CHAPTER III

VEERESALINGAM: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IDEAS
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Reform movements in Andhra, during the second half of the 19th century, were associated with the name of Kandukuri Veeresalingam (1848-1910). He initiated and led these movements providing them with the necessary ideological content and organizational form. He was a pioneer of public life in Andhra as one who both inaugurated a new era in Telugu literature and strengthened the nascent but inchoate elements of social reform so as to give them the force of a movement.¹

¹ Veeresalingam was described by several scholars as the one who swam "against Time's current and changed the current life in Andhra, with no predecessor in his line and no successor of equal stature". See Iswara Dutt, "Pioneer of Modernism in Andhra" in Swatantra dated 17 April 1948. The idea that he was the genesis of modern movements in Andhra — social and literary — was the unanimous theme of a number of Telugu scholars. For example, see the article of C.R. Reddy, "Veeresa­ lingam Pantulu garu", published in Andhrapatrika (Telugu daily), June 21, 1919, wherein he compared Veeresalingam to Lord Brahma (Lord Creator) vis-a-vis modern Andhra. The same opinion was expressed by Arudra, a leading modern poet and literary historian and critic in his article "Gadya Tikkana, Samgha Samskartha Kandukuri Veeresalingam Pantulu" in Vikasalabhari (Telugu), (Hyderabad, 1974), P.116. See also Andhrapatrika (annual number) 1919, P.52. This estimate of Veeresalingam, however, sounds hagiographic and uncritical. For, one man cannot be the genesis of movements. In fact, as noticed in the last section of chapter II, there were strong but stroy trends of ideas of social reform in Andhra prior to the emergence of Veeresalingam. Also there were predecessors to Veeresalingam who introduced new forms into the Telugu literature. This aspect will be discussed in the forthcoming pages. Nevertheless, the uniqueness of Veeresalingam lay in consolidating these trends to develop them into movements.
Born in a Niyogi brahmin\(^2\) family and by profession a Telugu pandit (language-teacher) Veeresalingam had undergone a great transformation before he undertook various reform activities. An analysis of this change as well as a discussion of his ideas would help us in appreciating the account of reform movements which we propose to present in this and subsequent chapters.

Veer esalingam's ancestors were employed as Dewans and Deshpondees — the revenue officials — under Muslim rule. Some of them were even estate-holders.\(^3\) Veeresalingam's grandfather was a Dewan under the local estate holders of the Godavari district and was known for his philanthropy and liberal patronage of poets and scholars.\(^4\)

His grandfather, during the last stages of his life, went without a job and spent much of his savings on the marriage of his eldest son, and by the time of his death, the family had just enough to maintain itself.\(^5\)

His father and uncle were, according to Veeresalingam, well versed in Telugu and had a working knowledge

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2. Niyogis were those Brahmins who took to secular and worldly occupations in life and had come to occupy the key posts in administration from the days of the Muslim conquest of Andhra. They realised the importance of English education as means to secure positions of influence in the Government and took to it early in Andhra. A detailed account of Niyogi brahmins was given in Chapter I under the heading 'caste system'.


5. \textit{Ibid.}, P.10. It appeared that at times, they were forced to dispose of a few items of movable and immovable property for the maintenance of the family.
of English too. His father was employed for some time in the office of the District Collector and then joined the service of the Rajah of Pithapur. Eventhough his ancestors were fanatical Saivaites (lingayats), his great grandfather married a girl of Vaishnavaite sect (among the Smartha Niyogis) and gave up the lingayat caste symbol. This reform trend, though appearing insignificant, was claimed by Veeresalingam as having influenced him even as a boy. ⁶

Veeresalingam was educated in the traditional pial school system where learning was done by rote. He learnt elementary arithmetic and read conventional Telugu books like Satakas ⁷ on morals and acquired a preliminary knowledge in Sanskrit. ⁸ As there were no examination-oriented schools, he was asked to learn work in the local Government Revenue office to qualify for a job. During this period he was introduced to the fundamentals of English by his uncle. ⁹ After 1858 the certificate-awarding schools were started and Veeresalingam was sent to the Government District school at Rajahmundry (in 1860)

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6. Ibid., P.7.
7. Sataka is the composition of one hundred verses (sometimes a little more or less) instructing people mainly in morals and good behaviour. In Telugu there are many Satakas among which Vemana Sataka, Sumati Sataka are highly popular even to this day.
9. Ibid., P.17.
where he studied for the college entrance course and successfully finished it in 1870, qualifying himself for admission into the first year of the college course.\textsuperscript{10} As the first year college course was abolished in Rajahmundry in 1870,\textsuperscript{11} he could not pursue his studies further and joined the Rajahmundry Government District school as an assistant teacher in 1871.\textsuperscript{12}

As a student of the Government School, besides acquiring a good knowledge of Telugu literature, he

\textbf{10. A district school was first established at Rajahmundry by the Government in 1853, where English was taught. Mr. Black was the first headmaster of the school. C.M. Barrow succeeded Black as headmaster and it was in his time that the present Arts College buildings were constructed and a High School was located, the name of the district school being then changed to Provincial school. Veeresalingam was a student of this school under Barrow. See C. Lakshminarasimham's article, "Rajahmundry : Men and Institutions", published in Godavari Pushkaram Souvenir (Rajahmundry, 1944), P.34.}

\textbf{11. The College with the first year course was again commenced in 1871 and subsequently the B.A. classes were opened in 1876. E.P. Metcalfe was the Principal of the Arts College for 25 years. What Dr. Miller, Mr. Powell and Mr. Porter were to South India in matters of education, that was Metcalfe to the Northern Circars and the Andhra region. Perhaps the greatness of Mr. Metcalfe lay in the fact that he did not confine his activities to his institution alone but took a lively interest in various social and cultural activities of the day creating and providing a favourable atmosphere for the students to shape themselves. Metcalfe was also responsible for the establishment of the Training College in 1894 and he was the Principal of that college till his retirement in 1896, the period during which the reform activity at Rajahmundry was at its peak. See \textit{Ibid.}}

studied English and History, Geography and Science. One does not know for certain what books he read in English. However, the course content of the middle schools of that period (upto the 8th standard) included Bradshaw's English Reader - V, Manual's English Grammar, Lethbridge's History of India, Collier's History of England, Geography Manual and Mathematics comprising Arithmetic, Algebra and Geometry. It may be concluded that the college entrance course (higher than the middle school course) done by Veeresalingam should have contained advanced courses on Indian and European histories and probably some classics of English literature and elements of Western Political Philosophy also.

Born and brought up in an orthodox Brahmin family, Veeresalingam, during the early part of his career, was prone to orthodoxy in life and letters. His faith in the validity of the Vedic and other Mantras was absolute. In his writings he displayed a bias for orthodoxy in style as well as content. He wrote two satakas in Telugu

13. He mentioned in his autobiography that he was particularly good in Mathematics, History and Cartography for which he was specially awarded prizes and books. *Ibid.*, P.45.


15. Veeresalingam stated that he was much under the influence of Brahmanical priests. After a ceremonial bath in the river Godavari, he used to visit the nearby Shiva temple and applied sacred ashes (vibhuti) all over the body. On special festival days of religious significance like Shivarathri, he used to fast the whole day. See Veeresalingam, *Sweeya*, P.I, *op.cit.*, PP.19-20.
during his early literary career which clearly reflected
his orthodoxy. He addressed them to the presiding
deities of two temples in Rajahmundry. 16

FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

In an attempt to evaluate the influences on Veeresalingam, who led an orthodox life earlier, it becomes no-
cessary to consider the time spirit and the ideals of social
justice which made him devote his attention to the erad-
cation of social evils. We have no evidence to prove
whether any personal or emotional factors contributed to
a change in him. With regard to the influences of Brahmo
movement in Bengal and the Prarthana Samaj of Bombay, two
mutually opposite views were expressed. 17 It was true that

16. Veeresalingam, though a Saivite by birth, sang the
praises of Vishnu (in the days of strong rivalry
between the two denominations of Saivaites and
Vaishnavaïtes) in one of his Satakas for which he

