Chapter-3

Dalit Awakening under the Nizam Rule

This chapter includes a broad study of the emergence of dalit consciousness in the Hyderabad state during the Nizam’s rule. It engages with the attempts to construct an autonomous Dalit identity outside of the traditional hierarchies of Hinduism through production of what came to be known as the Adi-Hindu (or aboriginal) identity. The study then looks at the specific modes and methodologies of the production of such an identity and the contexts of oppression which necessitated the rise and assertion of an autonomous dalit consciousness. An important part of this chapter is to understand that the dalit subaltern subjectivity produced as a part of the dalit movements of the time were necessarily modern subjectivities in the way they attempted to break away from existing practices of domination, and this was necessarily made possible through modern institutions of education and employment. We then look at the various debates on the development of education and the limitations imposed on it during this time, and how education was strongly placed at the core of the movement for an autonomous dalit consciousness. This chapter also deals with a few of the Dalit social reformers and their works and the political differences between them, and how they navigated the landscape of the regional Dalit movements of the Hyderabad state during the time. We see that largely, “there were two stages in the movement. The radical assertion of autonomy and the non-Hindu identity forced them to form their own organizations. From 1900-1930 they fought against the social oppression and economic exploitation…” This chapter then begins with the history of this ‘radical assertion of autonomy’, that of the construction of the Adi-Hindu identity.25

3.0 Adi-Hindu: The Construction of an Identity

The massive mobilization against ascribed practices of humiliation and discrimination was initiated by educated Dalit intellectuals and ideologies. The idea of caste-centric mobilization acquired prominence especially in the making of a cultural identity that produced itself as an aboriginal or the original inhabitant of the land. As part of constructing a democratic cultural Dalit identity, inspiration was drawn from Bhakti (liberation) movements, rich knowledge one’s cultural roots was produced and disseminated and this then became a prominent expression against the larger practices of social inequality.

Simon Chareley (2002: 5239) asserted that from the early 1920s Adi ideas and distinctions began filtering in from Madras. This then implied that separate linguistic aboriginal identities demanded policies of inclusivity that would require a broader creativity which could embrace a vast diversity. The term ‘Adi – Hindu’ as a common designation, offered the possibility of achieving this. This term as we Jangam finds was meant to replace the derogatory names that were imposed on the untouchables by Hindu upper castes. It meant “original pre-Aryan Hindus”. At the All-India Adi-Hindu Conference, held in Hyderabad on March 29-31, 1922, a set of agendas and duties were drawn for Adi-Hindus to follow:

(2) Adi-Hindus’ duty would be to give education to their children and take full advantage of the facilities given to them by the British government and by their native states. (3) The states and the British government should open primary schools for Adi-Hindu children, and penalties should be imposed on authorities at other private and middle and high schools if Adi-Hindu students were not admitted to these institutions. (4) Marriages at
very early age should be prevented; brides should not be younger than fourteen, and grooms should not be younger than nineteen. (5) The dedication of girls to deities as devadasis, also known as jogins, murlis, and other names in different parts of India, should be declared immoral and the custom abolished. (6) In marriages and other auspicious functions, liquor and meat (non-vegetarian food) should not be served, and extravagant expenditures should be avoided. (7) Adi-Hindu Jangams and Acharyas should work for the moral uplift of the adi-Hindus and dissuade them from superstitious beliefs.26

What the above manifesto largely implies is that there was an effort to invest in an autonomous identity, which not necessarily made a radical break from existing structures of Hinduism. These efforts were largely part of mobilizing and organizing towards the making of an identity. As Washbrook (1975:176) critically analyses, to succeed in making a vibrant socio-cultural identity, groups need to develop broader patterns of social linkages which are able to educate and be educated and to acquire patronage for and disseminate knowledge about their own cultural roots. A part of the process of obtaining the required patronage and support was by appealing back to caste myths and identities and by trying to strengthen their ritual connection with their community. Thus, the whole idea behind mobilization of the Non-Brahmins around their caste identities was to be able to transform themselves into pressure groups and thereby “win from the government educational concessions, public appointment and nomination to local boards and legislatures.” (Cited in Sambaiah, G, 2013: 24)

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The significant fact among all the various groupswas the cultural assertion which drove the mobility. Omvedt (1994: 117-118) points out that “Dalits in Telugu land mobilized on the Adi-Hindu ideological grounds by asserting the so called Panchamas (Untouchables) as the original sons of the soil and rulers of the country”. Indeed by tracing their origin to the pre – Aryan epoch enabled them to claim that once upon a time in this country’s history, Dalit ancestors held a great position. There were great devotees, wise men, writers, rulers, chivalrous men and chaste virtuous women who were born to such communities. (Cited in Sambaiah. G, 2013: 27).

