CHAPTER VIII

EXTENT AND DURATION OF THE MOVEMENTS
Venues of District and Taluk social conferences

1. KAKINADA
2. RAJAHMUNDRY
3. ELURU
4. PASALAPUDI
5. AMALAPURAM
6. BHIMAVARAM
7. GUNTUR
8. VELLATUR
9. TENALI
10. VIJAYAWADA
11. NARASARAOPET
12. NELLORE
13. ANANTAPUR
14. PENUGONDA
15. CUDDAPAH
16. HAMPI
17. BERHAMPORE
18. PARVATHIPURAM
19. KALLIKOTA
20. VIJAYANAGARAM

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EXTENT AND DURATION OF THE MOVEMENTS

As the cause of social reform was spreading in Andhra, meetings and conferences became a regular feature. Reformers like Veeresalingam laid great emphasis on the organizational aspect of the reform movements in the dissemination of ideas as well as the involvement of more people in them. These conferences provided a platform for those interested in reform to meet annually at one place and discuss issues of common interest and take appropriate decisions to strengthen the movements. Although several reform associations were functioning informally, the idea of convening conferences was borrowed from the annual gatherings of the Indian Social Conference which was founded in 1887. These conferences met mostly at important urban centres in Andhra, from Ganjam in the northern Circars to Bellary in the Ceded districts. Primarily they were district level conferences, even though the venues were not necessarily district towns. For example, towns like Vizianagaram (Visakhapatnam district), Parlakimidi (Ganjam district), Kakinada, Ellore and

Bhimavaram (Godavari district), Vijayawada, Bapatla, Vellatur, Vuyyur (Krishna district), Penugonda (Anantapur district) were some of the places where these conferences were held. The District Social Conferences were preceded by the District Political Conferences which discussed usually political and economic issues of general interest, and the delegates who attended these two types of conferences were, more or less, the same. This provided more cohesion and unity among the delegates impelling them to strive for both political and social ends. The Conference reports do not afford any clear insight into clash of group or personal interests. This was due to the absence of a strong revivalist faction in the congress opposed to social reform. Also it was due to the high esteem in which reform leaders like Veeresalingam were held by the political leaders who were, by and large, either his direct disciples at Rajahmundry who later on went back to their original places or those who came under his influence in the course of the reform movements. This kind of situation continued till 1907 when during the Swadeshi movement,

2. Information about these conferences is gathered from the available news papers and periodicals of the period like the Hindu, Indian Social Reformer, Krishnapatrika, Chin-tamani, Telugu Zenana.

3. This resembled more or less the model of relationship of the National Social Conference to the Indian National Congress which were meeting at the same venue, political conference preceding the social conference.
the political reform gained upper hand pushing the social reform movements into the wings. After 1907, though there was no apparent clash between these two streams, social reform gradually receded into the background giving place to the nationalist movement. To call this as the stage of decline may not be wholly correct. For the need for social reforms was not fulfilled nor was their mission completely realised. On the other hand, people at large realised the need for social reform and, at least at the theoretical level, they accepted its philosophy, thanks to the persistent efforts of the reformers.

With the acceleration of public life in Andhra, the all-India organisations like the Indian National Congress and Indian National Social Conference, attracted the attention of the Telugus who regularly attended
This experience might have induced the delegates to organise similar conferences at the district level. The first District Conference was that of Krishna district in the Northern Circars in 1892. It was the first of its kind not only in the Madras Presidency but perhaps in India too. Annual Conferences were held thereafter. The organisational

4. The first Congress session at Bombay in 1885 was attended by delegates from Berhampore, Machilipatnam, Cuddapah, Bellary and Anantapur. See M. Venkataranghiya, ed. The Freedom Struggle in Andhra Pradesh (Andhra), Vol.I, op. cit., p.90. At the Calcutta Session (1886) there were 21 delegates from Andhra. See Report of the Calcutta Congress Session (Indian National Congress, December, 1886). At Madras session in 1887, there were 67 delegates. See Report of the Madras Congress Session (Indian National Congress, December 1887). This number could probably have been more but for the lack of a railway link between the Coastal districts (Circars) and Madras and the only available transport was steamer. Likewise in the Indian National Social Conference held at Poona in 1895, out of 33 delegates from Madras Presidency 22 were from the Andhra region. The town-wise-break up figures were as follows: Parlakimidi-5; Bellary-8; Rajahmundry-5; and Tirupati-4. See Indian Social Reformer, Vol.VII, No.8 (October 25, 1896). Veeresalingam attended the Indian National Social Conference at Madras in 1894 and proposed a resolution on widow marriage. Ibid., Vol. VII, No.34.

5. See the editorial, The Hindu, June 11, 1903.


7. District Conferences were mainly concerned with the economic as well as general interests of the districts concerned. They became a regular feature of the Andhra public life in the first two decades of the present century. To cite a few issues that came up for their consideration: (1) Revenue matters, reorganizing revenue firkas, divisions etc. (2) Improvement of irrigation and communication facilities. (3) Spread of educational facilities. (4) Establishment of technical and agricultural schools. (5) Separation of judiciary from the executive. (6) Rural water supply and medical relief etc. See for reports of the various district conferences, Madras Government Proceedings, Public No.1417, Novr.3, 1914; No.517, April 28, 1914; No.1298, Oct.8, 1914; No.410, April 1, 1914; No.1050, Aug.20, 1913; No.931, Aug.1, 1912; No.130, Jan.27, 1915; No.1271, Aug.30, 1915 and No.774, May 18, 1915, Tamil Nadu Archives.
success of the Krishna district conferences encouraged the people in the Godavari district to convene their first conference at Kakinada in 1895. A social conference was also organised here in connection with the district conference. However, we do not have information regarding the details of the first two social conferences.