17. A. Ramapati Rao stated that Veeresalingam was influenced
by the Brahmo reformers of Bengal though the prevailing
social conditions had a deep impact on him. See
Introduction in A. Ramapati Rao, ed. Kandukuri Veeresal-
ingam Diaries and Letters (Telugu), (Vijayawada, 1970).
A similar view was expressed by his earliest biogra-
pher T. Venkata Subba Rao, Sri Kandukuri Veeresalingam-
kavi Charitramu (Telugu), (Rajahmundry, 1894), P.41.
Veeresalingam was regularly in touch with the articles
published in 'Tatwabodhini', a journal published from
Madras propagating social reform ideas. It was publi-
ished from 1884 to 1870 on behalf of the Veda Samaj
(predecessor to Brahmo Samaj in Madras). Veeresalingam
mentioned in his autobiography that he consulted arti-
cles on the problem of widow remarriage published in
this journal for his discourse on the same topic. See
Veeresalingam, *Sveeya*, P.I, *op.cit.*, P.150. Also see
contrary to this was expressed by M. Venkataramaiah in
an article written in the Souvenir Yugapurushudu Veere-
salingam (hereafter referred to as *Yugapurushudu*),
(Hyderabad, n.d.), P.33. He stated that Veeresalingam
was influenced neither by Bengal nor Maharashtra
reformers and the interest in reform was his own.
Veerasingam’s discriminating and rational mind was doubting and questioning the superstitions and retrograde customs in society. He declared that he was not prepared to be led blindly by any established faith or hearsay and desired to go into the truth of the matter. Furthermore, he stated that if he became convinced of a thing he would pursue it sincerely.18 At this stage in his life when his faith in the accepted customs and beliefs was tottering, we learn from his autobiography that he borrowed from one of his friends a volume of the collected speeches of Keshubchandra Sen. "After reading those speeches my faith in certain established truths was

18. Veerasingam, Sweetya, P.I, op.cit., P.58. To illustrate this aspect of his personality he cited a few instances from his early life when he followed this attitude. Against the popular belief or superstition, he did not cut down the banana tree in his backyard when it flowered at its stem and instead he allowed it to bear fruit and ate it against the warnings that it would bring misfortune. He took up the headmastership at Korangi (a place near Rajahmundry) on a new moon day much against his mother’s wish who bewailed it as wanton courting of disaster. Again in the case of a witch-doctor, who was called in to cure his mother from hysterical fits, which she attributed to evil spirits possessing her, Veerasingam refused to yield to his demands for more money. The witch-doctor threatened to kill him by his Black Magic at which Veerasingam was not frightened. Instead, the witch-doctor fell seriously ill from self-induced fright and had to be rescued by Veerasingam from his death. See Ibid., PP.69-73.
Furthermore, the arrival of a teacher by name Atmuri Lakshminarasimham, a Brahma by faith, to the District School in Rajahmundry strengthened his changing convictions towards reform.\(^{20}\) Under his influence

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19. Ibid., P.60. He borrowed the volume from Challapalli Rangalil. Keshubchandra Sen visited Madras in 1864 and delivered a few lectures. This created a stir in the public not only of Madras but of certain mofussil towns as well. This visit coincided with the beginnings of Brahma movement in the Madras Presidency. For, one Sridharulu Naidu, after this, left for Calcutta and stayed there for four years at the Brahma Samaj headquarters and returned to Madras as 'amshatantra'. See for example Keshubchandra Sen, Diary in Madras and Bombay, from 9th February to 8th April 1864 (Calcutta, 1867), cited in J.G. Leonard, "Kandukuri Veeresalingam, 1848-1919, a Biography of an Indian Social Reformer" (xerox copy), Doctoral Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1970, P.64.

20. Atmuri Lakshminarasimham came to Rajahmundry from Machilipatnam (it was then called Machili Bandar) where he taught in a Mission School. He worked in Rajahmundry till the year 1871. Veeresalingam and a few other like-minded students of his class were closely associated with him. See G.V. Subbaraya Gupta, op.cit., PP.20-21. See also in this connection, for further biographical details, an article, in Telugu, "Atmuri Lakshminarasimha Somayajulu" by G.Nageswara Rao in S.Sundaram ed. Vijaya Vaisya Pratyeka Samohika (Vijayawada, 1977). The influence of Brahmos from Bengal, and in particular Keshubchandra Sen, on Veeresalingam was pointed out by D.V. Siva Rao in his article "Sri Veeresalingam", in Andhraprabha (Telugu daily published from Vijayawada), November 17, 1968. He pointed out, however, that Veeresalingam was not changed in his convictions eventhough a change occurred in Sen after 1875. Veeresalingam identified himself with Sadharana Brahma Samaj later. That he had developed great respect and admiration towards Bengali reformers, and in particular to Vidyasagar, could be seen from the fact that in his short novel, "Chandramathi Charitra", the heroine, Chandramathi, was educated by a teacher called Vidyasagar ('Samudra' is a synonym of Sagara). See Veeresalingam, Collected Works (hereafter referred to as Col.Works), Vol.V. (Rajahmundry, 1953). Furthermore, he wrote short biographies of Ishwarachandra Vidyasagar and Raja Rammohan Roy (incomplete) and published them in his journals 'Satyasamvardhani' and 'Chintamani'. 
Veeresalingam and a few of his co-students formed into a society to discuss social issues once in a week.\(^{21}\)

Rajahmundry, as we have observed earlier, had among its population, elements of enlightenment.\(^{22}\) It might be due to the progress made in the economic sphere after the construction of Godavari anicut or the early establishment of Government School and College, the judicial and revenue establishments, and the activities of missionaries. An English lady stationed at Rajahmundry during the 1830's in

\(^{21}\) Veeresalingam, *Sweeya*, P.I, *op.cit.*, P.60. The meetings used to take place behind doors and they were mockingly called 'meeting wallahs' by the public. One or two close associates of Veeresalingam, in his reform activities later, like Bluri Lakshminarasimham, were also members of this group.

\(^{22}\) Towards the close of the Chapter II, discussing the pre-Veeresalingam Reform trends, a person by name Samineni Mathoo Narasimmah Naidoo from Rajahmundry was mentioned. He wrote a book "Hitsocochance" pleading for social reforms. This book was found in Veeresalingam's personal library which constitutes a major part of the present Rajahmundry Town Hall Library. His collection consists of both English and Telugu books among which mention may be made of encyclopaedias, literary histories, histories of different nations and books on social histories. Standard books on Brahmo Samaj are also found in good number. We find in these books the pencil markings and marginal writings of Veeresalingam. What remains today is only a part of his huge library, which unfortunately was damaged by the Godavari floods in 1952. Consequently, his correspondence (with Mahadev Govind Ranade, Ishwarachandra Vidyasagar, Pandit Sivanatha Sastry, Babu Hemachandra Sarkar and others) was lost to posterity. Whatever remained, mostly in an unconnected and fragmented form, of his diaries and letters, has been collected and edited by A. Ramapati Rao, *op.cit.*
one of her letters gives credence to this view. In this context, attention may be drawn to the influence of western education and thought on Veeresalingam and his comments on this subject. Though the spirit of reform did not affect all sections of the educated community equally, it did create, at least, among some of them a general recognition of the existing social evils and a need for an analysis of the Indian socio-religious conditions. On the transformation of ideas among his fellowmen, Veeresalingam wrote:

"It is admitted by one and all that Western lore has worked wonders among the natives of India. We are quite aware that English education has rendered natives more refined in their manners, has dispelled the mist of superstition from the minds of several of them if not many and has considerably developed their moral calibre whenever it is

23. "The other day we had a visit from a very intelligent native.... He told us he had three daughters and a son, and that he was determined not to be influenced by the Hindu prejudices against female education, so he had taught his daughters to read and write...English...but he had met with a great deal of trouble and opposition from his relations on account of his innovation—especially from his wife, who for a long time allowed no peace or quiet in the house...". See A Lady op. cit., P.138, letter from Rajahmundry, Nov. 19, 1838. The signs of an earlier enlightenment could also be seen in other towns like Machilipatnam which was similar in locale and other influences, as Rajahmundry was."
properly imparted". 24

