

**CULTURAL AND IDEOLOGICAL MEDIATION OF
TELUGU CINEMA IN COLONIAL ANDHRA, 1931-1947**

A Thesis Submitted to the
University of Hyderabad
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
HISTORY

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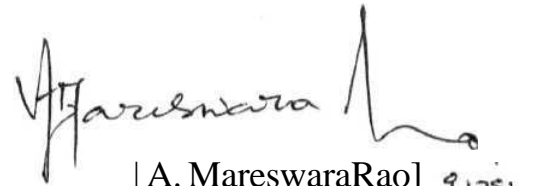
1997

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work embodied in this Thesis entitled **CULTURAL AND IDEOLOGICAL MEDIATION OF TELUGU CINEMA IN COLONIAL ANDHRA, 1931-1945**, carried out by me under the Supervision of Prof.V. Ramakrishna, Professor and Head, Department of History, School of Social Sciences, University to Hyderabad, is original and this has not been submitted for any other degree either in part or in full to any other University or this University.

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However, any mistakes or drawbacks in the work are entirely mine.


[A. Mareswara Rao] 9.12.97

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: HISTORIAN AND FILM STUDIES

Cinema medium is a powerful tool for the propagation and extension of any given ideology, as it can reach millions of people. The tremendous impact that the controversial film, **Bombay**, directed by Mani Ratnam had on popular culture, in tune with the ideology of Siva Sena chief, Bal Thackeray is the best example. Feudalism, though outlived in western civilization, still has a say in India. Age old conventions are still found continuing within Indian society. Religion, caste, community and a host of traditional value systems are playing a major role in the lives of Indian people. In society, religion not only plays a pivotal role in articulating social relations but also legitimizes state power. Early films no doubt had social concern. But they mirrored pre-modern ideologies and value systems as the nature of colonial modernity was such that both the aspects were never turned contradictory to each other." Present attempt is a detailed study of cultural and ideological contours of Telugu cinema of pre-independent era.

It is no wonder, as the saying goes, that one may find a person who was not wet by the rain but not seen a film. It is amazing to know that cinema was born to picture the racing horses in race courses. The hair-breadth difference of racing horses can be noticed only through a movie camera which ordinary camera fails

¹On colonial modernity, see Bipan Chandra, "Colonialism and Modernization," in his **Nationalism and Colonialism in Modern India**, New Delhi, 1979, pp.1-37; A.K.Bagchi, **Private Investment in India, 1900-1939**, New Delhi, 1972 and **The Political Economy of Underdevelopment**, Cambridge, 1982, Indian edition, 1989.

to do.² Cinema is the most popular medium of entertainment throughout the country. It is exerting maximum influence in shaping the minds of the people. Many intellectuals, ignoring its potential, look down upon cinema with contempt.

In a developing country like India, where more than 50 percent of people are illiterates, cinema is the most popular medium in reaching out to the rural folk. It is an instrument that helps bring consciousness. Unlike literature, cinema is at their beck and call. Cinema is also a combination of all arts and science/technology. The portrayal of Shakuntala by Kalidas in all its richness could be made to materialise only on silver screen. In the film, **Shakuntala** of Shantaram,³ there is a marvellous frame: when Dushyanta goes for hunting all the mild animals run away frightened. Fearful atmosphere dawns upon the jungle. Such an atmosphere can never possibly be shown on stage by any director, however, great he or she might be. But it is possible to recreate the poetic imagination in the medium like cinema.

²Krishnabai and Prasad, "Influence of Cinema: Society-Cinema," in **Chaaya-Souvenir**, 1977, [Chaaya, a film society in Visakhapatnam] pp.19-21.

³Shantaram began his career in Bombay with a film based on Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* [1943]. It was a Rajakamal Kalamandir production; Jayashree and Chandra Mohan played the lead roles. See Veritas, "An Institution Unto Himself: Sixty Years in Show Biz," in T.M. Ramachandran [ed.], **50 Years of Indian Talkies, 1931-1981**, Bombay, 1981, p.27.

Cinema can have varied influences on the society. While defeat of love is shown in **Devadas**, the positive aspect of life is highlighted in Shantaram's **Admi** and **Parchhain**. Gudavalli Ramabrahmam produced **Rytu Bidda** at a time when feudalism had been struggling to retain its social and cultural roots despite colonial modernity.⁴ The contrast, of course, is the recent movie, **Premnagar**, believed to be a *kalakhandam* [master piece] that celebrates the dead feudal culture and life.⁵

Film industry is prone to all evils as of any other industry. It represents a bourgeois culture, where the objective of art is to give pleasure. Patriarchy is part of bourgeois culture.⁶ In this system woman is an object of beauty and a symbol of biological reproducer of male lineage. Due to the colonial peculiarities the bourgeois culture in India has ushered in, not by destroying feudalism, but by incorporating its value system. But the irony is that the main consumers of cinemas are common and lower middle class people and thereby the financial backbone to the industry. The hegemonization of popular classes with various cultural forms is essential for the bourgeois rule. And cinema is one such form. Through *patiwratya* ideology this class is controlling half the

⁴Krishnabai and Prasad, **Op.Cit.**, p.20.

⁵Interview with Kakarala, a character artist of Telugu cinemas, Madras, dated 15 April 1994.

⁶Kodavatiganti Kutumba Rao, "Cinema parisramalo Avalakshanalu" in **Chitra Samskara**, September 1978, pp.12-14. [**Chitra Samskara** is a monthly journal in Telugu of Vijayawada Film Society.]

population, i.e., women. In the present study an attempt is made to analyse cinemas in order to show how patriarchy in bourgeois system operates.

Irrespective of class, caste and religion or social and political differences all people view cinemas. What is in cinema that mesmerizes all and sundry; what are its historical roots? What are the historical processes that influenced the evolution of cinema in Telugu? The differential impact of cinema on the society and also the varied response of social classes to it are the other interesting questions that are addressed in this work.

The history of Telugu cinemas began with mythologicals; the social films were produced only from 1938. The widespread social and caste reform movements, national liberation struggles and peasant movements all had their influence on Telugu cinemas. Themes like untouchableness (**Mala Pilla**, 1938); temperance (**Grihalakshmi**, 1938); widow marriage (**Malli Pelli**, 1939); dowry (**Varavikrayam**, 1939) and Zamindari issue (**Rytu Bidda**, 1939) were taken up. The visual depiction of these issues was so powerful that they had awakened people in Andhra in late 1930s and early 1940s and contributed for the transformation of their consciousness. The film, **Griha Pravesam** (1945), was of a different category, for the crucial contemporary issue, feminism was, for the first time, depicted in it. A historical film, **Palnati Yuddham** (1947), was also of this period. All this had been happening in a social and

cultural atmosphere which was permeated by feudal ideology. Therefore, despite some progressive deviations, most of the films still refracted the dominant feudal ideology. Feudal ideology legitimizes the interests of "the God, the King and the Feudal Lord and the Patriarch."⁷ The hegemonization process of these interests and ideas as articulated in the films is brought to light in this work.

Historiography:

"Cinema is the only Book that even illiterate can read."

The period of this study, 1931 to 1947, was a crucial one in the colonial history of India. The electoral institutions and legislative methods of struggle were already emerging as the dominant forms of highlighting popular grievances in society. The preceding half-a-decades' development of commercial agriculture contributed to the emergence of dominant rural elite. Politically, Gandhiji and his method of struggle were in full control of the anti-colonial struggle. A call to mass Civil Disobedience was in the offing. The ever increasing circulation of vernacular press began to shape the public opinion. It was a period of cultural and political revival. Since it was an age of mass politics, the role of mass media is important without any doubt. The silent cinema has already been doing wonders by attracting crowds. The themes,

⁷Su Ra, "Rangula Vala: a socio-political introduction of Telugu cinema," in **Srujana**, [Telugu, monthly], January 1983.

opinions and crusades of popular entertainment, i.e., cinema therefore, reflected all these rather conflicting ideas and aspirations of the colonial society.

While tracing the growth of popular movements in modern period, historians so far have been relying upon archival material. They use contemporary press as a source of information. Historians have yet to concede that the visual medium like films can be a valuable source for serious historical study of Indian society.

The media studies are increasingly attracting the attention of historians in the West. The study of feature films, for instance, is an important part of their historiography on the political, social and cultural change in the 20th century. We are convinced that in general, film is one of the most modern and far reaching methods of influencing the social consciousness or what the French historians would term the 'collective mentalities.'⁸ There is an increasing feeling that a regime thus must not allow film to go its own way, as it will have a far reaching influence on the social consciousness.⁹ Hitler's Fourth Army, after the conventional army,

⁸The innovative way the concept of "mentalities" is applied in various studies, see Michel Vovelle, "A Century and One-half of American Epitaphs (1660-1813): Toward the Study of Collective Attitudes about Death," in **Comparative Studies In Society and History**, Vol.22, 1980, pp.534-47; Andre Burguiere, "The Fall of the History of *Mentalities* in the *Annales*," in *ibid.*, Vol.24, No.3, July 1982, pp.423-37;

⁹Speech by Joseph Goebbels. Quotation appeared in David Weinberg, "Approaches to the Study of Film in the Third Reich: A Critical Appraisal," in the **Journal of Contemporary History**,

navy and air force, was propaganda, of which the psychological atom bomb was the film.¹⁰ Such is the importance of film. Film, the new spectacle, which Eisenstein had claimed, was the heir of all existing arts.¹¹ It is as important to a modern historian as what a temple art and architecture is to an ancient and medieval historian. Unlike the ancient and medieval historians, the contemporary historian of film is dealing with a new cultural product: Cinema. The projector created the cinema and through the cinema, film became the first mass medium in history. This medium was such that through it virtually any kind of views and information could be conveyed to almost every member of society.¹² "Film, in other words, is uniquely equipped to record and reveal physical reality and, hence gravitates towards it."¹³ The value of the feature film as an historical source is similar to that of a single artistic or literary document used in intellectual or social history.¹⁴

Vol.19, No.1, January 1984, p.105.

¹⁰**Ibid.**

¹¹Marc Ferro, "Film as an Agent, Product and Source of History," in the **Journal of Contemporary History**, Vol.18, No.3, July 1983, p.357.

¹²Nicholas Pronoy, "The Moving Picture and Historial Research" in **Journal of Contemporary History**, Vol.18, 1983, p.367.

¹³Siegfried Kracauer, "From Theory Of Film: Basic Concepts," in Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen [ed.], **Film Theory And Criticism: Introductory Readings**, New York, 1974, p.8.

¹⁴R.C. Raack, "Historiography as Cinematography: A Prolegomenon to Film Work for Historians," in **Journal of Contemporary History**, Vol.18, 1983, p.414.

The importance of film as a study of history is well observed with the case of USSR. The context of Soviet Cinema in 1920s and early 1930s has been formed by four principal factors: the aesthetic, the ideological, the technical and the audience factors.¹⁵

In the feature films, which we have taken up for our study, importance is attached to their cultural and ideological contours. So far, at the All India level considerable research has been done on cinemas. Some of the readings we indicate below, particularly those we consider significant:

1. Erik Barnouw and S. Krishna Swamy's book, **Indian Film**, is historically speaking an authentic one.
2. T.M. Ramachandran [Ed.] **50 Years of Indian Talkie (1931-1981)** is a compilation of different articles written by eminent persons on Indian cinema. It is a Cinema India Publication, Bombay, 1985.
3. **A Pictorial History of Indian Cinema** was written by Firoze Rangoonwalla.
4. Ravi Sankar Vasudevan's unpublished Ph.D Thesis, titled **Errant Males and the Divided Woman: Melodrama and Sexual Differences in the Hindi Social Films of 1950s**, University of Amsterdam, U.K., 1991.
5. Gaston Roberge has written, **Another Cinema for Another Society**, Seagul Books, Calcutta, 1985.
6. Gayatri Chatterjee's **Awara**, a Wiley Eastern Publication (1992), Bombay, is a detailed study on Raj Kapoor's **Awara** film.
7. Chidananda Das Gupta's **Talking About Films** was published by Orient Longman in 1981.

¹⁵Richard Taylor, "A 'Cinema for the Millions': Soviet Socialist Realism and the Problem of Film Comedy," in **Journal of Contemporary History**, London, Vol.18, 1983, p.440.

8. Vinayak Purohit has written about **Sociology of Indian Films**. It was published by Indian Institute of Social Research, Bombay in 1990.
9. R.D. Jain wrote **The Economic Aspect of Film Industry in India**. It's an Atma Ram publication, New Delhi, 1960.
10. **Fifty years of Indian Talkies 1931-1981**, by K.A. Abbas was published by Academy of Motion Pictures, Arts and Sciences, December, 1981.
11. B.V. Dharap, **Indian Films**, 1975.
12. Aruna Vasudev [ed.], **Indian Cinema Superbazaar**, Vikas, New Delhi, 1983.

Some Historiography on South Indian Films:

1. S. Theodore Baskaran's **The Message Bearers: The nationalist Politics and the Entertainment Media in South India, 1880-1945**, published by Cre-A., in 1981, is a standard one.
2. M.S.S. Pandian wrote **The Image Trap: M.G. Ramachandran in Film and Politics**, Sage Publication, New Delhi, 1992.
3. Sara Dickey's **Cinema And the Urban Poor In South India**, Cambridge University Press, 1993, is also a praiseworthy work in film historiography.
4. CA. Radhabai 's **An Economic Survey of Cinematographic Industry in Madras Presidency**, Thesis submitted to Madras University in the year 1940, is a pioneering work on the history of cinematography.
5. Robert L. Hardgrave did commendable work on M.G.R. His article, "The Celluloid God: MGR.," in **South Asian Review**, Vol.V, No.4, July 1971, is worth looking at.
6. Ms.P. Rukmani submitted her Ph.D Thesis to Madras University in December 1987. The title of this unpublished thesis is **The South In the Making of the Indian Film Industry 1913-1955**.
7. Another Madras University doctoral thesis on film history is **Film and Politics in Tamil Nadu 1947-80**, by R. Stephen Samuel (1983).
8. Similarly, S.Lakshmanan submitted in 1981 to Madras University a doctoral thesis, entitled **Gandhi and Marx: A Comparative Study of Their Socio-political philosophies**.

