



SOCIAL CONTRADICTIONS AND THE LEGACY OF KANDUKURI VEERESALINGAM IN ANDHRA

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ABSTRACT :

It is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore the Kandukuri Viresalingam. The past century has seen the rapid social change and social development in many communities in Andhra. However, these rapid changes are having a serious effect on past and present society. One of the most significant current discussion on social contradictions and social change in Andhra. The paper to date has tended to focus on social contradictions in Andhra during colonial period and social capital trends in Andhra. The objective of this research is to determine how the contemporary social reformers rather than community reformer or social reformers is the question. The main issues addressed in this paper are social reform and social contradictions in Andhra.



KEYWORDS : Social Reform, Counter Reform, Social Capital, Cultural Capital, Communities, Caste, Journals.

INTRODUCTION

The modernity trends through social and cultural reform and counter-reform movements in Andhra during 1847-1958 required a synthesis of two very different types of sources: biographies and autobiographies in Telugu, English language and Telugu language newspapers. No until 1907, when Bipin Chandra Pal toured South India protesting the partition of Bengal, did Andhras participate noticeably in events whose significance transcended the regional boundaries. This isolation meant that the history of Andhra during this period of Social and cultural contradiction was not fully understood in Madras. The English language newspapers in Madras mentioned some of the highlights of the social and cultural contradiction events and thus provided a rough chronology of events in the region, a chronology which could then be linked with major events in Madras and the rest of India. Yet this chronology was at best only an outline.

For a full understanding of social and cultural contradiction in Andhra, the Telugu sources were crucial. Most valuable were Kandukuri Viresalingam's autobiography and collected works. Newspaper reports were very brief at that time, and it would be virtually impossible to describe contradiction events without the works of D.V. Prakasa Rao, Rayasam Venkata Sivudu, Valluri Suryanarayana Rao , Chilakamarti Lakshminarasimham, Vedamu Venkataraya Sastri , K.Venkatappayya, T.Prakasam A.Kaleswara Rao etc... their autobiographies furnished revealing accounts of the social and cultural contradiction activities.

INDIAN SOCIETY IN 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY

Indian society was organized into various identical cultural faces. The ideas of Post-Enlightenment rationalism of the west such as a rational and scientific approach to life, humanitarianism and the doctrine of social equality had entered into Indian society during the colonial period. Learning these ideas through English education, intellectuals of Indian society, responded in two different ways. One was social reformation and the other was 'Counter-Reformation'¹.

A section of Indian intellectuals, who saw themselves as pioneers of leading change in Indian society towards western modernity, compared the socio-cultural fabric in which they were living with that they were learning. Finding incompatibility in their own society and culture with the western modernity, they formed into movements such as the Brahmo Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, Theosophical society, Ramakrishna mission etc.... and worked for reformation of Indian society on the lines of western modernity. Apart from the work of these reformers, the spread of English education, the work of Christian missionaries, helped to popularize the ideas of Post-Enlightenment rationalism among every section of Indian society AND The shift in ruling party in England, when the liberal party was in power Indians got an opportunity to establish and reform society on their own social and customary bases and number of associations are emerged during the liberal rule.² On the other hand the counter-reformers, such as the Theosophical Society, the Arya Samaj etc gauged the essence of western modernity and attempted to redefine the 'Indian society and culture' under the mask of defending Indian traditions from the impact of westernized reformers. Like the Tagore work 'Gora'³ questions, Indian system was with indigenous problems and it had his solutions from its own culture, customs and society but the Britishers are imposing western laws for Indian problems. These events of these two sections reflected in society and some changes have taken place in various social groups at various places at different times.

All communities of India attempted to modernize and simplify their dogmas through educating the masses of their community. At the initial stages, the documented works of the press reached only to the upper community. Slowly it started to reach other sections of the society due to the work done by the reformers and Christian missionaries. Community groups were empowered with western ideology and they tried to establish their role in social and cultural activities. Western education and ideologies, on the one hand, gave rise to reformation and helped to the development of cultural tendency to support indigenous system. "In which people would use cultural knowledge to undergird their place in the hierarchy, explores the ways in which the trappings of middle-class taste and cultivation are used by people as cultural signifiers, as they seek to identify themselves with those 'above' them on the social ladder, and to demonstrate their difference from those 'below'⁴. This is not an especially creative struggle and serves to reinforce those middle-class pretensions.

ANDHRA SOCIETY AND KANDUKURI VIRESALINGAM

Andhra Society is so similar like in India, Andhra society with caste clusters with customs and traditions and the reformers are allowed only to reform their caste and not allowed to enter to reform the other castes since the traditional customs are very strong and not allowed others caste persons to involve in their superstitious practice so mostly the reformers are confined to their caste only. at this point of time if anyone tried to reform other caste and to educate about the superstitious practice they were expelled from

¹ Counter reformers - social reformers but reforming the society on the bases of historical social cultural heritage with regional rational orthodox ideology

²E. M. S. Namboodiripad, A History of Indian Freedom Struggle, Page.No.