The starting of a journal, 'Vivekavarhani', of his

24. Vivekavardhanī, October 1875 (a bi-lingual journal edited and published by Veeresalingam). Susobhan Sarkar quoted Rabindranath Tagore who held a similar view with regard to the "magic touch of western culture that roused Bengal from its torpor", and stated that though the Bengal reformers like Rammohun and Vidyasagar found quoting Hindu scriptures in defence of their reforms, their "obvious original model was western liberalism". See Susobhan Sarkar (General President's address, Muzaffarpur, 1972), Indian History Congress, Proceedings of the Thirty Third Session (New Delhi, 1973), P.13. However, Veeresalingam grew cautious in his views on the influence of education (including English education) in general on men's minds motivating them towards reform. He stated, "you often hear it is stated that education is the best remedy for the evils from which our society is suffering. If by education you mean that which is imparted in your schools and colleges, this statement does not express the whole truth....for, we know the majority of our education men are as backward in espousing the cause of social reform in practice as their uneducated countrymen... A friend was telling me.... that education, while it makes good men better, makes bad men worse. This epigram....must....be accepted with a good deal of reservation; but observation will show you that literary education is often double edged weapon....this education....must be supplemented first, by a familiarity with the ideas of reform, and secondly, by the influence of personal example". See the presidential address of Veeresalingam delivered on the occasion of the 12th Indian Social Conference held at Madras in 1898, published in C.Y.Chintamaní, ed. Indian Social Reform (Madras, 1901), PP.204-5. Veeresalingam by 1898, might have experienced apathy, if not non-cooperation, from a number of educated people in his reform activity which prompted him to adopt this view. Also of interest is his ideas on contents of education which, according to him, should be reform-oriented.
own in 1874 could be considered a landmark in the life of Veeresalingam. It marked the beginning of his public life as he joined issue with the orthodox sections in Andhradesa over women's education. Thus one can observe the growth of intellectual convictions in him and dedication to the cause of eradication of social evils. 25

'Vivekavardhani', to start with, was a monthly. 26 In 1876 it became fortnightly and later weekly. 27 It was not, strictly speaking, the first journal in Telugu—prior to that about half—a—dozen journals existed which were either news—sheets or periodicals with

25. However, Veeresalingam emerged only in the year 1878 as an active and committed social reformer when he started the social Reform Association in Rajahmundry and took up the cause of widow remarriages and other activities.

26. The first issue was published from Dowaleswaram, and, until a press was acquired, it was printed at Madras. Besides 'Vivekardhani', Veeresalingam published a few other journals in Telugu, namely 'Hasyasanjivani' (1876), 'Sathihitabodhini' (1883), 'Chintamani' (1891), 'Satyasamvardhani' (1891), 'Telugu Zenana' (1904), and 'Satyavadini' (1905).

a limited purpose and yet the first journal devoted to a thorough-going social regeneration. It was more or less, a one-man show. Veeresalingam was its life and soul—editor, printer, publisher, proof-reader all rolled into one. He conducted this journal single-handedly for several years, eventhough the promised help never came from his friends and well-wishers, fighting against odds in those days of early Telugu journalism. The journal had a laudable motto, a verse

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28. The first journal in Telugu was 'Satyadootha' started by Christian missionaries in 1835. It was followed by 'Vrittantini' (1838), 'Vartamana Tarangini' (1842), 'Hitavadi' (1862), 'Sri Yakshini' (1863), 'Tatvabodhini' (1864), 'Sujanaranjani' (1864), 'Andhra Bhashasanjivani' (1871), 'Purusharthapradayini' (1872). See Bangorey's article "Nellore Patrikala Charitra" (Telugu) in Vikramasimhapuri Mandala Sarvaswamu (Nellore, 1963). See also N. Venkata Rao's article "Prachinamdra Varthha Patrikulu", Bharati (Telugu monthly, Madras), May 1929.

29. As a journalist he gave a better and more finished shape, in an original way, to material which, in lesser hands, possessed neither finesse nor workmanship. See "One of the Great Men of India" an article by G.R.S., Swasthita (an English weekly..., published from Madras), April 17, 1948. Also see K.Punnaiah's article op.cit.

30. T.Venkata Subba Rao, op.cit., P.63. Leonard mentioned the names of three merchants from Rajahmundry as partners of the journal and their investment, according to him, was for financial reasons. One does not know how long they continued their association with the journal. However, in 1875 a press was purchased and installed in Veeresalingam's house. See G.J.Leaden, op.cit., P.76. Also see Veeresalingam, Swasti, P.I, op.cit., PP.94-95.
taken from the Telugu Mahabharata, "Do to others as you would have them do to you."

The two main aims of the journal were, viz., (1) to increase the moral tone of the people and thus work towards the social progress, and (2) the improvement of the Telugu language.

Veeresalingam made it an effective weapon reflecting public opinion. It served two purposes simultaneously. Firstly, it was the medium through which Veeresalingam propagated his ideas of reform giving suitable replies to his critics. Secondly, he made use of this organ to whip up and organise public opinion against the growing corruption and immorality in the administration. He attacked official high-handedness as well as prostitution and concubinage prevailing in society.

Soon it

31. Ibid., p.78.
32. Ibid., pp.80-81.
33. J. Gurunatham, Veeresalingam, the Founder of Telugu Public life (Rajahmundry, 1911), p.43. Outlining his task as editor and the hardships he faced, Veeresalingam wrote in one of the early issues of 'Vevekavardhani': "If bribery is condemned, the local officials would be furious; if concubinage is disapproved of, the rakes of the town would become angry; if dead customs are criticised and attacked the ignorant and the illiterate would feel unhappy; if the external forms of religion (rituals) are denounced, the priestly classes would be displeased; if the journal were to justify its existence, it has to defy such a wide range of people". See Veeresalingam, Sweeya, p.i, op.cit., p.81.
became a guardian angel of the public and the terror of venal officialdom in and around Rajahmundry and a centre of Veeresalingam's reform activities. Thus he earned the high praise as the first journalist in Andhra who used journals as the effective media of disseminating the ideas of reform and modernism.\textsuperscript{34}

By 1874 the evolution of Veeresalingam's ideas on life from that of orthodoxy to non-conformism had a corresponding shift in his attitude to literature also. Veeresalingam was naturally an heir to the ways of writing which were in vogue by the middle of the 19th century. They can all be characterised as forming part of "Panditha Sampradaya", or the scholarly tradition in language and literature and they were intertwined with the predominant form of social organization which was decadent feudalism.

After the downfall of the Vijayanagar empire, subsequent to the military defeat in the battle of

\textsuperscript{34} K.R. Seshagiri Rao, ed. \textit{op.cit.}, P.150. Also see S. Natarajan, \textit{History of the Press in India} (New Delhi, 1962), P.193 where Veeresalingam is described as "the father of Telugu Journalism". And also see J. Natarajan, \textit{History of Indian Journalism} Part II of the Report of the Press commission, (New Delhi, 1955), P.201, which stated that Veeresalingam made a beginning in Telugu journalism through his 'Vivekavardhani'. A similar view was expressed by 'Chronicler' in an article "Telugu Journalism, Leaders and Landmarks" in V.R.G.K.M. Prasad et al., ed. \textit{Half Way} (Vijayawada, 1958).
Rakshastagadi in the year 1565, there cropped up a large number of small kingdoms and chieftaincies all over the Andhra country and in the Tamil country. They were all supported by a motley crowd of Poligars who, in their turn, were propped up by armed retainers. The fragmentation of the political authority was coupled with social disorder. The decline in the classical literary values reflected this social phenomenon.

The 'Prabandhic' genre of the days of Vijayanagar was now inflated in terms of numbers and deflated in terms of quality, producing what are known as 'Kshudra' or debased Prabandhams. They gave undue importance to the meaner variety of 'Sringara' rasa, with emphasis on the details of coitus and sexual satisfaction known as 'Parakiya Sringara'. Whole poems were composed to give two to four different meanings to the same terms employed by the poet. Still greater poetic feats were performed in


36. K.Rajayyan, op.cit., P.VI. Also see S.B.Chundhari, Civil Disturbances during the British Rule in India (1765-1857), (Calcutta, 1955), P.36.


the name of 'Chitra Kavita' and 'Bandha Kavita'.