Adi-Hindus were to be called by region specific terminology such as “Adi-Andhra”, “Adi-Dravida”, “Adi-Karnataka” and “Adi-Maharashtra”. As a result of large-scale mobilizations, we see significant change in the numbers of groups who reported to the census under conventional governmental categories such as Mala and Madiga. On comparing the 1921 and 1931 census data we find that 14, 93, 000 Malas of the 1921 census had reduced to 1,39,000 in the 1931 census, while 7,37,000 Madigas in 1921 were reduced to 6,12,000 in 1931. This largely corresponds to the fact that more than 6,65,000 Malas and Madigas assumed the new identity and wanted to be known as Adi-Andhra. This reflected that the Adi-Andhra ideology which emerged in coastal Andhra with the impact of Christian conversion and the non-Brahmin movement was able to influence the Dalit leadership and help effect this change of identity. In fact, the Government of Madras notified in G. O. No. 617 dated 25th March, 1922, “to delete from the Government records the ignoble terms hitherto used to designate the members of our community and to adopt ‘Adi-Dravida’ in Tamil and ‘Adi-Andhra’ in Telugu districts. After the publication of this notification some educated people in Hyderabad began to use the dignified term ‘Adi-Hindus common to ‘Adi-Dravidas’ ‘Adi-Andhras’ ‘Adi-
Karnatakas’ and ‘Adi-Maharastras’ of all the castes and sub-castes of the Depressed Classes."  

Rarely, is the political tension around the minorities issue discussed in terms of conversion. ‘Adi’ politics must in fact be seen as a means to both resist covert forms of conversion from Hinduism as well as a way to identify one-self as autonomous from Hinduism. One may even argue that ‘Adi’-politics was a strategic means to break away from Hinduism, without having to undertake a substantial radical break. The above-mentioned agendas of the Adi-Hindu Mahasabha in fact show that Adi-politics had a lot to do with reformist ideas, placing much of the onus of transformation on the ‘Adi-Hindu’, although a strong critique of the oppressive structures and practices of Hinduism is definitely part of the premise.

The current research therefore tries to foreground the Dalit political activity and the social transformation that took place through the ‘Adi’ identity and points to the committed and sustained leadership that the movement inspired. Many Dalitintellectuals emerged during the colonial period in the Nizam’s Domain. The best known among them and are more specifically those whose works help us conceptualize the question of conversion. They are, Bhagya Reddy Varma, B. S. VenkatRao and Shyamsunder. Bhagya Reddy Varma stands out as one whose sustained political and social activity for the upliftment of Adi-Dravida communities shaped the Dalit movement and continues to influence it even after his death. As we shall find, the critique of Hinduism and the options of conversion were alive in their work as well in their personal lives. It is also important to note that Bhagya Reddy Varma’s work for the emancipation of the Dalit’s took place much earlier than that of Ambedkar. It seems that contemporary Dalit movements have

also unconsciously or consciously undervalued the salient social movements that emerged at the local level by centralizing Dr. B. R. Ambedkar as the only icon for the modern Dalit politics. To say this is not at all to devalue Ambedkar’s importance in the emergence of the Dalit consciousness. On the contrary, it shows that he was drawing on a political context of others’ work that had been done on such questions.

3.1 Contextualizing the autonomous Dalit activism in Hyderabad state.

The caste Hindus’ traditional leadership, their unethical practices of power relations, and even the progressive forces of the Andhra MahaSabha (1928) failed to problematize the question of caste oppression and that of Dalit subaltern autonomy (Krishna Madiga; ThalliTelangana, (2003:02); Surender: Telangana declarations (2014:37).

BhangyaBhukya’s (2014:04) critical framework attempts to understand the caste question in the Telangana region. He argues that caste in India was not simply produced by Hindu religious texts but also shaped by ecologies, languages, religion modes of production and political system.