As per the Telugu Cinema, it is rather disheartening that not many research works on films with a historical perspective have appeared so far. The limited works produced so far are:

1. K. Jayasree, **Influence of Cinema on Indian National Movement in Madras Presidency 1920-1947**, Unpublished M.Phil dissertation, Osmania University, Hyderabad, 1989.
2. Chittibiyina Koteswara Rao, **Cinema Patallo Sahityapu Viluwalu - Sanghikalu 1936-1986**, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis in Telugu, Andhra University, Waltair, 1988.
3. G. Bangaraiah, **Problems and Prospects of Film Exhibition Units: A case study of units in Visakhapatnam District, Andhra Pradesh**, Ph.D. Thesis, Andhra University, Waltair, 1988.
4. Birudavolu Maithili, **Telugu Navala: Cine Jivita Chitrana**, Ph.D. Thesis, S.V. University, Tirupati, 1987.
5. T. Gouri Shankar, **Telugu Cinema Patallo Sahiti Mutyalu**, Ph.D. Thesis, Osmania University, Hyderabad, 1985.
6. K.H. Lakshmana Rao, **Influence of Folk Literature on Telugu Film Songs**, M.Phil dissertation, Osmania University, Hyderabad, 1979.

The published books on Telugu Cinema with full narration of stories are:

- (I) Randor Guy, **B.N.Reddi: A Monograph**, National Film Archive of India, Pune, 1985.
- (ii) K.N.T. Sastry [Compiled and Edited], **Telugu Cinema** [An Anthology of Articles], Cinema Group, Hyderabad, 1986.
- (iii) Pydipala, **Telugu Cinema Paata**, Sneha Publishers, Madras, 1992.
- (iv) Bhanumati Ramakrihsna's book **Naaloo Neenu** [Autobiography in Telugu], Cinema Group Press, Visalandhra Pub., Hyderabad, 1993.
- (v) Prabhu, **Swarnayugam lo Annapurna**, [Telugu] Visalandhra Book House, Hyderabad, 1993.
- (vi) K.N.T. Sastry, **L.V.Prasad: A Monograph**, Wiley Eastern Limited, New Delhi, 1993.

- (vii) Maddali Raghuram [compiled], **Aravaiyella Telugu Cinema**, [Telugu] Kinnera Publications, Hyderabad, 1994.
- (viii) K.N.T. Sastry, **Alanati Chalana Chitram** [Telugu], Cinema Group, Hyderabad, 1995.
- (ix) P.S. Rao, **Vandella Venditera**, Prajasakthi Bookhouse, Vijayawada, 1997.
- (x) Namala Visweswara Rao [Compiled], **Telugu Cinema** [Telugu], Progressive Communications, Hyderabad, 1997.

Erik Barnouw and S. Krishna Swamy studied Indian film as a scholarly subject. Their book is a reference volume to a film historian. From 1895 to 1979, all major events associated with the film industry are codified. Rest of the works on Indian films are studies of a specific aspect or broadly informative as that of T.M. Ramachandran's edited volume **50 Years of Indian Talkies**: it is rather a compilation of different articles. Ravi Vasudevan tackled the issues in a different angle but his study is of 1950s films.

In South India, Theodore Baskaran's study is noteworthy. It can be treated on par with Erik Barnouw's work. Theodore Baskaran surpassed the duo, Erik Barnouw and S. Krishna Swamy. A living connection between the tide of nationalism and cinema is well established by him. By all means, S. Theodore Baskaran's work is a monumental one, as it gives very rare original materials on the new **communicative** media, theater and cinema. There was, in Tamilnadu, a towering personality like Staya Murthy who evinced keen **interest** in cinema. He realised that cinema is a powerful mass medium. Nationalism and Tamil cinema went hand in glove. Baskaran, nc

doubt, maps out all these dimensions, but unfortunately, his interest in nationalism overshadowed social aspect of the **film**. Man-woman relationship, family, social evils, social reform, etc., were not covered adequately. His interest was rather cinema and politics. Similarly, other works on cinema were predominantly concerned with political aspects of the media. It is only Sara Dickey who deviated the path and took up a case study of cinemas' influence on urban mass, with a case study of Madurai. How the urban people's lives are inseparable from cinemas is **narrated** convincingly by Sara Dickey. She says, melodrama in films **attract** viewers and provides escape from day-to-day pressures and problems. She did an in-depth study of three films: **Sindhu Bairavi** [1985], **Amman Koovil Kizhakkaalee** ("The East Side of Amman Temple") [1985], and **Patikkaatavan** ("Illiterate Fellow") [1985]. Methodologically, she has just portrayed the events and failed to provide an ideological explanation of social phenomena.

In the works that are available on Telugu cinema, the relationship between cinemas and literature is taken up for a detailed study. K.Jayasree's work is a humble attempt to show the relation between nationalism and cinema. Very much under the influence of Tamil film historians, she too did not take up detailed case studies, probably for want of space and time. G.Bangaraiah's work, on the other hand, looks at the economics of films. He had confined his study to Visakhapatnam district only.

The present work is taken up to cover up the lacunae seen in the historiography on films reviewed in the preceding pages. Our attempt is a different one, in so far as the emphasis is on cultural and ideological dimensions of Telugu cinema. The objective of our study is to analyse the role of cinema as a medium; its ideological mediation between social, political and cultural consciousness. Film, and the culture and society in which it is produced are broadly analysed. Popular film can be used to read or diagnose the state of mind of those large sectors of society to which popular films appeal. The insights gained from such diagnosis can in turn be used to formulate programmes or policies that would have popular appeal. Cinema has been studied to show how it was not merely giving a new shape to old cultural form but was also an instrument of change. In this study, the origin and growth of film is dealt within this framework. A thorough study of socio, economic and cultural background is made and it is against this backdrop a critical study of every social picture is undertaken. Much importance is given to changes in social life: the cultural and ideological struggles in the urban middle classes and the rural peasant families. In total, seventeen pictures are studied in depth. In the history of Indian cinema, the Telugu cinemas produced in the late 1930s are outstanding compared to their counterparts in other states. Film makers like Gudavalli Ramabrahmam and B.N.Reddy got national fame. It is a glorious period in the history of Telugu films.

CONCEPTS: An EXPLANATORY NOTES

CULTURE: Improvement (mental or physical) by training is called culture. Culture is a state of intellectual development of a society. Customs, arts, social institutions, etc., of a particular group or people denote culture.¹⁶ Some feel culture is an intellectual phenomenon concerning about spiritual values: like religion, philosophy, laws, literature, music, arts, etc. But material culture is the base that produced the above. It is a question of production and the social surplus. Surplus contributes to the growth of culture, e.g., social surplus made it possible to build pyramids, Great Wall of China and Taj Mahal. Forces of production and relations of production are important. The interaction between the forces of production and the relations of production gives shape to a given social formation.

In common parlance, we think of only dominant culture, i.e., culture of the ruling classes. But there is another segment: culture of the ruled, the culture of the majority. This may not be seen or considered prominently. But it is there alive among the people: popular culture or folk culture. It is part and parcel of people and their daily living. All music and other fine arts are born in human labour: daily chores of life, their sufferings,

¹⁶Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Fourth ed., Oxford, 1989, p.291.

tears, joys, etc.¹⁷ As D.D.Kosambi said, all popular customs, beliefs, cultural forms are taken from people in their tribal or primitive form. The elite class developed them by adding rituals and other ceremonies, i.e., the process of Sanskritising and refining and taking them back to people. It reminds us what Marx said, "From people and again back to people." Thus culture is something more comprehensive than just art or religion, that it comprises not only the social relationships but it is also intrinsically connected with the modes and relations of production, the development of productive forces and the distribution of labour as well as its fruits.¹⁸ It is a myth that India's culture is eternal, based on religion, other worldliness, spirituality, mysticism, going back to the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* and it remained the same up to this very day. It will be important to see that religion and cultural values have always been changing, that they take their origin under specific historical, socio-economic and political conditions and that even if the values seem to remain the same, they may acquire different functions and meanings in the

¹⁷**Examples** - During sowing, harvesting, road making, boat rowing and house building operations they sing. Song, dance, painting (cave painting), sculpture, pottery and even religion were born like this.

¹⁸**Gabriele Dietrich, Culture, Religion and Development**, Madras, 1978, p.6. 'For official purposes it is common to refer to the rich cultural heritage of our country.' In such references, people have usually in mind art, music or literature and sometimes religion. The richness has to do not only with skills, refinement and erudition but also with variety in form, colour and rhythm material.

changing society.¹⁹ It is important to be aware of the fact that the different phases of unfolding the productive forces are accompanied by their own culture in terms of organisation of society, language, values, religion, artistic self expression, attitudes, etc. It is a common place observation that tribals who live as food gatherers have certain values of sharing and mutual aid, have values which are not shaped by the money economy and the laws of the market. They have their own religion, art, music, dance and customs which are quite distinct from the culture of an agricultural village with different castes and private ownership in land. It is also obvious that there are parts of the countryside in which the production is organised in a much more traditional way (feudal or semi-feudal: landlords who do not work on the land but have bonded labourers working, employ traditional methods of agriculture, and use surplus more for consumption and status symbols than for reinvestment) , while in other parts we find capitalist farming (i.e., rich farmers who supervise modernised production with methods of green revolution, pay wage labour and reinvest their surplus). Accordingly, it is possible to talk of feudal values or capitalist values in describing the respective ethos and self expressions of these different ways of doing agriculture. Similar differences **can** also be observed between urban and rural life styles. Often different kinds of values co-exist side by side.²⁰

¹⁹**Ibid.**, p.12.

²⁰**Ibid.**, p.13.

Culture is the social personality of a group of people. Culture is a particular way of life and experienced in three main areas: thought, institutions and rituals.

(a) Thought - What a particular group thinks about themselves, others and the world, and the various ways they have of expressing their thoughts. These include, art - how people feel about themselves in the world; mythology - the stories they create to solve existential problems, ideology - the uncritical thinking justifying their way of life; history - the collective memory of their past; communication methods - from torn torn to satellite telecommunications, language- tongue, gesticulation and other **non-verbal** expressions; tradition - collective vision mummified.

(b) Institutions - created by a social group to keep the group united and orderly, the police; the mass media - moulding public opinion into a consensus to protect the group from outside aggression, to propagate itself the family, the educational system; to exchange goods, commerce, monetary and bank systems, industry labour organisation.

© Rituals - Rituals or established manners of performing certain collective actions : voting, sports competitions, religious ceremonies, funeral rites, national festivals, wars, courts of law. To these can be added a large number of daily actions which tend to take on the character of rites like the morning reading of

newspaper, bathing, shopping or dressing up according to circumstances.

All the elements of thought, institutions and rituals are integrated in a living, but somewhat fragile in their unity-²¹

A culture is what the members of a social group identify most readily with. Changes in culture bring about crises of **identity** and cause insecurity feelings which often result in violence. It should be the role of artists and educators to help their people to be sensitive to cultural changes and to integrate these in a manner which enriches them instead of rendering them cultural cripples.

CULTURE and RELIGION: While culture in the broader sense comprises all the material and intellectual as well as spiritual achievements of a society, religion tries to answer the question what life is all about. In traditional society religion formulated the core values of society. We can broadly define religion as a system of beliefs, values, symbols and practices which give **meaning** to the individual, to groups, to society as a whole and to the cosmos - all this with reference to some ultimate reality. Ultimate reality can mean one supreme being, or several gods, it can also mean some ultimate essence of all that exists as e.g. in

²¹Gaston Roberge, **Mediation**, New Delhi, 1978, pp.40-42.

early Buddhism or in the monism of advaita philosophy.²² Four basic types of religious authority which occur in many religions are the priest, the prophet, the saint and the mystic. In India we know of many saints in Islam as well as in Hinduism and it is a special feature that saintliness has a political appeal as can best be seen in personality like Mahatma Gandhi (Vinoba and Jayaprakash). At the village level one may often be confronted with types of religious authorities of a lesser order like *mantrikas*, sorcerers, exorcists, etc. The same is true with respect to the pseudo-religious charisma of film heroes which in states of Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh directly transferred into politics.

CULTURE, RELIGION and IDEOLOGY: In traditional society, the ideology which gave authority to the state and enforced the social structure, was directly derived from religion. The nationalist movement used religion in its different phases. To Gandhi the nationalist movement definitely had a religious dimension. The social cultural transformation, Gandhi aimed at did not go far enough and he was criticised for this by people like Ambedkar.

An ideology is a system (possessing its own logic and rigour) of representation (images, myths, ideas or concepts, as the case may be) existing and having a historical role within a given

²²Gabriele Dietrch, **Culture, Religion and Development**, op.cit., p.14.

society.²³ An ideology is a system of representations, the awareness a society has of itself-, the manner in which a society wishes to appear to its own eyes, the doubt of itself which it creates and in which it finds its own `raison d'etre', the screen behind which a society hides itself in order to create rationalizations, religious feelings and external certitudes often expressed in sublime philosophies.²⁴

The sets of beliefs which legitimize the interests of the dominant powers is ideology or in other words a set of ideas adopted by a group to hegemonise their power over other sections. Ideology is a system of ideas that aspires both to explain the world and to change it.²⁵ The Cinema's particular ideological function is integrated within this general definition.

CINEMA: Cinema like any cultural expression is a montage of diverse influences and a many layered set of aesthetic values. Some of Indian cinema's basic features go back to two thousand years to Sanskrit drama; others are drawn from the kaleidoscopic folk theater that has kept dramatic traditions alive over the

²³Louis Althusser, "Marxism and Humanism," in Christopher Williams [ed.], **Realism and the Cinema**, Part III, **Forms and Ideologies**, Delhi, p.177.

²⁴Gaston Roberge, **Mediation**, Op.Cit., pp.96-8.

²⁵**The New Encyclopaedia Britannica**, Vol.9, Chicago, 1973, p.194.

centuries.²⁶ Cinema today is the single largest dissemination of popular culture, dominant leisure activity, mass entertainment. Despite the growth of television and availability of other means of entertainment, cinema remains the most popular audio-visual medium of entertainment for the masses which is a basic necessity. Cinema is supposed to be a synthesis of several arts. In 1922 Lenin wrote: "of all the arts, for us the cinema is the most important."²⁷ Cinema is desired to contribute to social change. Cinema in India is no longer only a medium of entertainment but has emerged as a major art form which gives expression to the vision of distinguished creative artists. The wide popularity of cinema and its known strength as an audio visual medium of communication invest this medium with a pervasive power for social influence. Cinema has, therefore, the potential to play an important role as a medium of enlightenment, information and education and as a catalyst for social change. Cinema is a major industry in India involving fairly high levels of investment and engages a significant number of people of semi-skilled, highly skilled and creative variety. It generates considerable amount of revenues for the government with very little investment of public funds.²⁸

²⁶Raghunath Raina, "The Context: A Social Cultural Anatomy," in Aruna Vasudev [ed.], **Indian Cinema Superbazaar**, New Delhi, 1983, p.2.