Telugu literature lacked prose and drama. A writer of the Southern School of Telugu by name Samukham Venkatakrishnappa Nayakudu of Madura had produced Jaimini Bharatham in a stilted, pedantic and rhythmic prose early in the 17th century. This style was far removed from the language current in the Andhra country. It, however, fitted in with the scholarly school of literature and at the same ignored or looked down upon the more popular and intelligible style of prose writing and employed by commoners as well as scholars in their day-to-day intercourse, in letter writing, court documents and even in learned commentaries on 'Kavyas'. Charles Philip Brown made a conscious attempt early in the 19th century, with the aid and guidance of his Telugu Pandits, such as Pathyam Advaita Brahma Sastry, Ravipati Gurumurthy Sastry and Chadalavada Sundararama Sastry to revive this

39. It is a form of Poetry where more permutations and combinations in prosody are tried giving less importance to meaning. See G.V.Ramamurthy, ed. Appakaviyamu (Telugu), (Madras, 1924), PP.278-81.

40. See for example N. Venkata Rao, Andhra Vachana Vangmayamu (Telugu), (Madras, 1954), PP.56-57.

41. Examples of this are cited by G.V.Ramamurthy, the exponent and leader of the movement of spoken dialect in Andhra in his lectures. See G.V.Ramamurthy Pantulu VyasaVali (Telugu), (Vijayawada, 1958, first edn.1933), PP.12 and 22 and 23. The book is a collection of essays contributed by G.V.Ramamurthy to different literary journals in Telugu. Also see N.Venkata Rao, op.cit., PP.73 and 92-94.
useful style of prose writing and to give it literary currency. But Paravastu Chinnaya 'Suri' thwarted Brown's labours by reviving the scholarly style of prose writing known as 'Grandhika', with his prose work of 'Panchatantra'. As the Andhra scholars of the mid 19th century were naturally partial to this more respectable style, Veeresalingam's first essays in prose writing were cast in its mould and, in fact, they went one better, as, for example, in his 'Sandhi' and 'Vigraham'. Similarly his early verses were also of the same scholarly stamp as in 'Suddhandhra Niryoshthyah Nirvachama Naishadhaham'. It was not until he put his shoulder to social reform that he first realised the utter uselessness of this style, both in poetry and prose, and especially in the latter. He deliberately sought to make a break with the old ways of prose writing with an eye on social reform.

Veerasingam, the old-fashioned scholar, was


43. Chinnaya 'Suri' was the first scholar to reverse this healthy trend in the style of the language in the 19th century. See G. V. Ramamurthy, Vyasaavali, op. cit., P. 26. Also see N. Venkata Rao, op. cit., PP. 100-102.


withdrawing into the background and Veeresalingam, the man with a purpose, was emerging. He believed that the main purpose of language was to communicate ideas. To be an effective instrument of communication of ideas the language should be simpler and more lucid. In this context he wrote, "What for is a language? For men to communicate their ideas to one another. What for are books in a language? To pass on their ideas to those who are removed both in time and in space. Can such a thing be accomplished by books such as "Vigrahamu"? No, it does not. Common readers have to have recourse to dictionaries and scholars in order to get at the meaning of words and sentences....So, how should books be? They should be intelligible to all. Thinking thus, I decided to write books, unlike 'Vigrahamu', in an easy style and gave expression to this idea in the press". He continued, "Eventhough it has been my opinion that books should normally be written in 'Salakshana', easy style, it is also my opinion that they may be written also in the colloquial style in accordance with their varying content. I thought of preparing a new grammar and a prose work in accordance with it, to suit the times and the growth in prose writing

46. Veeresalingam, discussed this aspect of change in his style at some length in his autobiography. See Veeresalingam, Sweeya, op.cit., P.II, PP.173-75.
because I think that all old grammars had been composed solely for versification at a time when there were no prose works and therefore, many of the requirements of old grammar are not suited to the development of a prose literature and hence the need for a change in grammar."48

Veeresalingam made his language simple so as to make his reform ideas reach people. This was indeed a turning point not only in Veeresalingam's life but in Telugu literature as well as in the social reform movement in Andhra. For, the reason why Veeresalingam simplified his language was to make it a popular vehicle and a propagandistic tool.49 His reform work and literary work were not two exclusively different aspects of his achievement. They

48. Ibid., PP.124-25.

49. This view has been clearly expressed by several Telugu literary critics and scholars. However, it has been powerfully brought out by V.Narayana Rao in his doctoral thesis, "Telugulo Kavitavipaleva Swaroopam", PP.65-68, submitted to the Andhra University in 1974. He pointed out that Veeresalingam had revived the broken link between life and literature. Also see K.Iswara Dutt, op.cit., who stated that, "the pen he wielded as a man of letters became a weapon in his hands as a reformer. Literature to him was the means to an end; he exploited its medium for the ennoblement of life by assailing its follies and frailties". See also D.Anjaneyulu, Dr.C.R.Reddy (New Delhi, 1973), Appendix, "Literature as a means of action" (Dr.C.R. Reddy's tribute to the work of Veeresalingam), where-in he expressed a similar view. Also see "Navayuga Mahapurushulu" in Andhradarsini (Telugu), (Vijayawada, 1984), P.732. M.Somashekhara Sarma in his article "Veguchukka" (Telugu), in Kinnera (literary journal from Madras) n.d., has ably brought out the capacities of Veeresalingam in making use of literature for social reform. He stated that "Veeresalingam ably mirrored the mountain-like society in his writings".
were in fact complementary to each other. His reform zeal put fire into his writings, whereas the simple and yet powerful expression of ideas secured for the reform movement a broad base of support among the literate people. He gave expression to the same in the form of a verse in his monthly journal, 'Vivekavardhani'.

The lasting achievement in this regard was his creation of a new Telugu prose. After having realised the futility of the earlier prose as a means of communication, Veeresalingam discarded it and evolved a new prose that was clear and simple and not beyond the ken of the non-pandit. With the same end of propagating his ideas on social reform, Veeresalingam pioneered in the matter of borrowing new literary genres such as the

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50. "....I have a liking for Telugu and I want to work for the welfare of the country with determination. I can compose verses and write on ethical questions useful to the society, in an easy style, so as to make all people understand them." Cited in Veeresalingam, Suveya, P.I, op.cit., P.79.

51. His predecessors (like Chinnaya 'Suri') and his contemporaries like Kokkonda Venkataratnam Pantulu were the protagonists of old literary prose style. Veeresalingam was never excused for his deviation from the old style and as it was in the field of social reform, he had to face strong opposition in literary sphere too. See for example V.R.Narla, Traditional Indian Culture and other Essays (Vijayawada, 1969), PP.101-103. Also see G.V.Ramamurthy, Andhra Pandita Bhashakula Bhasha Bhesajamu (Telugu), (Guntur, 1933), PP.3-4.
novel, the farce or 'prahasanam' and the play, both from English and Sanskrit. For all this work of developing a prose literature he has aptly been described as

52. He enriched the Telugu literature by being practically the first literary man in Telugu to employ a variety of literary forms—novel, drama, satire, pamphlet, literary history, essay and autobiography, with success. However, Veeresalingam was not the first novelist for he was preceded by Narahari Gopalakrishnamma Chetty who wrote 'Sri Rangaraja Charitram' in 1872. In the field of essay, his predecessor was Samineni Moothoo Narasimman Naidoo ('Satibita Soochance'). Veeresalingam's greatness lay in the fact that he took up these infant-like genres into his lap and nourished them to establish them finally in the field of letters. For a detailed account of his literary genius see A. Ramapati Rao, Veeresalingam Pantulu, op.cit.
'Gadya iikkana', i.e., the greatest prose writer. 53 As