Telangana as a region is significantly distinguished because of a vibrant history of social movements and diverse cultural harmony. Both social and religious movements have witnessed reformist traditions. The popular notion, as widely observed by scholars in this case, caste in Telangana is different from other regions in India as it is conditioned by the particular socio-economic and political practices of the region. In many ways, scholars then have suggested that the politics of caste in any region must be studied through given

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“…caste-based identity politics in colonial India was full of contradictions, as it was often intertwined through the language of regional sub-nationalism and religious nationalism, or sometimes through nationalism itself. This is largely because of the dynamics of regional caste politics. Each region in India is dominated by one or two particular castes, not necessarily a Barhman caste, and the subaltern castes adopt different strategies to deal with them.” (2014: 2)

The Telangana region along its socio-economic nature and characteristics are utterly characterized by the feudal practices which involve ruthless exploitation of masses through caste relations. Bhukya’s (2014:04) framework outlines the nature of exploitation of subordinate castes that occurs through social relations rather than through economic relations. One is exploited and made poor and subordinated perpetually because of low status of his/her caste. The social and economic life of the marginalized communities had taken a tragic shape under the Reddy, Velama feudal system during the medieval period and the same apparatus has rigorously been continuing down into the twenty first century (Bhukya, 2014:05). To an extent, as Bhukya suggests, Dalits of Telangana were the worst victims of the practices such as Vetti (Bonded labour), Bhagela, Jeetham and Jogini cultural practices maintained and imposed reluctantly on the Dalits which systematically graded them culturally to a sub human position.

The Nizam ruled Hyderabad state was the largest princely state in the Indian sub-continent. It consisted of nine Telugu speaking Telangana districts (Adilabad, Hyderabad, Karimnagar, Khammam, Nalgonda, Warangal, Meboobnagar, Medak and Nizambad),
five of Marathwada (Bidar, Aurangabad, Parbhani, Nanded and Osmanabad), and three Kannada speaking districts (Gulbarga, Bidar and Bijapur).

Despite its territorial vastness, the Hyderabad state was economically one of the most backward regions in the sub-continent and until after the first world war, the Telangana region had witnessed little development either of the commercial, agricultural or of the industrial nature (Omvedt, 1994: 119) (Cited in Sam. G, 2014: 02). Eventually the political backwardness of the Nizam state was also certainly because of its political structure and relations with its subjects. As it is pointed out by Karli (2002:06) that the Nizam state’s support base was constituted by ‘a class of landed gentry’, consisting of Muslims in the form of Jagirdars and caste-Hindus such as Deshmukhs and Deshpandes who largely hailed from the Reddy, Velamas and Brahmin communities. Indeed, this class of landed gentry inflicted untold sufferings upon the rural population (mainly Dalits), such as illegal eviction of farmers from their fields and extraction of free goods and labour, which was significantly known as Vetti.

Indeed such feudal rule was repressive for all the subjects. As Omvedt (1994:120) argues, Dalits were caught between traditional caste and feudal forms of subordination and therefore had little opportunity to move into freer forms of industrial or agricultural wage labour. Sam. G, (2013:02) further argues that it was against this caste and class based subordination that the Dalits particularly in Hyderabad and Secunderabad launched a small but vigorous movement for social equality and political representation by adopting the Adi-Hindu identity since the end of the 19th century and the dawn of the 20th century (Sam. G, 2013:02).

It is a highly observed fact that the colonial rule in India brought minimum amenities for Dalits which the Indian traditional/caste society denied Dalits for centuries.
ChinnaiahJangam\textsuperscript{29} (2008:02) critically presents that during colonial rule untouchables and other historically oppressed sections of Indian society gained access to modern institutions and ideas such as secular education through the initiatives of the government and the work of Christian missionaries. He further argues that this was indeed an important breakthrough in the history of these marginalized communities, since through these institutions they articulated the language of rights and the means of mobilization against oppression, inequality and exploitation.

