CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION
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The latter half of the 19th century witnessed the rise and growth of social reform movements in Andhra. Reform trends did exist earlier too, especially from the 1820's onwards. However, they were few and far between and were confined to a few individuals who gave expression to their views in their general and occasional writings. Such scattered and individual ideas were woven into an organised effort on more systematic lines by the reformers at a later date.

Reform movements in Andhra were not an isolated phenomenon. They should necessarily be viewed as a part of all India reform movements. They were influenced considerably, both in their rise and growth, by similar movements in Bengal and Maharashtra. Need for reform in society was consciously felt by several 'saints' and reformers even during the 17th and 18th centuries. This too was a country wide phenomenon. These pre-modern reform trends, however, were an expression of serious dissent against the unhealthy practices in Hindu society ritualistically dominated by Brahmins. They were all led by 'low caste' men. Despite several limitations they established that pre-British Indian society was not stagnant, rigid and
unchanging. Reform-consciousness was present in society throughout, but in different ways and with different orientation. These early essays, in addition to the protest they launched against the social evils, contributed to the growth of vernacular literatures. In Andhra these saint-reformers appealed to the masses through verses, 'tatwulu', pseudo-philosophical songs, in spoken dialect and thus established and enriched the tradition of building up of 'peoples' literature. The modern reform movements were thus a continuation of the earlier trends, though in a better organised way.

Andhra society in the 19th century was, more or less, the same as elsewhere in the south. Social life was oppressive with all its evils such as the caste system which was exclusive and hierarchical in its nature and superstitions. Education, to begin with, was limited to the privileged or propertied few. Even that was outmoded. It perpetuated illiteracy and ignorance and favoured superstitions. Attempts were made to introduce English education even though, in the initial stages, response to it was poor. However, the spread of education was more in the circars (coastal districts). For, the impact of the British was first felt by this region as it was on the highway between Madras and Calcutta. Influences from both these presidential towns were discernible on the circar districts. Bengal through Orissa had its
clear impact on the border districts of Ganjam and Berhampore and towns like Rajahmundry, Kakinada and Machilipatnam had access to Madras by sea and later by rail. This region was covered also by the missionary activities who, along with their proselytising activities, also opened a number of schools which provided education in English and sciences and thus opened a window to the ideas of the west. More importantly, the Godavary and Krishna districts, among the cirears, were the pioneers of reform movements with centres at Rajahmundry, Kakinada and Machilipatnam. These two districts were brought under the delta system through the construction of Godavary and Krishna anicuts around 1850's. They became comparatively rich and prosperous and a new class of farmers came into being. Furthermore, a number of small towns sprang up here and the urban areas became centres of education. The urban based educated middle classes took to new professions and this led to social mobility, even though in a restricted manner. The urban based educated middle classes (professional middle classes) initiated new ideas and provided the base for reform movements in Andhra. In Andhra there were no commercial middle classes worth speaking, not to speak at all of an industrial middle class in the strict sense of the word 'industrial'. It was against an essentially moribund but stagnant, feudal society that this reform movement was
started, making the former its target. Veeresalingam was a product of this situation and rightly he hailed from Rajahmundry in the Godavary district. The break-up of old order consequent upon the new land relations and transformation in the social fabric of Indian countryside led to the undermining of agrarian economy. These were initial but feeble attempts to change from the pre-capitalist feudal economy of India into a formal capitalist economy. With the decline of old industries the pressure on land increased resulting in the rural unemployment which accelerated the agrarian crisis. These were the symptoms of structural imbalance in the Indian society during the 19th century. This was influenced by other factors such as education, growth of towns, establishment of a new legal system, political unity, communications and the rise of new middle classes. All this led to the much desired social change and social reform movements.