53. See the article of Arudra, op.cit., P.115. Also see R.Venkatasivudu's article "Three Eminent Andhra Educationists" in Triveni (Quarterly English journal published from Bangalore), October–December 1942. He stated that, "He invented a new style of prose writing, which is at once direct and telling. Farce, story, essay, were all forged in the Smithy of Reform, with the object of combating the evil customs of society". K.Punnalalah in his article, "A tribute to Sri Veeresalingam" in Triveni April–May 1948, stated that Veeresalingam's prose "combined simplicity and charm of style with the power of lucid expression. He would tell a tale with magical effect." Commenting upon his prose style R. Venkataratnam Naidu, a younger contemporary of Veeresalingam and a great Brahmo declared it was "lucid yet learned, familiar yet classic, vigorous yet chaste, full-flowing yet self-contained". See V.Ramakrishna Rao, ed.R.Venkatataratnam, Message and Ministations (Madras, 1924), Vol.III, P.444. Though Veeresalingam is considered to be a precursor of modern Telugu prose, there are conflicting opinions regarding his prose style. See G.V.Sitapatli, op.cit., PP.112–13, wherein he mentioned that "we do not find anywhere in his writings, 'obscurity and affectation', which according to Macaulay, 'are the two greatest faults of style'". But Veeresalingam used the spoken word only in his farces not in his essays or dramas, "lest he might fall in the estimation of contemporary pandits". G.V.Apparao, a great playwright and contemporary of Veeresalingam, in his diaries criticised his prose style as neither literary nor spoken dialect. See P.S.Sarma's article "Apparaya Kaviacharuniki Veeresalingam Soryuda?" in Andhra Nuthi (Telugu daily published from Vijayawada), 7th March, 1976. However, in this connection the opinion of V.R.Narla in his biography of Veeresalingam (New Delhi, 1968), PP.26–31 (Chapter called 'Creator of Modern Prose) is worth noting. "As in social reform, so in creating a new prose, Veeresalingam was the 'Iswarchandra Vidyasagar of the South'. In both fields, the task of the latter was made lighter by Rammohan Roy.....Unlike Vidyasagar, Veeresalingam had to start from scratch....". On the question of the parentage of the modern Bengali prose, opinions among Bengali literary historians are divided. Pradyumna Bhattacharya wrote the question itself was wrong as one individual cannot "beget the prose of a nationality". See for a lucid account on this, Pradyumna Bhattacharya "Rammohan Roy and Bengal : Prose", in V.C.Joshi, ed. op.cit., PP.195–223.
C.R. Reddy said, "In literature he commenced by writing Prabandhas\(^{54}\) bristling with slesha,\(^{55}\) Chitrakavita\(^{56}\) and the entire gamut of ugly artificialities, and ended as the creator of the Telugu novel, the Telugu social satire, the Telugu drama, especially of the social type, and of science and scientific biography in Telugu".\(^{57}\) But he stopped half-way in this regard at best relaxing some of the rules of the 'sandhi' and reducing the number of sanskritic compounds from his new prose which he named 'sulabha' or 'intelligible prose'. He did not extend his language reform to its logical end. The more ardent and logical reformers of style such as G.V. Ramamurthy and G.V. Appa Rao found fault with his prose style for its inadequacies\(^{58}\) and they failed to win him over to their side until his last days in 1919 when he consented to head the 'Vartamanandhra Bhashapravartaka Samajam' or

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54. Prabandha was a poetical form in Telugu during the late middle ages which continued up to the beginning of the 19th century. It corresponds with the heyday of feudalism in this part of the country.

55. It is a form of poetry in which a verse gives two different meanings - double entendre.

56. It is again a form of poetry where more permutations and combinations in prosody are tried giving less importance to meaning.

57. C.R. Reddy's article, op.cit.

58. For a historical exposition of the evolution of modern Telugu from its feudalist character see G.V. Appa Rao, Minute of Dissent (Madras, 1914), Report of the Intermediate Telugu Composition Committee submitted to the Government of Madras and also G.V. Ramamurthy, A Memorandum on Modern Telugu (Madras, 1913).
the 'Association for promotion of current Andhra Language'.

Social and Political Ideas of Veeresalingam

Veerasingam chose the teaching profession as he liked to lead comparatively an independent life.

A number of his illustrious contemporaries also chose the same profession with similar views. Teaching was an honoured profession and people with idealism and zeal for social work took to it as it also afforded them

59. The 'Association' was formed at Rajahmundry on 28 February 1919 and, after that, within three months Veeresalingam died. G.V. Ramamurthy, Vyasa vali, op. cit., P.153.

60. He was qualified for high posts in the Government as he had passed several revenue and judicial tests. "One must choose an independent walk of life", he wrote, "and he must opt for the teacher's profession where there is little occasion for sinning". See Veeresalingam, Sveeya, Part I, op. cit., P.78.

61. To cite only a few examples, Raghupati Venkataratnam, Chilakamarthi Lakshminarasimham, Desiraju Pedappaiah were teachers. Speaking about the teaching profession R.Venkataratnam stated: "I elected to be a teacher more for the sacred responsibilities and noble opportunities than for the ample emoluments of the profession.... They alone ought to be teachers who look upon their work as a 'vocation' with its service and not as a 'profession' with its prizes". Cited in K.Suryanarayana, R.Venkatataratnam (Rajahmundry, 1952), P.5; C.Lakshminarasimham mentioned in his autobiography, op. cit., P.46, that he took to teaching under the influence of Veerasingam who taught him at Rajahmundry.
considerable leisure. Considering the times in which he was placed, he had to play the roles of a pioneer and a propagandist. Teaching profession gave him ample time and opportunity to sow in the receptive minds of generations of his students the seeds of reform ideas and liberal thought and prepare them for solid practical work in future. Veeresalingam had immense faith in the capacities of youth and their cooperation in his work, which proved to be correct judging from the great support he received from them during the height of his reform activity. Veeresalingam answered the criticism of his

62. Apart from the sanctity attached to teaching as a profession, it was also easily available as this was the period during which both governmental as well as private effort in education was fairly considerable. Besides. teaching, the other profession which was popular during this time was law. A few of the co-workers of Veeresalingam were lawyers too. In this context mention may be made of Nyapati Subba Rao who became later an opponent of Veeresalingam espousing the cause of Hindu revivalism under the leadership of Annie Besant. He became a leader of the Indian National Congress by becoming its General Secretary. See for example, C.Lakshnaraasimham, Pushkaram Souvenir, op.cit.

63. R.Venkatasivudu, Veeresalinga Samsmrithi (Telugu), (Guntur, 1931), P.133. The author was a student of Veeresalingam who became an active co-worker later. Students were being sent to remote villages to bring secretly willing and desirous child widows to Rajahmundry for remarriage. Veeresalingam himself gratefully acknowledged the help he received from students in his autobiography, P.1, op.cit., P.158. On the demise of Veeresalingam in 1919 one of his former students was asked to write the editorial in an illustrious Telugu Weekly Krishnapatrika (published from Machilipatnam), May 31, 1919. In his editorial he stated that the teachings of Veeresalingam on social evils and the need to eradicate them left a deep impression upon their minds. Students were made to stand watch during nights at the houses of corrupt officials. Students were eagerly awaiting the issues of 'Vivekavrdhani' which used to contain social farces, articles on reform and news exposing corrupt officials.
opponents that he was relying excessively upon students in the following terms:

"Our opponents are showing as a weakness on our side that the majority of our Samaj—members and the others that take part in our gatherings and talks—are students. They take it as a drawback and feel happy that our cause is not strong; on the other hand I take it as point in our favour which augurs well for the future. Our country looks forward with great eagerness towards the students, who will grow into elders tomorrow. The part that the elders are playing had come to a close. These young students are players in the great theatre of the world and will stage new plays with greater capacity and perfection to please the audience. If these students learn their parts well and play them their successors will be enabled to follow their path and enhance the moral influence of the drama, so as to work for the benefit of the country with greater courage, zeal and capacity and make their motherland a heaven on earth. Our country has to progress always with the help of students". Though this may sound as laying undue stress on the help of students (which, of course, he received in full measure), it showed that he wanted to create a strong base among students in support of his movement in Rajahmundry where

64. Veeresalingam's lecture (in Telugu) on "The duties of educated men" ('Vidyadhikula Dharmamulu') in Veeresalingam, Col. Works, Vol.VII (Lectures), (Rajahmundry, 1951). The lecture cited above was delivered in 1893 under the auspices of the Prarthana Samaj, Rajahmundry.
the anti-reform (orthodox) sections were strongly entrenched. We are informed of this by his onetime students who later became converts to reform during the life time of Veeresalingam.65 Veeresalingam earned the reputation of being one of the great inspiring teachers who strove hard to create an awareness and social consciousness among the youth of his times. Many became his dedicated followers professing faith in his teachings and extending whole hearted support to his activities unmindful of consequences.66

Spread of education in general and of women in particular occupied the main attention of the 19th century social reformers. Veeresalingam held the view that the progress of a nation depended much upon the education of its women. With this view in mind he strongly pleaded, in his speeches and writings, for their education. In an article, 'Women's Education', he argued that, "there

65. See for example the article of A.Lakshmipathi in Yugapurushudu, op.cit., PP.30-31. Also see f.n.63 above.

66. One of his students wrote, "Ever since I joined in Fourth Form in the Government College, Rajahmundry in 1876, Kandukuri Veeresalingam was our teacher. He taught us not only Telugu but other general works too. His teachings against social evils and superstitions and pleas for social reform left an indelible impression on our tender minds. His main aim was to break the idols of the past. He wrote powerful social satires and made us enact them. There were almost none who could oppose his pen". See V.Suryanarayana Rao, Suryanarayanasayamu (an autobiography in Telugu), (Kovvur, 1936), P.165.
are some who think that education is for securing jobs, for a living and ask, "why do women need education when they do not have to work and earn?" I wish to ask them, 'In that case, where is the need for education for rich men who do not have to earn for their living?' Though uneducated, a labourer makes a living out of his toil. One can take up a number of professions for a living; education is not that necessary to eke out one's livelihood. Education is for something else, for knowledge, for wisdom and for the fulfilment of deeper and nobler urges of life. Women need education for the same purpose."