3.2 The Question of Education and the Difficulties in its Dissemination

Indian society continues to rely on unquestioned graded inequality unquestioned, ascribed by religion (largely Hinduism). As a result of such socially entrenched hierarchies, a range of autonomous castes and communities were historically neglected and subordinated by the dominant caste Hindus. V.T. Rajashekar\textsuperscript{30} (1978:02) has argued that there were persisting conflicts between castes and communities in Telangana. The dominant caste Hindus further imposed a series of restrictions and humiliating practices on the subordinated castes to ensure continued subordination (Cited in Bhukya, 2011:04). He further argues that the imposed subalternity, at the same time, became the basis for an emergent consciousness of the self, that of identity and a sense of self-respect. The intersecting forces of modern education, the necessary demands and functions of modern bureaucracy and that of census enumeration enabled the formation of a new consciousness among the dalit subalternity. In the popular imagination, the rule of the Nizam’s in the region of Telangana has been largely equated with medieval or pre-modern or feudal political and social sensibilities. In fact entire studies have been dedicated to the “educational deprivation” of children in the Telangana region of Nizam’s Hyderabad state.

\textsuperscript{29} A conference paper presented at The Dalit Studies Conference, 2008, University of California: Center for the advanced study of India.

\textsuperscript{30} A prominent Dalit writer and activist and chief editor of Dalit voice, Bangalore.
In a study conducted by MotkuriVenkatanarayana\textsuperscript{31}, titled “Historical Factors in the Process of Educational Deprivation of Children: The Case of Telangana Region of Nizam’s Hyderabad State”, it has been argued that in spite of “being the most privileged princely state and having relatively more freedom than that of other princely states, the state had stood backward in all respects including education. Fellow princely states Travancore, Baroda, Mysore were far better especially in social outcomes like education (2005: 2). The study has put together data that points to the morbidly low literacy rates in the state, where only 3\% of the population was literate in the year 1901, and by 1951 this percentage had increased to only 9.2 \%. Venkatanarayana also drew data from the Census to conclude that within such low literacy rates, only specific communities appeared to have benefitted from the existing education policy. In addition to the fact that female literacy rates were lower than male literacy rates, “among the major religious groups the literacy rate was higher in Christians community followed by the Muslim. Literacy rate was lowest in the Hindu community and among them, the literacy rate varied with class-hierarchy where upper castes like Brahmans had the highest literacy rate and in the lower castes particularly SC community, the literacy levels were insignificant and negligible.” (2005: 4) The study makes a broad, yet important analysis of the changes in the educational policies brought about by the state of Hyderabad through the period of the 1850s to after independence of the Indian state, and the kind of impact it had on the existing literacy rates. Prior to the 1850s education in the form of private tuitions was accessible and affordable only to the rich and the upper class. Later, however education began to be institutionalised for public access with the establishment of the Dar-ul-Uloom (centre for oriental learning and culture). With increasing number of schools and

government funds invested in them, the notions and practices of public education became a matter of social importance in the popular imagination. Till the early 1920s, the Nizam state was invested in the rapid expansion of primary schools, following which it turned its focus to the efficient administration and dissemination of education in these institutions. During the 1920s and the 30s, we then see a rapid oscillation in the student intake, an oscillation that was directly related to the alternating policies of expansion and efficiency in the policies related to primary schools. Prior to the institutionalization of state-endorsed education, the missionaries had largely taken up the responsibility of promoting education, especially that of high school, and towards producing subjects for state service. It is important to understand that the education was not homogeneously disseminated across the state of Nizam during the given period. The introduction of state-endorsed education, both in the Telugu language as well as in Urdu, was a complex procedure that encountered limitations of diverse measures and kinds. In the non-diwani areas (where the government had no direct intervention in terms of public welfare activities), as of 1949, “…98 per cent of the non-diwani villages remained without primary schools.” (Bhukya, 2011: 11). Such ‘discrepancy’ in the distribution of education across the Nizam state largely had to do with the nature of interactions and linkages between the government and the jagirdars, feudal formations who had immense determining powers over the decisions and the policies undertaken by the former. The jagirdars had significant stakes in preventing the common people of the lands under their control from availing education. In many ways, this indicates on the one hand how education is a part of the empowering force of colonial modernity and the crisis it invokes in the pre-existing feudal processes and structures. It had the power to destabilize prior hegemonies and introduce in the masses a new kind of consciousness and subjectivity. Moreover, other kinds of infrastructural limitations such as
the lack of transport and communication facilities made it difficult for the masses to access opportunities of education.