³ Gora was a one of the literary work of Rabindranath Tagore. it reflects the social, political and religious scene in Bengal at the turn of the century and the forces that were operating in Bengal at that time were one of the intense nationalism and revival of ancient spiritual values and also that of liberal western thought.

⁴Islam, M. Rezaul, Social Research Methodology and New Techniques in Analysis, Interpretation, and Writing p.173

their village and also from their own caste⁵. only the Kandukuri Viresalingam dared to reform all sections with the support of his Students and friends and we cannot neglect the other even they confined to their social group they did at their level to balance the contemporary social and cultural constrains, like Raghupathi Venkatarathanma Naidu, who was a member his Telaga caste and made moves to reformed the community as well as society.

In Andhra, we can find three trends. One was that of westernizing reformers who were alienated by the orthodox section of Hindu society. The second was the counter-reformers who were against the westernizing social reform. The third group formed out of the contradictions between the reformers and counter-reformers. They were sympathizers of the reform but were not able to come out of their cultural sanctions to directly support the reform activity. However, they indirectly supported the reform activity.

It was Kandukuri Viresalingam who came forward through an institutional set up to shoulder the responsibility of reforming the society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. He was of the view that by using exactly the same process with which the west achieved modernity, the Andhra society was to be modernized. In other words, spreading scientific education and rational thinking among the people is the only solution to get rid of the superstitions and lead the society towards modernisation

The thought of philosophy was changed from circular to straight line philosophy i.e from rebirth to birth and death, from birth of the universe to evolution of the universe and human evolution and civilizations. For that, he had effectively used print journalism in the Telugu language to spread the movement among the people of Andhra. Thus as part of the reform activity, the Telugu language and literature was transformed in such a way that subsequent regional cultural identity formed on the basis of language. Viresalingam's project of social reform attracted huge support from western educated youth. These educated youth were of different castes who in turn organized into caste associations of the respective castes to implement social reform and eradicate superstitions.

It is a natural phenomenon in any system to incline to an indigenous society and culture where it was already psychologically injected and genetically passed from centuries onwards and not that easy to get a sudden change in society and culture at this point of time the system don't want to loose the 'social capital'⁶ which was on the caste based and on other side due to Swadeshi wave and industrial growth brought Human capital formation which brought drastic changes in Andhra society. And by the first decade of the 20th century saw the trend of cultural indent which led to establishment of journals on the name of caste to gather their social capital.

SOCIAL COUNTER AND ENCOUNTERS

At the 20th-century first decade, the Swadesh movement and the nationalism on one side in Andhra and the demand of separate province for Telugu people with regionalism demand emerged thus the society was with clear idea about the exploitation of British and hegemony of Madras region. Sanmargadarshini in 1885, Vijayanti by Panappakam Anandacharyulu from 1894 to 1899, Krishnapatrika from 1902 played vital role in imparting nationalism and later on trends were changed with both nationalism and regionalism. In this scenario thus westernized reform project of Viresalingam was not unchallenged in Andhra. Reform activities through print media were Hasya Sanjivani from 1876, in Godavari Vidyaprabhodhini of Revender Baurough from 1879 wrote some articles with the help of Viresalingam, Chintamani of Vavilala Vasudevasastri from 1881, Satyasamvardhani from 1891 by himself and, Jatiya Patrika of Malladi Venkataratnam from 1893, Mannava Butchayya Pantalu started Hindu Janasmskarini from 1885 to help the Viresalingam and he was encountered at literary level, the social reform activity of Viresalinam was

⁵ Darisi Chenchayya. Nenu Naa Desam, an autobiography of Darisi Chenchayya (Translated in to English from Telugu language)

⁶ Bourdieu 'Social capital is not uniformly available to members of group or collective but available to those who provide efforts to acquire it by achieving positions of power and status and by developing goodwill' in a similar way on the bases of caste social capital was accumulated from centuries to various communities in Andhra.

challenged by men like Kasibhatla Brahmaya Sastri from Kakinada who started journal Aryamatabodhini in 1883, Bajululla Saheb started Satyanvesini to criticise the articles of Satyasamvardhani, in 1905 Suvarnalekha was stated by Tallapragada Suryanarayana started to criticise the social reform and modern trends published Satyasamvardhani, Kokkonda Venkataratnam Naidu through Andhra Bashasanjivani from 1871 criticised the social reform activities, movements, in social and cultural fields particularly women education and widow remarriages by targeting the Kandukuri and Vedam Venkataraya Sastry⁷.

