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REFORMS FOR EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN DURING COLONIAL PERIOD; WITH REFERENCE TO EAST GODAVARI DISTRICT

Seelam Srinivasa Rao

ABSTRACT:

In the history of the development of women conditions, women condition has been thought of as a key factor in the development. Over the past century, there has been a dramatic increase in women conditions. Despite its safety and efficacy, Women suffered from several major drawbacks: In many research works a debate is taking place between social reformation and social reactions concerning social development and So far, however, there has been little discussion about women condition in the East Godavari District during the Colonial Period. This paper will focus on examining women in the Godavari region during pre-independent ear and this paper first gives a brief overview of the past history of Social reformation.



KEYWORDS: Social Reformation, Women, Superstations, Customs, Associations and Missionaries

SOCIAL REFORMATION:

The emancipation of women occupied a pivotal place in the activities of social reform movements in India, in general. It is understandable, for, women in this country have lived in social bondage for centuries. The position, they held, by and large, was that of glorified slaves. Women, except under the matriarchal system, did not possess property rights, essential to develop individuality and self-respect. Women suffered, broadly speaking, because of (1) lack of social liberty, (2) infant marriages, (3) polygamy, (4)

enforced widowhood, and, more importantly, (5) want of education. A contemporary writer of this time gave a vivid description of women: "Deprived of all education, confined within the four walls of the house, seeing little of the world and knowing little of it, immersed in superstition and oppressed by customs, our women to our shame be it said are no better than slaves".[1]

The new scientific outlook, the doctrine of rationalism and humanism particularly impressed the English educated class. The Indian leaders, stimulated by the new

knowledge, sought to reform Hinduism from within and sought to purge it of superstitious beliefs and practices. The ferment of ideas gave an expansive touch to Indian culture. A spirit of renaissance pervaded the whole country. India intellectuals closely scrutinized the country's past and found that many beliefs and practices were no longer of any use and needed to be discarded: they also discovered that many aspects of Indian's cultural heritage were of intrinsic value to India's cultural awakening. The result was the birth of many socio-religious

reform movements touching almost every segment of Indian society.

The Godavari region was influenced by Brahma Samaj leaders. The ideas of Raja Rammohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and Keshub Chunder Sen had a powerful impact. The followers of the Brahma Samaj movement in Andhra laid much emphasis, on social reform. People like Mr Pedabapaiah, Venkataratnam Naidu and Butchaiah Pantulu who had close contacts with the Madras Brahma Samaj also directly influenced Veeresalingam. They come to Rajahmundry to associate themselves with the work of Veeresalingam.[2]

The main function of the Prarthana Samaj which was established by Veeresalingam and his colleagues were to worship one God and practice pure theism. Social work like providing free education to the poor and the needy was also taken up by the young members of the Samaj, visiting nearby towns like Narasapur and other places in order to teach the ideals of Brahma Samaj.[3]

When education was sparse in Andhra, female education was more so. Strong opposition and apathy existed among people towards this. It was a deep-rooted belief for several years that women should not be educated. They felt that it would bring misfortune to families where girls are educated. Also, a feeling was prevalent that female education was meant only for "Devadasis" who had to learn fine arts to dance in temples and on public occasions. A prejudice so deeply rooted as this was not to be removed all of a sudden. Endless patience was necessary to undermine it gradually, and to bring about a change in public opinion on this issue. Since learning was confined to a few 'upper' castes and ruling classes in society, and hence these taboos applied only to women belonging to these sections. However, the trend set by the orthodox sections was to continue for long even in modern times not recording much progress on the issue of women's education.[4]

The backwardness of women was attributed to their ignorance resulting from the lack of education. The old pial school education was fast declining and in its place, new schools were yet to come into existence. Even by the year 1887, the position was in no way better. The first government institution of high school rank (provincial school) to be established in the coastal region of Andhra was at Rajahmundry in 1853. Establishment of the taluk schools, where English was not taught satisfactory, was the next step that the company initiated for the spread of education. The desire to learn English, perhaps for reasons of securing jobs, was so intense that the natives did not favour these taluk schools.

In the Andhra region, the orthodox sections led by Kokkonda Venkataratnam were still voicing vehement opposition to women's education. The reformers took up the issue of education for women on two grounds, viz., (1) that it would lead to social progress in general. A plea for the opening of more schools for girls was made by them. In 1872 Kokkonda started publishing articles in his journal opposing women's education. The orthodox sections, in their fears and misapprehensions with regard to this issue, resorted to quoting of ancient texts to justify their position. If the orthodox sections were led by Kokkonda, Veeresalingam led the reforming group and answered them through the columns of Purushardhapradayani.

2. SOCIAL REFORMS FOR WOMEN IN EAST GODAVARI.

In 1878 the first Prarthana Samaj was started by Veeresalingam at Rajahmundry. That was the first of its kind in Godavari region. He constructed the first Brahma Mandir in the Andhra country at Rajahmundry in 1887, he constructed a Widows' Home, a two-storied building and a similar one for the Social Reform Association at Madras; he started the first theistic high school, the Hithakarini School at Rajahmundry in 1908; during the same year he willed away all his property for the benefit of Rajahmundry Widows' Home and the school, and placed them under the management of an association, the Hithakarini Samaj. The movement spread from Rajahmundry to Coconada, Parlakimedi, Palakole, Narsapur, Vijayawada and Tenali[5] People like Raghupathi Venkataratnam Naidu, Pedabapaiah and Unnava Lakshminarayana played a significant role in the reform movements as his associates.