Although Venkatanarayana’s work makes perfunctory references to social conditions, it does not necessarily identify the existing social hierarchies that are determined by caste. He in fact argues that “poverty, low income levels, low standard of living, socio-economic inequalities were constraints of educational development. (Motkuri,2005: 12)” He talks about instances of famine, draughts, and diseases that affected economic and therefore educational development, but he almost entirely ignores the question of caste, and how it relates to issues of infrastructural limitations and privileges, of natural disasters and health concerns and that of access to economic and social capital and resources. Venkatanarayana identifies three inter-locking realms as the bases for the ‘underdevelopment of education’, namely social conditions, the economy and prevalent conditions of labour. Such a broad categorization is useful to identify specific socio-economic issues such as the pre-dominance of child marriages, obstinate superstitions related to modern education, the ways in which occasions of natural disasters such as famines and droughts exacerbated the oppressive nature of feudal relationships between land-holders and bonded labourers, the impossibility of lower caste groups to have an independent socio-economic existence, prevalence of child labour and enforced practices of prostitution (especially on lower caste women). However, such categorization fails to understand that these issues do not necessarily constitute the socio-economic bases of the lack of educational development during the given period in the Telangana region, but should in fact be seen in conjunction with each other, and how they relate to a more central question of caste-based hierarchy and oppression. One of the biggest shortcomings of the article is its failure to think of education as an integral project of modernisation. Without such an understanding, it would be difficult to understand the place and value of
education in the mobilization of an autonomous dalit consciousness in the Telangana region.

3.3 The Role of Education in the Emergent Dalit Consciousness in the Telangana Region

Bhangya Bhukya in his work, “Being Dalit, Being Modern: Caste and Culture in Hyderabad State”\textsuperscript{32} has argued that “Modernity and identity politics are …integral or interdependent despite the contentious relation between them. Identity politics is not simply self-assertion against the grand homogenisation of modern nation and state that reinforced Hinduism in a newer way, but also an attempt to carve out a place within it.” (2014: 1) His work is significant in the way it identifies the Dalit subject as a vehicle of modernity, and unlike Venkatanarayana is incisive in how it is able to evaluate the role of education in the emergence of the autonomous Dalit consciousness as one that is radically modern. For Bhukya then, the possibilities produced by the anonymity of urban spaces, the opportunities of employment in modern institutions such as the railways and mass education became spaces for dalits to emerge as autonomous subjects who could act and think on their own terms. The struggle then for dalits was not only to introduce reforms within their communities according to the norms and practices endorsed by colonial modernity but also to be able to assert an independent and new identity. The Dalit movements of the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century in the Hyderabad state must also then be seen as the first of their kind, in terms of the egalitarian and democratic values that drove them and endorsed. (Bhukya, 2014: 3). Bhukya then draws a clear trajectory between institutions, practices and the value-systems of colonial modernity and the emergent dalit movements of the time in the Hyderabad state. His work is an in-depth study of the ways in which

education was an important nodal point in the war waged against traditional forms of socio-economic hierarchies produced by the logic of caste. Modern education emerged as a strong destabilizing force in existing social hierarchies and the practices through which they were reinforced such as the vetti and jeethagadu or bhagelasystems, the jogini practices and the manifest occupation of land by dominant upper caste groups such as the Reddys and Velamas.

In this thesis we closely engage with the social welfare interventions taken by the Hyderabad State. Part of these interventions was an indigenous education system that would combine both the values of colonial modernity (through English language) and that of Daccani (through urdu) (2014). During this time the primary medium of instruction was Urdu. The last Nizam also ensured that important science and technology books would be translated in to Urdu, thus making available to the Urdu-proficient students more ‘cosmopolitan’ or modern forms of knowledge (2014: 8). There was a rise in the number of schools and educational facilities and opportunities across the districts of the Telangana region, and although in the beginning it was accessible largely to the dominant castes and the rich, later special schools were instituted by the last Nizam for purposes of education of women, tribal and the depressed castes.