Balika journal in 1896 was started by Sangitapu Bapiraju from Srikakulam gave lot of support to Viresalingam project and Hindusundari in 1902 by Balantrapu Sashamma from Kakinada strong supporter of women reforms, at the earlier for Viresalingam it took two years to find a widow who would remarry and a bridegroom for her after establishing the widow remarriages association in 1879. As noted earlier one section of the educated elite was supporting the social reform project of Viresalingam, there was also a section of the educated elite who provided leadership to the counter-reformation. In other words, it was not the orthodox Brahmins alone that were opposing the reform of Viresalingam but a section of the educated elite, some of them were employed with the colonial government, partook in the counter-reformation and provided leadership to its activities. Participation of the western educated elite in the counter-reformation had significantly shaped its response to the reformers' activities. By 1881, there were as many as 22,962 widow below the age of 14 years and 2577 widows of the same age in Andhra.”⁸

This could be observed from the conflict between the reformers and the counter-reformers after the first widow remarriage of Gogulapati Sri Ramulu and Sitamma and they planned to kidnap the groom and bride and assault Veeresalingam. They prevented the priest, the cook and the instrument players but the plans were unsuccessful because of the strong support of the students. About 500 students attended the wedding and made it a success but many of his close associates left him in the final hour and performed purification ritual later on⁹. Until the first widow remarriage, usually, the orthodox Brahmin priests and scholars used to be the challengers of reformation. They responded to the reformers with activities such as enforcing traditional sanctions; withdraw from domestic works, not having any kind of relations with them. But by the time of the first widow remarriage, some of the educated elite started to join the counter-reformation. Before the first widow remarriage, the orthodox association opposition was led by Vaidiki or priestly Brahmin scholars¹⁰. Then an association against widow marriages was formed in Rajahmundry led by Western-educated men, indicating a shift in the leadership of the orthodox opposition. “Violence used by both sides during the months after the first two widow marriages, college students fought with the young disciples of priests- resulted in the filing of lawsuits by both sides, although only the priest’s disciples were convicted. Another lawsuit filed as a consequence of the first widow marriage was far more significant. One of the Non-Smartas out casted by the Sankaracharya of Virupaksha Matta, Atmuri Lakshminarasimham, filed a court case against him. The initial decision, against the reformers was appealed to the Madras High Court in August 1882, and the caused misgivings among orthodox and reformers alike. Basavaraju Gavarraju, closest follower of Veeresalingam, filed an appeal. Its outcome was surprising. The Madras high court upheld the lower court decision with respect to Sankaracharya ecclesiastical power – he could expel people from caste but decided against Sankaracharya because of the way he had notified reformers of his action. He had sent them postcards through the mail, and this violence the laws against defamation, they fined him Rs.200. after the year 1884, serious dissension among the reformers caused the movement to lose momentum”¹¹. Only thirty widow remarriages were performed before Viresalingam’s death in 1919”¹².

⁷ Journals Published in Telugu prior to 1947, p.1to 36

⁸ Censes report of India, Madras,1818.

⁹ Statement of Suryanarayana Rao, V, A student of Veeresalingam in his autobiography, Suryanarayana was quoted in Rama Krishna, V, A Social Reform movement in Andhra,p-78

¹⁰ John Leonard and Karen Leonard, Religious controversy in British India,P-164

¹¹ Burton, Burden of History- British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial culture, 1865-1915, P-8

¹²Ibid, P-240

As noted earlier, the effect of the Counter-Reformation on the supporters of reformers was such that they feared excommunication from the Hindu society and therefore performed penance to stay back in their respective castes. Here caste played an important role. Supporters of reform feared that they would be excommunicated from their castes if they continue to support widow remarriage. Thus caste rules prevailed over them in withdrawing direct support to the reform activity. It did not mean that they completely withdrew from the social reform. Though they continue to be members of their respective castes, their caste associations and worked for their aim of improving the condition of their castes' economic and cultural standing in the Hindu socio-cultural structure, some of them still extended support to the reform. But the support was indirect in nature. For instance, Paida Ramakrishnayya a local business man from Kakinada who promised Sankaracharya that he would never fund the Rajahmundry reformers in Andhra but extended his financial support to the activity indirectly by channelling funds through the reformers of Madras. He wrote in his will that, upon his death a trust fund worth Rs 10,000 would be donated to the widow remarriage movement.

