

Women in the new terrain: A study of women liberation movement in modern Andhra Pradesh

S. Archana

Archana, Doctoral Research Fellow,
Centre for Women's Studies, School of Social Sciences,
University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, Telangana, India.

Abstract: Women are marginalized in patriarchal society. Education played a significant role in the process of empowerment in the early 20th century C.E. Many people worked hard for women liberation in the society in various ground. Veerasalingam was one among them, who initiated new educational institution for women. In meantime, prominent women such as Kandukkuri Rajyalakshmi, Kalangi Seshumamba, Kotikalapadi Sitamma, Sarojini Naidu and Durkabei Desmuh worked exclusively for women empowerment. They started newspapers, weekly and other journals to popularize their views. The new organizations as if Andhra Mahila Sabha was established and it invented a space for women in the public sphere. The present paper is going to trace out the women empowerment discourse in the 19th and 20th century C.E. Andhra Pradesh.

Key words: - Women empowerment, women magazine, Veerasalingam, Andhra Mahila Sabha, Andhra Pradesh

Introduction

The period of 19th and early 20th century C.E. India constituted a very important period for the social and cultural history, specifically in the region of modern Andhra Pradesh. The period witnessed a series of social movements that brought many changes in the outlook of people and the movements prepared the mass to accommodate modernity in their lives. The western education enlightened people to realise the need for synthesis of traditional values of the east and the liberal ideas of the west. The western education brought a consciousness shift through education and built courage to people to question about the social and religious misconceptions, blind beliefs and social evils that prevailed in their society. The reformers were successful in breaking the conservative beliefs, which existed in the name of the tradition under colonial rule. This resulted in the emergence of large number movements for reform. The society gradually transformed and it paved the way for the amelioration of Indian womanhood. Large scale of reforms happened in Andhra region to improve the status of women. This particular paper discussed about the socio-political and cultural changes that brought the new light in the empowerment of women.

The condition of women was deplorable particularly from the middle of 19th century C.E. in Andhra *desa* like other modern two states in Madras presidency.ⁱ Women suffered mainly due to the lack of social liberty, infant marriages, polygamy, enforced widowhood and lack of education.ⁱⁱ Women education was denied and there were no facilities and possibilities for women to acquire knowledge. Not one even woman in

thousands were literate.ⁱⁱⁱ The 19th century C.E. poet, Vemuri Saradamba explained the condition of women. In her words,

“the lady with her tender leaf life palm puts dots on the wall to account for the curd supplied by the milk maid, and removes knots on a rope to count the cloths brought by, the washer women- all because she is illiterate”.^{iv}

In a patriarchal society, man functioned as a sole arbiter and decided the life of women in the family as in society. Women inhibited from personality development and capacity of independent thinking.^v The public appearance of woman was considered as improper and indecent and even a conversation of woman with man believed to be a sin. The traditional joint family system strongly uphold the patriarchal values in the Indian society. The joint family system made impossible for any couple to enjoy privacy and develop intimacy. The traditional family setup encouraged the conservative outlook of the young kids in the family.

The backwardness of women attributed to their ignorance resulting from the lack of education. It was deep rooted belief that women should not be educated. They believed that the education of women would bring miseries to the families. Rama Krishna, a historian, mentioned that in the early 20th century C.E. Indian society created a kind of opinion that only female education was allowed to devadasi woman, who were expert in fine arts in order to dance in temples and other public and private gatherings.^{vi} It was not that much easy for the people to eradicate the prejudice that was

existed in the society. In meantime, child marriage became a greater social evil in the Indian tradition. In general, the custom of child marriage resulted in the death of the husband even before the child wife attained puberty.^{vii} The situation of the child widows was miserable. Often the young girls were functioned as a daughter in laws not as a wife of their husbands.^{viii}

The women empowerment in the early 20th century C.E. Andhra desa

The women started to mobilise to acquire their rights. The large number of women came forward to the reform activities after 1920 C.E. The post-Veerasingam era laid serious efforts in the direction of dowry and *nautch* problems, child marriages and other women related issues were taken up in concerted manner. It is precisely here that the reform efforts after 1919 C.E. differ from the earlier period. In the early 20th century C.E., a number of women associations established in Andhra region of Madras Presidency. The women associations were organised in various places in Andhra region such as Visakhapatnam, Rajahmundry, Kakinada, Narasapuram, Eluru, Vijayawada, Machilipatnam, Guntur, Ongole, Kurnool and Berhampore.^{ix} A significant aspect of the work of these women associations is that they inculcated a right spirit to women work for their progress in an independent manner. Another significant aspect is that they mobilised and facilitated the movement of women. In this turn led to the much-needed exposure of female members in the society that ultimately brought development of women.