The third Godavari district social conference met at Eluru in 1897. The conference was presided over by Nyapati Subba Rao, a veteran reformer from Rajahmundry and a co-worker of Veeresalingam. The conference was attended by 500 people, delegates and visitors put together. Besides passing a number of resolutions, the

8. The Hindu, July 3, 1895.

9. Eluru was one of the important trading centres in the district. Carpet industry was flourishing and it was situated on the main Grant Trunk Railway line between Calcutta and Madras. Proceedings of the conference were reported in the local vernacular as well as the all-India journals. See for example, Chintamani, Vol. 7, Nos.8-9. Indian Social Reformer, Vol.VII, No.38 (May 23, 1897) reported that a reception committee was formed to organise the Godavari district social conference with P. Gopala Rao in the chair on My 7, 1897, and the topics that would come up for discussion among which the consideration of the formation of a district reform association was unusual as that was not known earlier in South India.
conference presented an address of honour to Veeresalingam. For the first time women delegates were present, and this was viewed as a significant advance in the direction of upliftment of women. Soon after the Conference a District Social Reform Association was formed for Godavari with its headquarters at Rajahmundry with Peddada Sambasiva Rao as the Secretary and Veeresalingam, Nyapati Subba Rao, D. Rama Rao, B. Krishna Rao, to mention only a few, as members. Godavari district, as noted earlier, was in the vanguard of the reform movements as it possessed both the material conditions as well as the leading reformers in Andhra and hence the success of the district conference and its fruitful deliberations.

In pursuance of the resolutions passed at the district conference at Eluru to form Taluk associations, a meeting of the citizens of Kakinada was organised on May 27, 1897, in which Veeresalingam took part and spoke. An association was formed at this meeting to strive for social reforms. Also at Eluru, the venue of the district conference, a local Social Reform Association was formed to work towards

10. In its editorial comments, the Indian Social Reformer congratulated the organisers for the good work that was turned out by the conference. When Nyapati Subba Rao, the President, left the conference due to some pressing engagements, Veeresalingam acted as President for the remaining session. See Indian Social Reformer, Vol.VII, No.42.

11. Ibid., Vol.VII, No.43 (July 4, 1897).
the eradication of social evils in the taluk. 12

Veeresalingam thus succeeded in his object of starting a district association. His success was mainly due to his personal contacts and influence. In Rajahmundry town he had the support of the Prarthana Samaj members of whom a good number were college students. Also he had enjoyed strong political backing of Nyapati Subba Rao. At Kakinada, another important town which figured prominently in the reform activity of the district, he had followers in Ganjam Venkatataratnam, a leading lawyer and a member of both the Municipal Council and District Board, 13 D. Seshagiri Rao, the Chairman of Kakinada Municipality for a number of years 14 and D.V. Suryaprakasa Rao, head of the Kakinada Brahma Samaj. 15

The lead given by the Godavari Social Conference was taken up by other districts. The Krishna District Social Conference met at Guntur in 1899 with R. Venkataratnam in the chair. 16 The same year witnessed the district conference of Visakhapatnam under the presidency

14. Ibid., P.73.
15. Ibid., P.104.
of B.N. Sarma and the fifth Godavari Conference at Pasalapudi under the presidency of D.V. Suryaprakasa Rao. 17 Speeches by leaders and resolutions on topics touching all aspects of social reform were passed. 18

The seventh Godavari district Social conference met at Amalapuram in 1901, under the presidency of Goteti Venkata Siva Rao, a local lawyer. Those present at the conference, including the visitors, were 250. 19 The third Krishna district social conference met during the same year at Vellatur, with Tholeti Appa Rao in the chair. The conference had among its participants Ganjam Venkataratnam Pantulu from Kakinada who was specially invited to the conference. 20 The sixth and seventh conferences of the Krishna district were held at Guntur and Narasaraopet respectively. 21 R. Venkataratnam was invited to be the President to the latter. 22

Even after the formation of a separate district for Guntur (1904), the social conferences of both the

17. The Hindu, May 29, 1901.
18. On all the topics concerning social reform, such as educational and social problems relating to women, temperance and nautch issues, inter-caste dining and reduction of marriage expenses, discussions were held and resolutions were passed. A brief discussion of the main themes is presented in the foregoing pages.
20. The Hindu, June 10, 1901.
21. Ibid., June 7, 1904. Information regarding the fourth and fifth conferences is not available.
22. Krishnapatrika, July 1, 1905.
districts of Krishna and Guntur were held jointly. Two such conferences were held in 1908 at Tenali and in 1909 at Bhimavaram, with Veeresalingam in the Chair for the latter conference. 23

The first conference to be organised in the Ceded districts was the Anantapur district social conference in 1909. It was held at Anantapur and was presided over by K.V. Srinivasa Aiyangar, the local Deputy Collector. 24 The third Visakhapatnam district social conference was held in 1909 at Parvathipuram. Venkatapathiraju, High Court Vakil from Visakhapatnam presided over it. 25

The Ceded districts followed a novel method of holding a combined social conference from 1901 onwards. It held its conferences at Cuddapah (1910) 26, Anantapur (1911) 27 and Hampi (Bellary district) in 1912. The conference at Hampi was presided over by Dewan Bahadur P. Kodandaram Naidu and the conference had a large gathering of 300 delegates and 100 visitors. 28