There are significant contradictions of stand-point in the ways in which Venkatanarayana and Bhukya have studied the dissemination of education in the Nizam’s state. While Venkatanarayana’s focus has largely been on the limitations on the dissemination of education in the Nizam state, and in many ways also places the onus of educational underdevelopment on the people’s ‘reluctance’ or ‘backwardness’ in exposing themselves to the benefits of modern education, Bhukya’s work, on the contrary, produces the Dalit subaltern as an agent of modernity, in a persistent pursuit to access modern education as a means to sever ties from pre-existing relationships of domination, and
making strategic negotiations with the Nizam to find a more empowered space within modern socio-economic structures. Venkatanarayana’s work, in many ways, is therefore a work of limitations, while Bhukya’s is of possibilities. Therefore, while the former persistently complains about the educational underdevelopment in the Nizam’s state, the latter’s work points to the ways in which education was made accessible to tribal and depressed groups, and the kinds of possibilities they introduced. He finds,

Education was generally provided free of cost till primary level to all. However, for tribal and depressed communities it was provided free of cost from primary to university level. Besides this they were also provided with facility and scholarship in order to encourage them in education. The depressed caste students were also awarded scholarship to study abroad. (2014: 9)

His work also studies the crisis created between dominant caste Hindus and Muslims (who considered themselves local beneficiaries) on the one hand, and non-dominant caste groups. Since non-\textit{mulkis} (or non-localites) occupied 47\% of the posts involved in decision-making in the civil services, it led to the consolidation of groups that identified themselves as \textit{mulkis} or localites. Another set of political resentment began growing with attempts to introduce Urdu-medium classes in the Osmania University, which led to the consolidation of the Arya Samaj on the one hand who felt the interests of the dominant caste Hindus were being compromised to benefit the Muslims, and the Ittehad-ul-Musulmin or the Razakars on the other hand to support the interests of the local Muslims.

We then see how in the Hyderabad state, education emerged as a site of contestation between different groups. Although the focus of the works of Venkatanarayana and Bhukya are diversely oriented in the ways they have studied the
question of education and its motivations in the Hyderabad state in the early 20th century, we learn a lot about the different kinds of stakes that various groups had in the policies and practices of education, and about the politics and materialities of the limitations imposed on the realm of education.

In the following section we will study the ways in which educated Dalit leaders and Dalit intellectuals began mobilizing around a newly emergent and autonomous Dalit subaltern consciousness.

3.4 Social Reform and Political Movements: Bhagya Reddy and the Others

In this section, we will look at the lives and work of Dalit public intellectuals and activists who took up leadership in the initial years of the 20th century in the Nizam’s state. Their work as we shall see was not only different from the political trajectory established by the Dr. Ambedkar, who is now known across the world, but also in many ways informed his work. Chinna Rao argues that,

The later phase of the colonial rule witnessed the emergence of a new force in the Nizams dominion. The increasing evidence of the growing consciousness of the outcaste groups, culminated in to proliferation of organizations throughout the region. Emergence of conscious assertive as well as politically active neo class of outcastes was one of the Fundamental developments of the period. Since the beginning of the twentieth-century numerous social organizations provided a source of direction channelizing the discontent and outburst of the outcastes.

(Chinna Rao, 2010: 72)
In 1911, we find the first documentations of the activities of the Dalit public intellectual, social reformer and activist Bhagya Reddy, when he founded the *ManyaSangham*, an organization dedicated to the mobilization of outcastes and untouchables under the emergent identity of ‘Adi-Hindus’. The organization worked towards the removal of social evils among Dalits, such as “intemperance, sacrificing animals or fowls at the altar of temples and child marriage.” (Chinna Rao, 2010: 73). Bhagya Reddy was born to the prominent untouchable community of Malas. His life, in many ways, embodies the centrality that modern education and occupations have had in the social and political mobility of erstwhile untouchable groups. In 1912 Varma organised the Swasti Dal towards the prevention of cruelty against animals, thereby taking up a wide range of issues. Varma was even able to influence the Nizam to ban the sacrifice of goats on the occasion of Eid. In 1922 ManyaSangham was renamed the Adi Hindu Social Service League, a decisive step in the institutionalization of Adi-politics in the region. A major contention of the Adi-politics was that “judged by the history; philosophy and civilization of the adi-Dravidians, the real aborigines of the decade, the depressed classes are, as a community, entirely separate and distinct from the followers of Vedic religion called Hinduism.” Another organization i.e. the Adi-Dravida Educational League argued that “Hinduism is not the ancestral religion of the aborigines of Hindustan; the non-Vedic communities of India object to being called ‘Hindu’ because of their inherited abhorrence of the doctrines of the movements and like scriptures, who have distinguished themselves from Caste-Hindus for centuries past.” (Chinna Rao, 2010: 77-78).