The prominent women in the early 20th century C.E. Andhra desa

The reform activities could influence the everyday lives of women. The reform activities provided a space for women and it lead few women to occupy the public sphere. Few women pioneered in the reform activities such as Kandukkuri Rajyalakshmi, Bandaru Atchamba, Unnava Lakshmi Bai, Kalangi Seshumamba, Srimati Janaktamma, Kotikalapadi Sitamma, Sarojini Naidu and Durkabai Desmuh. The personal live, writings and activities of these women changed the faces of the reform movement in Andhra region.

Kandukkuri Rajyalakshmi (1851 C.E. – 1910 C.E.)

Kandukuri Rajyalakshmi was born in Kalheru village near Rajamundry in an orthodox family. She married at the age of ten to Kandukuri Veerasalingam who was thirteen at that time. She was not educated at the time of their marriage. After her marriage, she accessed education. She was encouraged by her uncle Vennetti Venkataratnam. Later, she was very active in social reform movements. She was the first women who stand for social reform activities like women's education, widow remarriage and other

revolutionary changes originated from her home.^x She took active interest in widow remarriage movement. She started Sri Victoria Girls School for women and brought hope to many young hearts among child widows. She encouraged Veerasalingam to donate all his property worth rupees 40000 in the year 1906 C.E. to found *Hitakarini Samajam*.

Kotikalapadi Sitamma

Kotikalapadi Sitamma was a writer and a disciple of Kandukuri Veerasalingam. She wrote two poetical works called *Sadhu Rakshana Satakam* and *Ahalyabai*. She gave number of lectures on social evils and women education. She was the president of Mahila Vibhag of Andhra Mahila Sabha in 1913 C.E. at Baptiala.

Bandaru Atchamba (1874 C.E. - 1905 C.E.)

Bandaru Atchamba is considered as the first women storywriter in Telugu literature and became the first Telugu historian. She was born in Nandigama in modern Krishna district. She learnt Marathi and English. She was very active in promoting women education and their development. Most of her writing gave important to women and their education. He established first Mahila Sangam (Women's Association) in Bandra on 1902 C.E. and called as Brindavan Stree Samajam.^{xi} She was the first women who used literature and her writing skill for social activities and women's education. She wrote *Beeda Kudumbam* in 1904 C.E. was a realistic portrayal of social condition of her life span.^{xii}

Unnava Lakshmi Bai (1882 C.E. - 1956 C.E.)

Unnava Lakshmi Bai was born in in Aminabad a village near by Sattenapalli Taluq of Guntur district. Her husband Unnava Lakshmi Narayana and she started Sarada Niketan, a *Gurukula Pathasala* for girls in Guntur.^{xiii} They taught Telugu, Sanskrit, Hindi and English. They gave training in music, art, sewing, knitting sari embroidery etc. There was no government support at the time. However, the public support helped Sarada Niketan to grow rapidly.

Kalangi Seshumamba

Kalangi Seshumamba started *Vaisya Yuvati Vidhyalayam* at Guntur. She was the daughter of Majeti Sriramulu, a reputed member of *vaisya* community of the town. It instructed students of the town. It gave instruction in handicrafts, music, tailoring, painting and embroidery. It also taught the students the aspects of elementary medical knowledge in ophthalmology and other subjects like Hindi, Telugu, History, Geography and Mathematics.^{xiv}

Srimati Janaktamma

Srimati Janaktamma was a widow of the well-known woman from *Goday* family of

Visakhapatnam district started a school for the education of Hindu girls in 1861 C.E. at Visakhapatnam.^{xv} After the death of the founder, her daughter Smt. Rutnamma maintained school. She called to the aid of the sisters of the St. Joseph French Convent, who superintended the education.^{xvi} Its curriculum included both English and Telugu in addition to fine arts and crafts like drawing, music and needlework.^{xvii}

Sarojini Naidu

From 1906 onwards, Sarojini Naidu was very active in women's movement and women emancipation programmes.^{xviii} She addressed in the Indian Social Conference in Calcutta on women education. The speech inspired the large gatherings. On December 31, 1906 C.E., one of the first conclaves of women took place in Calcutta at Bethune College, under the Indian Ladies Conference.^{xix} The meetings discussed various social issues that was related to women in home, society, education, and life in general. The conference was inaugurated by the queen of Baroda and was attended by the queen of Mysore, Nattore, Mayor Bhanj and Cooch Bihar. In the meeting, Sarojini advised Indian women to find space along with men and empower themselves.^{xx}

After returning from London to Hyderabad Sarojini presided over a meeting of the Hindu social reform association that was held in Mahboob college hall at Secundrabad.^{xxi} Sarojini strongly criticised certain evil practices such as Child marriages and dowry system, nautch and high expenses of rituals.^{xxii} She was against the system of sati. She advised that *sati* performed in the past for love and regret for the beloved.^{xxiii} She mentioned that *Do the men in our society deserve sati? What sort of men do we find out now? They are not men at all. They can be called as the degenerated heroes.*^{xxiv} Sarojini was against the purdah system. In March 1908 C.E., a meeting was held in Bombay to celebrate the jubilee of Streebodha, a Gujrati monthly of Bombay. In the meeting, many Muslim women assembled in gallery behind the screen. During the occasion, she pointed out that the purdah system was great stumbling block in the way of social reforms.