23. Ibid.
24. Ibid., April 23, 1909.
25. The Hindu, June 5, 1909. The news item did not provide particulars regarding the number of delegates attended.
27. Ibid., June 19, 1911.
28. Ibid., May 23, 1912.
The 12th Krishan-Guntur Social Conference which met at Guntur in 1910, under the Chairmanship of V. Bhavana-
charyulu, a local advocate, was significant in many as-
pects.29 Firstly, it was attended by learned pandits
and scholars who proposed resolutions on widow marriages
and post-puberty marriages. Secondly, a decision was
taken to start a widows' Home at Guntur. One of the dele-
gates, S. Subbannaidu, a rich ryot, promised to meet the
expenses to maintain two widows for life and the zamindar
of Munagala donated a site to the Home.30 Thirdly, the
conference was preceded by a Ladies' Conference which
held its deliberations exclusively on the issues concern-
ing women. Next to Gadavari, Krishna and Guntur districts
witnessed vigorous efforts in social reform. Vijayawada,
Tenali, Guntur, Bapatla and Narasaraopet were some of the
centres of the reform activity in the two districts.
Comparatively a rich landed peasantry due to the irriga-
tional facilities provided by the anicut built on the
river Krishna, spread of education, growth of urban cen-
tres and also the presence of leading personalities like
Raghupati Venkataratnam, Rayasam Venkata Sivudu, Unnava
Lakshminarayana, D. Pedabapaiah, V. Bhavanacharyulu,

29. See for a detailed report of the Conference, Ibid.,
June 7, 1910.
30. Ibid.
V. Ramakrishna Rao, B. Pattabhisitaramayya, Mutnuri Krishna Rao, A. Kaleswara Rao contributed to the spread of the movement somewhat extensively in Krishna and Guntur districts.

The movement reached the northern most areas of Andhra region, namely, Ganjam district (now in the neighbouring Orissa State), where a district reform association was formed in 1910 with its headquarters at Berhampur. The association had the privilege of having Chilakamarthi Lakshminarasimham (a popular poet and reformer from Rajahmundry) as president of its meeting. The association was functioning regularly and was holding annual conferences.

In 1911 the fourth Visakhapatnam district conference was held at Vijayanagaram under the presidency of V. Subrahmanyam Pantulu, District and Sessions Judge.

31. Sometimes even before the formation of District Associations, Social Conferences were convened by the local enthusiasts. In the case of Ganjam district a social conference was held at Berhampore in 1909. It was presided over by C.B. Sarma, a member of the Legislative Council from Madras. His speech covered topics such as welfare of the 'depressed classes', Kanyasulkam, Varasulkam, Social Purity, female education and the like. See Ibid., June 23, 1909.

32. Ibid., August 18, 1910.

33. In 1912 the annual conference was held in Kallikota College under the presidnentship of Dewan Bahadur Kalli Narasimha Rao of Madras. See Ibid., October 22, 1912.

34. Ibid., June 6, 1911.
Nellore district lagged behind in the organisation of social conferences. As noticed in the early chapters the movement in Nellore district was rather weak. However, it also fell in line when it organised the first conference in 1912 at Nellore. 35

Women's conferences were being held separately from time to time and they were "organised solely by ladies for the promotion of culture and advancement among Telugus". 36 Two examples may be cited in this connection. In 1911 a conference of women called the 'Andhra Mahila Sabha', was held at Kakinada under the presidentship of Kallepalli Venkataramanamma, a well-known social worker. Again at Visakhapatnam another conference was organised which was attended by delegates from several places in Andhra such as Kakinada, Guntur, Kurnool, Chatrapuram, Vijayanagaram, Berhampore and other places. 37 This clearly showed that, at several places in Andhra, a number of separate associations for women were organised which played an active role in the reform movements.

35. Ibid., September 23, 1912.
36. See the article "The Position of the Telugus" by C. Seshagiri Rao in the Ibid., March 24, 1911.
37. Ibid., May 5, 1911 and May 17, 1911. In 1915 on All-Andhra Women's Conference was organised. It was presided over by the 'Maharani' of Vijayanagaram. See for particulars, Dharmasadhani, June 1, 1915. Details about the spread of women's education as well as the activities pertaining to the Ladies' associations are given in detail in Chapter IV.
Thus the district conferences were systematically organised and the reform movements were spread, region-wise, to the whole of Andhra. That these conferences were not simply annual shows and they had struck deep roots in the districts was vouched by the fact that at some places associations at the taluk level were also organised. 38 Organisationally speaking, when once these district conferences became a regular feature, all-Andhra Conferences also started meeting. Though it met for the first time in 1906, the report of the third Andhra Provincial Conference only is available to us. It met at Machilipatnam in 1908 under the presidency of A. Somanatha Rao and Veeresalingam was present at the conference along with other delegates who came from several places like Vijayawada, Guntur, Bapatla, Ongole, Nellore, Rajahmundry, Kakinada, Visakhapatnam, Berhampur, Anantapur and other places. 39 The conference passed a number of resolutions touching all the relevant social problems.

38. Refer above in this chapter f.ns.10 and 11. Also, in this connection, it may be pointed out that at Penugonda, taluk headquarters in Anantapur district, an active social reform association existed and it organised a successful social conference in 1911 is brought to our notice by The Hindu, February 25, 1911. The conference was held under the presidency of Swami Sreenivasa Yogi from Visakhapatnam. It was remarkable for a small place like Penugonda to have gathered nearly 300 members to the conference. It discussed the usual topics concerning social reform.

