resolved to put an end to this. He exposed them through the columns of his journal, 'Vivekavardhan'. He also caught hold of one original manuscript of the judgements prepared by the Government vakil. He wrote in the journal: "Our acting district munsiff is P. Sriramulu Garu.... In violation of the long standing orders and rules of practice, on the point, he takes up the trial of not less than two cases simultaneously. He directs his attention to one case before him and entrusts a goomastha with the conduct of the second case. We must observe that this sort of procedure is very objectionable and detrimental to public justice.... He never takes them up in the order or the serial number in which they stand in the register of suits. Another circumstance we may note down is the way in which judgements are pronounced and dated. They say that long after the cases were heard, reserving judgements, he would one day deliver them putting a previous date... he holds the court

29. See for the complete description of the incident in Ibid., PP.112-115.
in the room or hall seating himself on a bed spread on the floor with pleaders, goomasthas, clients, etc., standing or sitting around him, thus presenting altogether a disorderly appearance...we feel confident that this may not fail to rouse the attention of the higher authorities...30 Subsequently the Madras Government ordered the High Court to enquire into this and Veeresalingam proved his charges with the copy of the judgement as proof. Kamaraju, the Government vakil, anticipating serious consequences, committed suicide by taking poison and the district munsiff, Sriramulu, died suddenly31. Thus death saved both of them from punishment.

Another evil which was successfully exposed and set right was the practice of granting 'sumnuds' (pattas) to all and sundry to enrol as vakils through giving bribes to the district judicial authorities. Nearly eighty new 'sumnuds' were enrolled who did not have even a working knowledge of English.32 Vivekavardhani exposed this evil in its columns under the caption "Pleaders' Pattas and Injustice to the Educated Public". The journal drew "the attention of the local government, the High Court... to the recent arbitrary proceedings of some of the Judges... with

30. Vivekavardhani, April 1887.
32. Ibid., P.108.
regard to the distribution of sunnuds to pleaders for practising in the District and Munsiff courts.... We wish that the High Court will set due limits to the abused privilege of the Judges for granting sunnuds", and called for the cancellation of those 'sunnuds' granted to unqualified and incompetent as per the existing rules of the Government.

The contemporary vernacular press attacked corruption that was prevalent in law courts. The Vartalahari (published from Berhampur) wrote an article against bribery prevalent in courts. The causes for this, the editor stated, were that the Englishmen who were entrusted with the administration were ignorant of the native language and so they transacted business with the help of their subordinates through English. Hence they had no chance of knowing the truth of the matter and were misled by the subordinates who were indulging in malpractices. While appreciating the manifold advantages that accrued through the introduction of new legal systems in India the journals still criticised the judicial administration in terms of heavy expenditure involved and delay caused in the settlement of disputes. 'Vivekavardhanai' went to the extent of complaining that the system of

34. The Vartalahari, July 1881, Native News, 1881.
35. Ibid.
justice, as it prevailed then, was not in the reach of the common man and hence pleaded for its total reform. 36

Also they were complaining against the practice of keeping judicial officers at one place for longer periods of time which might lead to evil practices. 37 These writings in the vernacular press must have had a healthy impact upon the Government. It appears that they also created an awareness of public issues among the people. In their open and bold exposures of the actions of the Government officials, the editors of these journals, however, displayed great courage and conviction. To show what impression these journals created on their contemporaries an example may be cited. In a letter to Veeresalingam, Pyda Ramakrishnaiah, a great patron of widow marriages, wrote: "I get very nervous whenever I read some of the articles of your paper when you attack big men. I fear in any one of the occasions you will get into trouble. You have many enemies.... I do not advise you to get into a row with Magistrate and criminal judges...." 38

36. Vivekavardhani, November 1886. Ibid.

37. Vivekavardhani, November 1879, Ibid., 1879. Also see the editorial comments of Vartalahari, October 1878, which stated that this practice was "injurious to justice". Ibid., 1878. Also see a news item, to this effect published in Andhraprakasika, July 1885, Ibid., 1885.