The reform movements were initiated and led primarily by educated middle classes (professional classes) and hence their content and following were severely restricted. Also these leaders were mainly of upper caste origin and this was reflected through the demands and problems undertaken by reform movements. Kandukuri Veeresalingam was a product of the 19th century Andhra society and was a heir to the past reform trends and also the mirror of his times. He was
influenced by the prevailing social conditions and also by Brahmo influences from Bengal. Veerresalingam was, like other reformers of the 19th century, keen in the spread of scientific knowledge and the growth of rational thinking. He incorporated these ideas in his speeches and writings. He was systematic in his efforts. To begin with, he endeavoured to create public opinion in favour of reform ideas through his writings in several journals and thus paved the ground for the success of reform movements. Being a great literary figure he made use of literature to spread reform ideas among his people. Literature, to Veerresalingam, was the means to an end. He pleaded for the spread of mass education in vernaculars. He was not for imparting mere literary education. According to him contents of education should be reform-oriented and purposeful. Such education coupled with personal example should be imparted to young and impressionistic minds. Being a moderate in politics, he extolled the virtues of British rule and was a victim of false consciousness as other reformers of the 19th century, who were, pinning their faith in the good intentions of the British and expected that they would strive towards the deliverance of the Indians. He was one of those reformers who believed that social and political reform should go hand in hand and more, that social reform should precede the political.
He felt that society should progress in all spheres equally and simultaneously.

Veerasingam was no mere preacher or theoretician. He was a practical reformer. He put into practice all his reform ideas, irrespective of their success and failure. His ideas were enriched by the reform movements he launched and he was drawing strength from time to time through the implementation of his ideas. This was a continuous process. Ideas for him were not ends in themselves and their worth had to be tested in the field of practical action. In short, his ideas were enriched by the movements he started and from the experience of his movements his ideas drew their sustenance and if need be he would revise his ideas in the light of their practice. His reliance on youth, as an important element in society to carry forward the ideas of reform, was unshakable. Judging from the immense cooperation extended by students of Rajahmundry, the home town of Veerasalingam, to the success of reform measures initiated by him, his faith in them was well-grounded. In a society which was traditional and which opposed change in matters of social reform, students happened to be the real hope with their idealism, youthfulness and their receptivity to new ideas. On more than one crucial occasion students stood by Veerasalingam and stoutly supported him against the onslaughts of the orthodox forces. Veerasalingam
appeared to be a far-sighted leader in this regard. He could not only foresee but make use of the immense potentialities of the youth power among students towards his reform activities. This augured well for future as student power was one of the main constituents of India's freedom struggle. It also appears that this was an innovation next only to that of Derozio who had tremendous influence over his students and who formed the spearhead of the young Bengal group. Other reformers in Andhra like Raghupati Venkataratnam, a contemporary and co-worker of Veeresalingam, too followed this example and had drawn quite a number of students into 'Social Purity' and Prarthana Samaj movements. Many generations of students were influenced by reformers in the initial stages of their lives and formed the vanguard of social movements and then political movements at a later date.

Problems concerning women figured prominently on the agenda of the 19th century reformers in general. It was perhaps their degrading or miserable condition in society that was responsible for this. Reformers also felt strongly that unless the status of women, who constituted more or less half of the population, improved, society would not be able to register progress, as they formed, by virtue of their age-old educational and social backwardness, the most reactionary section in society. Education in general, and women's
education in particular, was limited in society. Efforts of reformers to open a number of schools for Girls' education, coupled with simultaneous effort by the Government, though limited in this direction, yielded limited results. What the reformers failed to perceive was, that private effort, however widespread it might be, would only have a limited outcome. Public education was necessarily to be a government endeavour if it was to achieve the desired results and, in a country like India, it should be organised on a mass scale. However limited might be the scope of the movement in this direction, a general atmosphere of enlightenment was generated among women. Lectures, conferences and organisation of cultural activities became the order of the day. Women's associations sprang up. Each association had organised its own library. Journals devoted exclusively for women were being edited and published by women. Women writers came up who started writing on various issues concerning women. The All-Andhra Women's Conference was organised for the first time in 1910 at Guntur. It is significant to note that social reform conferences were attended also by women along with men. The deep concern and involvement of women in their problems could be illustrated by their advocacy for, in addition to the need for formal and general education, vocational education and the relevance of subjects such as crafts and other useful household arts. This was, in very general terms, a demand for
work-oriented education for women. But for the upper and middle class nature of reform movements and their leadership, this demand should have been pursued normally to its logical conclusion of demanding equal rights and equal job opportunities and wages for women. Nevertheless, considering the spirit of the times and evolution of ideas in society of the period under study, even the growth of consciousness among women of their rightful place in society, which the reform movements achieved, was a great leap forward.