39. For a report of this conference see Krishnapatrika, April 26, 1908.
The topics that came up for discussion in these conferences covered the whole gamut of social reform. Necessarily, women and their problems occupied the first place. Education for women was considered essential not only for their general development but significant for enlightenment in the society as a whole. In fact that was the starting point of all social reforms as women occupied a pivotal place in the family set up and her age-long ignorance and isolation, the reformers thought, should be put to an end. As this issue was universally accepted, there was no need for much deliberation and resolutions were passed in all the conferences without exception. 40 Reformers, however, were not content merely with general education for women. They realised the need for occupational education for women and urged the Government to open professional schools in each tehsil or taluk. 41

Reform of the institution of marriage vis-a-vis women claimed the constant attention of the delegates of these conferences. Resolutions urging a ban of the early marriages were passed. Initially they set the age limit at twelve for boys and eight for girls 42 and realising

40. See for example, the reports in The Hindu, May 29, 1901, June 10, 1901 and June 6, 1911. Also see Chintamani, Vol.7, Nos.8-9.

41. See Krishnapatrika, April 4, 1908 and May 17, 1908.

42. The Hindu, June 10, 1901.
that it was too early an age for marriage, raised it to twenty four and sixteen for boys and girls respectively. 43

In the initial stages this issue raised controversies and led to divided opinions among the delegates as to whether or not it was desirable on the part of the Government to interfere in such matters as this. However, gradually, the opinion gained ground that early marriages were the worst of all social evils, and should be banned. Even the opposition of learned pandits, who objected to this on the ground that the Shastras did not sanction them, was successfully overcome and in some conferences some pandits themselves took the initiative in proposing this resolution. 44

At times the sponsors of the resolution pleaded that early marriages should be penalised either by debarring married students from entering high school classes or by levying double fees or by denying them of jobs in the Government. 45

The problem of the child widows closely connected with the early marriages, was the concern of all the

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43. Krishnapatrika, April 4, 1908 and April 26, 1908.

44. The Madras Standard, June 9, 1911, Native News, 1911. The report stated, "It is an encouraging sign to note that learned pandits took part in the discussion and gave expression to the view that the Shastras lend no sanction to the custom of early marriage". Also see the report of the Krishna-Guntur Social Conference in The Hindu, June 5, 1910, wherein it was stated that a resolution on widow remarriages was proposed by a pandit named Vemuri Sivaswamy Sastry.

conferences. Besides encouraging widow marriages, resolutions on the need to start widows' Homes to provide them with shelter and necessary education were passed.\footnote{Krishnapatrika, April 23, 1909.} This was indeed a new dimension to the solution of the problem of widows. For, it was not possible to get all widows remarried. The attempt to teach them house-hold arts and other skills to make them self reliant and thus bring them back into the mainstream of social life was indeed laudable.

The other concomitant evils of the institution of marriage like 'Kanyasulkam' (bride-price), 'varasulkam' (bride-groom price which came to be practised later), extravagant spending during marriages were condemned. To encourage harmony among various sub-castes, inter sub-caste marriages were advocated.\footnote{As noticed in Chapter I, social intercourse among sub-castes in Andhra was as rigid as it was among castes. This was only a beginning made by the reformers in the direction of attacking caste system. Later on they passed resolutions advocating the abolition of caste system as a whole. See for example, the resolutions passed during the third Andhra Social Conference at Machilipatnam in \textit{Krishnapatrika}, April 26, 1908.} And as the marriages had to be performed only among the members of a sub-caste, it was found more often than not, difficult to find suitable partners in the same sub-caste and led to other evils like early and unequal marriages, 'kanyasulkam' etc. Even the abolition of sub-castes by amalgamating them into one single main caste was pleaded by these conferences in their resolutions.\footnote{See for example the resolution passed in the Krishna-Guntur district conference at Bhimavaram in April 1909 in \textit{Krishnapatrika}, April 23, 1909.}
In the name of 'social purity', resolutions on nautch (Devadasi) and temperance figured prominently in the conferences and elicited their unanimous approval. However, in the case of sea-travel ('Kalapani') initially much opposition was voiced in the name of the Shastras. By the turn of the century even this was overcome and resolutions in favour of sea voyages to be undertaken to learn the modern methods of production and new ways of living were passed in the conferences.\textsuperscript{49} Those who undertook sea voyages were not to lose their caste and there should not be any hindrance to admit them back into Hindu society.

During the first two decades of the 20th century much attention was paid to the problem of 'depressed classes' in society. Regular discussions were held and resolutions passed towards their welfare.\textsuperscript{50} This was, perhaps, due to the growth of political consciousness as well as the spread of general programme of the Indian

\textsuperscript{49} See Krishnapatrika, April 26, 1908 and May 17, 1908. Dharmasadhanī, April 1, 1914 in its editorial stated that more people were undertaking sea voyages to the foreign countries and referred to a large meeting at Benares on this issue attended by a number of scholars.