The opponents of female education wrote in the contemporary journals that 'women do not deserve education'. Answering them in a sarcastic manner Veeresalingam wrote in his journal that 'Men do not deserve education'. He wrote, "Our ancestors were never educated and education goes against our tradition. To do so is bad. Even otherwise education is leading to evils such as forgery and the like.... What then is the use of education? In the past people were not educated and yet


they managed to live well. Why should we put ourselves to needless strain by taking to learning? When the British Government is coming forward to open schools in our villages and thus spoiling our children, why should our patriots keep quiet? Should not our leaders assemble and decide to place all those receiving education under social boycott? If, as it is often said, Englishmen achieved progress through education, it is so because they are unlike us in complexion. They are white and we are black. So what is possible for them is not possible for us. The advocacy for English education is the cause for premature deaths too. 69

In the campaign that Veeresalingam conducted against the critics of female education, often he found himself answering their criticism. 70 Nevertheless, at times he also lashed out at the opponents, for example:


70. He exposed in Satya Samvadhan (a bilingual journal published by him from Rajahmundry on behalf of the Prarthana Samaj), January-February 1894, the opponents' claim that "ignorant Indian women are altruistic and self-sacrificing", by saying that all services from women were expected as a matter of course and were forced upon her.
"Were women to be educated,
What would happen to the sale of human flesh,
Thinks one.
What would become of the time-old domestic ceremonies,
Laments one.
Who would serve me as though I were her very God,
Mourns another.
Whom am I to thrash and belabour,
Rages another.
Who will look after the idols and offers worship to them,
Reasons yet another.
And these are now the leaders of society whose
old-fashioned ways
Are out to safeguard evil ways of life.71

Spreading knowledge to liberate people from their
deep-rooted superstitions and social evils was the main
tHEME OF THE 19th CENTURY REFORMERS. Veeresalingam was
in line with them. The spread of scientific knowledge and
the growth of rationalist thinking were the two aspects
which Veeresalingam stressed in his speeches and writings.
For, ignorance of people, according to him, was the main
cause of all superstitions and social evils. He pleaded
for the spread of scientific education in vernacular
language, in easy Telugu prose. He declared,

71. He expressed these ideas in the form of easy verses.
"In order to increase the total happiness of the common people, books in easy and lucid Telugu prose should be written on subjects like astronomy, anatomy, physiology, hygiene, philosophy and religion, mechanics, logic and ethics, economics, history and geography". 72

He ridiculed the pseudo-scientific information given in the Puranas and other Hindu scriptures and appealed to the people not to place faith in them. 73 Veeresalingam's rationalistic outlook could be seen pervading all his writings, either in criticising outdated customs or in introducing reform ideas. 74 Scientific education was meant to serve two purposes, to dispel the darkness of ignorance of masses, and to develop native agriculture and industries. 75 He compared the western scientific knowledge to bright sunshine which breaks darkness and ushers in the dawn. 76

73. Ibid., P. I, PP. 36-37.
75. Ibid., PP. 283 and 392-93.
76. Ibid., PP. 188-89.
He felt that unless the general public was educated, society could not improve. He pleaded for mass education through the medium of vernacular language. In this context he wrote that, "Books have to be written in simple and lucid vernacular prose and made available to the people at low cost.... Popular books of knowledge should be written in vernaculurs. Even one such book which can impart basic knowledge of one of the sciences would be able to bring enlightenment in some measure. When people come to understand the phenomenon of solar and lunar eclipses from a scientific point of view they will firmly reject the myth and meaningless rituals connected with them. People tend to become less and less superstitious as they learn more and more of natural sciences. Therefore competent people would consider my suggestion sincerely and undertake to write suitable books on sciences in vernaculurs for the benefit of the people and the progress of the country."  

As a rationalist he placed faith in reason and suggested that reason should be the hallmark of any social custom or tradition. He stated:

77. See for example, Ibid., PP.202-204, 365 and 372-75. Also see Veeresalingam, Col. Works, op.cit., Vol.VIII, P.II, PP.41-42.

"Any number of quotations from the Vedas and Sastras does not in the least help the reformer to bring about even a single widow marriage. If he wants to effect practical reform, he must bring in reason to his help and appeal to the feelings of reasonable men.... Reason can accomplish in one week what the so-called national lines cannot effect in a year. They may say this is a violent measure. Yes. Violent maladies require violent remedies."79

Noticing the change that came in the ideas and ways of thinking of the people, Veeresalingam saw the emergence of a new era of intellectual and moral enlightenment in Andhra. In his lecture on 'the duties of educated men' he stated that, "now there is war between truth and untruth, between wisdom and stupidity and between the light of knowledge and the darkness of ignorance. The new thought sown by the maiden of physical sciences, sent among us by western scholars, have (sic) spread around the country in their new born energy and are about to shake the

79. This extract is taken from the inaugural address delivered by Veeresalingam as president of the Sixth Madras Provincial Social Conference held at Kakinada. See Indian Social Reformer, Vol.XII, No.43 (1901-02). Veeresalingam, in this speech, was answering critics of social reform movement who suggested that reforms should be organised on "national lines". He asked what those "national lines" were by which that reform (widow marriage reform) could be brought about?
foundations of old beliefs.... The dawn of new knowledge is dispersing the darkness of ancient faiths and ignorance.... There is no doubt that the wise gradually enlist themselves on the side of truth. Again, there is far less doubt of the final result of the war....in the end, truth shall assuredly triumph over untruth". 80

Veeresalingam condemned the caste system and pointed out its evil consequences: "Our caste system prohibits certain castes' people from receiving education. This has largely impeded the development of their knowledge and skill. In a world which is progressing in all branches of human activity, we have to keep pace with other developing countries. Without education this is not possible. An uneducated craftsman hardly knows the improved skills and techniques employed in his vocation with the result that his growth remains permanently stunted. The present caste system has created mutual distrust and hatred. There are now among our people, not only the four castes but innumerable sub-castes. A book on our caste structure has enumerated the names of as many as two thousand sub-castes among the Brahmans only....This naturally results in

disunity and bitterness.\(^{81}\)

It is not correct, as some are inclined to suggest, that Veeresalingam was socially a progressive but politically a reactionary.\(^{82}\) He was a typical representative of early Indian nationalism. He can be classified as a

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82. In the assessment of Veeresalingam, from the beginning, a controversy arose as to his attitudes towards the Raj. Born in pre-1857 period (he was only nine years old by the year 1857), by the time Veeresalingam grew to manhood, the British rule in India was a fait accompli. By comparing it to the earlier post-Mughal India which witnessed anarchy and lawlessness, he praised the British rule for its achievements in law, administration and security of life and property. As it was the case with other reformers of the 19th century, Veeresalingam too believed that the British rule was a God-given boon ('Divine Dispensation') to the Indians. These ideas of Veeresalingam were expressed in his lecture on "The national Congress and its aims", incorporated in his *Col. Works*, *op. cit.*, Vol.VIII, PP.3-50.