The women's journals

The actual development of women education came with the reforming ideas of Veerasalingam, which influenced the press to become popular in 1870s'. His efforts on women education and welfare popularised through his magazines and journals. He edited the first women's periodical *Sahithya Bodhini* in 1883 C.E., which committed to the cause of women in Andhra *desa*. Malladi Venkadarathnam established a second journal *Zenana Patrika* in 1893 C.E. Veerasalingam was closely associated with him for the journal activities. These journals and magazines voiced for women education and their development. In

addition to periodicals, Veerasalingam had also published books like *Rajasekhara Charithra*, *Sathyavati Charitramu*, *Patnihita Soochani* for women. Veerasalingam portrayed the life *Sathyavati* in his book *Sathyavati Charitramu* to popularise women education. According to him, *Sathyavati* was women who overcome all her problems, gained education, and remained an ideal woman throughout her life. Her example was used to suggest that education developed patience, sympathy, forbearance, wisdom and a renewed commitment to family.^{xxv}

Veerasalingam wrote many satires, lampoons and dramas like *Brahmavivaham* to criticise *Kanyasulkam*, early marriages and marriages to old men with young girls. All these articulations reflected the patriarchal ideology and the traditional social role of women within the family structure. He believed that female education was necessary for the advancement of the nation. He believed that no social reform movement would become fruitful until women cooperation. He tried to popularise an idea of improving status of women within the family itself through education. Because of his efforts, the cause of women's education in Andhra *desa* received a tremendous impetus. His perception of women's emancipation was also strongly criticised by orthodox patriarchal understanding in the society. Veerasalingam was not only focused public attention on social evils but also initiated and encouraged women to associate, organize and express their views through writings.

The encouragement and support given by the reformers like Veerasalingam in writing literary works for the emancipation of women got much attention. The journal of Veerasalingam, *Viveka Vardhini* advocated women's education and western education through English as a medium of communication.^{xxvi} He inspired many to start women's journal such as *Hindu Sundari*, *Telugu Zenana*, *Zenana*, *Kameswari*, *Chintamani*, and *Savitri*. All these journals addressed women issues.^{xxvii} Women started to contribute their work to magazines, which was edited by men in the beginning. Later, women started to publish their own magazines. This resulted in the establishment of the first women periodical called *Hindu Sundari* under the editorship of Mosaliganti Ramabayamma. The first issue of the *Hindu Sundari* was released in 1908 C.E. from Kakinada, Andhra *desa* and its editor was Mosalakanti Ramabai and was published until 1945 C.E.^{xxviii}

Kakinada, the modern city of Andhra Pradesh, became one of the most important centres in the social reform activities in Andhra *desa*. There were many women's periodicals published in a very short span of time. In 1910 C.E., another women's journal *Savitri* was started. Pulugurta Lakshmi Narasamamba was the editor of the journal. The journal was published from the town of Kakinada. In 1914 C.E., the journal *Anasuya*

came from Kakinada under the editorship of Vinjamuri Venkataratnamma, both the editors endeavoured to spread female education and the former Pulugurta Lakshmi Narasamamba take active efforts against widow marriages was severely criticised by the reformers.

From the beginning, women writings were influenced by the social reform activities of the male reformers. These reformers helped women to get rid of the social evils that were prevailing in their culture. It was a step forward when women started discussing the problem of their lives and tried to cross the traditional boundaries that were prescribed for women. Their writings were however an attempt to question these social constraints implemented by the mainstream society. During the late 19th century C.E. and early 20th century C.E., for women lot of other magazines published for women like *Soundaryavalli*, *Stridharma*, *Streeprabodhini*, and *Andhra Pathrika*. Nearly 16,025 Telugu magazines were published in the end of the 19th century C.E.^{xxix} By the year 1920 C.E. to 1921 C.E., the number was increased up to 21,213.^{xxx} In addition, women writing in the periodicals, they were started to write books, stories, biographies, translations, social novels etc...

The content of the women writings in the 19th century C.E focussed on the sacred and theosophical literature. They emphasised the need of women's dedication to the age-old traditions and customs as laid by the sacred literary works. For example, Tarikonda Venkadamba's *Bhagavatam*, *Vishnu Puranam* and *Venkatachala Mahatmyam*. There were all written in 1840s'. Kavirani Kanchanapalle Kanakamba wrote *Jeevayathra* and *Amrutananda Bodha Saramu* in 1893 C.E. Avadhutha Jnanamba's *Rangavatutha* and *Satprabhu Satakam* were written in 1895 C.E. Chavali Bangaramma wrote *Bhagavatham* in 1900 C.E.^{xxxi}

By the end of the 19th century C.E., with influence of the reform movements, significant changes were taken place in women's writing. During this period, the content of the writing centred on the contemporary social problems such as women illiteracy, purdah, child marriage and widow ill-treatment. In all these issues, women gave their special attention to female illiteracy and women education. To gain support women education the writers took up the examples of great literary women like Gargi to disprove that the belief of women were mentally inferior. To oppose the social intolerance, that education would bring misfortunes to the family, they portrayed the lives of Savitry as examples of the renounced life of women for their courage and ability to face problems and protect their families. Sati Savitry had an intelligent conversation with Lord Yama (the god for death) to save her husband's life.^{xxxii} The reformers argued that the extensive illiteracy

of women was not because of religious sanction or mental incapability but lack of encouragement and low status of women in history.