Regarding the problems of women, marriage reform, in all its totality, was a major activity of Indian reformers during the 19th century. Reformers in Andhra took up issues, prevailing during the period, such as infant marriages, 'kanyasulkam', marriage expenses and widow remarriages. Though these problems were not universal, they were fairly widespread in the Andhra region of the erstwhile Madras Presidency. They were mostly confined to the upper castes, though due to 'sanskritisation' the other castes too were adopting these pernicious practices lest they should be looked down upon in the social hierarchy. The significant contribution of the reformers towards the reform in the field of marriages was the production of a considerable amount of literature disproving the arguments of the orthodox sections. In doing so the reformers relied upon and took shelter under the Shastras. This
method was adopted primarily, as in the case of Bengal and Maharashtra, to create credibility in the minds of the public with their arguments and also to pay back the orthodox pandits and scholars in their own coin. Otherwise reformers like Veeresalingam made it known clearly that he was convinced of the uselessness and irrelevance of the Shastras in the modern context. That is why he adopted, in his speeches and writings, the arguments based on both Shastric and rationalist grounds. This movement, in particular the issue of widow remarriage, registered moderate success. It was due mainly to its prevalence among the upper castes in society. To the 'lower' sections it was not much of a problem and hence its limited spread among them. Economic factors such as losing control over their widowed daughter's property induced rich parents to remain opposed to their remarriage. Likewise the poor parents of propertyless widows wanted them to remain unmarried as they would be of immense help in performing household duties and also, at times, add to the income of the family through their earnings. Other factors such as the temperamental differences between the couples, lack of proper post-marital care and attention of these married people, absence of idealism on the part of couples and the small community of these married people with no prospects of opening their contacts and establishing relations with other members.
of the society were responsible for the limited success of the widow remarriage movement. Also the highly individualistic nature of a leader like Veeresalingam alienated himself from both the married parties as well as his co-workers and followers. The movement, no doubt, spread to other parts of Andhra, mainly urban areas like Guntur where able people like Unnava Lakshminarayana took up the mantle of reform, upon their shoulders. He was rightly called the 'Veerasingam of Guntur' for his notable efforts in this direction. In addition to a number of widow remarriages performed by reformers, the most singular and lasting contribution of the movement was the establishment of 'Widows' Homes' at Rajahmundry and Madras by Veeresalingam and at Guntur by Unnava Lakshminarayana besides a few other personal attempts wherein a few widows were maintained by private individuals. The maintenance of Widows' Homes stressed the rehabilitating aspect of the problem. In these 'Homes' widows were given general education along with instruction in useful arts to enable them live independently. It was said that these 'Homes' were maintained against many odds as there was dearth of material and human resources. The movement achieved a very useful purpose of spreading reform ideas among the public. As the reformers had to face formidable opposition throughout the Andhra region they had to undertake extensive tours delivering speeches, publishing articles, pamphlets, tracts and even satires which in their
turned educated the general public and also simultaneously hit at the citadel of reaction.

'Social Purity' movement aimed at the achievement of high standards of morality in society. Towards this end, the advocates of this reform aimed at bringing out a charge in the minds of people by moulding the public opinion. The reformers realised that the realisation of this was doubtful as both the 'nautch' and 'drinking' problems were deep rooted and long established. They, however, pleaded with the government to enact suitable laws to prevent these two evils. Anti-nautch and Temperance associations were formed at a number of places with students mainly as members. They signed 'Social Purity' pledges which were circulated by the reformers. What is more significant in this connection was that, under the profound influence of the movement, reform started from within the community of Devadasis ('or 'Bogam vallu'). Prominent male members among them took up the lead in starting associations and issued statements urging members of their community to discard the 'profession' and also asked them to impose certain self punishments upon those who violated the understanding of not pursuing the profession. They started performing marriages to their female children and also gave them schooling wherever opportunities were available. Certain castes as a whole gave up the 'profession' and took to normal
However, what the reformers forgot, in their enthusiasm for very high moral, almost 'puritan', life was rescue and rehabilitation programmes for those women who would give up their old ways of living. With inadequate educational and job opportunities their future appeared to be bleak, even though they could appreciate the efficacy of the teachings of reformers.