That he was a reactionary in politics was stated by K.Venkaiah, *Deseraya Bhaskala*, *Jatula Samasya*, *Prajasaamika Parishkaram* (Telugu), *Guntur*, n.d.), PP.18-24. Another view point, that he was loyal to the British Government and cultivated good relations with top ranking district officials, for he needed their help in his social reform activities, was expressed by K.Punnaiah, *op. cit.* Also this view was, to some extent, based on the incidents that took place in Rajahmundry in 1907 in the wake of Swadeshi movement. He openly condemned the terrorist activities of people like Khudiram Bose and removed his portrait from the reading room, which was placed there in his absence. The students of the local college, who were once his loyal followers were no longer with him. He was much ridiculed for his attitude. His opposition to this stemmed from two grounds, (1) he was a moderate in politics, and (2) the movement of 1907 was reactionary socially. He described these incidents in detail in his *Sweeya*, P.II, *op. cit.*, PP.307 and 320-24.
moderate among Indian nationalists without their strong and trenchant criticism of British rule. He glorified the benefits of British rule. "The fact that we are meeting and fearlessly discussing political issues today is due to the benevolence of God-given British rule over us in the interests of our country". He was convinced that the elements of civilisation introduced by the British Government like English education, well-knit administration, civil and criminal courts, modern means of communications and other scientific advantages would place British rule as a great benefactor in proper historical perspective.

However, Veeresalingam hastened to add that this would not mean that British rule was perfect and faultless. He compared the relationship between the British Government and the Indian people to that between mother and child. He wanted people to rely upon the British to introduce constitutional reforms to ensure peace, justice and good government. He feared that if the British were to leave India, it would result in lawlessness and disorder.

83. Veeresalingam, Col.Works, Vol.VIII, op.cit., P.9. (Lecture on "The National Congress and its aims"). Also see the article which he published on the same theme in 'Vivekavardhani', reproduced in Ibid., P.III, PP.70-73.

84. Ibid., PP.10-13.

85. The child, according to him (India), was perfectly justified in asking for freedom and the mother (England) would grant all that the child merits. See Ibid., P.16.
He stated, "Because of the British rule there are no civil wars and there is peace and order in our country. If the British were to entrust the whole political power and responsibility of the management of state affairs to Indians even for one year, India would soon (within months) be Balkanized into many warring factions resulting in the infighting between different religions, castes and nationalities. The illiterate majority would brand the educated minority as atheists and evil doers and supress them and revive the dying social evils and traditions. All this would ultimately result in anarchy. Hence in order to avert this catastrophe befalling our nation, let us pray God to ensure the British rule over us for ever". He pleaded for the representation of Indians in the local government institutions and also in the Viceroy's council. He put the blame upon the local government officials - revenue, police and judicial for the ills of the people and pleaded for the reform of these officials to ensure clean administration. From this it is clear

86. Ibid., PP.17-18. It is clear from this that the freedom he wanted was of a limited character within the general framework of the British empire. Even about this, in the early stages, he did not have clear-cut ideas for he did not specify the type of relationship that should subsist between England and India.

87. Ibid., P.35.

88. Veeresalingam, Sweeya, P.I, op.cit., P.80. He saw no use in criticising the laws of the government when their implementation was defective and corrupt at the local level.
that he had no grasp of the nature of British colonial rule in India. 89

Veerasingam, as a typical representative of the educated middle classes (the ideological spokesmen of the rising bourgeoisie of India), evinced great enthusiasm for Swadeshi as early as 1880 and advocated the manufacture of Indian products. 90 He wrote: "Almost all the clothes worn by the rich as well as the poor are manufactured in England. It is much cheaper than the cloth that our weavers produce here. It is manufactured by machines and hence cheaper. Hence everyone has given up buying Swadeshi cloth; they are all buying clothes manufactured in Europe. Crores of rupees that are spent every year in the purchase of foreign cloth are thus flowing out of our country into foreign lands impoverishing further a country which is already poor. If on the other hand, textile mills are

89. K.N. Panikkar described this as "false consciousness" of the 19th century intellectuals. He stated, "A positive vision of the political future, independent of colonial domination, was inherent in the concept of Divine Dispensation... Their inability to grasp the contradiction between British imperialism and the interests of the Indian people led them to believe that this transformation would occur as a part of general bourgeoisification within the existing political framework - a false consciousness created primarily by the influence of the bourgeois - liberal ideologies of the colonial rulers themselves.... Hence their criticism was limited to the administrative lapses..." K.N. Panikkar, op.cit., P.17.

90. He realised, though vaguely, that there was drain of resources from out of India and he desired the profits to accrue to the Indian entrepreneurs. See 'Vivekevardhami', April 1880.
set up in our country, all that money will remain here."\(^91\)

In the lecture on the Congress, he spoke of the rights of the people and how the Congress aimed at striving for these rights.\(^92\) The founders of the Congress hoped that the British would help in securing these rights. Veeresalingam too nurtured such hopes. He stated, "At a time when we were ignorant, not knowing our rights, they taught us how to demand them; they helped us attain maturity. How can such enlightened and kind-hearted people fail to bestow on us those rights when we become qualified for them".\(^93\) It is with such a broad understanding that the Congress functioned in the beginning. During this period no basic demand for self-government, leave aside independence, was advanced by the Congress.\(^94\) Veeresalingam also voiced the same demands of the Congress in its


92. Veeresalingam was one of the delegates elected to attend the third session of the Indian National Congress held at Madras in 1887. However, he attended the Session not as a delegate since he was advised not to do so, as he was a teacher in the Government service. See Veeresalingam, *Sweeva*, P.II, *op.cit.*, P.309.


94. They demanded for a greater degree of Indian representation within the British system of government. Increase in the number of elected representatives in the Viceroy's and Governors' Legislative Councils, competitive examinations for the I.C.S., to be held simultaneously in India, abolition of income-tax on all those earning less than Rs.1000/-, reimposition of the import duty on foreign textiles, establishment of institutions for technical education, abolition of judicial powers given to District Collectors, were some of the main demands of the Congress during this period.
early phase, in the above lecture and in his journal 'Vivekavardhan'. The demands of the early nationalist movement, judging from the present day standards, may appear too humble. It should not however, be assumed from the tone of these declarations that the early Congress leaders were reactionary. On the contrary, they represented, at that time, the most educated and enlightened force in Indian society. So long as the peasantry did not become an organised force, so long as the working class remained a nascent force, the rising industrialist class was the most progressive force in India. They and their ideological spokesmen (the educated middle class) strove hard for social reforms, for enlightenment, education, industrialisation and technical progress. The intelligentsia of those days derived inspiration from the Congress resolutions. And Veeresalingam was no exception.

Veerasingham belonged to that section of the reformers who believed that the social reform should take place along with political reform, if not precede it. In this he was one with the Maharashtrian reformers, Ranade, Bhandarkar, Malabari and others. He held the view that when social evils like ignorance, superstition, caste and sub-caste were prevalent, there was no use in securing political freedom.

95. To give an example, Vivekavardhan contended "That the income-tax does the country a great deal of harm. A person with an income below 150 are (sic) in England exempt from it". Native News, June 1930.

Veerasingam in an article entitled 'Political and Social Reforms' wrote that, "It is very necessary that we should strive to achieve our political rights. To ignore the immediate need of bringing about social reform, we believe, is highly injurious to the welfare of the country. What good can these men do to the people if they are unmoved by the hardships and misery of their own womenfolk? ..... When our people suffer helplessly from countless social evils, what kind of happiness do they derive by achieving their political rights." 97 He stated, in this connection, that like the uniform growth of all limbs in a body, various facets of life in society — social, political, economic and cultural — should be developed without detriment to any one of them. 98 The fierce controversy that raged on this question found its

97. The article was published in Vivekavardhini. See Ibid., P.III, PP.81-83.

98. Veeresalingam, Sweeva, P.I, op.cit., P.80. Mahadev Govind Ranade expressed similar views on this question. He stated, "If your religious ideals are low and grovelling, you cannot succeed in social economic or political spheres. This interdependence is not an accident but is the law of our nature. Like the members of our body, you cannot have strength in the hands and the feet if your internal organs are in disorder; what applies to the human body holds good of the collective humanity we call the society or state". See T.V.Parvate, Mahadev Govind Ranade (a Biography), (Bombay, 1961), P.150.
Delivering the presidential address of the 12th Indian Social Conference at Madras in 1898 Veeresalingam declared, "...I believe the political development of a country must largely depend upon the social condition of the community which supplies the physical, intellectual, moral resources of the people." While realising the need to effect reforms in all fields of a country's life, he argued out his case in favour of social reform, along with political

99. The Carlylean (published from Rajahmundry) in 1908 wrote: "The attainment of Swaraj either within or without the British Empire without social reform is an absolute impossibility. Without genuine union between various castes and classes that inhabit this land, India cannot get Swaraj; and without social reform, there can be no genuine union between them...can we get swaraj without abolishing early marriages...can we reach it without ceasing to be slaves of custom, priest, and superstitions in various spheres of life? That a nationalist who fights shy of social reform and who wants to bring about Swaraj without social reform is not a true patriot in the right sense of the term..." Native News, 1908. Opposing this view the Desabhimani (from Guntur) stated, "So, before reforming society...the people should try for self-government. Unless the Government is in our hands, we cannot enforce the reforms that are conducive to our (social) welfare". Ibid.