The reform activities influenced Andhra women to realise education would enable them to improve themselves and it helped the development of nation. Many of them emphasised that western progress and achievements were the result of literate self-determining female population. The writers were unanimous in their belief that education would enable women to develop their analytical thinking, to differentiate right or wrong.

The issues of widow remarriage

The problem of widow remarriage was closely connected with the custom of child marriage. The pioneering works of Veerasalingam emancipated the Andhra widows from their social clutches. Widow re-marriages, especially child widows were the main theme of the social reform activities in the late 19th Century C.E. Andhra *desa*.^{xxxiii} According to Ramakrishna, the remarriage was not allowed among the upper caste society.^{xxxiv} During 1881 C.E., in Madras presidency among 21 percent of the widows only 2 percent were attained puberty before they became widows.^{xxxv} The reformers like Veerasalingam and others realised that early marriages were the root cause of the widowhood. The Census of Madras Presidency 1891 reported about 25 percent of the population were following the custom of infant marriages.^{xxxvi} Veerasalingam took up this issue and started to deliver speeches to encourage the people to think about the remarriages. He delivered his first speech on widow remarriage on August 3, 1879 C.E. at Rajamundry. This became a milestone of the widow remarriage movement in Andhra.

In 1880 C.E., Veerasalingam established an association for widow remarriage of women.^{xxxvii} The first widow remarriage had happened in December, 1881 C. E. Veerasalingam sent his students to various parts of Andhra to find the parents who were ready to remarry the widows in their family. However, it was very difficult to find out the parents who were prepared to get their daughters to remarry. Veerasalingam find out lot of mothers of young widows were anxious to get their daughters to remarry. In addition, one among the widow was Sitamma, one who married to Gugulapati Sriramulu on December 11, 1881 C.E. at Rajamundry.^{xxxviii} The marriage was considered as the first widow remarriage in Andhra *desa*. It was performed with the strong support of Veerasalingam. The orthodox leaders were not supported the widow remarriages and they tried their best to break up the marriage. However, the students and the followers of Veerasalingam remained intact and equally determined to perform the marriages. Police provided securities in the respective localities where the marriages were taken place. The orthodox leaders failed to stop the reform marriages. The orthodox leaders ex-

communicated 31 families one who participated in the celebration.^{xxxix} With all these threats and unrest, the second widow remarriage was occurred within four days after the first. On December 15, 1881 C.E., Racharla Ramachandra Rao married a widow named Ratnamma.^{xl}

Before 1884 C.E., almost 10 widow remarriages were performed. Veerasalingam faced threats from the orthodox section of the Hindu society. The parents were not ready to remarry their widow daughters. Veerasalingam offered good jobs and accommodation to bridegroom.^{xli} In 1884 C.E., he started a new association for the causes of widow remarriage. However, in the span of seven years from 1884 C.E. to 1891 C.E., they had only conducted three marriages.^{xlii} In a novel *Rajasekhara Charithramu*, Veerasalingam decrypted the condition of the widows and reflected the other aspects of the contemporary Andhra society.^{xliii}

Veerasalingam initiated the widow remarriage activities in Andhra *desa* that based on the prior activities that were happened in the city of Madras.^{xliv} Veerasalingam circulated a notice on July, 1874 C.E. to inform the people of Rajamundry that he was going to give a talk on widow remarriage. This notice created a wide range of unrest among the local orthodox sections.^{xlv} He lectured that the practice of enforced widowhood was no-where found except in India and especially it prevailed among the three upper caste Hindus.^{xlvi} The lecture created a large stir in Rajamundry. The attention of the public drawn to the issue of widow remarriages and people stared to discuss about it. Veerasalingam gave his second lecture on October 17, 1879 C.E. to strengthen his arguments on widow remarriage. In 1879 C.E., he started an association for widow remarriage. He became the secretary of the association. The association was consisted other members like Ch. Bapaiah, B. Gavarraju, E. Narasimhan Chetty, B.V. Jogaiyyah Naidu, and K. Parthasarathi Naidu.^{xlvii}

The activities of Veerasalingam spread to different parts of the country and his activities were accolade by eminent personalities like Iswar Chandra Vidhyasagar, Mahadev Govinda Ranade, N.G. Chandravarkar, Maharshi D.K. Karve etc... His fame spread abroad. Ms. Manning of the United Kingdom left 50 dollars in her will for the widow home of Veerasalingam.^{xlviii} The contemporary government appreciated him by honouring the title of Rao Bahadur in 1893 C. E. He was presided the Indian Social Reform Congress held at Madras in 1898 C. E. In the meeting, Mahadev Govinda Ranade acclaimed Veerasalingam as Ishwara Chandra Vidhyasagar of the South.