\textsuperscript{50} See for resolutions in this direction, The Hindu, June 5, 1909, June 23, 1909 and February 25, 1911. Also see Krishnapatrika, April 26, 1908 and May 17, 1908.
National Congress which aimed at their amelioration. Moreover, in 1906, a Depressed Classes Mission was started at Madras and also the programme of the Prarthana Samaj in Andhra included in it the need to work towards their uplift. Raghupati Venkataratnam, a prominent Brahmo from Andhra, actively associated himself with the measures of reform aimed at their development. There is no evidence that except the practical work in the form of "lodges" for the 'depressed classes', started by the Rajah of Pithapuram under the influence of Brahmo Samaj, besides the deliberations and resolutions on this issue, any practical work was undertaken by the reformers. It was only after 1920, when the nationalist movement gained momentum under the leadership of Gandhi, that this problem received the legitimate attention it deserved.

Resolutions favouring the introductions of "national education" and establishment of gymnasiums to promote physical culture among the youth found place in some of the district conferences. The concept of "national education", as different from the system introduced by the British, with native teachers and curriculum incorporating

51. Venkataratnam was the inspiration behind the Rajah of Pithapur in establishing hostels and lodges for the 'depressed classes'. He was actively associated with the management of these institutions. Venkataratnam, as a member of the Justice Party, was also presiding over the conferences of the 'depressed classes' in Andhra.
such subjects as art, music and sculpture and financed by the native philanthropy gained currency after the launching of the Swadeshi movement. In accordance with the resolutions two such educational institutions were started, one at Machilipatnam and another at Madanapalle. 52

Information is lacking with regard to the exact number of delegates that attended each of these conferences. However, we are informed that the third Godavary district social conference held at Eluru was attended by 500 people including the delegates. 53 Again, in the case of fifth Godavary district social conference, the number of delegates was given as 40 and the total audience present were approximately 250. 54 All the remaining conferences on which information, other than the details of attendance of delegates, is available are described as "well attended". It appears that there was no strict procedure in the matter of the enrolment of delegates to the conferences and all those who were willing to attend the conferences were allowed to do so. Perhaps the movement could not afford to be strict in these organisational

52. Krishnapatrika, May 17, 1908. With regard to the establishment of the National College (Andhra Jat-eeya Kalasala) at Machilipatnam and endowments made to its maintenance, see the report in The Hindu, June 7, 1910. Also see Fortnightly Letters to the Government of India. Vol.III, September 1, 1917, Tamil Nadu Archives.

53. The exact number of delegates, out of 500 people present, is not mentioned. See The Indian Social Reformer, Vol.VII, No.42.

54. Ibid., Vol.XI, No.40.
matters as it was striving to broaden its base and bring into its fold as many people as possible, not necessarily as delegates. Moreover, as noted earlier, these conferences were preceded by the conferences convened under the auspices of the District Associations to discuss matters of general interest pertaining to that particular district. And usually, therefore, the delegates of these conferences also participated in the proceedings of the social conferences and contributed to their success.

Major participation in these conferences came from the enlightened sections of the public such as students, teachers, lawyers and government officials at the taluk and district level.\(^5\) Besides these professional sections,\(^5\) As seen earlier the prominent members of the Prarthana Samaj and Social Reform Associations at Rajahmundry and Kakinada belonged to these sections of society. The composition of the Social Reform Association at Kakinada as presented in the columns of *Indian Social Reformer*, Vol.VII, No.43 (July 4, 1897) corroborates with this view. D. Seshagiri Rao, M. Sobhanadri Rao, D. Subramanyam were lawyers. V. Narasingarayudu, K.S. Ramamurthy were teachers. S.V. Ramadas Naidu and D. Krishna Rao were holding official positions in the Government, the former being a Treasury Deputy Collector and the latter was the Settlement Officer. D.V. Suryaprakasa Rao, another prominent member was an Accountant. Further, proof of the official participation is provided by the reports published in *The Hindu*, October 24, 1910, which stated that Anantapur district social conference met under the presidency of Sudarsana Mudaliar, Collector's Shrestidar. Also see *Krishnapatrika*, April 23, 1909 which mentioned that Anantapur district social conference was presided over by K.V. Srinivasa Aiyangaer, who was a General Deputy Collector. Eluri Lakshminarasimham a co-worker of Veeresalingam at Rajahmundry was a Judicial Officer in the Government service.
also sometimes a few small traders and middle peasants, who were otherwise educated, participated.\textsuperscript{56} Occasionally the movements found a patron in a rich landlord or zamindar as in the case of the Rajah of Pithapur in the Godavari district, the zamindar of Munagala in Krishna district or a wealthy merchant and financier like Pyda Ramakrishnaiah of Kakinada. Leadership of the movements also came from the above sections of society—professional classes which may broadly be categorized as educated middle classes.\textsuperscript{57}

\textsuperscript{56} This observation is particularly true of the Prarthana Samaj movement which spread into the interior parts of the Godavari district which was dealt with in Chapter VI. However, enlightened members of the trading community like Nalan Ramalingayya of Kakinada, Nalan Krishna Rao of Rajahmundry (earlier he was at Eluru), Mothay family at Eluru, Darisi Chenchiaiah from Nellore took active part in the movements. Also rich peasants like S. Subbanaidu of Guntur district evinced keen interest in the reform movements. See for example The Hindu, June 7, 1910.