SOCIAL CAPITAL TRENDS

At the same time, the social system was changed and organizations were formed openly and tried to grab the opportunities and protect their cultural existence and get rid of implicated customs and craved for the identity. On the basis of their caste, they started journals to protect and grab the opportunity from the British India administration and also worked on literature and history. The tendency of the reformers was changed from time to time. One tried to stalk British system of society; second, identified the indigenous cultural and social indent and tried to protect the system as it was in early times and third from the middle class to protect the local indent with a Western humanitarian, rational and scientific approach to life and the doctrine of social equality. But the caste played a vital role in the social and cultural conditions.

We find both traditional and non-traditional type of organizations in the villages, functions of the caste councils or caste *Panchayat* or *Kula Panchayat* 1. One should not marry people of other caste, 2. Tribe caste marriages are not permitted 3. Widow re-marriages are not permitted 4. Adultery or extramarital sex relations are prohibited 5. Inheritance should take place in the male line 6. Divorces are not permitted; Caste councils were the most important political, social and judicial institutions.¹³ The educated people from the respective castes played vital role in functioning of *Kula Panchayat* within customs and outside as reformers and nationalist for the sake of social capital and cultural capital at the same time in the beginning of the twentieth century witnessed a series of political development which led to the formulation of anti-caste movements in different parts of colonial India. As part of reform activity a number of castes were organized into associations by the educated members of the respective castes to implement social reform and eradicate superstitions. Caste associations came into existence in Andhra and each association had its aim i.e. the improvement of the social and economical standings of its caste.¹⁴ The main objectives of these movements were to liberate Dalits from the drudgery of caste oppression and enable them to lead a life of dignity and equality. The communities journals like *Settibalija* weekly in 1909, *Aryavaishya* from 1911, *Chawdary* from 1916, *Dinabandhu* from 1917, *Niyogi* from 1920, *Kshatriyapatrika* from 1921, *Devangajyothi* from 1921, *Reddirani* from 1932, *Vaishya* from 1923, *Kapu* from 1924, *Brahmanapatrika* from 1926, for their caste. The first is the sociological approach, which sees the individual in a social and cultural environment, subject to 'norms, rules, and obligations'

The journals names, *Deccan Vaishya*, *Bharatiya Vaishya*, representing the National feeling along with their caste, the *Aryavaishya*, *Adi Andhra* journals represents cultural propensity of the castes. Changing Name of the Caste *Panchama* to *Adi-Andhra* represents the habitat social and cultural capital tendency of contemporary society. Reformers struggled on both sides to protect and safeguard their existence. The

¹³ A. Vijaya Kumari, *Social Change Among Balijas*, M.D. Publications Pvt. Ltd., 1998,p.90.

¹⁴ G. Sudharshan Reddy, *Caste Reform in Andhra 1900-1930*, Proceeding Volume of Indian History Congress, 63, Session, Amritsar, 2002,p-85.

conflict between the individual within existed customs, traditions and acquired knowledge of the East and the West, the second one was countering the orthodox section through journals and public speeches.

The activities of the reformers were a bombshell in the society and had vast publicity in an unprecedented manner. In Andhra Duvvuri Subbahamma, Perambadoor Subadharamma, Kambampatti Manikyambha, Racharla Samrajam, Buttala Kamakshamma encouraged reforms and contributed through writings.

On the other hand, the orthodox sections of the Indian society fashioned modernity formed organizations and found journals to speculate, articulate and put forward their argument against the reform and the reformers. They filed cases in Madras court against the remarried women and reformers for violating the traditional customs and culture. "Violence used by both sides during the months after the first two widow marriages, college students fought with the young disciples of priests- resulted in the filing of lawsuits by both sides, although only the priests' disciples were convicted."¹⁵

Through the writings each community tried to indent themselves with past history and also helped others with their history like Veturi Prabhakarasastry published several manuscripts related to the Reddy kingdom in Andhra in journal Reddirani which was devoted to literature and history of Reddy community. It is not the casteism like present times; it was with an objective to finding root of every community history to enhance their social and cultural capital and to come out from the western social and cultural arrogance.

CONCLUSION

Kandukure Viresalingam was one of the important personality in the Andhra Society who brought social and cultural change at the end of 19th century mainly with his students support later on by the beginning of the 20th century trends were changed in Andhra society and faced counters from his own group, orthodox section, from literary section and ne never compromised to bring down his mission and continued till his death and also his ideology gave birth to new secular and nationalistic journals in Andhra but due to the typical cultural and regional identity crises from 1905 and due to the nationalism and regionalism society was strengthened with discourse and counter-discourse for self-identity and for cultural and social capital but later on hegemony trend was rooted strongly and still Andhra society was facing this because it can be observed that the Justice party and Anti Brahmin movements were not like in core Madras presidency on Telugu people region. Caste, Capital, political power controlled the social capital of Andhra society and finally, the political power was not distributed and it was concentrated with only a few communities'.



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¹⁵ Antoinette Burton, opp, cit , P-8