Veerasalingam criticized on the expensive marriage rituals and ceremonies. He requested the society to avoid large expenditure on marriages, abolition of taboos on sea voyages and he campaigned against corruption in public life. According to him, all

these issues were entertained in the name of tradition that was based on the *sastras*, the Hindu religious doctrines. The reformers fought against the orthodox and to those who established power in government positions. The marriage reforms started with the reduction of high marriage expenditure. The luxurious marriages were negatively affected the life of poor and middle class families and they struggled to afford the amounts of marriage expenses.^{xlix}

Veerasalingam was strongly raised voice against the custom of performing the marriage ceremonies for five days.^l From these marriage rituals, the priestly classes earned economic benefits such as money and other gifts. They demanded and received heavy amounts as gifts and other payments. In meantime, Veerasalingam condemned the devadasi system. He considered Bhogamvullu (nautch-girls) as a prostitute. Nevertheless, their performances were put to improper use, which led to the deterioration of moral standards in society.^{li} Later, the maintenance of devadasi and attend a 'nautch' performance became status symbols and marks of social status.^{lii}

The role of Andhra Mahila Sabha

There were many associations like Andhra Mahila Sabha were established for the women causes. The Andhra Mahila Sabha (Women's Association of Andhra country) was a pioneering association, which functioned for the women empowerment in Andhra Pradesh. The association addressed many social problems that was faced by the contemporary women. As a structured association, Andhra Mahila Sabha was established by Durgabai Deshmukh at Madras in 1937 C.E. Initially, the association was functioned like a club and more like a club providing recreational facilities to the children and for enabling them to take part in the children's programmes of All India Radio.^{liii} The success of this association was because of the founders of Andhra Mahila Sabha, B. Krishnavenamma and her illustrious daughter Durgabai Deshmukh (1909 C.E. – 1981 C.E.).^{liv}

Durgabai and other early founders made the association into something more useful and productive. The Rajahmundry born Durgabai was against child marriage and dowry problem. She herself was a victim of child marriage. In meantime, they decided to bring up the women to the Mahila Sabha for their progress.^{lv} She decided to provide necessary training, opportunity and leadership to the women. This will make the women capable to overcome their subjection. Durgabai opened Hindi classes in the premises of the children's club in 1937 C.E. for the benefit of mothers of the children attended the club. The people's responds were encouraging and following the association. In addition, she started education of adult women with a purpose.^{lvi} The Andhra Mahila Sabha was established with the aim of gathering tiny tots together and putting their juvenile

enthusiasm to something artistic and beautiful.^{lvii} The association dedicated to the service of women, children and handicapped in the fields of health, education, welfare and rehabilitation.^{lviii}

In modern days, the association became a gigantic intuition. However, the roots and functions of the association laid in the earliest years of the 20th century C.E. The women's gathering addressed different issues of the women. There was regular meetings organized in different parts of Andhra country and each meeting gave its special attention to one specific issues of women. The initial meeting of Andhra Mahila Sabha was held at Guntur town in 1910 C.E. The meeting was presided by Pulugurta Laxmi Narasimha. The conference received presided sections of the people from all part of Andhra *desa*. This conference stressed on the importance of women education. It demanded an establishment of at least a high school for girls in every districts of Andhra *desa*. The Mahila Sabha encouraged women to study the professional courses.^{lix}

In 1912 C.E., the Andhra Mahila Sabha conducted its second meeting at Nidadavole along with the Krishna-Guntur district conferences. Burra Butchchi Bangaramma, Balanthrappu Seshamma, Madabhushi Chudamma and Kalleppalli Venkata Ramanamma were very active in the Mahila Sabha. The meeting discussed on widow remarriage. In addition, the conference addressed issues on women's role in the national movements and characteristics of women education.^{lx} The third conference in 1913 C.E., at Machilipatnam passed many resolutions such as promotion women education, establishment of girl's schools, free technical education for widows, appointment of qualified widows as teachers in girl's schools etc. The meeting encouraged the establishment of training schools for women, for sending girl child after puberty. It also voiced for the training for music, knitting, sewing, domestic economy, child care in the curriculum of girls schools, for prohibiting early marriages for performing marriages after 16 year of age for girls. The meetings objected *kanyasulkam* and *varasulkam*, encouraged inter-caste marriages and inter dining.^{lxi}