\textsuperscript{57} Kandukuri Veeresalingam, Raghupati Venkataratnam, Chilakamarthi Lakshminarasimham, Rayasam Venkata Sivudu at the higher level and V. Jogaiah Pantulu (Berhampur), Nabhi Jagannatha Rao (Visakhapatnam), Ganjam Venkataratnam Pantulu, D.V. Suryaprakash Rao (Kakinada), P. Sambasiva Rao (Rajahmundry), G.V. Siva Rao (Eluru), B. Pattabhiseetaramayya, Adipati Somanatha Rao and V. Ramakrishna Rao (Machilipatnam), Tekumalla Rajagopala Rao and Dasu Sariramu, K. Perraju Panthulu (Vijayawada), Unnava Lakshminarayana, Vinjamuri Bhavanacharyulu, Desiraju Pedabapaiah (Guntur), P. Kodanda Ram Naidu (Bellary), T. Rama Rao (Anantapur), N. Pattabhirama Rao (Cuddapah), at the district level belonged to the above mentioned sections in the society.
By the turn of the century social reform movements in India, in general, lost much of their initial vigour. In Andhra too, more or less, the same pattern was discernible, though the year 1907 could be fixed as the date from which the movements showed down their pace in terms of practical work done. Writing in 1902, A. Subba Rao, Lecturer in Rajahmundry College, sensed the downward trend of social reform in Andhra and stated, "...we wish reform to spread and take root, we want a social reform mission. We want organisation, we want touring preachers, and we want funds.... We are merely playing hide-and-seek in the resolutions we are passing year after year".58 Despite the meeting of several conferences and establishment of associations at the district and sometimes taluk levels, the organisation was practically non-existent. The lack of organisation was realised and deplored,59 even though no serious attempt was made to set it right.

58. *Indian Social Reformer*, Vol.XII, No.44.

59. See for example, the presidential address, delivered at the third Ganjam district social conference in 1917 by A. Mahadeva Sastry wherein he presented a scheme for the organisation of social reform. The scheme envisaged, in addition to the formation of an all-India organisation, local committees to be set up for each province, district and big cities. He expected the all-India Committee to formulate general policy matters, decide upon methods of work and lines on which propaganda to be carried on both in English and vernaculars. See A. Mahadeva Sastry, *Social Reform in the light of the Hindu Scriptures*, (Madras, 1917), P.21.
That an organisational facade was not possible was inherent in the movement itself. For, the support to reform came from diverse social groups of people pursuing heterogenous professions. Social reform they desired, but at the same time they could not be brought under an organisation. Attending conferences and other meetings, held periodically, listening to speeches on reform and paying occasional subscriptions was, they considered, the main task of social reform. General sympathy and support to the movements was there among most of the educated sections of the society, but organisationally they were never well-knit.

A few other factors, in addition to the lack of a sound organisation, contributed to the slow process of wilting of the reform activity in Andhra. The foremost among them was the rise and growth of nationalist movement in Andhra from the first decade of the present century. The Swadeshi movement, in Andhra, gained momentum in 1907 with the visit of Bipin Chandra Pal to Rajahmundry, Kakinada and other towns. Reform leaders, like Veerasalingam, who were moderates, kept away from this. Moreover they considered the movement socially revivalist and, therefore, had nothing to do with it. Disturbances that took place at these two towns involved many local
students and others who were hitherto followers of Veeresalingam. Veeresalingam was highly critical of them and vice-versa. These personal differences, which were never patched up, led to the alienation of a major part of the following of Veeresalingam from the movements. During the post-1907 period, when social reform activity continued, people who were politically active gained upper hand over the reformers. This was clearly demonstrated by the resolutions passed during the conferences. A resolution was regularly passed underlying the significance of achieving political reform first as it was considered the bedrock upon which all other reforms would rest and these conferences would eventually conclude with slogans of 'Vandemataram'.

Thus it was no longer a controversy which reform should precede the other - social or political. Veeresalingam, who was earlier a strong advocate of social reforms preceding political reforms, got himself reconciled to this as he was present at these conferences. Also during this period social conferences adopted resolutions on the need to improve the lot of the 'depressed classes' and stressing the importance of

60. See Krishnapatrika, April 19, 1908. When the Swadeshi struggle was at its height at Rajahmundry, Veeresalingam could not put up with the people greeting each other with the words 'Vandemataram' and students wearing 'Vandemataram' badges. See Veeresalingam, Sreeya, P.II, op. cit., P.307.

61. See for example the report of the Third Andhra Social Conference published in Krishnapatrika, April 26, 1908.
'national education' — themes which did not find place in the earlier stages of the movements. These demands were adopted from the general programme of the Indian National Congress and this showed the new dimensions that the movements were taking in order to step into the mainstream of nationalist movement that was increasingly holding the attention of people in general. This trend continued and during the post-war period, after 1919, the nationalist movement played a dominant role, pushing into the background, all other movements. Though the movements continued in name for a long time after, they paled into insignificance before the all embracing nationalist movement. Several active workers in the field of social reform like Unnava Lakshminarayana, Konda Venkatappayya, Bhogaraju Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao, Mutturi Krishna Rao, Gadicberla Hariswarothama Rao became activists in the Congress organisation during this period.

The rise of so called revivalism during the last decade of the 19th century in the form of Theosophical society under the leadership of Annie Besant and Colonel Olcott with its headquarters at Madras placed social reform at a disadvantage. Theosophists started glorifying the past Hindu society and its scriptures.
Theosophy, though it never gained much ground in Andhra, gave new life to the orthodox sections and others who were opposed to the reform movements. Furthermore, the visits of Vivekananda to the south in 1892 and 1897 and his speeches criticising social reformers strengthened the forces of revivalism. More significantly, the starting of the Madras Hindu Association in 1904 by Annie Besant put the social reformers on the defensive as it proclaimed that it would work for the "promotion of Hindu Social and Religious advancement on national lines in harmony with the spirit of Hindu civilisation". By implication it meant that other social reformers were western-inspired and thus divorced from national moorings.