²⁷Richard Taylor, "A Cinema for the Millions," **Op.Cit.**, p.445. Also see, V.I.Lenin, **On Literature and Art**, Moscow, 1970 and A. Karaganov, **Cinema Ideology Box-Office**, Moscow, 1974.

²⁸"Report of the Working Group on National Film Policy, New Delhi, 1980," in Gaston Roberge, **Another Cinema for Another Society**, Calcutta, 1985, pp.66-72.

CINEMA and IDEOLOGY: The entertaining process of cinema commands absolute submission from the spectator. Disguised as humour, the cinema inculcates a set of values to the masses. Cinema becomes an agent of an ideology; an ideology which can be imposed only by a constant erasure of the awareness which in its process seeks justification for its own values and beliefs.²⁹ The function of the dominant ideology is mainly to justify the role of the dominant group in a society. For the survival of any social system, needs must ensure that along with the production process, the means of production and relations of production continue intact. In a society which has class conflicts, a major activity of the ruling class is to make sure that the circumstances are created for continuing its production needs. The repressive state apparatuses like the legal system, the police, the army and the prison as well as the ideological apparatuses like religion, family, workers union, politics, cultural movements, all these come to the aid to the ruling classes. When the various apparatuses used for oppression are polarised, under a central rule, the working of the ideological agencies also get polarised by their utter submission to the interests of the rulers. Thus it is not possible for the ruling to power function without establishing its hegemony on the two groups of the apparatuses mentioned earlier. Therefore one main objective in class conflicts is to win over the ideological weapons. Immediate concern of the rulers' ideology is the

²⁹Ravindran, "Cinema and Ideology", in **Malayalam Cinema: 50 Years**, Bombay, 1989, p.59.

justification and maintenance of the existing sense of values. This in turn is a justification and maintenance of the existing relations of production. This is reinforcing the passage of historical progress. Like other ideological establishments, artistic operations also are involved in such an operation.³⁰

Cinema is a popular form of art being consumed extensively by the masses. Therefore the basic interest of film production comes to be its marketability. The mechanical and mindless repetition of the context, type characters, type sequences, type styles all these standardise the language of the cinema and even its technique with an inevitability to be used as ideological weapons. Thus content largely safeguards and justifies the ideological interests of the ruling **class**.

As Althusser said, "Man, naturally is an ideological **animal**." His very birth is into the belief of ideology. Therefore, film making, perception of reality and all human functions have an ideological grain. The existent ideology has its base in the beliefs and interests of the ruling class.³¹

Many a movie is made each year. All of them have apparently different plots. It is a repetitive action based on a few, basic

³⁰Ravindran, **Ibid.**, p.60. Ravindran took up the ideas of Althusser from his book on **Lenin and Philosophy**.

³¹Ravindran, **Ibid.**, p.61.

plots. Of course, a few cosmetic changes could be discussed in placement of sequences, in presentation, in emotional planes, in art and in music. The reason for this is not the poverty of imagination of the scenarists like H.M. Reddy, R.S. Prakash, Y.V. Rao, C. Pullaiah, Gudavalli Ramabrahmam, B.N Reddy, K.V. Reddy, K.S. Prakasa Rao, Adurthi Subba Rao, Kamalakara Kameswara Rao, V. Madhusudna Rao, K. Viswanath, Bapu, Dasari Narayana Rao, etc. The reason lies in the fact that no given social set up has anything more to say or wants to say anything more. All the crises and situations have been codified and organised in terms of the existing ideology. All functions of communications become the servant of ideology.³² The political power that Marudur Gopalamenon: Ramachandran [MGR] or Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao [NTR] derived comes as a corollary of the acceptance of the ideology fattened on the legends about the actor and his characters.

Eulogised by his followers, as the undisputed patron saint of the poor in Tamilnadu, M.G. Ramachandran thrived in Tamil politics like nobody else had done before. His early popularity rested substantially on his successful roles in films. His films propagated a mild and diluted version of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam ideology. A characteristic of M.G. Ramachandran's role was that of a working man attempting to combat everyday oppression. He acted as a peasant, fisherman, rickshaw puller, carter, gardener,

³²For Example, the woman who has lost virtue would never be the hero's wife. Similarly all the conspiracy of the villain would ultimately lead him to his destruction.

taxi driver, quarry worker, shoe shine boy, cowherd, etc. It is the subaltern M.G. Ramachandran who is given prominence.³³ The same is more or less true with N.T. Rama Rao also. While **Sardar Papa Rayudu** inspired N.T. Rama Rao to enter politics, **Bobbili Puli** could be treated as manifesto to his Telugu Desam Party.³⁴

In the main stream cinemas, the fight between hero and villain invariably ends in the downfall of the villain and the ultimate triumph of the hero and his ideology. If the hero's fight is to reinforce the established structure of the society, the villain's fight represents total anarchy. Therefore, the fight of the hero with the villain becomes a noble act of emancipation of a set of values from a situation which has no value. It becomes some kind of social security as against total chaos. The hero thus becomes not merely an agent of the ideology of the ruling class but the prophet of the ideological inevitability of the whole mankind. At the level of ideology this challenges and denies the validity of the class conflict.³⁵

³³M.S.S. Pandian, **The Image Trap: M G Ramachandran in Film and Politics**, New Delhi, 1992, p.39.

³⁴**Sardar Papparayudu** was released in 1980 and **Bobbili Puli** in 1982. See for details M.Nageswara Rao, **Telugu Chitra Darshini [1931-1992]**, [Telugu], Madras, 1992, pp.235-36. Also see A.V.V. Prasad, "Interview with Dasari Narayana Rao," in **India Today** [Telugu], Annual Number 1996, p.64.

³⁵On the ideological front, in main stream cinemas, feudal values are extolled. For a long time, cinema remained brushed in family dramas dealing with the eternal values and the purity of kinship. They reinforced the feudal value of kinship and took care to tempt the spectator into the same values exploiting his nostalgia.

Indian society at the moment is distancing itself from a feudal landlordism but it has yet to attain the status of well developed capitalism. This is the passing phase. It is in this background that one has to view the attempts of the **mainstream** cinema, to synthesize the feudal social relations and colonial capitalistic values.

In the present study, films depicting bourgeois social reforms like removal of untouchableness, widow marriage, etc. are taken up.

MEDIATION: Mediation aims at creating a state of mind , from an understanding of the media to an understanding of self and society for optimal interaction between the two for, the manner in which the media are allowed to mediate shapes both world and mind.³⁶ The media referred here is an institution of culture and communication, increasingly influencing society. The ideological implications of a truly popular order of media indicate the necessity of a broader participation in the production, dissemination and utilization of culture and communications.³⁷ Of all the arts and the *mass media*,³⁸ cinema is the most important. In a country where illiteracy is more, cinema medium is very important. Cinema's purpose is

³⁶Gaston Roberge, **Mediation, Op.cit.**, p.V.

³⁷Vibodh Parthasarathi, "Media Impact," in **Seminar**, No:411, November 1993, p.43.

³⁸**Mass** means large number of people: Press, Broadcasting and Television are other mass media.

threefold - to inform, to educate and to entertain. Cinema is both a medium of expression and a fact of economics. The present work focusses the cultural and ideological role of cinemas, specifically Telugu cinemas as a medium of communication. The period of study is 1931 to 1947. 1931 is the year of the dawn of Talkies in India. The first talkie in Telugu was **Bhakta Prahlada**, released in 1931. Since then its rapid growth is unhindered. That is why the year 1931 is taken as the beginning of the study.

Sound came to Indian film instantly after its discovery in 1930. The sound film was neither photographed theatre nor the photographed novel but an independent art form. This was firmly demonstrated during the first decade of sound films like **Kaneradeshaft** [1931, G.W. Pabst], **Our Daily Bread** [1934, King Vidor], **La Regie de Jen** [1938, Jean Renoir] and **Citizen Kane** [1941, Orson Wells] to name only four. Likewise, in India too many purposeful films were produced with the advent of sound in cinema from 1931 onwards. The tradition of the socially conscious cinemas of Shantaram of Prabhat, Barua and Debaki Bose of New Theatres and Himansu Rai of Bombay Talkies, in the thirties has been extended in the work of Nitin Bose, Chandulal Shah, K. Subrahmanyam, Mehaboob Khan, B.N. Reddy, **Bimal Roy**, K.A. Abbas and many others. The films of this tradition are charged with a message of contemporary social values.³⁹ The pre-independence Telugu cinemas were as much a part

³⁹Satish Bahadur, "The Context of Film Culture in India," reproduced from **The Education of Film Makers in India**, UNESCO, Paris, 1972.

of ongoing cultural and ideological struggle within the colonial context as that of the broader social reform and political movements.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS IN COLONIAL ANDHRA BY 1930s

The beginnings of British acquisitions in the Coast of Northern Circars started with their control over Pettapolly and Masulipatnam in the present Krishna district in 1611. Between 1625 and 1751, parts of Nellore, Godavari and Vizagapatnam were acquired; whereas the districts of Bellary, Anantapur, Guntur, Cuddapah, Kurnool and Chittor were brought under the direct control of the East India Company by 1801. In other words, by 1800-01, the total subjugation of all Andhra districts was complete and the initial impact of colonial rule was experienced by the people.⁴⁰

The initial impact of colonial political rule was in the realm of economy, society and culture. The first half of the 19th century saw the emergence of an educated elite,⁴¹ the off-shoot of

⁴⁰For detailed history, see Macleans, **Administrative Manual of Madras Presidency**, Vol.1, Madras, 1879, Para 94; Atkins, **Treaties, Engagements and Sanads**, p.114; Lanka Sundaram, "British Beginnings in Andhra," in **Triveni**, November 1928.

⁴¹For general introduction at all India level, see Aparna Basu, **The Growth of Education and Political Development in India, 1898-1920**, Delhi, 1974; Bruce T.McCully, **English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism**, Gloucester, 1966.

English education.⁴² The new administrative structure, evolved to serve the interests of colonial rule, also strengthened the position of the educated classes.⁴³ Added to this process of change was the **commodification** of agriculture. Between 1860s and 1890s changes in the agrarian social structure consolidated the position of a new landed elite or rich peasantry. The development of commodity production, marketing system, price rise, high rentals, unequal revenue burdens and system of money lending helped the emergence and consolidation of a rich peasant class, which in turn tended to polarise the agrarian social structure.⁴⁴ We propose to look at this changing socio-economic and intellectual situation during the 19th and first half of the 20th century so as to locate the ideological and cultural underpinnings of cinema in Andhra.

Economy of Andhra in colonial context:

⁴²See V.Ramakrishna, **Social Reform in Andhra [1848-1919]**, Delhi, 1983; B.Kesavanarayana, **Political and Social Factors in Andhra, 1900-1956**, Vijayawada, 1976; Y.Vaikuntham, **Education and Social Change in South India: Andhra, 1880-1920**, Madras, 1982.

⁴³B.B.Mishra, **The Indian Middle Classes: their growth in modern times**, Delhi, reprint 1978.

⁴⁴Atlury Murali, **Social Change and Nature of Social Participation in National Movement in Andhra, 1905-1934**, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1985, pp.20-163; A.Satyanarayana, **Andhra Peasants Under British Rule: Agrarian Relations and the Rural Economy 1900-1940**, Delhi, 1990.

As a consequence of British rule, India passed into the orbit of world capitalist economy in a subordinate or colonial position. In 1920-21, the Madras presidency comprised of 27 districts and had an area of 1,42,255 square miles, of which 21,962 square miles was occupied by zamindaries.⁴⁵ The zamindaries of Andhra were chiefly situated in Ganjam, Vizagpatnam, Godavari, Krishna, Nellore and Chittoor. When considered in the whole Madras Presidency, the Zamindaris' concentration was mostly in Andhra districts. Pasture and agriculture formed the occupation of a majority, i.e., 70 per cent of the population of the presidency.⁴⁶ Land was mainly under the Ryotwari, Zamindari and Inamdari systems.⁴⁷ Many nationalist historians have often emphasized the heavy burden of land revenue demands and the coercive processes employed both by the government and the Zamindars in the realisation of the revenue and rent respectively, as the main causes for the impoverishment of the peasantry under colonialism. This logic may broadly explain the objective social base of the peasant discontent and their participation in the peasant and national movements. The increasing

⁴⁵**A statistical Atlas of the Madras Presidency, 1920-21, Madras, 1921, p.1.**

⁴⁶**Ibid., p.7.**

⁴⁷**The percentage of Ryotwari to total area in 11 Andhra districts, in 1920-21 was 58.67, Zamindari was 35.10 and the Inamdari was 6.23. See A Statistical Atlas of Madras Presidency, 1920-21, Op.Cit.**

revenue demand not only absorbed the petty profit but also cut into the meagre subsistence income of the peasants. High rentals and revenue demand forced the peasants to borrow money from the moneylenders even at abnormal rates which aggravated the situation.⁴⁸ In the coastal districts like Godavari, Kistna, Vizagpatnam, Ganjam, Gunturu and Nellore the incidence of revenue per acre was much higher than in the backward areas of Rayalaseema districts like Bellary, Anantapur, Kurnool, Chittoor and Cuddapah.⁴⁹ In the irrigated regions of Andhra, though the level of revenue demand was high, due to the rise in prices of agricultural produce, a section of the peasantry benefitted and emerged as rich peasant class.⁵⁰ It was during the period of 1896 to 1920 that this section of peasantry in coastal Andhra reaped the benefits of not only a steep rise in the prices of agricultural products but also of the new irrigation systems i.e., Godavari and Kistna anicuts.⁵¹ But the

⁴⁸W.R.S.Sathianathan, **Report on Agricultural Indebtedness**, Madras, 1935; N.G.Ranga, **Agricultural Indebtedness and Remedial Measures**, Tenali, 1931.

⁴⁹**A Statistical Atlas of Madras Presidency, 1910-1911 and 1920-21**, Appendix VI as appeared in A.Murali, **Social Change, Op.cit.**, p.39.

⁵⁰A. Murali, **Social Change, Op.cit.**, p. 34.