Many organizations that were part of the Adi-Hindu movement in the 1920s and 1930s put up conferences in the Hyderabad state. These conferences largely focussed on the urban demography. This was a modality that was different from the mobilizations that were taking place in the more rural bases of the coastal Andhra region. In 1925,
BhagyaReddy organized a handicrafts’ exhibition that were meant to uphold to the public the art and artisanal skills of the Adi-Hindus.

Bhagya Reddy’s politics and mobilizational methods have often been debated upon because of his insistence on building coalitions with caste Hindu reformers and philanthropists such as Justice Rai C Balamukund, Pandit Kesava Rao, Seth Lalji Meghji Jain and Narayan Govind Wellinker. Chinnaiah Jangam points out that Reddy’s involvement with caste Hindu reformist organizations proved crucial for his organizational activities among untouchables. It helped him to emerge as a public intellectual and activist in Hyderabad civil society. He offered important positions to Hindu reformers who had supported his activities financially or politically… (His) grand plan of including every prominent person in Hyderabad may seem ambitious for an organization representing untouchables, but by involving a cross-section of society, Bhagya Reddy wanted to combine the cause of untouchables with general social and religious concerns. Most importantly, it helped him generate needed financial resources for his activities.

(Jangam, 2016:110)

Chinnaiah Jangam’s work shows that on the one hand, Reddy built strategic alliances with prominent members of upper caste groups, and on the other hand explored complex and rich avenues (social reform, education, arts and cultural practices, academia and popular journalism) of asserting and articulating the emergent adi-hindu identity.

Another contemporary and rival of Bhagya Reddy was Arigay Ramaswamy, who started the organization Suneethi Bala Samajamu (it was later renamed as the
Bhoomananda Swami Gurumandali) in the year 1912. The organization was primarily focussed on the eradication of alcoholism and the Devadasi system, prevalent among the untouchable communities. Arigay took to street conferences, -inter-personal advocating and public speeches to disseminate his reformist ideology. One of his most significant and in many ways, radical social intervention was his insistence on inter-caste marriages. His organization took up all expenses of inter-caste marriages.

Although Arigay And Bhagya were educated in and largely subscribed to the Gandhian reformist framework, at crucial points they had radical political differences with each other. While on the one hand, Arigay was invested in the eradication of sub-caste differences within the untouchable communities, Bhagya Reddy endorsed a more regressive position often insisting against the inter-mingling of Mala and Madiga sub-castes, whether through inter-dining or through inter-marriage. (Cited in C. Jangam, 2016: 121)

M.L. Audiah was a social reformer, who was greatly influenced by Bhagya Reddy. He started a branch of the ManyaSangham in Secunderabad in 1912. Audiah’s life was also largely determined by the quest for education. According to Swapna H. Samel, “Audiah was an educationist. He realized the fact that the education is the real essence of life and one can come up in the life not with the donations or small mercies done by others but only with the help of education.” In 1906, Audiah started a primary school towards the education of the depressed classes. Later, with the help of caste Hindu reformists such as Rev. B. Paul, Rao Bahadur and C.V. Pudmarao he was able to start a middle school by the name of Sir William Burton School. The beginnings of this school are also the history of the negotiations that Audiah undertook with the local government to acquire land and grants. SangabhiwrudhiSamajamu was another organization started by Audiah. This

organization maybe considered a religio-cultural front that conducted bhajans and marriages on a weekly basis. (Cited in Samel, 2004: 91-92)