At Vijayawada, the fifth Andhra Mahila Sabha was held on May 11 and 12. Mrs. Kotikalapudi Sitamma presided the meeting. The conference received nearly 200 delegates from various places like Madras, Vijayanagaram, Visakhapatnam, Rajamundry, Secundrabad, Bellary and Guntur and nearly 400 women from Bejawada alone. Adurthy Bhaskaramma was honoured with three gold medals. She was awarded by Vignana Chandrika Mandali in the conference for securing good marks in her examinations.^{lxii} Maharani Lalitha Kumaramma presided the sixth Andhra Mahila Sabha at Vijaya Nagaram and the conference focussed about women education, marriage reform and home management.^{lxiii}

The following conference was held at Kakinada on May 7 and 8, 1916 C.E. Ajanantha Raukinamma presided the meeting and 100 delegates were attended the conference. The main agenda of the conference stressed the role of women in the abolition of bride money and dowry, insisted necessity of women education. The conference concerned about the livelihood of widows and it raised issues on the women healthcare.^{lxiv} Nellore hold the eighth Andhra Mahila Sabha and it was presided by Kasinadhuni Ramaoyamma. Kanochanapalli Kanakamma proposed the establishment of a Women's University. There were good responses for all these conferences. The gatherings inspired many women in the society. The association brought significant social and political changes in Andhra country.^{lxv}

Conclusion

The new developments in Andhra Mahila Sabha

The political changes in India brought many new states. In 1956 C.E., Andhra Pradesh was established as a new state. In the new region, Andhra Mahila Sabha kept its activities beyond the political boundaries and decided Hyderabad, as it is headquarter. The president Babu Rajendra Prasad inaugurated the newly established institution under the aegis of the Sabha in January, 1958 C.E. All the educational activities undertaken by the Sabha in Madras and the programme of nurses training, found a parallel development in Hyderabad. With a view to spread of its activities in to the under developed districts of modern Telangana, a nurse's training programme was also undertaken at two other underdeveloped areas like Mahbubnagar and Sanga Reddi districts of Telangana.^{lxvi} The sabha started educational institutions from level of nursery schools to arts, science colleges, teachers training, handicrafts training institute, nursing homes, training institutions for auxiliary nurse, midwives and general nurses, a nutritional educational mobile unit, a preservation and canning centre and an institute of social adult education for work in the field of functional literacy and social education.

The Regional Handicraft Training Institute

The Regional Handicraft Training Institute became a first established technical institution of Andhra Mahila Sabha. The institution was started at Hyderabad. It organized programme of All India Handicrafts Board, to develop regional handicrafts by opening institution in different parts of the country with special emphasis on training workers for the handicrafts typical of that region. The board offered to finance the establishment of such an institution for the southern region, and the Andhra Mahila Sabha took up the responsibility of its functioning. The programme was designed to train young women, sponsored by different institutions of private bodies, in four or five typical handicrafts of Andhra Pradesh. The lines of activity chosen

were textile printing, including the **kalamkari (embroidary)** and the batik style of printing, fancy leather work, cane and bamboo work, toy making both the hard wooden toys and also soft toys and card board works. The choice of candidates who are to receive such a training, which lasts for a year and a half, was normally limited to women sponsored by running institutions or establishments, so that there is the guarantee that these trainees after successful completion of their training would have berths ready for them in their own sponsoring institutions. This ensured that the training given to these candidates, when they get back, was usefully employed. In course of time, some of this candidates are also had developed into self-employed persons with their own independent production centres. Till now there are about 443 candidates who in all have received training, which included as many as 113 in toy making, 76 in leather crafts, 90 in binding and card board work and about 80 each, in cane and bamboo work and textile printing. All these are gainfully employed without exception. Some of the trainees who have successfully completed the training have also joined the institution as instructors or production assistants. Efforts are afoot to develop this training institution as a production centre in at least 2 or 3 of these crafts. The instructors and the superintendent of this training institution are highly qualified technician with master artisan qualification in addition.

Besides this scheme of training sponsored candidates, the institution also caters to the enthusiastic non-professionals and homemakers who would like to take one or the other of these handicrafts as a hobby. They are charged a small fee and are given the intensive coaching and training over a period of a few months, until they get a certain amount of proficiency.^{lxvii} The entire financial support for paying the salaries of instructors, the stipends to the trainees and the monies required for the materials for training, is provided by the all India handicrafts board, while the institution works under the administrative control of the Sabha.^{lxviii}

The Mahila Vidhyalaya

The Mahila Vidhyalaya at Hyderabad was started in the year 1963 C.E. with the basic teachers of training and an upper primary school. The school trained nearly 500 secondary grade teachers during the period 1963 C.E. to 1971 C.E., when it was decided by the government that there was no more need for this category of teachers. The course was consequently wound up and staff absorbed in the upper primary school that was later up graded in to a high school in 1967 C.E. The first batch of **S.S.C.** students appeared for the public examination in March, 1969 C.E. Up till now six batches have appeared for the S.S.C examination. The school employee a staff of 25 trained teachers and has student strength about a thousand children. Besides

this the high school, Sabha also runs Sisu Vihar, a school for children below six years. About 200 children are now getting the benefit of pre primary education under the kindergarten system of instruction. It is run in four sections with four teachers in charge, with an age wise distribution.