38. An extract from the letter written by Pyda Ramakrishnaiah to Veeresalingam, dated 1-10-1881. See for the full text of the letter, Veeresalingam, Sweeya, P.I, op. cit., P.212.
Besides attacking judicial administration, the journals also criticised the general evils like nepotism and corruption of the Delta Superintendents who were creating problems in releasing water into the canals in the Goda-vari district by saying that the ryots cannot satisfy their "gnawing hunger". Suggesti ons were made to check this growing menace among the Government officials such as declaring their assets before entering the service which could be compared with their estates after retirement.

As a part of the campaign to cleanse the public life of its numerous evils, the reformers and the vernacular press bestowed their attention upon the local self-governing units such as municipalities. Some of the reformers like Veeresalingam at Rajahmundry, Ganjam Venkataratnam and D. Seshagiri Rao at Kakinada were associated with the municipal administration of their respective home towns as members. Their endeavours to set right maladministration existing in municipalities were noteworthy. Veeresalingam, for example, exposed both through the writings in 'Vivekavardhani' as well as through the literary form of satire, the graded rates of bribes that were being collected right from the Chairman at the top down to the peons. Influential citizens of the town were illegally occupying

40. Andhprapakasika, October 1892, Ibid., 1892.
the empty spaces around their houses and no action was taken against them. 41 He wrote: "Among the municipal councillors, corruption became rampant and some of them having no other livelihood were entirely dependent upon taking bribes....The street lamps so fixed by the council that all councillors had them arranged in front of their houses. Kerosene which should have gone into the street lamps, was used by the councillors in their houses. Contractors were having a free hand in eating away the funds meant for road repairs..." 42 The system of Government officers becoming Chairmen of municipalities was opposed on two grounds that it would overburden the officers and that the members would not criticise the municipal administration freely in the presence of Government officials. 43 The municipal administration, thus, in general, came under severe attack of the press. 'Vivekavardhani' criticised the Rajahmundry municipality as catering to the needs of the rich and influential people. The poor and common people had no chance of their grievances being redressed. 44

The contemporary journals in Andhra drew the

41. For a detailed picture of the administration of Rajahmundry municipality, See Veeresalingam, Swetha, P.I, op.cit., PP.390-97.
42. Ibid., P.390.
44. Ibid., August 1893. Also see the reports in Mandaramanjarl, November 1880, about Kakinada municipality.
attention of the Government to several issues like the extreme poverty of the people and reasons for it, the burden of heavy taxation, wasteful expenditure on the army and civil administration, neglect of the education of the masses and of medical facilities, dearth of irrigational facilities and the like. It is not proposed to go into these issues in the present study. However, discussion of these problems in the press indicated a healthy trend that people were being educated and the reformers and the contemporary journals contributed a great deal to the growing consciousness among the public in general. For example, as early as 1881, 'Vivekavardhani' had an article on "Poverty of India". It refuted the contention that poverty was due to the increase in population and pointed out that the main causes of it were, the annual remittance to England of a sum of twenty crores, the decay of indigenous industries due to the importation of machine-made goods from abroad and the

45. The Reports of Native News Papers of this period abound with these items.
defective administration of the country. 46

After the dawn of the present century attention of the vernacular journals in Andhra shifted from social to political and economic problems. They freely criticised the policies of the Government and also the administrative measures. By 1905 they became militant in their tone. Thus the journals were serving two purposes, namely, (1) criticism of the Government policies and administrative lapses with a view to correct them, and (2) building up of public opinion by educating the public on political, social and economic problems. What began as a campaign for cleaner public life, attacking evils like corruption, nepotism etc., through the writings in journals, ultimately led to championing of larger issues of national interest.

46. Vivekavardhani, January 1881, Native News, 1881. Commenting upon the same problem of growing poverty of India, the 'Andhraprakasika' wrote in October 1887: "While the natives of the country state that the Indian ryots are getting daily poorer, the Anglo-Indian authorities affirm that the ryots are in a far better condition than previously. The impoverished Indian ryots borrow money at a very high rate of interest as there is not much chance of their ever being able to repay it.... The English Government have neither constructed irrigation works, nor have they properly repaired those constructed during the Mohammadan and Hindu administrations so that these are gradually falling into decay. Moreover, Government officials visit annually every village on the pretext of jamabandy, but in reality live on the supplies provided by ryots". Ibid., 1887.