⁵¹**Report on the Direct and Indirect Effects of the Godavari and Krishna Anicuts in Rajahmundry, Masulipatnam and Guntoor**, Madras. 1858; G.Niranjan Rao, "Transition from Subsistence to Commercial Agriculture: Problems, Potentialities and Results - A Study of Krishna District in 19th Century," in **Economic and Political Weekly**, June 1985 and **Changing Conditions and Growth of**

period between 1928 and 1934 witnessed an unprecedented fall in the prices of agricultural produce thereby hitting the rich peasantry seriously.⁵² The introduction of enhanced resettlement rates in Kistna and Godavari districts in 1931 further increased the land revenue burden.⁵³ In other Andhra districts too the condition of the peasantry was no way better. Even in the areas where there were no resettlements the revenue burden was heavier because of lower prices of all commodities.

The increase in area under irrigation, commercialisation of agriculture and agriculture marketing system of the period gave rise to the growth of a new class of people. Between 1895 and 1924 the total irrigated area in the Kistna-Godavari deltas had increased by 37 per cent.⁵⁴ In coastal Andhra, rice emerged as the dominant commercial crop, while the industrial crops increased

Agricultural Economy in the Krishna and Godavari Districts, 1840-1890, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Andhra University, Waltair, 1973.

⁵²C.J.Baker, "Debt and Depression in Madras, 1929-1936," in C. Dewey and A.G.Hopkins [eds.], **The Imperial Impact: Studies in the Economic History of Africa and India**, London, 1978.

⁵³For details on resettlement proposals, see Govt. Of Madras, Rev. Dept., G.O.No.1486 (21-5), dt. 11th July 1931; **The Economic Enquiry Committee Report**, Vols.1-3, Madras, 1931; **Kistna Patrika**, 1 Dec. 1928, "Editorial on Resettlement" 26 January 1929.

⁵⁴**Board** of Revenue, G.O.No. 29 (Land Rev. & Set.) 18 May 1927.

substantially in the ceded districts: (Cotton and Groundnut) and Jute in Vizagpatnam district.

Communications between nearly all parts of presidency had become easy by 1920s and there was no district which was not connected with the rest of the presidency by railway. There were navigable canals, apart from roads.⁵⁵ This tremendous improvement in communications and the internal and external trade benefitted the rich peasants, merchants and traders who controlled the regional as well as the national markets. The merchants were able to import or export food grains from one district to another or from one province to another at times of scarcity and there by make huge profits. The keynote of the system of marketing agriculture produce in the Andhra districts was the predominant role played by host of middlemen. Thus the rich peasant and merchant classes consolidated their base under the colonial rule.

The evolution of a new pattern of agrarian relations fostered by the colonial rule in Andhra districts was neither capitalism nor

⁵⁵S.S. Raghavaiyengar, **Memorandum on the Progress of the Madras Presidency during the Last Forty Years of British Administration**, Madras, 1892; A. Vipani, **Scheme of Road Development for the Madras Presidency**, Madras, 1935; A.V. Raman Rao, **Economic Development of Andhra Pradesh, 1765-1957**, Bombay, 1958; V.V. Sayana, **The Agrarian Problems of Madras Province**, Madras, 1949.

feudalism nor was it a continuation of the old Mughal arrangement. It was a new structure that colonialism evolved. It was **semi-feudal** and **semi-colonial** in character.⁵⁶ The disruptive role of colonial rule was not confined just to the agrarian economy in isolation, but it shook the very foundations of the old economy through the destruction of the union between agriculture and handicrafts and artisan industries.⁵⁷ The chief industries carried on in the Presidency at the end of the 19th century were handicrafts, cotton weaving and spinning, cotton ginning and pressing, coffee curing, tile making, printing, sugar refining, tobacco curing, tanning and rice dressing.⁵⁸ The decline of **Andhra's** traditional handicraft industries caused acute distress among the artisan classes. A large number of artisans were forced to seek their livelihood either in agriculture or emigrate as coolies to Ceylon, Burma, Mauritius, etc.

Educated Middle Class:

⁵⁶Bipan Chandra, et.al, **Freedom Struggle**, New Delhi, 1972, p.19.

⁵⁷R.P. Dutt, **India Today**, Delhi, 1970 part II, pp.79-193 [first published in 1949] .

⁵⁸**Report of the Administration of the Madras Presidency during the year 1905-06**, Madras, 1906, p.56.

The establishment of British rule in India marks the beginning of a new era in Andhra as in other parts of the country. It marks the introduction of a new educational system in this region. The colonial rulers evolved an educational policy which resulted in the emergence of a powerful educated middle class.

The progress of English education was rather slow in the Madras presidency, especially in Andhra districts before 1911. Afterwards English education was spreading fast among non-Brahmins.⁵⁹ Though domination of education by Brahmins was more initially, children of cultivating castes with their secure economic conditions began to take to education more towards the 1920s.⁶⁰ Educational advance was an important factor in contributing to the rise of critical social thinking. The non-Brahmin intellectual groups supported the national movement. Castes like Brahmins, Kammas and Reddys who had a lead in English education were politically more advanced. It was this educated intelligentsia which first perceived the basic contradiction with colonialism and

⁵⁹**Report of Public Instruction for Madras Presidency for 1901-02 to 1921-22**, Vol.1, Madras, 1923, p.6. Between 1906-07 and 1911-12 when the Non-Brahmin students increased by 31%, the Brahmin pupils increased by 19%. Proportionate decrease of Brahmin caste pupils was more striking between 1917 and 1922.

⁶⁰See Atlury Murali, **Social Change, Op.Cit., pp.164-177.**

formulated the nationalist ideology and structured the initial politico cultural response to colonial domination.

The emergence of Indian middle classes was one of the direct results of the spread of new education under the British rule. The term educated middle class signifies the new groups of persons who received higher education through the medium of English and engaged themselves in the various recognised professions that grew in modern times as a result of western education and **capitalist** economy.⁶¹ Growing population and economic difficulties compelled the rural middle classes to migrate to adjacent towns and cities to eke out a living by taking to new avenues of life. The fact that English was the passport: for lucrative professions like law, medicine, judiciary, etc., became an incentive for the growth of English schools and English education. English was a great social elevator.

The growth of towns in Andhra began by the middle of the 19th century and many towns came into existence by the close of the century. The movement of the rural population to the urban areas was largely due to higher wages and greater freedom from caste

⁶¹B.B. Misra, **The Indian Middle Classes**, p.147. Also see Y. Vaikuntham, **Education and Social Change**, p.195.

repression. The growth of towns were also due to the factors like starting of industries, famines, availability of cheap labour, tendency of rich landlords and other similar classes to live in towns and modern education.⁶²

The reform movements naturally were initiated and led by the educated middle classes (professional classes), particularly the English educated. In Andhra, the pioneer in this field was Kandukuri Veeresalingam. He strongly believed that social reform should precede the political reform.⁶³ The reform movements took up by Veeresalingam were centered around the issues specific to upper castes and middle classes. The sections which participated in these movements were students, teachers, lawyers and government officials. Reform ideas never percolated into the lower layers of society as the problems addressed in them did not directly relate to their life experience. In any case the 19th century reform movements in Andhra were urban based.

⁶²V.Ramakrishna, **Op.cit.**, p.34.

⁶³**Ibid.**, p.83. For his views on several aspects of social reform also, see Kandukuri Veeresalingam, **Sweeyacharithramu** [Autobiography, Telugu], Rajahmundry, 1954, first published in 1911 and John Greenfield Leonard, **Kandukuri Viresalingam (1848-1919) : A Biography of an Indian Social Reformer**, Hyderabad, 1991.

In the first half of the 19th century the natives which first took to English education in Andhra were the Brahmins, who had been traditionally associated with intellectual pursuits.⁶⁴ These English educated persons filled the openings at the lower levels of the colonial bureaucracy. Initially, they adopted some of the European cultural habits which tended to alienate them from their own cultural and the masses. As the myth of social and cultural superiority of the westerners increasingly became a major profess of colonial rule and its cultural ideological hegemony, the dreams of the English educated elite of being assimilated into colonial culture were shattered. Increasingly the educated began to perceive and perform the role of intellectuals and began to grasp the inner contradictions of colonialism. They also began to be alienated from colonial cultural ideology.⁶⁵ In order to fight degradation and exploitation - cultural, social, political and economic - they endeavoured to modernise the indigenous society through cultural renaissance and formulate national cultural defence to revive the suppressed native culture. Simultaneously, they also laid the

⁶⁴**Census of India, 1901, Madras, Part I, Vol.XV, p.74.**

⁶⁵For an analytical perspective on this issue, see K.N. Panikkar, **Presidential Address**, Section III, Indian History Congress [36th Session], 29-31 December 1975, Aligarh; "Culture and Ideology: Contradictions in Intellectual Transformation of Colonial Society in India," in **Economic and Political Weekly**, 5 December 1987, pp.2115-2120; **Culture, Ideology, Hegemony: Intellectuals and Social Consciousness in Colonial India**, Delhi, 1995.

foundations of a nationalist political ideology to articulate the interests of the people vis-a-vis colonialism.

Social reform and cultural modernisation:

The Andhra intelligentsia showed an increasing awareness of the cultural ideological dimension of the colonial rule and simultaneously started articulating the national cultural defence to help people regain their cultural personality. The powerful social reform movement in Andhra in the second half of the 19th century took up on its agenda the revitalisation of indigenous culture by removing what they considered to be backward looking and irrational elements and social practices.⁶⁶ The maturation of the national cultural defence was complete by the end of the 19th century under the leadership of Kandukuri Veeresalingam (1846-1919). The notable among the intellectuals who worked in social reform activities apart from Veeresalingam were Basavaraju Gavarraju, Pulugurtha Lakshmi Narasamamba, Desiraju Peda Bapaiah, Pyda Ramakrishnaiah, Gurajada Appa Rao, Bandaru Atchamamba, Atmuri Lakshminarasimham, Chilakamathi Lakshminarasimham, Unnava Lakshminarayana, Tekumalla Raja Gopala Rao, Nyapati Subba Rao and Rayasam Venkata Sivudu, to name only a few.⁶⁷

⁶⁶A. Murali, *Social Change, Op.cit.*, p.191.

⁶⁷V. Ramakrishna, *Social Reform, Op.cit.*, pp.189-205.

An interesting feature of social reform in the 20th century was the sway it had on the peasant caste groups - the Kammas, the Kapus and the Reddys. This period represents the urge and the efforts of the newly emerged rich peasantry - comprising of non-Brahmin high castes like Kammas, Reddys and Kapus - to modernise their social and cultural outlook through internal caste reform.⁶⁸

The numerous peasant caste associations and the non-Brahmin movement after 1915-16 took up the task of developing education, internal reform - women's education, widow marriages, removal of child marriages, etc., and made a determined bid to uplift their status by breaking the framework of "the traditional ritual and social hierarchy. Tripuraneni Ramaswamy Chowdary and Suryadevara Raghavaiah Chowdary played a crucial role in developing internal social reform among the non-Brahmin castes, especially Kammas.⁶⁹

⁶⁸A. Murali, **Social Change, Op.Cit.**, p.234.

⁶⁹Uma Ramaswamy, "Belief System of the Non-Brahmin Movement in India: The Andhra Case," in **Asian Survey**. Vol.18, No.3, March 1978. Also see, K.Bhavaiah Chowdary, **Kammavari Charitra**, [Telugu], Sangamjagarlamudi, 1955; Suryadevara Raghavaiah Chowdary, **Brahmanetara Vijayam**, [Telugu], Kollur, 1925, and **Brahmanetara Sanghadharsyam**, [Telugu], Bapatla, 1927; Tripuraneni Ramaswamy Chowdary, **Vivaha Vidhi**, [Telugu], Tenali, 1935 and **Sambuka Vadha**, [Telugu], Tenali, reprint 1978.

This, in fact, explains the dominant position which the **rich** peasantry - Kammas, Reddys and Kapus - later acquired during the non-cooperation and civil disobedience movements in Andhra. One drag on the non-cooperation movement, however, was the opposition which the Congress had shown regarding the problems of tenantry in the Zamindaris. In the name of avoiding the so called civil war even their basic demands vis-a-vis colonial state were not **taken** up. Consequently, the powerful social base, which the national movement had acquired during this period was confined to the ryotwari areas and failed to penetrate the Zamindari areas. Despite the emphasis on the **anti-untouchability** programme, the Harijans in Andhra mostly remained passive sympathizers and not as active participants.⁷⁰

The social reform movement in Andhra had acquired a wider dimension and a new orientation from 1920s, at least at the intellectual plane. Much broader and crucial social-cultural questions were debated and discussed in a bid to create a **new** atmosphere conducive to bourgeois social **development**. One of the major social-cultural questions addressed by the intelligentsia was

⁷⁰For details, see Atlury Murali, "Civil Disobedience Movements in Andhra, 1920-22: the nature of peasant protest and the methods of Congress political mobilization," in Kapil Kumar [ed.], **Congress and Classes**, Delhi, 1988.

the problem of untouchability.⁷¹ The aim of Gandhi in taking up the problem of untouchability was internal reform and self purification from the very bottom. But this should be done within his consensus model. Even though the social degradation was rooted in their economic position the consensus model propagated by Andhra nationalists had tended to negate this dimension. Unnava Lakshminarayana's famous Telugu novel *Malapalli* is an example to show the perceptions rooted in the bourgeois ideology.⁷²

Growth of nationalist consciousness and mass movements:

With the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 both political associations and journalism acquired a wider political role. It was due to the relentless propaganda carried on by Telugu press that nationalist ideology was internalised by the people in their collective consciousness. In other words by

⁷¹See Atlury Murali, "Changing Perceptions and Radicalization of the National Movement in Andhra, 1922-34," in **Social Scientist**, Vol.16, No.8, August 1988. We have discussed *Malapalli* novel in Chapter IV.

⁷²**Ibid.** *Malapalli* literally means a village hamlet where untouchables live. It was the best example of contemporary intellectuals' efforts to solve the problem of untouchability. *Malapalli* is like a mirror reflecting the contemporary Andhra society in its totality. We see in it the contending political ideologies and their powerful hold on the young minds of the nationalist intelligentsia. For the summary of the novel, see Modali Nagabhushana Sarma, **Telugu Navala Vikasam** [Evolution of Telugu Novel], [Telugu], Hyderabad, 1971, pp.255-69; Srinivasa Siromani, "*Malapalli* Nirmata Unnava Lakshminarayana," in **Bharati**, Vol.22, No.11, 7 November 1945.

structuring the nationalist ideology in the course of their two decades long struggle the nationalist intelligentsia laid the theoretical foundations for national liberation struggle. With the completion of this primary ideological task, the national cultural defence acquired the character of an organised political struggle.