The arts, science and college for women

The opening of the branch of the Andhra Mahila Sabha at Hyderabad gave a new turn to the activities of the Sabha in the shape of providing higher education for girls and such of those women who could not afford to attend regular day college. The arts and science college started in 1966 C.E. at Hyderabad was one of the innumerable institutions started by Andhra Mahila Sabha. From the beginning, this college was started as evening college for women with the aim of creating working opportunities for women and homemakers for higher education.^{lxix} Later this developed as well equipped day college that gave instruction in arts, up to the degree level, and with science. The results had been quite satisfactory ranging from 70 to 99 percent. The college has an active student union, planning forum and a national integration Samidhi also organized to develop a spirit of national integration among the students and organize activities to inculcate the spirit of social service among its members. In the starting stage, there were fifteen students in PUC and five in B.A. Most of them were working women.^{lxx} The college has acquired reputation for quality education to fulfil Durgabai's patronized aim for the education and empowerment of women. This became the first college to introduced B.Com course in the state of Andhra Pradesh to equip the students with job.^{lxxi}

The College of Education

The Sabha was not satisfied with the opening of a college for higher education for women. A programme for starting a college for teacher training was also taken up in the year 1971 C.E. The college of education was formally inaugurated on 16th August 1971 and has proved its worth by the outstanding results it has been able to produce, even during the first years of its existence. It is no mean compliment to the teaching standards of the college, for the college to secure 99% and 100% success for its students in the B.Ed examinations claiming as many as many as 43 first classes in theory and 137 first classes in practical within these three years, with barely 424 students appeared.^{lxxii} It was also significant to note that the students of this college annexed the first and second ranks in the university examination of 1973. Both the college are affiliated to Osmania university and been admitted for grant-in-aid.

The nursing home

The nursing home at Hyderabad established in 1964 C.E. as a maternity and child welfare centre. In the course of ten years developed in to a full-fledged hospital with total bed strength of 75 in its

maternity and children's wards. Outpatient departments separately for men and women also started. A planning clinic also formed part of the nursing home. A fully equipped air conditioned operation theatre, pathological laboratory and x-ray units are also provided as adjuncts to the nursing home, for serving the needs of the patient. It has also developed a medical centre of a high order, with the cooperation of the medical profession, especially from experts in all specialties including the ophthalmic, ENT, skin, etc., besides general medicine and surgery. Experts in these fields attend the hospital on one or two days in the week by turn, for a few hours normally, and at other times when the situation demands their presence.

In addition, a paediatric unit gives special attention to all kinds of children's ailments. The large number of out-patients treated which comes to over 45 thousand besides nearly 6 thousand patients treated as inpatients perhaps can judge the success and popularity of this developing hospital. The number of deliveries conducted and major operations performed which run into a few thousands also speak creditably of the performance of the nursing home. In addition to these general facilities, the nursing home is provided with a special sterilization ward for cases of sterilization to meet the increasing load of sterilizations, thus serving the cause of family limitation effectively. The total number of tubectomy and vasectomy operations conducted by the nursing home during the year 1974 C.E. - 1975 C.E. is not of the order of a thousand, which speaks creditably for a voluntary agency like the Andhra Mahila Sabha.

Nurses training

Just as Madras, a programme of training auxiliary nurse mid-wives was started in Hyderabad in 1963 C.E. and 3 years later two more centre for a similar purpose opened at Mahbub Nagar and Sangareddy. In these three centres were together as many as 125 trainees are admitted each year to this course. They are paid stipends and are expected to stay in the hostels provided for them. They attend classes and are given clinical facilities in the nursing home as in other government hospitals in the twin cities for their practical training. In these three training centres so far nearly 900 auxiliary nurse mid wives have been turned out and most of them have found employment either in the government hospitals of rural dispensaries or in private nursing home and have earned for themselves and to the institution, a fair name by their exemplary attitude to service as also technical competence.^{lxxiii}

The Sabha succeeded to given the training of auxiliary nurses, the government of India sanctioned in 1966, and scheme for training general nurses. Three and half year course-recruiting girls have completed matriculation. At present, this training course admits twenty trainees each year. During the first three years, they receive coaching in the theory and practice of general sick nursing

and during last six months, they are given training in mid wifery. This was also the auxiliary nurse midwives training is financed by the government of India cent percent. The responsibility for financing the scheme has since been transferred to the state government. The trainees are also given opportunity to have their clinical training in the specialized hospitals dealing with tuberculosis, cancer etc. So far, 78 general nurses have received their training and all of them are employed in either general railway or military hospitals as staff nurses. This is one of the few voluntary organizations that give such training in Andhra Pradesh.