The temperance movement achieved very little progress when compared to the anti-‘nautch’ movement. It served the purpose of spreading ideas about the evil of drink through the columns of native press and publication of a few tracts. It was known that the poorer sections were the worst hit by this evil. Yet the reformers, unlike their counterparts in Bengal, did no practical work among these sections. In fact this problem gained momentum during the freedom struggle when the issue was taken to the masses through popular song and drama by means of the efforts of the congress workers in the countryside. Thus the efforts of reformers in the 'social purity' movement were mainly propagandist and they succeeded in creating consciousness about the evil nature of these problems among the educated sections of the society and the need to eradicate them. Reformers like Veeresalingam and Venkataraman extolled the middle class virtues such as thrift.

1. Refer above, Chapter V, PP.295-96.
frugality and hard work. It was similar to the protestant ethic. This was in tune with the attempts, though feeble and half-way, of transforming feudal society.

Religious reform went along with social reform and reformers of this period believed that unless reforms in the religious sphere were made, the achievements in the social sphere might be lost. Their belief was also based upon the popular opinion that several social evils had the overt or covert sanction of religion.

Prarthana Samaj, as it came to be known in Andhra, was clearly influenced by Brahmoism as long back as 1864 when the Veda Samaj was established at Madras. It was during this year that Keshub Chandra Sen visited Madras as a part of his all India itinerary for the spread of Brahmo teachings. The influences on Andhra, in this regard, came, perhaps, from both Madras and Calcutta. That Brahmoism had its major impact on Andhra was corroborated by the evidence of regular visits by Bengali Brahmos to this region throughout this period. Also, a number of Andhra reformers visited and stayed in Calcutta and returned to Andhra after receiving proper training and enough learning in Brahmoism. Many of the reformers here became 'anushtanics' too. However, in name it was different. It took the name of Prarthana Samaj of Maharashtra. As the Brahmo Samaj in Bengal alienated itself from the genera:
public by its aloofness as well as its separate identity as a new religion, the Andhra reformers, if one could indulge in speculation, wanted to avoid the same fate befalling their movement in Andhra. In Maharashtra, Ranade declared that, the Prarthana Samaj remained a part of the Hindu society and decided to keep religious reform as the basis of social reform. This was a clear instance of the Andhra reformers learning by example and taking the model of Maharashtra and being benefited by it.

The Prarthana Samaj in Andhra attacked idolatry, polytheism and a host of rituals which came to be associated with Hinduism. It advocated pure theism. Though Veeresalingam founded the first Prarthana Samaj at Rajahmundry in 1878, Raghupati Venkataratnam was his senior partner in the Prarthana Samaj movement. Kakinada, where Venkataratnam was the principal of the Pithapur Rajah's College, was the centre of Prarthana Samaj. With Venkataratnam at the centre, Veeresalingam and the Rajah of Pithapur formed the triumverate of Andhra Brahmo movement. The Prarthana Samaj, in addition to the dissemination of ideas of religious reform, organised at Kakinada and Pithapur a few lodges' and an 'Orphanage' (Karunalayam'). The

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2. Kakinada Prarthana Samaj changed its name to Brahmo Samaj in 1910 and other Samajas remained Prarthana Samajas as in the past. However, not withstanding the name, for all practical purposes, this movement in Andhra was considered Brahmo movement as it could be seen from the names of the affiliating bodies to it such as 'Brahmo Dharma Mandalii' and the 'Andhra Brahmo Sadhana Ashram' and the like.
'lodges' provided food and accommodation to the inmates who were prosecuting studies in local schools and colleges. The 'Orphanage' was doing similar service to those who were destitutes and the children of 'Devadasis' who gave up their 'profession' under the influence of the reformers. The inmates were mostly from the 'Depressed classes'.