62. See The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda, Vol.III (Mayavati Memorial Edition), (Almora, 1948, sixth edn.), PP.213-16. Referring to the Madras reformers he stated: "They want to reform only little bits. I want root-and-branch of reform... where we differ is in the method. Theirs is the method of destruction, mine is that of construction... For a hundred years they have been here. What good has been done, except the creation of a most vituperative, a most condemnatory literature?... Most of the reforms that have been agitated for during the past century have been ornamental.... The question of widow marriage would not touch seventy per cent of the Indian women, and all such questions only reach the higher castes of Indian people who are educated, mark you, at the expense of the masses."

63. This is the first object of the Madras Hindu Association. See N. Subba Rao, ed. Hindu Social Progress (Madras, 1904), Appendix B, P.53. Emphasis is added.
and detrimental to national interests. The Association held the view that religious education to be given to all Hindu boys and girls in all Hindu Schools and Colleges, and also in those that are maintained by the state. It pleaded for the reentry of repentant converts, from Hinduism into other religions, by obtaining prior religious sanction. It did not include widow remarriages in its programme and, on the other hand, it laid stress on their education and organisation of institutions wherein they may be looked after. Finally, they declared that "It is absolutely necessary to restore in India the ancient

64. To substantiate this, a few lines from Annie Besant's inaugural address of the Madras Hindu Association may be quoted. Answering a question about the need for another reform association she stated that the basis of the new association was a "national path and not a foreign one, one of Hindu Civilizations and not of western civilization...." Ibid., P.44.

65. Ibid., P.54.

66. Ibid., P.55. Annie Besant was non-committal on several of the issues concerning social reform. In a reply to the letter addressed by A. Subba Rao, Secretary of the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association, dated December 25, 1893 to Annie Besant, requesting her to declare her views on issues such as instant marriages, widow remarriages, caste system, nautch etc., she said in her letter dated December 29, 1893, "The questions you submit... go to the root of the Hindu Social System. Hasty or imperfect expression of opinion on these matters is dangerous....Permit me to choose my own time, place and way of expressing my thoughts...." and thus shied away from the matter. See Indian Social Reformer, Vol.VII, No.18.
rule, the rule of Manu, the Law-giver, repeated also by many lesser men...."\(^{67}\) Thus it was clear that Annie Besant and her followers wanted to debunk the reform movements. Annie Besant, by her position, personality and eloquence gathered around her all those who were not only opposed to reform movements but also some others like Dewan Bahadur Raghunatha Rao at Madras who hitherto evinced a lukewarm attitude towards social reform. In Andhra, at Rajahmundry, Nyapati Subba Rao, an erstwhile co-worker and supporter of Veeresalingam and who broke away from him for personal reasons, joined hands with Annie Besant.\(^{68}\) The upsurge of militant nationalism, with its revivalist undertones, strengthened this trend and dealt a hard blow to reform movements. Reformers in Andhra were now seen defending their position declaring that social reform movements, they launched, were not against national heritage and culture. All the reform

\(^{67}\) N. Subba Rao, ed. op. cit., P.49.

\(^{68}\) Reference had already been made to Nyapati Subba Rao and his break with Veeresalingam in Chapter III.
measures, they held, were sanctioned by ancient scriptures. 69 Unnava Lakshminarayana, a leading reformer from Guntur (described as 'The Veeresalingam of Guntur'), referred to in Chapter IV, analysed the causes for the setback of the movements in Andhra. He stated that various reforms proposed were not opposed to national ideals, but, however, the same could not be said of reformers. He reasoned out this by saying that most of the reformers were Brahmos to whom the Bible and other religious were dearer than the Vedas and Hinduism. He also felt that these Brahmos were mainly products of missionary institutions and missionaries were generally patrons of the reform movements. 70 Ranade and Chandavarkar, leaders of National Social Reform Association, were pro-Brahmo in their outlook. Speaking about Andhra, Lakshminarayana said that, Veeresalingam, though a Brahmo by

69. See for example the presidential address by Unnava Lakshminarayana at the Twentieth Guntur District Conference (Chennapuri, 1917), P.10. Lakshminarayana, in this address, indulged in loud thinking about the future prospects of the movements, taking into account various criticisms levelled against them. The same tone was adopted by other reformers of this period who endeavoured to show that social reforms which they championed were not, as alleged by opponents, opposed to national ethos. See, in this connection, Kopargam Ramamurthy's presidential address delivered at the Godavari District Social Conference in 1913, published in Hindu Social Reform - Series II (Nellore, 1914), PP.152-54.