Brahma Samaj at Cocanada was established in 1888. Like the Samaj at Rajahmundry, the members of the Cocanada Samaj also visited villages near Cocanada to preach the Brahma ideals.[6] Raghupati Venkatarathnam, the principle of P.R College, was responsible for inculcating the Pithapuram Raja into the Brahma faith and it was under the influence of him that the Raja rendered

great help in building a number of Choultries, hospitals and providing free boarding and lodging for the depressed classes.[7] The following table shows the places where Brahma Samaj's were established in East Godavari District.[8]

Brahma Samajas in East Godavari District:

Table-I

S.No.	Place	Year	Permanent Person
1	Pithapuram	1907	Mokkapati Subba Raidu (Diwar of Pitapuram) Koka Venkata Subba Rao
2	Peddapuram	1907	The Raja of Peddapuram
3	Tuni	1915	Pulavarthi Subba Rao
4	Alamuru	1930	Muthula Krishnayya, Kurma Naganna, Pusalapati Appala Swami
5	Ramachandrapuram	N.A	Eli Vadapalli,
6	Mummiduvaram	N.A	Koka Venkata Subba Rao, Khambhampati Rama Sastry

Veerasingam was pleading through the columns of his journal 'Vivekavardhani' for the publication of specially prepared textbooks for the Girls schools and suggested to the government that they should institute awards for their compilation. Citing the example of the establishment of a Girls' High School at Poona, Veeresalingam requested the government of Madras to open a similar institution in the Andhra region also. As a fitting finale to his efforts, he started a Girls' school at Rajahmundry in 1881. Veeresalingam translated his ideas in this regard into practical activity by starting a girls' lower secondary school as an appendage to the widows' home in Rajahmundry. The school gradually gained importance and even those women who were under seclusion started attending the classes unmindful of the opposition and adverse comments from the elders in the family and orthodox sections in society.[9]

Girls' education was patronized by the Rajah of Pithapuram. A girls' school was started at Kakinada in 1868 with a monthly contribution of Rs. 100/- (recurring expenses), and Rs. 300/- per annum towards the purchase of prizes to be given away to girls of special merit. Furthermore, he denoted a site and an amount of Rs. 900/- for the construction of a school on this site. A plea for the opening of more schools for girls was made by them. In 1872 Kokkonda Venkataratnam started publishing articles in his journal opposing women's education. If the orthodox sections were led by Kokkonda, Veeresalingam led the reforming group and answered them through the columns of Purushardhapradayani. His ideas in this subject bore fruit in 1874 when a Girls' school was started in Dowaleswaram.[10]

3. MISSIONARIES

The missionaries were the pioneers in women's education in Madras presidency. Between 1830 and 1837 several boarding and day schools were opened in Madras by the London Mission, the Wesleyan Mission, the American Mission and the Church Missionary Society. In the initial stages, only converts used to attend these schools as caste girls were not allowed to go to these schools. The first caste girls' school was opened in 1843 under the 'zenana' education (for women of the middle and upper classes). The progress made by the missionaries (according to the reports of the director of public instruction) in female education was a little more than six-fold between the years 1866-67 and 1876-77. Concerning the Andhra region, the claims of certain writers that there were no girls' schools prior to the one started by the initiative taken by Veeresalingam in 1874 at Dowaleswaram is not correct.[11] Besides the contribution of the missionaries, a few local attempts also merit our attention.

Concerning the Andhra region, the claims of certain writers that there were no girls' schools prior to the one started by the initiative taken by Veerasalingam in 1874 at Dowalelswaram is not correct. The missionaries had already started a few elementary schools.

3.1 The Godavari Delta Mission:

Captain Sir Arthur Cotton, a military engineer, was urged by some of his European friends to establish a mission station in the Godavari delta area where he constructed the dam at Dhavaleswaram. From England, he brought with him Rev. Bowdon and Beer. They established a mission station at Narsapur in Godavari delta in 1836. [12]

3.2 The Canadian Baptist Mission:

The Canadian Baptist mission was started on October 18, 1867, by Dr Moos Duck. The missionary of Canadian Baptist mission decided to start gospel work in India. Rev. Timpany and Rev. John McLaurin left the American Baptist Telugu mission in 1784 and went to Kakinada to found the Canadian Baptist mission and they began their evangelistic work.[13] The objectives of the Church were equality and liberty of believers.

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Total Emancipation of women can be done only through the free-minded education with the effort of the contemporary intellectual class with western thought through by imbibed the emerged social and cultural customs.

CONCLUSION

To reform the society by education the society in masses during the colonial period it was really a challenging task to the reformers. Instead of bringing change with the rational thought society tried to establish the orthodox pattern and interestingly we can find the contradictory trends in the society. One in the name of nationalism society is fighting for social equality political freedom and second one society was not in a position to accept the social equality and gender equality within the system. Even the women played a vital when the freedom fighters are jailed by the Britishers the women in the family took the responsibility to lead the reformers with rational outlook and struggled a lot to bring change in women conditions since the social barriers are very strong to not to involve in other community customs and traditions. In that scenario, reformers started reforming their basic community and later on came out into public form. But it is very clear since the reformers reformed with their community and later moved towards the society but the society not accepted very easily and they struggled a lot to sustain and at the same time the alternative steps and support from the British for reformation and establishment the rate schools and missionary schools.

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