The Literacy House and Literacy Programmes

The inspiration to involve itself in the field of functional literacy came to the Sabha in the year 1966 C.E., as a sequel to the spelling out of the concept of functional literacy in the conference at Tehran in 1965 C.E. and the UNESCO seminar on the eradication of illiteracy held in 1966 C.E. in Hyderabad.^{lxxiv} Towards the end of 1966 C.E., the Sabha undertook a pilot project of functional literacy in the Shadnagar block and completed the first three stages of work namely, a survey of levels of illiteracy, training of illiteracy workers and preparation of instructional materials. Following on the successful completion of this programme the Sabha planned a more comprehensive integrated project of farmers training and functional literacy in the same block. The success of this programme in the pilot area Shadnagar encouraged the government of Andhra Pradesh to entrust the implementation of all functional literacy programmes undertaken in Andhra Pradesh to the Sabha.^{lxxv} With the growing expansion of those programs it was realized that it would be necessary to have properly trained and suitably oriented workers and the necessary reading materials both instrumental and supplementary.^{lxxvi}

This realization led to the establishment of the literacy house in 1972 C.E. The primary functions of this central organization the literacy house are to be the organization of training to teachers, production and testing of literature both instrumental and follow up, suitable for the functional literacy programmes and training in other audio visual media particularly the existing folk and rural forms of art.^{lxxvii} At this stage, it was felt that in his scheme of approach to the rural mass it is but proper that a fresh dimension should be added in the shape of population education and family welfare to the programme. The integrated programme of functional literacy with population education and family welfare was financed by the government of India ministry of health through the population council of India.

Institute of Adult and Social Education

Another field of activity that has always been nearest to the heart of the founder president Durgabai Deshmukh was continuing education

both for women and men.^{lxxviii} In its expanded form it was decided to include the neo literates who have graduated from functional literacy classes so as to give them an opportunity at least to such of those who wish to enlarge their horizons of knowledge by organizing short term intensive course of agricultural training. This will fulfil the long felt need of a follow up programme to the neo literates, for keeping alive the literacy skills attained by them, besides giving them additional information on modern methods of agriculture. It was also felt desirable to give some special courses of non-formal education to urban house wives to fit them more effectively in to the modern age and develop in them a scientific attitude to life and also a rationalistic approach to their daily chores of activity.^{lxxix} For this dual purpose was established the institute of adult and social education with financial assistance from the government of Andhra Pradesh. This institute work as a supplementary institute to the literacy house.

The Gandhi Satabdi Bhavan

The Gandhi Satabdi bhavan was built as a part of the celebrations of the Gandhi centenary year. It was felt that it is necessary in the present context that the ideals for which Gandhi had lived and died and the constructive programme of national development both material and ethical he advocated should be kept alive by starting institutions or centres where such activity should be perpetuated.^{lxxx} The younger generation who have not had the benefit of knowing Gandhiji during his lifetime need it was felt such institutions to inspire them to understand and follow in the footsteps of the father of the nation. It was planned that every district headquarters must have a building to be constructed to Gandhi and Kasturbas memories where appropriate activity should be taken up. For

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this purpose, the government of Andhra *desa* gave a donation of twelve lakh rupees and under the inspiring leadership of Durgabai Deshmukh who was the chairperson of the state level committee for women and children for the Gandhi centenary celebrations, donations from the public were collected and utilized for erecting these buildings. In the state headquarters Hyderabad.^{lxxxii} The Andhra Mahila Sabha college campus was chosen as the right place for its construction. A novel building was erected in the college campus with a Gandhian library. The interior of the building is decorated with paintings and incidents in Gandhi's life. Every Friday evening a meeting takes place under its roof where Gandhi ideals are explained by prominent scholars. Bhajans are conducted and readings from Gandhi life are given, to inspire the audience in Gandhi's way of life.

Conclusion

The traditional Indian society in the period between 19th and early 20th century C.E. was undergone many social changes due to the process of modernization. The social reformer like Veerasalingam worked hard for the empowerment of the society. He established many schools for girls and published newspapers for women. In meantime, some prominent women such as Kandukkuri Rajyalakshmi, Kalangi Seshumamba, and others occupied the centre stage for women liberation. After long debates, Andhra Mahila Sabha was established and initiated many welfare activities exclusively for women. The organization established educational institution to give proper train women. Later, the organization became an icon for the women development process in the post-colonial India, especially in the Andhra region.

ⁱ The region Andhra *desa* referred to the modern Telugu speaking places especially modern states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

ⁱⁱ Rama Krishna, V. *Social Reform in Andhra*. New Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1983: 89.

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^{vi} Rama Krishna, V. 1983. *Op.cit.* 90.

^{vii} Putli Krishnamurthi, N. 1987. *Op.cit.* 9.

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^{ix} *Krishna Patrika* (Telugu weekly). May 10, 1922.

^x *Women Scape*. 37.

^{xi} *Ibid.* 41.

^{xii} *Ibid.*

^{xiii} *Ibid.* 49.

^{xiv} *Grihalakshmi*. (August, 1929): 664.

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- xlii Subbamma, Malladi. 1994. *Ibid.*12.
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- xlvi Rama Krishna. V. 1983. *Op.cit.* 114.
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