The transformation of the national movement into a storm occurred with Lord Curzon's partition of Bengal on 16th October 1905. For the first time the Swadeshi ideology had provided an all India level common political programme. The social base of the movement during this period (1905-1911) was, however, confined to the urban educated middle classes mostly youth and particularly students. The movement sometimes touched the artisan groups, especially weavers, both in urban centres and villages and merchants in the urban areas.⁷³ The rich peasantry in the rural areas was not in favour of the movement despite their grievances against colonial rule. One reason perhaps was the common political programme projected during Swadeshi movement had not fully incorporated the problems of peasantry vis-a-vis colonial rule. The incorporation of peasant grievances into the common political programme was successfully accompanied during the non cooperation movement 1920-22.

⁷³A. Murali, **Social Change, Op.cit.**, p.163.

Chirala Perala struggle, Palnadu and Raychoti forest satyagrahas, Pedanandipadu no tax campaign, etc., were started due to constant pressure from below on the local congress leadership. Despite the disapproval of Gandhi and the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee, the peasants launched the local militant movements and then pressurised the provincial leadership to structure them into the general non cooperation movement.⁷⁴

When the Indian National Congress gave a call for the civil disobedience movement, the social groups in the forefront in Andhra were women, youth (mostly with a peasant background) peasantry and business groups.⁷⁵ The untouchables were not yet brought into the movement on a big scale. They largely remained passive sympathizers once again.

The civil disobedience movement in Andhra showed three important aspects of the national liberation struggle. One was the fully structured or mature strategy followed by the nationalists in their struggle for war of position. Another interesting aspect was

⁷⁴Atlury Murali, "Civil Disobedience Movements in Andhra, 1920-22: the nature of peasant protests and the methods of Congress political mobilization," in Kapil Kumar [ed.], **Congress and Classes: Nationalism, Workers and Peasants**, New Delhi, 1988.

⁷⁵A. Murali, **Social Change, Op.Cit.**, p.671.

the dominant role of youth, women and peasantry in the two struggles i.e., 1930-31 and 1932-33. In fact, in the non-movement phase, the struggle was kept alive by the women picketers.⁷⁶ The third and the most important aspect was the mass social base which the national movement had acquired during this period. Each and every village was structured into the movement. The peasant youth was spontaneously thrown up from the villages into the leadership both in the rural and urban areas. Another interesting development was the emergence of radical congress youth influenced by the left ideology who began to organise the peasantry on class lines, especially after their first encounter with the revolutionaries in jails during 1930-31.⁷⁷

Throughout 1928-29 and 1930-34, the peasant youth led by N.G.Ranga, particularly in the non-movement phase organised the peasantry both in the ryotwari and Zamindari areas. The movement under N.G.Ranga, however, represented the class aspirations or interests of the rich peasantry in the ryotwari areas and the

⁷⁶Fortnightly Report, Fort St. George, 3 March 1932, p.105 and also see Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiya [ed.], **The Freedom Struggle in Andhra Pradesh [Andhra]**, Vol.IV, Hyderabad, 1974, pp.56-59.

⁷⁷For details on these movements, see M.Venkatarangaiya, **The History of Freedom Struggle in Andhra Pradesh [Andhra]**, Vols.3 and 4, Hyderabad, 1964; Atlury Murali, **Social Change, Op.Cit.**, Chapter VIII, pp.616-749; Sarojini Regani, **Highlights of Freedom Movement in Andhra Pradesh**, Hyderabad, 1972.

substantial tenants in the Zamindari areas.⁷⁸ It was only during 1933-35 that the communists came on the scene as an important political and ideological factor and started organising for the first time the agricultural labourers on class lines for their class demands. These developments in the national movement were to have an **important** bearing on the later course of the struggle.⁷⁹ In other words it was during the civil disobedience movement, mainly during 1932-34, that a bitter struggle for ideological and political hegemony over the national liberation struggle between the socialist and bourgeois ideologies started emerging.⁸⁰ The integration of Zamindari **peasantry** into the movement was another **important** dimension of the national liberation struggle during this period.

⁷⁸K.Chinnayasuri, **Andhralo Rytu Udyamamu** [Telugu], Hyderabad; B.Reddy Prasad Reddy, **Anti-zamindari Struggles in Andhra**, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Department of History, University of Hyderabad, 1993; Brain Stoddart, "The Structure of Congress Politics in Coastal Andhra, 1925-1937," in D.A.Low [ed.], **The Congress and the Raj**, London, 1977; Kambhampati Satyanarayana, **Andhra Pradesh lo Communist Udyama Charitra**, [Telugu], Vols.1-2, Vi jayawada, 1984.

⁷⁹**Ibid.**

⁸⁰Office of the IGP., [Confid.], Govt. Of Madras, **24 May 1935**, therein "Appreciation of the Present Communist Situation," in History of Freedom Movement Files, CDM., B.No.67, A.P. State Archives, Hyderabad, pp.1741-69.

The class character of the national liberation struggle has to be seen in terms of the quest for ideological and social hegemony over the movement rather than on the dominant role played by a particular social class or group in the struggle. An analysis of the national liberation struggle in Andhra (1905-1934) clearly shows that the social participation in the movement had slowly and steadily enlarged from that of urban educated middle classes in 1905 to a very wide social base comprising of peasantry, women, artisans, merchant groups, professional classes, women and students by 1934.⁸¹ Even agricultural labourers mostly untouchables were drawn into the movement from that of a passive role to a relatively active role by the end of 1934.⁸² The leadership was mainly provided initially, by the urban educated middle class from 1905 onwards. The rich peasantry, however, moved into leadership positions once the national movement during 1920s acquired a mass social base. It is of course true that in the colonial situation when different social classes were drawn into the national liberation struggle they came into the movement with the realisation of their own basic contradictions (of the material interests) with colonialism. They also brought along with them their long term and short term class aspirations into the **movement**.

⁸¹A. Murali, **Social Change**, Op.Cit., p.741.

⁸²**Ibid.**

It was the structuring of these divergent aspirations into a basic anti colonial ideology which brought about the necessary unity and real social strength to the movement. But this was done under the hegemony of the bourgeois ideology and a rich peasant leadership. It was the vision of the future social transformation of the society which made the Indian National liberation movement a bourgeois movement.

A BRIEF NOTE ON CHAPTERISATION:

The present thesis is divided into Eight chapters. In the introductory chapter, historian and his relation with the study of films has been discussed. Due importance also has been given to concepts and their explanations. Socio-economic and political conditions in colonial Andhra by the 1930s are also discussed. The second chapter deals with the history of film and the importance of film as a medium in mass communication. Cinema is a popular source of recreation for the masses. The importance of film for artistic, cultural, educational and propagative values is an accepted fact. A brief survey of the development of Indian films is attempted in this chapter.

Form and Content in Telugu Cinema are discussed in Chapter III. Content wise, Telugu cinema progressed by leaps and bounds.

Mythologies, folklore, crime and socials are the broad thematic divisions. Under the period of study, special attention is paid to social themes. From 1938 to 1947 there were only a few social films, but the importance given to the social issues is noteworthy. Issues like social reform, national movement, peasant struggles, untouchability, the evil of liquor, widow remarriage, dowry system, feudal value system, etc., are thoroughly touched upon by the films during the period under study. The perception and presentation in the Telugu cinemas in terms of the context are explained.

Chapter IV, titled, "Colonial Capitalism and Cultural Feudalism: Ideological Construction of Harijan Issue in **Mala Pilla** and **Rytu Bidda**" is an in-depth study of Harijan and peasant issues in colonial Andhra. The ideological moorings of Harijan issue as refracted in **Mala Pilla** and the rich peasant's struggle for partial liberation of peasantry from feudal domination in **Rytu Bidda** are contextualised. At material level, the particularities of colonial commercialization of agriculture created differential social and cultural changes in the ryotwari and Zamindari areas. In the ryotwari areas the development of commodity production, marketing system, price rise, high rentals, unequal revenue burdens and, system of peasant money lending helped emergence and consolidation of rich peasant class by 1920s. Right from 1920s it was this

entrepreneurial rich peasant cultivators who were at the center of social and political struggles. In the realm of culture the old feudal value system and the social practices like untouchableness have been hindering the process of traditional agricultural labouring castes into wage labour. Without the liberation of agriculture labour from feudal cultural value system, the market oriented agriculture would not take off, as the wage labour will not be available for production. Naturally, the peasant entrepreneur will be up in arms against such a feudal value system and practices like untouchableness. The famous Telugu novels like **Mala Palli** (1922), and the first popular Telugu movies like **Mala Pilla** (1938) have intensively reflected on the issue of feudal control over agriculture labour and the ways and means of creating necessary socio-cultural liberating conditions for the Harijans.

Gudavalli Ramabrahmam's, **Mala Pilla (An Untouchable Girl)**, as the name suggests, is the story of a Harijan girl. This film touches upon the burning social evil untouchableness, upliftment of Harijans, fundamentalism of orthodox people, social oppression of upper caste Hindus, social reform activities of Harijan Seva Sangh are the other issues that are prominently figured in this film. However, the central theme is inter caste marriage. With the entry of Harijans into a temple the film comes to a happy end. This film

was produced under the influence of Gandhian ideology. **Mahatma's** objective was made known to the people through this powerful medium and gave tremendous moral boost to the vast multitude of Harijans.

The theme of Gudavalli **Ramabrahmam's Rytu Bidda** is an extension of social problems related to colonial agriculture. **Rytu Bidda's** production time was late 1930s. The enmity of ruling class and the ruled was dominant then. One of the main functions of the ruling class, then, in addition to ensuring the economic organisation and political power of their class, was to preserve the hegemony of their class over a society as a whole, by means of justifying ideology.⁸³ In any given period of time, ruling class creates the cultural atmosphere which serves its vested interests and try to present it as the ideology. In class society, music, literature and all other art forms are created in this frame work only. However, on the other hand, there would be an alternative people's culture. But the cultural values and ideology which get the official propaganda and patronage, that only culture continues to be dominant at least visibly.⁸⁴ The Telugu cinemas of the earlier times represented the culture of the ruled. The

⁸³David McLellan, **Marxism After Marx**, London, Second edition 1979, p.184.

⁸⁴Hari, "Aanati Cinemarangam," in Kalipatnam Rama Rao, [Ed.], **Manaloo Manam**, Visakhapatnam, 1990, p.12 6.

mythologicals, the historicals and the social films did not in any way conflicted with the ruling interests. All these cinematic themes were useful for the emerging new class from ruled which was going to be a ruling class. The creators of 1938 cinemas were no other than that class which got a share in 1937 government.⁸⁵ They inaugurated social films with reform zeal. Hitherto cinemas catered to the entertainment needs of middle class. When once the rural folk also joined the band wagon of cine audience, there arose a need for different themes. How the Zamindars were feeling about ryots and what impression they carry about rural folk, etc., attracted the attention of some creative film makers. They were content with middle class consciousness, but not proletariat consciousness. The second item is taken care off after independence by Progressive Writers Association, IPTA/Prajanatyamandals, etc. But they too failed in creating alternative people's culture. It is a harsh historical reality.

The specific feature of the time is legitimisation of the hegemony of rural rich peasant class and the dominant nationalist ideology. **Rytu Bidda** succeeded in manipulating peasant consciousness in tune with these two processes.

⁸⁵**Ibid.**, p.128.

The theme of **Rytu Bidda** is about the necessity of unity of peasants. The village usurer and his evil designs, the election scenario, the factionalism, the vandalism of Zamindari henchmen were well portrayed in this film. The rural indebtedness is vulnerable point of exploitation. This is more relevant even to present day.

Contemporary social life is better depicted. Unlike mythologies, **Rytu Bidda** cinema is about living human beings. In any frame, there is evidence that this film is about the village of contemporary times. One gets the impression that there is direct link between this film and actual life. The cyclone of 1938 which shook the Krishna district found a place in **Rytu Bidda**. The opening of the film is with sunrise. Ramajogi's song awakens the ryot folk. There is cock fight, goat fight, thrashing of paddy, watering of fields by using *Etam* (pumping of water from well in a traditional native style), bullocks with ploughs, transporting of grain bags in bullock carts are the visuals that are extensively used in this film. The urbanisation has made the people's lives mechanical. Those urban audience whose origins were villages definitely admire the scenes of churning of curds, spinning wheel, feeding bran to buffaloes, girls playing hide and seek game by tying cloth over their eyes, fetching of drinking water from

village common well with pairs of pots borne by a yoke and thrashing redgram or pulses.

The theme of Chapter V is a detailed study of colonial culture and traditional value system. The discourse on morality, social customs, value system, patriarchy and gender are analysed as they got articulated in Telugu cinema.

While literature and theater were the early vehicles of the spread of new nationalist ideas and cultural regeneration, from 1930s the medium of cinema took their place. In 1930s and 1940s several Telugu movies were produced articulating new perceptions on morality, social customs, value system, patriarchy and gender. The most dramatic aspect of the cultural and ideological mediation of cinema was the conflict between the colonial culture and traditional value system, for the nationalist intelligentsia was neither prepared totally to subordinate themselves to colonial culture and western modernity nor were they willing totally to reject the indigenous traditional value system. In this Chapter, we have studied this cultural conflict as reflected in the Telugu movies: **Vandemataram, Malli Pelli, Varavikrayam, Sumangali, Illalu, Devata, Pantulamma** and **Swarga Seema**.

The issue of dowry was taken up in the films **Vandemataram** and **Varavikrayam**. The woes of daughter-in-law in a joint family are depicted in **Vandemataram**. Unemployment issue also was touched upon in **Vandemataram**. In Hindu families, widowhood is a curse upon women. Widow marriage was the central theme of **Malli Pelli**. *Pativratya* dharma is an unquestioned devotion to one's husband. This theme is focused in **Grihalakshmi, Illalu, Devata**, etc. The importance of turmeric and saffron powder (*Pasupu Kumkum*) and karma theory is dealt with in **Sumangali**. The body of a woman is considered to be the property of that man who first had sexual relationship with her. *Thali* is the central relationship which gives social identity to a wife. Pre-marital sex and unwed motherhood is a curse. Tolerance is the only solution for all family problems of a woman. It is with this virtue, woman makes her life happy at the end. **Devata** is with this theme. Sacrifice, austerity and self deprivation are accepted in the Indian ethos as noble values. Woman's purity, faith and devotion to her husband are considered to be high values of Indian society. All these values are dealt with in the cinema, **Swarga Seema**.