70. Lakshminarayana's presidential address at the Twentieth Guntur District Social Conference, op. cit., P.12.
faith, initiated the movement to remove the evils that had crept into Hindu society and others followed the same path. However, in 1907, Veeresalingam, who was associated with the Prarthana Samaj for a long period, became a Brahmo. This not only shocked his followers but provided an argument to the opponents of reform to decry the movements. Lakshminarayana also mentioned an event of international significance like the 'Rise of Japan' in the Far-East which added to the argument that the western knowledge, after all, was not indispensable. Followers of Veeresalingam, and people in favour of social reform, raised several questions, in the light of these new developments, about the relevance and purpose of social reforms, the methods pursued by reformers and their views on religion and politics. These questions bothered followers but not reformers. And also the propaganda of Annie Besant's Madras Hindu Association (1904) was not adequately countered. All this resulted in creating a wide gulf between the reformers and their followers culminating in the gradual decline of the movements. However, in this well-built argument of Lakshminarayana, there is

71. Ibid.
72. Ibid., P.13.
73. Ibid.
one weakness. Veeresalingam, whatever his followers might have concluded about his views and methods of action, was never vague in his ideas regarding the influence of western thought on Indian reformers. Furthermore, it was clear that what he wanted was the reform of Hindu community. But his reliance on the ancient scriptures was not born out of conviction. It was more to convince his opponents that he adopted the methods of citing ancient Hindu Scriptures. 74

Certain other factors like the formation of caste associations and the movement for a separate Andhra province on linguistic basis contributed further to the slowing down of social reform. Each prominent caste organised its own association holding regular annual conferences and incorporating several measures of the reform movements and thus depriving them of the following. Besides endeavouring to improve their economic status in society these associations also launched a programme to get rid of social evils in their respective castes. This was, of course, an indirect service to the cause of social reform. However, the working of these associations, independently of each

74. This aspect of Veeresalingam's ideas was discussed in Chapter III.
other, and at times in mutual competition, created animosity among them.\textsuperscript{75} Suggestions were made to coordinate this diffused reform activity and also to avoid bitterness among various organisations, working with similar goals, as far as social reform was concerned.\textsuperscript{76} Attachment to their caste and vested interests involved in each of the caste associations did not allow this to bear fruit.

The movement for separate Andhra province which assumed organised form in 1913\textsuperscript{77} had further diverted the attention of people towards political issues. As this movement aimed at the improvement of Andhras, materially as well as culturally, by pulling out of Madras Presidency and forming into a separate Andhra province, it soon gained a popular base.\textsuperscript{78} The attention of people, appropriately, was increasingly turned

\textsuperscript{75} Instances are many in this regard. Associations formed by sub-castes among Brahmins like the Vaidikis and Niyogis fought among themselves on questions of superiority and patronage of the Government. The Viswabrahmin (Kamsali community) association claiming equal, if not superior, status with the Brahmins, and similar instances among other communities and also their scramble for concessions from the state may be mentioned.

\textsuperscript{76} A. Mahadeva Sastry, \textit{op. cit.}, PP.6-7.

\textsuperscript{77} See for a comprehensive account of the movement for Andhra province, K.V. Narayana Rao, \textit{The Emergence of Andhra Pradesh} (Bombay, 1973).

\textsuperscript{78} For a list of demands, in this connection, see \textit{Ibid.}, P.40.
towards this problem. The whole leadership of the Congress in Andhra, who were earlier prominent in the reform movements, came to be associated with this demand.\textsuperscript{79} The annual conferences, organised in this direction, started including in their resolutions issues related to social reform also.\textsuperscript{80}

Also certain personal factors like the advancing age of Veeresalingam and the death of his wife in 1910, which created a great void in his life, contributed to the slackness of the movements. Veeresalingam concentrated all his energies after 1910 on the organization of the Hitakarini Samajam which was brought into being, using of all his savings in the process. Furthermore, he was handicapped both by the dearth of personnel to organise the movement as well as resources.\textsuperscript{81} His attention, during this period, was directed more towards creative writing, and he was engaged in completing the second

\textsuperscript{79} It should, however, be noted that though this movement was conducted separately it was never antagonistic to the Congress. It grew as a part of the nationalist movement and thereby strengthening it in the Andhra region.

\textsuperscript{80} See for resolutions of the Second Andhra Conference, G.O.No.752, Public, May 20, 1915, Madras Presidency, Tamil Nadu Archives. It was in fact a broad based movement including in its ranks people belonging to political, social and caste organisations. At the second conference, convened at Vijayawada, Veeresalingam and Chilakamarthi Lakshminarasimham were also present. The total number of delegates attended were 2,000. See \textit{Ibid}.

\textsuperscript{81} This feeling was conveyed by Veeresalingam to R.Venkatasivudu in his correspondence with him. See A. Ramapati Rao, ed. \textit{op. cit.}, PP.98-100.
volume of the "Lives of Telugu poets" which he had undertaken to write earlier. The reform movements, in Andhra, were thus deprived of a single accepted leader of the stature of Veeresalingam.

Finally, it should not be ignored that these movements were carried on by reformers under constraints inherent in a colonial society. For example, they tended to lean more on alien rulers for help in their efforts to achieve their ends. And also the reformers lacked support of the masses as their ideas and programmes never went beyond the reach of middle classes and their problems. Furthermore, as the "filtration" theory did not actually materialise, the masses were left, as before, in a state of illiteracy and ignorance, which only helped in perpetuating the forces of tradition and custom. On top of all this, feudalism, though moribund, continued to be a major force and its ideology did not show signs of real break up. The colonial rulers did not evince the same amount of real interest for social reform lest it alienated men of substance from their rule. The British empire began falling on the defensive with the appearance of Imperial Germany as the powerful contender for colonies and commerce and the British rulers of India could not, therefore, afford to kick off
one of the strongest pillars of India. The industrial bourgeoisie was not so much interested in the betterment of religion and morals of its subjects as in their financial exploitation. Reform movements could not draw sustenance, in the new context, either from above or from below, and they naturally withered away. The reformers failed to see that the progressive or beneficial role of the foreign bourgeoisie had ended and they mistook the rapacious bourgeoisie of the Manchester school for the more liberal and utilitarian school of bourgeoisie of the earlier day.