A distinct Brahmo literature, consisting of articles, booklets, prayer songs and translations of biographies of well known reformers and Brahmos of Bengal, was developed during this period. Each Samaj had a 'mandir' where regular prayer meetings were held and these Samajas had inter-connection through the exchange of literature, and speakers. An Ashram, on the model of Calcutta Brahmo Ashram, called the 'Andhra Brahmo Sadhana Ashramam' was established at Kakinada in 1913. The Ashram, besides training full time Brahmo 'sadhaks', published two journals, 'Dharma Sadhani' in Telugu and 'Sadhana' in English. In 1916, a central organisation called 'The Andhra Brahmo Mandali' was established. However, the Ashram could not be run for long as the human and material resources were lacking. The Andhra Brahmo Mandali never got into its stride as the Samaj was organisationally always weak. The lack of a central organization was in fact one of the reasons for the decline of an effective Prarthana Samaj movement in Andhra.
Significantly its spread, though confined to a few districts, was considerable. The movement came to be closely associated with the other social reform movements through its teachings. The Prarthana Samaj became popular in those areas where other reform movements were fairly wide spread as both their teachings were complimentary to each other. The movement was confined to Godavary, Krishna, Guntur and Ganjam districts. The material conditions including the relative prosperity of people and the presence of a good number of popular leaders and the comparative growth of towns and spread of general education led to its success in the districts of Godavary, Krishna and Guntur. Bengal's influence on Ganjam district bordering Orissa must have contributed for its success there. A number of Bengali officials working in the inter-state services like the railways were frequenting the northernmost circars of Ganjam and Visakhapatnam districts. Also there is evidence to the effect that a few members of the aristocratic families of Visakhapatnam district were educated at Calcutta and, during their stay there, came under the direct influence of Brahmos like Debendranath Tagore, Keshub Chandra Sen and others. 3

A good number of students at places such as Rajahmundry, Kakinada, Machilipatnam and Guntur joined the movement either

3. Refer above, Chapter IV, P.181, f.n.33.
under the personal influence of reformers like Venkataratnam and Veeresalingam, or through the influence of the rational teachings of the Samaj. In the urban areas a number of educated people practising professions such as law and teaching, or holding jobs in the government service took to the teachings of the Samaj. Uprooted from their old surroundings, these educated middle classes, with their newly acquired flair for social reform, were in need of new identities. Brahmo ideals with their stress on rationalist ways of thinking and anti-idolatrous and theistic ideas attracted their attention. Thus a number of them joined the Brahmo Samaj and others who did not become members were at least not averse to the new ideas. They became its 'associate' members, attending their prayer meetings and other social functions organised under the auspices of the Samaj. In districts like the Godavary the Prarthana Samaj spread its influence, in some cases, even into the countryside. This was facilitated by the presence of people, who were once members of the 'lodges', ' orphanage' and 'hostels' at Kakinada and Pithapur, in those villages. Furthermore these villages in the Godavary district also had educational facilities since long time. In the Bapatla and Vetapalem areas of Guntur district, the Samaj became extremely popular among the weaving community in places like Vetapalem, Ipurupalem and Chirala. This was perhaps due
to two factors. Firstly, this area had produced great Brahmo leaders like Desiraju Pedabapaiah and Pillarisetty Seetharamaiah, the latter being a member of the weaving community and the presence of these leading personalities also had its impact on the growth of the Samaj.

Dependence on a few dynamic individuals for its spread was one of the causes for its decline. Dearth of resources, entrenchment of tradition in society, lack of central organization, absence of democratic functioning and shorthandedness in regard to 'pracharaks' were some other factors that led to its gradual decline. The non-Brahmin movement in Andhra, an extension of the Justice Party of Madras, also contributed its share in this respect. Raghupati Venkataramnam Naidu, the life spring of the Andhra Brahmos, joined it raising almost a revolt from the ranks of Brahmos. Though the Brahmo Samaj did not split on this issue, the movement was greatly weakened as a number of its leaders, who were mainly Brahmins now joined the nationalist movement led by the Congress party which was antagonistic to the Justice Party. However, it should be mentioned to the credit of the Prarthana Samaj movement that it was the first to champion the cause of the 'depressed classes' and work for their amelioration through schools, colleges, 'hostels', 'lodges' and 'orphanges'. Schools exclusively meant for these classes were being
The first generation of 'Harijan' leaders were the alumni of these institutions. Besides paving the way indirectly for the spread of social reform movements, the Samaj created a liberal and broad outlook among the people in general.