The structure of patriarchal family system and feminism are the central themes in Chapter VI. We have taken up for our analysis

one important Telugu movie: **Griha Pravesam** to show the character of the patriarchal ideology and its influence on the female psyche, both at the level of its acceptance and its critique as well.

Generally, **Griha Pravesam** indicates the meaning of entering into a new house, an event to be celebrated. Here, the film **Griha Pravesam** has wider context although with the same spirit. Heroine Janaki reminds hero about the existing problems. He awakens him through her song to look into human miseries like poverty, religious and caste fundamentalism, political slavery, economic inequalities, etc. She gives emphasis to solidarity between man and woman. She denounces celibacy vehemently. She calls the hero arise, awake and with pure heart join hands with her in order to establish a new order where there is equality and fraternity. This new order is compared to the building of a new house. Both man and woman, hand in hand, enter this new house and this event is called '*Bhavyasaya Maha Griha Pravesam*' .

Griha Pravesam is a progressive cinema. It inaugurated a banner of revolt against many orthodox beliefs. It is a reflection of dominant left ideology of the times and indication of modernity. The criticism on celibacy is an indirect attack on Gandhian belief.

"Colonialism, history and nationalist politics: A Study Of films of **Grihalakshmi, Mahatma Gandhi, Palnati Yuddham** and **Yogi Vamana**" is Chapter VII. As the title suggests, this is a reading of Telugu films to map the ways and means of appropriation of history by the contemporary politics as predominantly reflected in **Palnati Yuddham**; or furtherance of temperance movement in **Grihalakshmi**; or the propagation of Gandhian ideals through **Mahatma Gandhi**; or the revival of the 18th century critique of social and moral degradation as refracted in **Yogi Vamana**.

Grihalakshmi is a Telugu social film produced and directed by a Telugu veteran, H.M. Reddy. It is a propaganda cinema. Gandhiji's temperance movement is the underlying theme of this film. This picture is a mixture of many objectives viz., (I) anti-liquor, (ii) anti-prostitution, (iii) chastity of housewife (*pativratya dharma*), (iv) upliftment of Harijans, (v) divine power is superior to human power and (vi) truth alone triumphs (*satyameva jaye the*).

Chapter VIII is conclusion.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY:

Our attempt in the thesis is to bring out the cultural and ideological dimensions of Telugu cinema by using the original films. The objective of our study are to analyse the role of cinema as a medium; its ideological mediation between social, political and cultural consciousness. Popular film can be used to read or diagnose the state of mind of those large sectors of society to whom popular films appeal. The insights gained from such diagnosis can in turn be used to formulate programmes or policies that would have popular appeal. Cinema has been studied to show how it was not merely giving a new shape to old cultural form but was also an instrument of change. In this study, the origin and growth of film are dealt within this framework. A thorough study of social, economic and cultural background is made and it is against this backdrop a critical study of every social picture is undertaken. Much importance is given to changes in social life, the cultural and ideological struggles in the urban middle classes and the rural peasant families.

We have made an in-depth study of 17 Telugu films produced before 1947. We have personally visited National Film Archive of India in Pune and seen available four original films: **Mala Pilla**, **Rytu Bidda**, **Swargaseema** and **Griha Praves am**. Among the other films, we are able to see only two, **Palnati Yuddam** and **Malli Pelli** on

Doordarshan. Since the original copies of the rest of the films are not available anywhere, in reconstructing their history, we have relied upon primary and secondary sources. We have also used available published original song and cinema story books in Telugu. The published autobiographical and biographical works are used extensively. The material from contemporary newspapers and journals, both in Telugu and English helped to cross-check the government sources from Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh State Archives.

SOURCES:

In the entire thesis we have used both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are basically consisting of the pre-1947 records of the Government of India in National Archives of India, New Delhi; records of the Government of Madras in Tamil Nadu Archives, Madras and Andhra Pradesh State Archives, Hyderabad. The main Government records consulted are the Proceedings of the Public, Home, Law and Political departments and also the operation of various G.Os and Acts, in particular the Cinematography Act of 1918.

Most part of the work is related to the viewing of original Telugu films and their scripts. The National Film Archive of **India,**

Pune [Government of India] has given the necessary access to see the original films, in particular **Mala Pilla, Rytu Bidda, Swargaseema** and **Griha Pravesam**. Though the positive film is not available for **Mala Pilla**, the National Film Archive of India has provided access to view it in negative. Since even the negatives are fragile in the case of films, **Vandemataram** and **Devata**, we could not see them. However, we could record and see the films like **Palnati Yuddham** and **Malli Pelli**, telecast by the Hyderabad Doordarshan.

For the other films under study, **Grihalakshmi, Vandemataram, Sumangali, Dharmapatni, Mahatma Gandhi, Devata, Apavadu, Pantulamma** and **Yogi Veemana**, since the original films are not available anywhere in India we have largely depended for reconstructing the history of them on other sources, like booklets of original songs and story synopses, and reports in contemporary Telugu newspapers and journals.

We have also recorded extensive personal interviews of notable contemporary film personalities like Kongara Jaggayya, K.S. Prakas Rao, Smt.Santa Kumari, S. Rajeswara Rao, Mikkilineni Radhakrishna Murthy, C.S. Rao, Kakarala, Arudra, Katragadda Narasaiah, B. Nagi Reddy, Ravi Kondala Rao, Y. Ramakrishna Prasad [Proprietor of

Paradhi Studios] , Edupaganti Lakshmana Rao, R. Narayana Murthy and Inturi Venkateswara Rao; film critiques like S.Hari Purushothama Rao, and A.P.Film Sensor Board's Member, V.Palavelli.

Apart from the above original sources, we have used secondary sources from both English and Telugu languages. In particular the Telugu journals, newspapers, periodicals and souvenirs have been consulted to reconstruct the history of Telugu films before 1947.

CHAPTER II
CELLULOID AND ITS PAST

Every society has a cultural mechanism to mediate its inner social and political conflicts. While the material needs are fulfilled through economic and scientific development, cultural development is achieved through the cultivation of fine arts. Throughout history different art forms have effectively contributed for the fulfilment of both the secular-material and entertainment needs of people. Puppetry, *Yakshagana*, *Veedhi Bhagavatas*, i.e., street plays are some of the popular performing art forms in traditional Andhra. These folk forms are both preservers and propagators of traditional literature, folk history, religious precepts [epics], moral world order and social system. These are considered to be peoples' arts. The Ballad (*Burra Katha*) and *Jamukula Katha* are also important among the traditional communicative folk arts. The highest form of folklore communicator has been drama.

It is in this sense that the popular drama assumes an important social function in the society. The beginnings of the Telugu popular theatre can be traced back to 1880-81, when the drama troops from Dharwad used to visit Andhra to give performances taking themes from well known Indian epics and other mythologies.

(A) Political Theatre

Even during the 19th century, the theatre groups in Andhra were content with performing mythologicals with all the ingredients of escapist entertainment and traditional morality and world view. Despite colonial education and modernity, the stage

artistes were regarded as veritable outcasts and they kept themselves away from the mainstream of society. There, however, was a dramatic change with the emergence of Gandhian movements for national liberation particularly from the first decade of the present century. During this period, Guntur has emerged as headquarters of dramatic activity; writing and staging of politically inspired propaganda plays. The first major catalyst that triggered the politicization of popular theatre was the wave of anger that swept the country following the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre in Punjab in 1919. The first play of this type was *Panchala Parabhavam* (The Insult Offered to Panchali) by Pundarikakshudu of Guntur.¹ This five act play dealt directly with the events that followed the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre. Another play that attracted lot of attention both from the public and the government was *Swarajya Swapnam* (The Dream of Self Rule) produced by Tilak Nataka Samajam, Guntur. The police, alarmed at the increasing popularity of the play,² banned its staging through out the presidency. The life of Tilak was a favourite theme among the Telugu playwrights of this period. Sripada Krishna Murthy's *Tilak Maharaja Naatakam* was banned before it could be produced on stage³

¹S.Theodore Baskaran, **The Message Beaxers: The Nationalist Politics and the Entertainment Media in South India, 1880-1945**, Madras, 1981, p.26.

²*Ibid.*, p.27.

³*Ibid.*, p.28.

Avatara Parivartanam, which depicted Tilak's life story though was staged in Guntur but was soon proscribed.⁴

The patriotic theatre movement that started in Guntur was fairly a well organized one. The drama actors formed into a Dramatic Association to carry on propaganda for the Congress and simultaneously raise money to sustain political agitations. The Association also, very ingeniously, put folk music, ballads, *hari kathas* and street dramas to effective use to gain deeper penetration into the rural areas. Modern Street Plays were educative with social themes of contemporary relevance.⁵ *Burrakathas* were very popular in Andhra.⁶ Nasser of Guntur, Kummari Master of Vizianagaram, were the famous Burrakatha artists. "*Battle of Bobbili*", "*Battle of Palnadu*", "*India's Freedom Struggle*", "*Cripp's Mission*", "*Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose*" and "*The Life History of Vivekananda*" were some of the few Burrakathas of the period. Sunkara Satyanarayana wrote *Alluri Seetharama Raju*. Nasser popularised *Kashta Jeevi* a Burrakatha written by Sunkara Satyanarayana with the ideology of socialism. The severe conditions

⁴**Ibid.**

S.G.D. Chandrasekhar, " Street Plays in Telugu," in **Telugu** [Monthly], Issue.9, Vol.5, September 1991, pp.17-20. Also see Ponangi Sri Rama Appa Rao, **Telugu Nataka Vikasam**, Hyderabad, 1967, pp.191-233 and Sri Srinivasa Chakravarthi, "Andhra Nataka Kala Parinamamu," in **Andhra Darshini** [Telugu], Hyderabad, 1959, p.582.

Burrakatha [Bardic recitals] was the most popular item as it includes, a story, music, rhythmic movements of body, make up and also the satirical remarks that players make on contemporary Politics.

of the famine of Bengal of 1944 were thematized in "*Famine of Bengal*" and its performance was immortalised by Nasser. From 1946 to 1948 many Burrakathas were written on Nationalist leaders.⁷ The success of the patriotic theatre movement in Guntur stimulated similar groups in other centers like Bezawada. For example, a number of Zamindars patronized Mylavaram Drama Company. Similarly some landlords of Rajahmundry founded and financed the Rajahmundry Hindu Theatrical company.⁸ Stage luminaries like Idavilli Suryanarayana Rao and Kuppalur Sanjivi Rao were active supporters of this movement. But most active of them all was a lawyer, Bellary Raghavachari, who brought a new awakening to the stage during the 1920s. He was able to bring to the world of popular theatre, a better organization and improved theatrical techniques.⁹ This was the same person who later on was inducted into Telugu cinema, *Rythu Bidda*, as a hero.

As a matter of fact, most of the stalwarts of early mythological films had their training in popular theatre. Playwrights and litterateurs like P.V. Rajamannar, Bezawada Gopala fteddy, M.R. Appa Rao, Narla Venkateswara Rao, K.V. Gopala Swamy, Kopparapu Subba Rao and others evinced keen interest in the theatre

Sunkara Satyanarayana, *Ryot Vijayam*, Vijayawada, 1945. [Kondapalli Veera Venkaiah, Kalahasthi Thamma Rao of Rajahmundry were publishers of such Burrakathas].

⁸S.Theodore Baskaran, *Op.Cit.*, p.29.

⁹*Ibid.*, p.29.

and were instrumental in not only developing better staging techniques but scripting plays with modern themes in Andhra.¹⁰ In those days social dramas like *Edureeta*, *N.G.O.*, *Eva.ru Donga*, *Parivartana*, *Pallepaduchu*, *Kulamleni Pilla* and *Rickshavadu* were staged in places like Kakinada, Bezawada, Eluru, Guntur, Masulipatnam, Tenali, Palakollu, Rajahmundry and Gudivada by the Andhra Nataka Kala Parishad.¹¹ Many a film personality got their early training in the Andhra Nataka Parishad. Writers like **Atreya**, **Narasaraju**, **Piniseti**, **Ravuru Satyanarayana**, **Kondamudi Gopalaraya Sarma**, **Korrapati Gangadhara Rao**, **Bhamidipati Radhakrishna**, **Aniseti** and **Bollimunta Sivaramakrishna**; actors like **Akkineni Nageswara Rao**, **Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao**, **Kongara Jaggayya**, **Nagabhushanam**, **Chalam Raja Rao**, **Ramana Reddy**, **Mikkilineni**, **Allu Ramalingayya**, and actresses like **Savitri**, **Vanisri**, **Sarada** and **Nirmala**, all have migrated from theatre to cinema.¹²

Music Directors **Pendyala Nageswara Rao**, **B. Narasimha Rao**, **V.Nagaiah**, **Sthanam Narasimha Rao**, **Y.V.Rao**, **Chitrapu Narasimha Rao**, **Koppurapu Subba Rao** and **C.Ramachandra** had their experience in

¹⁰Prabhu, **Swarnayugam lo Annapurna**, Hyderabad, 1993, p.59.

¹¹**Ibid.** Nataka Kala Parishads were started in Vijayawada in 1929 for professionals only. Later on in 1944 in Gudivada amateurs also were taken into Parishads. Dharwad troupes [1880-86] were the fore runners to Parishads. M.R. Appa Row was the President of 1945 Parishad. Veteran film personalities like Gudavalli Ramabrahmam and Bhanumathi were honoured in Gudivada. Dukkipati Madhusudana Rao of Annapurna banner served Andhra Nataka Kala Parishad from 1944 to 1952. He linked up theatre movement with cine field.

¹²**Ibid.**, p.60.

theatre. Veteran directors like B.N.Reddy, C.Pulliah and others their apprenticeship in Telugu Theatre.¹³

When the Congress party came to power in 1937, Sri Rajagopalachari, the then Prime Minister of Madras Province, removed the ban on dramas and created the necessary freedom of action required for the growth of popular stage. The appearance of Talkie in 1930s, however, took over the social space earlier enjoyed by the popular theatre by virtue of its unprecedented reach into both urban and rural areas. Afterwards, though the theatre continued its existence along with cinema, it gradually got displaced by the talkie. It is the very nature of the film medium and its communicative skills which made the people throng at cinema halls.