By the turn of the century the trend was clearly in favour of political reforms through vigorous political agitation and the same period witnessed the comparative decline of the social reform movement. This was the reason why Veeresalingam was harping on

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101. In his presidential address to the Sixth Madras Provincial Social Conference held at Kakinada in 1902 Veeresalingam stated that improvement should be all-sided – political, social, moral and religious. One-sided reform was not conducive to the healthy growth of a country. "If we demand justice from our superiors in matters relating to the Government of the country, we ought as well to do justice to our inferiors in social matters.... How can we with consistency, be liberal in politics and conservative in social matters"? Indian Social Reformer (first published from Madras and then shifted to Bombay), Vol.XII, No.43 (1901-1902).
this theme repeatedly. 102

Veerasingam was acquiring new ideas and developing his outlook on social problems from time to time. The growth of his ideas was a continuous process. He went on drawing

102. Certain significant local problems also, perhaps, influenced his thought. It should be noted that Nyapati Subba Rao Pantulu who was a close associate of Veerasingam in his reform activities broke away from him and established a 'Hindu Samaj' and collaborated with the activities of the theosophical society of Annie Besant who visited Rajahmundry to deliver lectures on 'Theosophy' at the invitation of the 'Hindu Samaj'. See Satyasamvardhan, November-December 1893. Col. Olcott accompanied her to Rajahmundry on December 15, 1893. Nyapati Subba Rao broke away from Veerasingam because his brother, under the influence of Veerasingam, married a widow. This was one of the widow marriages, performed by Veerasingam to which Nyapati Subba Rao did not give his approval. See Veerasingam, Sweeya, P. II, op. cit., pp. 114-16. In this connection it may be noted that 'In the 1880's and 1890's social reformers in Bengal were increasingly swamped by the flood-tide of Hindu revivalism, which was later to link up with the reaction against Moderate political 'mendicancy' to constitute the characteristic Extremist mood'. See Sumit Sarkar, op. cit., pp. 26-29. More or less the same situation prevailed in Andhra too. 1890's witnessed, as stated above, the surge of revivalism closely followed in the first decade of the present century by Extremism which joined hands with it. For an account of extremist political agitation in Andhra see M. Venkataramaiah, ed. Freedom Struggle in Andhra Pradesh (Andhra), Vol. II, (1900-1920 A.D.), (Hyderabad, 1969), and in particular the situation in Rajahmundry, pp. 52-53. Also see for the situation prevailing in Rajahmundry, Veerasingam Sweeya, P. II, op. cit., pp. 308-09, and 321-22. For particulars of Debi Chandra Pal's visit to Andhra, see New India (Calcutta), April 20, 23, 27 and May 4, 1907.
new experiences from the work he undertook and linked it up with his reform activity. When he set to work in 1874 he was very young, only 26 years old. Nevertheless he had a will and individuality which were unyielding to pressures and influences. He stated in his autobiography, "Wherever there appears to be wrong it is not in my nature to suffer it in silence. I do not have peace of mind, until I find a remedy for the wrong."\textsuperscript{103}

This gives us an idea of the keynote of his personality. He was highly intolerant of social wrong and hated it. He further stated, "I can bear any amount of pain when it affects me but when others are subjected to it for no fault of theirs I cannot put up with it."\textsuperscript{104}

Another important characteristic of Veeresalingam's personality was his strong moral sense and love of justice. He declared, "I believed from the beginning that morality was essential for religion, that an immoral man could not be a real devotee of God and that in order to find favour in His Eyes, we should be pure

\textsuperscript{103} Veeresalingam, \textit{Sreeya}, P.I, \textit{op.cit.}, P.49.

\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Ibid.}, P.50. His contemporaries vouchsafed to this in their writings on Veeresalingam. See for example, R. Venkatasivudu, \textit{Sam享受riti}, \textit{op.cit.}, PP.iii and 130-32.
of heart and of good character”. 105

The most prominent trait in his character was his indomitable courage and steadfastness of purpose. "I am not disposed even as a boy to give up an undertaking or let slip my purpose, when once I enter upon it," he wrote in his autobiography.

Veeresalingam was not content to remain a mere preacher of dreamer. He had a philosophy of action and a programme of work. "I have myself always endeavoured in my own humble way to work on the plan which makes action follow as closely as possible upon the heels of

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105. Veeresalingam, Sweya, P.I, op.cit., P.56. Also see Veeresalingam, Col.Works, Vol.VIII, op.cit., P.157, where he expressed the same feelings in a lecture on 'Mushchadharmamu', delivered in 1892 at Rajahmundry. Veeresalingam condemned idolatry and pleaded for monotheism. He was a thief by faith. His religious ideas are discussed in Chapter VI.

106. Veeresalingam, Sweya, P.I, op.cit., P.60. Instances are many in his life (which he narrated in his Autobiography while discussing his crusade against local corrupt officialdom) where he did not flinch even an inch from his duty. To illustrate this point an incident from his boyhood may be cited. Dissatisfied with the inefficiency of his headmaster as an English teacher and also hurt by his harsh treatment of the boys, Veeresalingam, then a twelve year old boy, got up a memorial against him for a transfer and organised an effective strike. The headmaster was transferred and a more efficient man was posted. For a detailed account of the incident, see Ibid., Pp.52-53. The opinion of N.G. Chandavarker, a contemporary and social reformer from Bombay, about Veeresalingam may in this context be mentioned: "Take a man who has the courage of his conviction, a man like Mr. Veeresalingam Pantulu (sic)... who is in every inch of him a man of spotless character, bold, humble, meek but at the same time resolute". See L.V. Kaikini, ed. The Speeches and Writings of Sir N.G. Chandavarker (Bombay, 1911) P.587.
conviction. I may therefore be pardoned for the observation that discussions and resolutions do not by any means exhaust the real work of social or any kind of reform...." 107

With regard to the work to be done in transforming public life in Andhra, he expressed his views in one of his lectures wherein he discussed the qualities and requirements of a practical worker. "Every person of right thought thinks of leading others to right conduct; but there are only very few who can really do so.... We see many people who always imagine that they could improve the world only when they reach a certain position or acquire wealth and pass away miserably doing nothing for the world. Wealth and position are not got easily without our yielding to many undesirable acts. He who relies on truth.... should be prepared to set aside considerations of father, mother, friends and relatives.... Unless a man better himself first, he cannot better others. And to better himself he must leave the service of the old damd custom and worship truth.... all other means for sustained action like courage, steadfastness and patience are got in a moment. These are thousand times more efficient weapons than the old S-straas, Astraas.... Even though your efforts may fail in the beginning, do not get dispirited. Show

to the world the usefulness of your attempts without giving them up, by publishing books, by delivering lectures and by showing it in your deeds". 108 This attitude of Veeresalingam helped him much in carrying on his work. As he once said, "It is confidence in my character that has made men rely on my word throughout my life.... Even my bitterest opponents in social reform had confidence in my character and trusted my word fully". 109

With all his great qualities, Veeresalingam possessed certain personal traits which were acting as obstacles to the progress of the movements he initiated. He became more irritable and short tempered with time as he had to lead a solitary life fighting against his 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. His was a strong willed personality with a tenacity of purpose. These qualities marked him out from others of lesser abilities who found it rather difficult and irksome to work in association with him. 110

109. Ibid., P. 47.
110. See for a candid expression of views on this aspect by one of his followers and co-workers, R. Venkatasivudu, Samsārīti, op. cit., P. 28.