To start with, the sea voyage issue was one of the earliest problems taken up by the reformers who demanded the removal of taboos imposed upon it. The argument that sea travel was prohibited by the Shastras was refuted by the reformers through the publication of tracts and articles in the native press. They also quoted from the smritis like Manu and ruled out the objections of opponents. With the spread of education, especially during the first decade of the present century, several youngmen belonging to upper and middle classes wished to go abroad for higher studies. For such young aspirants of higher education, the reform movement extended moral support and was prepared to take them back into the mainstream of society after their return. However, the sea voyage movement gained momentum during the Swadeshi movement when several enterprising youngmen decided to go to countries like Japan to learn new industrial skills and techniques in order to start such ventures here. Thus an economic motive accelerated the pace of the movement and a

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4. Refer above, Chapter VI, PP. 348-50.
number of people undertook foreign trips. Even some caste associations such as the Vaisya association (a community traditionally trained in arts of trade and commerce) took up this issue and started supporting the demand of the reformers.5

Purifying public life by eradicating evils like corruption among the local officials and striving to establish high standards were dearer to the hearts of reformers like Veeresalingam and Venkatataratnam. Through the columns of his journals, such as 'Vivekavardhan', Veeresalingam severely criticised corrupt and erring local officials. He spared neither high nor low. He strongly believed that unless the administration at local levels was above board, progress at national level was not possible. The contemporary vernacular press took the lead and focussed this issue. Along with this a number of other public issues such as municipal administration, supply of water to the fields, providing adequate educational and health facilities were championed by the reformers and the press. A healthy public opinion was sought to be built around these issues, a tradition which developed and continued later during the freedom struggle. Attack on minor public inconveniences such as the above would, the reformers contemplated, lead people on the path of tackling major issues related to political and economic matters. It

5. Refer above, Chapter VII, P.393.
should be noted, in this context, that creating consciousness among people on public issues was one of the aims of the reformers through their movements.

Social reform ideas were spread, in the initial stages, through lectures, vernacular press, pamphlets and booklets. Once the movement struck roots, conferences at taluk and district level were organised throughout Andhra. These conferences served the purpose of disseminating reform ideas among the public through discussions and resolutions. However, organisationally the movement was always weak. Veeresalingam spoke at length about the need for organisation in his presidential address delivered at Eluru on the occasion of the Godavary district social conference in 1897. Nevertheless he was not endowed with the qualities of an organisational genius. His style of working was highly personal. He would give everything at his command for the sake of the movements, and would lead the movements at great personal risk and sacrifice. However, his colleagues and followers in the field could not cope up with his impatience and short temper and breathless drive and enthusiasm in the course of the reform movements. He became more irritable and short tempered as he had to lead a solitary life fighting against opponents when his friends and followers in the movement deserted him for fear of consequences like excommunication. He was individualistic by nature and was uncompromising in his
convictions. He had an indomitable will and tenacity of purpose. All these qualities marked him out from others of lesser calibre who found it rather difficult and irksome to work in association with him. A contemporary news report stated: "The work of Veeresalingam Pantulu has been mainly his own....Mr. Veeresalingam has an oppressive personality, his genius, his strength of will, his peculiar humour and stubbornness, his uncompromising attitude.... have always been in the way of his weaker followers. They prefer to admire and adore him from a distance rather than understand and sympathise with him from near. This is certainly due to utter lack of definitiveness and smoothness in his methods of work.... His troubles and persecutions made him to entertain a general distrust in the capacity and sincerity of his friends and followers. He used to interfere with the work he entrusted to others (the management of any of the important branches of the work) of which he is the head....Mr. Pantulu has all that is needed for the work of a pioneer; he has the pickaxe of biting satire; daring courage and steadiness of aim. But he lacks the power of building, uniting and cementing the materials before him." Apart from the personal qualities of Veeresalingam which prevented the building-up of a strong organisation, there were causes inherent in the nature and composition of the movements which contributed to this effect.
The movements were upper caste and middle class based as was evident from the issues they took up to tackle. Similarly those sections of society which participated in these movements were students, teachers, lawyers and government officials. In certain areas small traders and middle peasants also took part in them. Thus these sections could mainly be described as belonging to educated middle classes or professional classes. Leadership also came primarily from these sections.\(^6\) As the leadership as well as the following of the social reform movements in Andhra belonged to divergent and heterogenous professions it became very difficult to get them under a single organisation. The lukewarm attitude shown by the educated sections of society towards the movements came under severe criticism. Social conferences were not followed by propaganda activities and the resolutions and decisions were not translated into concrete action. Reform ideas never percolated into the lower layers of society as these ideas never concerned them. Issues like welfare of the 'depressed classes' and concepts like 'national education' were taken up actively only after the first decade of the 20th century by which time the reform movements showed clear signs of decline due to a number of factors.