(B) CINEMA

(I) Film Medium And Mass Communication

Film is a continuous (jointed) strip of acetate based celluloid, with a unit length of one reel, i.e., 1000 feet, normally running for a duration of 10 minutes. Each reel is composed of several sequences. Each sequence is made up of several shots. Each shot is a varying multiple of frames. The film is an image sequence captured by the camera and regenerated by two

¹³K.N.T.Sastry [Ed.], **Telugu Cinema** (An anthology of articles), Hyderabad, 1986.

projectors, running one after the other at the end of each reel, providing continuous projection.¹⁴

Hence, film itself requires several types of medium: 'camera' for its configuration, 'projector' for decoding the message (images) locked in it, 'screen' for recovering the message, and 'microphone amplifier' for regenerating its 'aural content'. The sound-track incorporated on it lengthwise in an unbroken manner (unlike the image) in the form of erratic lateral projections of a continuous streak which becomes reactivated when struck by a pencil of light.¹⁵

Film is a revolutionary communicative tool. The 'communication' is primarily the reception of and response to a stimulus, visual or aural or even telepathic. Essentially, it involves two of the five senses, namely, sight and sound. Through touch, taste, and smell also communicate, each in its own way, the experience of physical objects, i.e., the visual and aural perception thus acquires a primacy. Film, offering both sight and sound therefore, communicates much more effectively than the others.

¹⁴Hameeduddin Mahmood, **The Kaleidoscope of Indian Cinema**, New Delhi, 1974, p.1.

¹⁵**Ibid.**

When we argue that film is a revolutionary "mass" communicative tool, we have in our mind both a quantitative and qualitative expression associated with the term "mass". Quantitatively, it refers to a human group in physical proximity (as in the case of a film projection or a social gathering) or in a dispersed manner (as in the case of radio or TV audience). Qualitatively, it is a generalised reference to a concentration of men, women, and children, horizontally diversified and vertically variegated. Implicit in this is the difference in physical features, mental equipment, social background, cultural attributes, and psycho-sociological bearings.¹⁶

The affectivity in communicating with the masses, by using film as a medium, requires an innovative and creative integration of these factors as film medium and mass communication, whereby film itself becomes the medium and its communication becomes circumscribed to a group.¹⁷ No other medium appeals to eyes and ears as much as film. Hence no other medium is as effective and popular communicator as the cinema.¹⁸

¹⁶Ibid., p.2.

¹⁷Ibid., pp.1-2.

¹⁸Ibid., p.8

In other words, cinema is the first mass medium in history through which virtually any kind of views and information could be conveyed to almost every member of society.¹⁹

(ii) Origin And Growth Of World Cinema

It is generally agreed that for all practical purposes Edison started the use of film in 1887. But it was not until samples of the first Eastman Kodak film with a nitrocellulose base were obtained by Edison in 1889 that the original cinema machine came into being. The actual cinema was born with the making of magic lantern for the projection of the film in 1895. The pioneers were Robert Paul in London and the Lumiere brothers in Paris.²⁰

Since then, passing many a hurdle the cinema was evolved into a motion picture. The first real attempt to tell a story by a moving picture was made in 1903. This event was achieved by Edwin S. Porter's sensational movie, **The Great Train Robbery**. In this 800 feet length film, with Marie Murray acted as the leading lady.²¹ With the arrival of the story, picture cinemas made tremendous

¹⁹Nicholas Pronay, "The Moving Picture and Historical Research", in **Journal of Contemporary History**, London, Vol.18, 1983, p.367.

²⁰Paul Rotha in collaboration with Richard Griffith, **The Film Till Now [A Survey of World Cinema]**, London, 2nd edition, 1951, pp.67-68. This book is acknowledge as the classical history of world cinema. The first edition was published from London in 1949.

²¹**Ibid.**, p.70.

progress in Hollywood **as** well as in Europe and this furthered the growth of the film studios.

From 1911 onwards the infra structural base of the film industry developed with astounding rapidity through out the world.²² The outstanding films from the west produced during this period were: **Queen Elizabeth** [1912], **Odyssey** [1912], **The fall of Troy** [1912], **Faust** [1912], **The Three Musketeers** [1912], **The Sack of Rome** [1912]; from Hollywood in USA, **The Ten Commandments** [1914], **Noah's Arc** [1914], **Metropolis** [1914], **Secrets of the East** [1914], **Casanova** [1914], **The Birth of a Nation** [1915], **Intolerance** [1916], **Robinhood** [1923], **Ben Hur** [1926], etc. With the outbreak of the First World War, the production of cinemas virtually came to a standstill in Europe. The disturbed conditions in Europe, however, smoothened the path of growth for movies in the U.S.A. Consequently throughout the whole war period the output of movies increased in the U.S.A. It was after 1914 that the USA could secure for herself the supreme commercial control over the world movie industry which she still holds on to.²³ Although Soviet Russia started to build up an industry at an early date she was not concerned with the commercial market outside its national **boundaries**. She made films

²²**Ibid.**, p.72.

²³**Ibid.**, p.73.

exclusively for her own people, as a part of building of Socialist society in the USSR.²⁴

The talking film medium stormed the cinema industry in every country, particularly after the First World War. The notable films produced in the USSR were: **Ten Days That Shook The World**, **Battleship Potempkin**, **The Strike**, **Mother**, **The End Of St .Petersberg**, etc.²⁵ On the whole the early history of cinema has thrown up classics such as: Eisensten's **Battle Ship Potempkin** [USSR/1925], Dreyer's **Passion of Joan of Arc** [France/1928], Orson Welles's **Citizen Kane** [USA/1941], Vittorie De Sica's **Bicycle Thieves** [Italy/1948], Alain Rosmais's **Hiroshima Mon Amour** [France/1957], and Satyajit Ray's **Pather Panchali** [India/1955]. These films continued to be seen by film lovers all over the world and also studied, discussed, talked about and written about.²⁶

(iii) Growth Of Indian Cinema.

From the first "all living, breathing, hundred per cent talking drama" (no background music, no sound effects or incidental sound) to the latest stereophonic block-busters to hit 70 mm screens, the Indian talkie industry has traveled a long way.²⁷ The

²⁴**Ibid.**, p.77.

²⁵**Ibid.**, p.221.

²⁶**News Brochure**, National Film Archive of India, Pune, June, 1995.

²⁷T.M. Ramachandran [Ed.], **50 Years Of Indian Talkies (1931-1981)**, Bombay, 1981, p.1.

history of Indian film industry had its beginning in 1913 in the release of Dada Saheb Phalke's **Raja Harishchandra**.

From 1913 to 1931 many pioneers worked for the development of Indian film industry and this was the era of the silent cinema. The beginning of the talkie era in 1931, made the cinema a very popular source of recreation for the masses. What is cinema for Indians? Cinema is the new urban folk culture, dominant forms of leisure and recreative activity, and the main channel of mass entertainment. It is also big business as hundreds of feature films were and are being made in most of the Indian languages every year (for data see Appendix I). Millions of people in thousands of theatres watch them. Film industry is one of the largest industries employing several thousands of people. Its annual box office receipts are around half a billion rupees or even more.²⁸ Cinema also had an all round influence on other media: AIR., TV centers, advertising and fashions shows and film magazines. In this section, a brief survey of the development of Indian films will be attempted keeping in view their mediating role in articulating artistic, cultural, educational and traditional value system.

The contours of Indian Cinema are discernible in the tradition of Sanskrit drama. The origins of Sanskrit drama goes back to the

²⁸Raghunath Raina, "The Context: A Social Cultural Anatomy," in Aruna Vasudev [Ed.], **Indian Cinema Superbazaar**, New Delhi, 1983, p.1.

God Brahma, the creator of the universe in Indian mythology. At the request of Lord Indra, the God of Heaven, for a form of divergence which will be audible as well as visible and be shared by all classes of people [the four Vedas were forbidden to the lower castes], God Brahma said to have created the *Natyaveda*, the holy book of **dramatology** by taking the four elements of speech, song, dance and mime from the *Vedas*. The great sage, Bharat Muni who taught this new *Veda* to the people, laid down that drama should be a representation of the various emotions essential for depicting different situations.²⁹

Both Sanskrit language and traditional drama were confined to the elite and extinguished from Indian culture for that reason. Like the Sanskrit language, which yielded place to Prakrit and *Apabhramsa* [the basis of modern Indian languages], Sanskrit drama was also supplanted by the polychromatic folk theatre. Rooted in spoken languages and popular culture, the polychromatic folk theatre and the two epics, being vibrantly alive, often changing in response to the dynamics of social conditions, imbued with the exuberance of song and dance, deeply embedded as they are in the collective consciousness of the Indian people, have become the direct source for the early Indian Cinema although they are still subliminal to it.³⁰ The roots of Indian cinema should be located

²⁹**Ibid.**, p.4.

³⁰**Ibid.**

within the above mentioned cultural roots, particularly the popular cultural traditions, performing folk arts and the two epics, *Ramayan* and *Mahabharata*.

THE BEGINNING

Film history began in India on 7 July 1896, when an advertisement in the *Times of India* invited Bombay residents to witness "the marvel of the century, the wonder of the world" at Watson's Hotel. This demonstration of "Cinematography" in the hotel was described as "living photographic pictures in life-sized reproductions by Messrs Lumiere Brothers."³¹ It was new, having been unveiled by the **Lumieres** at a Paris cafe only a few months earlier, i.e., on 28 December 1895. The first shows of these "films" were held in Russia and India on the same day.³² These first moving pictures recorded the actual happenings like the steering in of a railway engine into a station, a gardener watering the garden with a hose, a child having breakfast and the like. It was regarded as a magic medium because it captured life in all the glory of movement on the screen. Later, the cinema started being used as a vehicle for story telling.

³¹Erik Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy, **Indian Film**, New York, Second edition 1980, p.1 [first pub., Oxford, 1936].

³²K.V. Subbanna, "Cinema For The Villages," in **Symposium On Cinema In Developing Countries**, New Delhi, 1979, p.84.

Dada Saheb Phalke was first among the Indians to be inspired by this new medium. He got inspired after seeing, in 1910, a film on **The Life of Christ**.³³ Though he originally intended to make a film on the most popular of the Indian gods, Lord Krishna, Dada Saheb's first film was turned out to be **Raja Harishchandra**. Now it has come to light that another film had been made earlier³⁴ than **Raja Harishchandra** (1912) of Dada Sahib." Whether his film was first or not, Dada Sahib Phalke is accepted as the father of the Indian Cinema.³⁶ Dhundiraj Govind Phalke (better known by the respectful title "Dada Saheb") [1870-1944], no doubt, faced all the problems of a pioneer, but succeeded in getting popular viewership for his films. The countrywide success of his films in fact, gave an impetus to many capitalists in Bombay to rush to this industry. Importers of liquor, manufacturers of wooden buckets, hair oil producers, textile manufacturers and cotton merchants took to producing films.³⁷ Another important contemporary change which had

³³N.V.K. Murthy, **Cinema and Society**, Bangalore, 1980, p.12.

³⁴R.G. Torn filmed **Bhakta Pundalik**. It was a stage play and was filmed when it was being staged. See Jagmohan, "The Pioneers of Indian Cinema," in **Yojana**, August 1995. However, this film is not traced.

³⁵**Raja Harishchandra**, completed in 1912, was opened at the Coronation Cinema theatre in Bombay in early 1913 and it was a overwhelming success. It was launched with a capital of only Rs.15,000, as mentioned by Erik Barnouw and S. Krishna Swamy/**Indian Film, Op.Cit.**, p.22.

³⁶N.V.K. Murthy, **Cinema and Society**, op.cit., p.12.

³⁷Raghunath Raina, "The Context: A Social Cultural Anatomy," **Op.cit.**, p.5.

a bearing on the fortunes of the film industry was the rise of new urban business class. This new class profiting from War time shortages and the rise of speculation and black marketing, had started looking for profitable areas of investment. The film making held out the promise of quick and rich returns. The new entrepreneurs built well equipped studios and laboratories, hand-picked their crew of technicians and kept stables of actors, writers and directors on their pay roll, a la Hollywood.³⁸ As we have pointed earlier that as a result of First World War, since film production in Britain, France, Italy and Germany had been paralysed, the Hollywood could unprecedentedly expand and capture world film market. By 1927, almost 85 percent of all cinema houses in India were showing only American films.³⁹ The dominance of the Hollywood film affected all departments of Indian cinema industry. The American film became, and still remains, the model, leading Indian producers to plagiarise plots, situations, styles and even to produce remakes of box office hits.

CINEMA IN CHANGED POLITICAL SCENARIO

The First World War had denuded India of its resources. Repressive laws were enacted, hundreds of people were massacred in Jallianwallah Bagh in Amritsar. A growing resistance to the punitive measures and humiliation orders grew throughout the

³⁸Ibid., p.6.

³⁹Ibid.

country under Mahatma Gandhi. India had reached a stage when she wanted to make terms with the modern world in her own way and in her own right. The first response of Gandian leadership was the launching of the Non-cooperation movement in 1920. The programme of the movement included mass resignations of jobs, withdrawal of students from schools and colleges, and boycott of proposed elections. The movement gained an unprecedented all India character. These events formed a psychological watershed in the development of modern India.⁴⁰

This self confidence as expressed in the Gandhian movements during 1920-22 changed the entire scene of artistic expression. In cinema, this trend was reflected in films like D.G. Ganguly's **England Returned** (1921) which mocked the educated Indian who aped the West.⁴¹ Marathi film maker Baburao Painter's **Sairandhri** was a film which camouflaged political comments in allegory.⁴² In another film **Savkari Pash** (1925) exposed the evils of money-lending.⁴³ Social films dealing with contemporary themes rose in importance. The film, **Gun Sundari** (why husbands go astray) (1925) was a milestone in the rise of the Indian Social films. It was produced

⁴⁰For a general history, see Bipan Chandra, et.al., **India's Struggle For Independence**, New Delhi, 1988; Sumit Sarkar, **Modern India, 1885-1947**, Delhi, 1983.

⁴¹Erik Barnouw and S. Krishna Swamy, **Indian Film**, p. 33.

⁴²**Ibid.**

⁴³**Ibid.**

by Cahndulal J. Shah. Miss Gohar was the heroine.⁴⁴ **Typist Girl** and **Educated Wife** were some of the other **socials**.