B. Shamsunder Rao was an important Dalit activist, who made strong articulations about the historical atrocities of the Hindus and the legitimate rights of the Depressed Classes. Shamsunder was a significant nodal point in the attempts to consolidate and legitimise a Dalit-Muslim alliance. Bhukya (2014:23) argues that although many new associations began mushrooming after the introduction of constitutional reform, which opened door for modern politics in the state under the suzerainty of the Nizam, the Depressed Class Association and the Scheduled Caste Federation emerged as the dominant Dalit organization in the state. The Dalit–Muslim axis was a novel development in the Hyderabad politics. He further focuses that although it was apparent in other parts of India, it was a fundamental character of the Hyderabad Dalit movement. Shyamsunder was the architect of this alliance and he felt that this had tremendous potentialities. His understanding was based on deep sociological research into the problems of both Muslim and Dalit communities. Indeed, the Nizam also recognized the importance of the Dalit communities’ unconditional support to his government particularly during the transfer of power. Venkataswamy P.R. asserts this historical account of unity praxis at one massive gathering at silver jubilee celebration of Nizam rule. The essence of the message follows as,

In my view there is none who should be regarded as low, nor do I recognize any community to be high or low, much less untouchables as long as they are good. I consider them as equal in as much as they are human beings. Being educationally backward and economically poor, they deserve greater consideration at the hands of my government, especially in view of the fact that they form bulk of the people in my state. I am sure then this section of
my people will take its proper place in the comity of communities.

Excerpted from P. R. VenkatSwamy (1958) and Cited in Bhangya: 2014: (21-22)

In 1943, Shamsunder was nominated by the Nizam to the educational statutory board. After independence, he was also elected to the Legislative Assembly of Mysore.

BS VenkatRao, popularly known as ‘Hyderabad Ambedkar’ was also a pioneer in Dalit autonomous activism in Hyderabad state. It is noted that the Nizam distributed government lands and waste lands to the Dalits on BS VenkatRao’s recommendation. A one crore trust fund for the education of the depressed classes was established on the basis of BS VenkatRao’s consistent lobbying. In addition, BS VenkatRao held a prominent role in the resolution of communal polarization by mediating groups for peace and communal harmony. Simon Charsley (2002:5242) draws the relation of Dalits and Muslim unity praxis and observes that ‘in general, however, it was the Muslim government which became increasingly prominent as the main source of material support. Forcing educational and other benefits for the depressed classes onto public agendas and gaining seats in representative bodies replaced both reform and social service as the goals of the Dalit movement.

JH Subbiah was a close associate of BS Venkat Rao and later Dr. Ambedkar. He was the secretary of the Depressed Classes Association for many years. Following ideological differences with Venkat Rao, Subbiah joined Ramaswami and together they founded the Hyderabad State Scheduled Caste Federation. (Cited in Samel, 2004: 94-95)
Conclusion

During the 1920s and 1930s, the growing radicalism in Hyderabad has largely been characterized as communal polarization and the increasing dominance of the Communists. All movements, especially those asserting and articulating Dalit subalternity and autonomy, were overshadowed by the Telangana peasant movement and Hindu-Muslim crisis (which was largely reflected in the growing consolidation of the Arya Samaj on the one hand, and that of the Majlis-Ittehad-ul-Mussalman on the other hand). The prevailing conditions produced the circumstances of crisis in both ideology and practice amongst the Dalit intellectuals and social reformers as some were drawn towards alliances with Muslims, and yet others took to the more forceful presence of the Communist movement. The Dalit organizations in Hyderabad during this time were split into six different groups and this continued till the late 1940s. Many consider this split, especially in the context of the simultaneous emergence of the Telanagan movement as detrimental to the assertions of a self-conscious and autonomous Dalit movement. In addition, many of the leaders (strikingly, someone like Bhagya Reddy) failed to reconcile the question of sub-caste politics and differences between different untouchable groups (primarily the Malas and Madigas). Chinna Rao (2010: 84) has attributed to the large-scale disintegration of the Dalit movement of the time to “the inability of leaders to overcome their prejudices, lack of a comprehensive policy to cement the widening gulf between the two communities …” Lastly, the encroachment of political parties, such as the Congress and the Communist Parties was also considered detrimental to the ongoing movement. “All the political parties, irrespective of their ideological differences including Communists, mobilized Dalits and used them as their cadre base. While a few parties like Congress had done that to get votes, the Communists were concerned about the advancement of their movement.” (Cited in Chinna Rao, 2010: 84)
This chapter has then largely studied the various directions that the Dalit movement for autonomy adopted in the Hyderabad state during the early 20th century, and the rich and vibrant political and cultural history that they produced, which in many ways was informed by regional specificities. This chapter then also studied the significance of the pursuit for education that formed the core of this movement.