The Swadeshi movement and its serious repercussions in

Andhra in the year 1907 was a major set back to the reform movements. Students who formed the major part of the following of Veeresalingam at Rajahmundry and Kakinada, joined the movement. Veeresalingam who could neither appreciate nor sympathise with the aims and objects of the movement became virtually isolated. Local factors, obtaining during this period at Rajahmundry when a number of his former colleagues and followers, who eventually turned out to be his opponents by joining the revivalist associations like the Hindu Reform Association, joined the Swadesi movement and his own apprehensions about its nature and attitude towards reform movements which he thought was reactionary, made him oppose the movement in 1907. It is significant, in this context, to note the opinion of Professor Sumit Sarkar that in Bengal, Hindu revivalism of 1890's combined later with reaction against 'Moderates' to constitute extremism in politics.

Events that followed 1907 strengthened the declining trend of the reform movements. Veeresalingam became an 'anushtanic' Brahma, gave up his sacred thread and performed the 'sraddha' of his parents according to Brahma rites and arranged an inter-caste dinner on the occasion. He took this decision, as he stated, after serious deliberation and after waiting for a long time. He delayed in becoming an 'anushtanic' as this act would impair the growth of reform movements.

7. Refer above, Chapter III, P.164, f.n.102 and also Chapter VIII, PP. 426-27.
The district conferences that met after 1907, to deliberate on political and social issues, passed resolutions pleading for political reform to be preceded by social reforms. This was not the case earlier. It was the other way round. Veeresalingam, an advocate of social reform preceding political reform, accepted this and got reconciled to it. It showed that political matters claimed the first place in the society's priorities. The need for social reform was accepted in general and the nationalist upsurge took into its all-embracing programme, social reforms also. A number of activists till now in the reform movements, like Unnava Lakshminarayana, Gadicherla Harisarvathama Rao and others joined the ranks of the freedom struggle. Even as early as 1897 fears were expressed by some of the colleagues of Veeresalingam that the movement was experiencing shortage of both men and money. Even Veeresalingam expressed this feeling in his correspondence with R. Venkatasivudu and found it difficult to find a suitable person to manage the 'Widows' Home' at Rajahmundry.

The rise of revivalism as a backlash against the reform movements also contributed greatly to the process of decline. Even during the hey-day of the reform movements orthodox sections in society continuously opposed them by delivering lectures and publishing books opposing the reforms. One such
serious effort against Veeresalingam was made by Kasibhatta Brahmayya Sastry in Rajahmundry by organising 'Aryananda Brindayini Sabha'. The 'Theosophical Society' founded by Annie Besant at Madras adopted the line of 'social reforms on national lines' and attacked the social reform movements and their objects. Annie Besant and Col. Olcott toured Andhra extensively and visited Rajahmundry, Kakinada, Masulipatam and other important reform centres. With her eloquence she captivated the minds of the public when she spoke of the past glories of Hindu India and the need for their revival. Though theosophy never took deep roots in the Andhra soil, despite the establishment of a number of 'Theosophical Lodges', it succeeded at least in diverting the minds of people from the issues of social reform and also roped into its fold dissident elements like Nyapati Subba Rao, who had been a staunch follower of Veeresalingam at Rajahmundry and who fell out from him on personal grounds, and provided a platform for them. Starting of the Madras Hindu Association in 1904 at Madras with the blessings of Annie Besant and Nyapati Subba Rao as one of its ardent advocates, the visits of Vivekananda to Madras and his speeches, the founding of 'Varnasrama Dharma Samrakshana Mandal' in Madras during this

8. Refer above, Chapter IV, PP.241-42.
9. Refer above, Chapter III, P.164, f.n.102.
period with their virulent propaganda against social reforms weakened the reform movements. Reformers in Andhra started defending their programmes proclaiming that their reforms were not opposed to national heritage.

Furthermore, factors like the non-Brahmin movement, organisation of caste associations which started working at cross purposes against reform movements with their policies such as 'sanskritisation', the movement for separate Andhra contributed to the decline of the reform movements.

In the colonial context of the 19th century, the reform movements were bound to fail as the reformers were working under the constraints of colonial rule. The priorities and preferences of colonial rulers were totally different from those of the reformers. Reformers who had fallen under false consciousness did not realise this. On the other hand they sincerely hoped that the colonial rulers would strive towards the successful achievement of these reforms.

The impact of the reform movements was confined mainly to the sections of literati residing in towns and a few villages around. A very small number of petty traders and educated farmers, if any, were also influenced by these movements, especially in the two districts of Godavary and Krishna. However, it should be made clear that keeping in view the limited spread of education and a few changes that were brought
about in society's economic relations, the social mobility was extremely limited. The old feudal relations continued to prevail, by and large, even though a few symptoms of structural imbalance and shake-up of the economic and social systems could be perceived through attempts to change land relations, introduce money economy and creating a single internal market. The new revenue settlements created private property in land introducing individual ownership of land and thereby transforming society from a basis of status to one of contract. This and other new commercial and economic forces which entered the village undermined, though to a limited extent, the agrarian economy of the Indian village of the pre-British period. This could at best be described as a period of transition from a feudal economy to capitalist economy in society and during the 19th century this process was not fully carried through to its logical end. In the absence of an industrial and commercial bourgeoisie the reform movements could not draw continued sustenance towards their growth and success. That is why the much desired social revolution or the so called renaissance of the 19th century had to be a half-hearted and incomplete measure of social change. The professional middle classes which sprang up along with the growth of towns stood for liberal and democratic values and respected the individual conscience but not any religious authority. They advocated for individual freedom
and participated and led the reform movements. Hence the impact of these movements was confined primarily to these sections in society.

The dissemination of enlightened ideas about man and society was the main contribution of the reform movements. Caste restrictions were loosened even though caste remained intact. Fanatical opposition to issues such as the abolition of infant and widow marriages gave place to rational thinking and scientific approach. Taboos regarding sea voyage were removed. Individual morality and 'social purity' were accepted as essential prerequisites for the healthy growth of society. In matters of religion too, people were made to think on more civilized ways of worship and observance of various practices. Rituals received a set-back. An awareness about the need to reform the old society with its outdated customs and practices was created. This could be seen, besides the reform movements, in the rise of caste associations which introduced a host of reform measures to uplift themselves from the social and economic morass they had hitherto fallen into. Along with the cry of social justice, there also went up the cry of social reform as far as each non-Brahmin caste was concerned. Resolutions on inter-sub-caste marriages, fusion of sub-castes, denunciation of evils of dowry and infant marriages can be found in the conferences of
these caste associations. Persons like Raghunatha Varma of Vayalpadu in Chittoor district, Tripuraneni Ramaswamy Choudary of Guntur district and Darisi Chenchaiah of the Gadhar party fame were only a few instances of such isolated individuals who carried on the work of social reform movements in their own way, but to the best of their capacities. This indicates the steady rise of the rural gentry into positions of social prominence which was just a step short of political dominance. Reform movements were urban-based, while these caste associations were centred mostly on the countryside. It is true that some of these associations at times, were falling a prey to the traditions of the upper castes and their ways of life. Taking an overall view, one must conclude that they could achieve only a part of the aims of the reform movements. Caste associations had the necessary homogeneity and strength of purpose to achieve this whereas the reform movements with their upper caste and upper class basis could not percolate through the masses and create in their minds conviction of ideas, or commitment to reform programmes.

The reform movements provided the backdrop to the nationalist movement in Andhra. The first generation of national leaders in Andhra, Tanguturi Prakasam, Bhogaraju Pattabhisetaramaih, Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao, Vemula Kurmayya, Unnava Lakshminarayana, Gadicherla Harisarvathama Rao, to mention only a few, and several others happened to
be the active participants of reform movements.

The decline and fading out of the reform movements in Andhra does not necessarily imply that its impact on men's minds ceased after 1907 or 1919. On the other hand, it became part of the intellectual atmosphere, imperceptibly and silently the very stuff of which the later generation was made, just as sunlight is absorbed by the plants. If the socialist movement of Andhra explicitly paid its homage to Veeresalingam and deliberately sought to restore social reform to life in the late thirties and the early forties, the permeative influence of Veeresalingam's movement cannot be doubted. But one should add to it the liberating influence of caste associations especially in relation to the agricultural middle castes of the Andhra countryside whose products these early socialist/communist leaders were. The background for the rise of such a leftist movement cannot be complete without the post-Chouri Chaura disillusionment of the younger generation of political enthusiasts with the Gandhian techniques of struggle and even more particularly, the anti-Simon Commission demonstrations of 1927 and later still, the beginning of the impact of the depression in the 'hungry thirties'.