Coming of Sound

The world's first partial sound film **The Jazz Singer**, was premiered in New York on 6 October 1927. Its premier signaled the end of an era, the era of silent films.⁴⁵ It, however, took two years for the hundred per cent talkie from USA, **Light of New York** to come into existence and another two years for the birth of first Indian talkie feature, **Alam Ara** (14 March 1931), directed by Ardeshir M. Irani.⁴⁶ In any case, **The Melody of Love**, a Universal Pictures Production became the first sound feature to be shown in India, in Calcutta, in 1929 signaling the birth of the era of sound films.⁴⁷ With the coming of sound, music and themes got closely integrated into the **movies**.

Thematically, the first decade of the Indian Talkie till 1931 started with films based on mythology. In the era of silent movies the predominant position of mythologies could be understandable given the nature of nationalist intellectual **concern** with the

"Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid., p.58.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷**Alam Ara** means 'Beauty of the World', was made by Ardeshir M. Irani. Its star was Zubeida as heroine; Mehaboob as hero and the singer **W.M.Khan**, with his song: "*De de khuda ke nam par pyar.*"

reassertion of traditional Hindu morality, value system and religious precepts or what is generally called the cultural and intellectual reassertion of Indian civilization in a colonial context. The mythologies were also used for an effective communication of the nationalist ideology and political programme to the people, as illiterate majority of them for centuries have been drawing their cultural resource from the mythologies, in particular **Mahabharat** and **Ramayan**. The sympathetic popular response to movies like **Bhakta Vidur** was, therefore, at both cultural-moral and religious and political levels.

The Gujarathi silent film, **Bhakta Vidur**, produced in 1921 by **Dwarakadas Narayanadas Sampat** was the first film to use Indian mythology as a powerful allegory to critique colonialism and propagate nationalist/Gandhian ideas.⁴⁸ In the film, the main character Vidur sporting a Gandhian Cap and clad in *khaddar* was shown sitting besides a *Charka* to spin yarn, like a true contemporary Gandhian nationalist. The film made a mention of the villagers not paying taxes in Khaira district in 1918 and the evacuation of Chirala-Perala town in 1921 as part of Non-cooperation movement in Andhra. Officials in the Court of **Drutarashtra** were shown being awarded the titles of "Danki Bahadur" an allegory to British Government's award of "Diwan Bahadur".

⁴⁸**Ibid.**, p. 58.

The mediation of mythological films in the nationalist cultural and political struggles was such that the Cinematography Act of 1918 was being applied at regional levels to control the movies, like other acts enacted to curb the 'seditious' literature and dramas. The original intent of the Cinematography Act was to curb the negative influence of American Hollywood films in India, but that Act was now being applied basically to control the 'seditious' films at regional level. The first movie to get targeted under the Cinematography Act was **Bhakta Vidur**⁴⁹. Wherever the film was released it led to public disorder, police cane charging and finally a ban on its screening.

During 1930-34, the Civil Disobedience movements not only brought the demand for total independence into fore but also the deeper social and cultural problems in Indian society. Particular were the removal of 'untouchability' and the communal harmony, essential for the success of Gandhian mass united struggles against the British rule. These new concerns, emerged out of the political struggles, naturally got reflected in the cinema. In other words, the social evils like 'untouchability' and alcoholism, the subordinate position of women, and many other gender, caste and class specific problems have become the main content of the stories handled by the film makers. The films made by Prabhat Talkies (1932) Kolhapur, later Pune from 1933; Movietone, Bombay (1934),

⁴⁹Erik Barnouw, *Op.Cit.*, p. 34.

and New Theatres, Calcutta (1930) come readily to our mind in this context. This trend of film making continued right up to the late forties.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, the nationalist politics in India were getting radicalised. Besides liberal and democratic ideas derived from the west, Indians, impressed by the Socialist experiment in the USSR, started showing interest in Marxist ideas. Jawaharlal Nehru had introduced 'Socialism' into the political vocabulary of the nationalists. This led to the growth of left wing within the Congress and the subsequent formation of the Communist Party of India. These changes naturally had an echo in Andhra as is shown in the historiography.⁵¹

Literature mirrored the temper of the times. In Andhra a Progressive Writers Association was formed by the writers who were for the creation and popularisation of what Antonio Gramsci called the "national popular literature". They issued a manifesto which rejected the concept of art for art sake and underlined the close

⁵⁰N.V.K. Murthy, **Cinema and Society, Op.cit.**, p.13.

⁵¹Atlury Murali, "Changing Perceptions and Radicalisation of the National Movement in Andhra, 1922-34," in **Social Scientist**, October 1988 and Kambhampati Satyanarayana, **Andhra Pradeshlo Communist Udyama Charitra**, [History of Communist Movement in Andhra Pradesh] , Vols.1-2, Vijayawada, 1983.

links of art with society. For them literature should advocate 'engineering of souls.'⁵²

The Indian cinema reflected not only this new awareness of radical ideas but the earlier critique of inequalities in Hindu society entrenched in the caste system. The themes naturally were attacks, directly or implicitly, on the traditional attitudes in the Indian society. The themes which emerged were: problems of Westernization (**Indira M.A.**, 1934)⁵³; protest against arranged marriages and social barriers for the realisation of free individual love (**Devadas**, 1935); caste barriers and religious bigotry (**Achhut Kanya**, 1936); problems of Hindu widows **Balayogini**, 1936);⁵⁴ the right of workers to participate in management of the factories (**President**, 1936); collective farming and mechanisation of agriculture (**Dhartimata**, 1937); a young girl's marriage with an elderly man (**Duniya Na Mane**, 1937); economic and social disparities (**Adhikar**, 1938); challenge to traditional ideas (**Admi**, 1939); appeal to nationalism (**Sikander**, 1940), etc.⁵⁵

⁵²V. Ramakrishna, "Literary and Theatre Movements in Colonial Andhra: Struggle for Left Ideological Legitimacy," in **Social Scientist**, Nos.236-37, Vol.21, Jan.-Feb., 1993, pp.69-85.

"Ruby Meyers or otherwise called Sulochana's smash hit was **Indira M.A.** She was an Anglo Indian.

⁵⁴**Achhut Kanya** is the best of Devika Rani's films to date. **The Hindu**, 25 June 1937. Ashok Kumar was the hero of this picture.

⁵⁵A. Erik Barnouw, **Op.Cit.**, pp.297-300. For further details of these films, see Appendix IV.

The 1940s were momentous years both for the country and the film industry. The Second World War created, though temporarily, new opportunities for industrialisation and expanded business and commerce which in turn consolidated the prosperous class in the urban centers. Simultaneously a vast and organised working class started getting exposed to the international events and they have become more organised in voicing their **grievances**. Like during the times of First World War, the Second World War had created shortages leading to black marketing and accumulation of black money in the hands of speculators. The War boom has been the greatest encouragement for all and sundry to enter the various branches of the film industry in India, as it provided new areas of profitable investment. With the inflow of this new capital, there originated star system and formula films consisting of songs, dances and contrived plots. The star system has become the order of the day. Ostensibly, these changes in the films were aimed at catering to the needs of a new class of audiences: industrial workers, those who had migrated to the big cities from rural areas in search of livelihood, and the growing bourgeoisie and the neo rich in search of entertainment in an alienating urban **environment**.

On the political front events were moving fast. The Congress party launched its final phase of national liberation struggle, the Quit India movement. The Bengal famine affected three million people. Anger was affecting the armed services resulting in the naval mutiny. A major development during this period was setting

up of the Indian Peoples' Theatre Association (IPTA). It exposed British colonial policies and reached vast masses with stirring songs and vivid presentation.⁵⁶ IPTA had a profound impact on the performing arts and many associated with it later joined films and contributed in giving a new dimension to cinema. Khwaja Ahmed Abbas, journalist, film critic and a writer was one of the founder members of IPTA. He wrote and produced an autobiographical film, **Naya Sansar** (New World) depicting the story of a journalist under pressure from business tycoons.⁵⁷ Being a popular and financially successful film, **Naya Sansar** brought a breath of fresh air into the formula ridden Hindi Cinema and gave birth to a series of films with progressive themes. Later Abbas also persuaded Mr. Shantaram to produce a film based on his book: **And One Did Not Come Back**; the film was named as **Dr.Kotinis Ki Amar Kahani** (1946).⁵⁸

(iv) Entertainment Medium in South India

Madras was introduced to moving pictures in 1897, when Edward held shows in the Victoria Public Hall.⁵⁹ But regular commercial shows in Madras began only in 1900 with Major Warwick setting up the first cinema house, the electric theatre, in the building that

⁵⁶Erik Barnouw, **Op.Cit.**, p.34.

⁵⁷**Ibid.**

⁵⁸**Ibid.**

⁵⁹S. Theodore Baskaran, **The Message Bearers, Op.cit.**, p.68.

later turned into Mount Road Post Office⁶⁰. The first studio in South India was set up in Millers Road, **Kilpauk**, with Nataraja Mudaliyar as the director. **Keechakavatham** (1916) of Nataraja Mudaliyar was the first silent movie made in South India. Thenceforth, upto 1932 altogether, 108 films were made in the silent era.⁶¹ The films made in the silent era were mostly mythologicals. H.R.Desai's **Bhagyachakra**, produced in 1932, marked the end of silent era.⁶²

The first full length Tamil talkie was **Kalidas** (1931) made in Bombay; while **Srinivasa Kalyanam** (1934) was the first talkie produced by A.Narayanan, in Madras. A.Narayanan also established the first sound studio, "Srinivas" and with this the era of sound began in Tamilnadu.⁶³ During this period cinema was all set for a meaningful interaction with the contemporary political movements, in particular the Civil Disobedience movement. In Satyamurthy, who was then at the helm of affairs in Tamilnadu politics, the cinema found an enthusiastic patron.⁶⁴ He recognised cinema's vast potential for bringing the message of nationalism to the masses. Symbols of nationalism like the *Charaka* and Gandhi cap were deftly

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid., pp.91-94.

⁶²Ibid., p.90.

⁶³Ibid., p.99. A Narayanan is considered to be the father of Tamil film industry.

⁶⁴Ibid., p.106.

used in the visuals and so also the use of patriotic songs. During the period Congress Ministry experiment, patriotic cinema attained its peak in Tamilnadu. K.Subrahmanyam's **Thyagabhoomi** (1939) was a typical nationalist film⁶⁵. Satyamurthy was quick to perceive the propagandist value of actors' involvement in political activities and inducted many of them officially into the Congress.⁶⁶ The participation of cinema in political propaganda forced the intelligentsia which had so far looked upon the cinema as a cheap and contemptible popular art, to take a closer and more serious look. But with the death of Satyamurthy in 1943, Tamil cinema lost its link with the higher echelons of nationalist political leadership.

The earliest Tamil films were mostly mythologicals and, within this tradition, K.Subrahmanyam, one of the few Brahmins among the early Madras producers, outraged the Brahmin community by producing a different Tamil film, **Balayogini** (Child Saint) in 1936. In this movie the role of a Brahmin widow was played by a widow in real life from a Brahmin community.⁶⁷ A number of early Tamil films had an anti-caste attitude. There were of course, films revolving around the various serious contemporary issues and concerns. The marriage of pre-puberty girls had been a widely discussed question

⁶⁵Ibid., p.116.

⁶⁶Ibid., p.120.

⁶⁷Ibid., p.114.

and the film **Child Marriage** (1940) was a story set in the years succeeding *Sarada Act*. It dealt with the story of a child, widowed at the age of seven and, her father, who by defying orthodox opposition arranged for the girl to be married again, when she came of age.⁶⁸ **Vimochanam** (1940) and **Neelamalai Kaithu** highlighted the evils of alcoholic drinks. **Jayakodi** (1939) attacked the practice of accepting dowry. K. Subramanyam's **Bhaktha Cetha** (1940) also created considerable stir. The film was based on an episode from the *Mahabharatha* in which Cheta, the cobbler, won the favour of God, and God appeared to accept his offerings.⁶⁹

The wave of films on nationalistic themes reseeded after independence. The occasional, sentimentally patriotic films like **Nam Iruvar** (1947) or **Thyagi** (1947) marked the last eddies of this wave. In the absence of a powerful motivating force, such as the struggle for freedom, the Tamil cinema lapsed into a predominantly escapist form of entertainment. The signs of a meaningful interaction between the intelligentsia and the cinema did not develop further, but seem to have disappeared after Independence.⁷⁰

(V) THE EVOLUTION OF TELUGU CINEMA

⁶⁸**The Hindu**, 21 June 1940.

⁶⁹Two orthodox Sanatanists from Madurai appealed to the additional magistrate to ban the film on the ground that it was a misrepresentation of the Hindu dharma. S.Theodore Baskaran, **The Message Bearers, Op.cit.**, p.124.

⁷⁰**Ibid.**, p.124.

The first Telugu moving picture was made in the year 1913 and the first talkie in Telugu was **Bhakta Prahlada**, released in 1931.⁷¹

There was only one exhibiting hall in the year 1919 and this gave birth to an unbelievable number of hundreds of theatres by the time India attained its freedom. Content wise also, the Telugu cinema acquired maturity by 1940s. Mythologies, folklore, and socials are the broad thematic divisions. In our period of study special attention is paid to social themes. From 1938 to 1947, though there were few social films in number, compared to other themes, the depth at which the social issues are tackled is noteworthy. The contemporary social reform movements, nationalist and peasant struggles; the issue of untouchability, the evil of liquor, movement for widow remarriage, fight against dowry system and feudal values were reflected upon in the films produced during the period of our study.

When in 1895, the actual cinema was born in the world, United States of America was experiencing economic crisis. There was mad rush for gold and the mass exodus to United States from many parts of the world caused a crisis. The inflow of immigrants, drudgery and depression demanded a way out. Silent cinemas grew catering to this internal need in the USA. In other words, the Hollywood films, which matured from silent era into a full fledged talkie industry,

⁷¹Gudipudi Srihari, "Telugu Cinema," in **Yojana**, New Delhi, August 1995, p.61.

began dominating the scene in India, as in other countries of the world in the post- First World War period. By 1925-26, almost 85% of cinema theatres in India were showing only foreign made films, largely Hollywood films.⁷² The films produced in Hollywood studios were like any other capitalist consumer goods designed for the realisation of vast profits. The enduring hallmarks of Hollywood cinema developing under such circumstances have come to predominantly represent illusionism, melodrama, vicariousness, voyeurism, mythification and mystification. The attitudes -hat are sought to be reinforced are conservative and lullifying.³ They legitimise the pillars of bourgeois-imperialist society.

But the surrealist cinema of Bunuel,⁷⁴ the humanist cinema of Chaplin, and the revolutionary cinema of Eisenstein,⁷⁵ Vertov,

⁷²Pranjali Bandhi, **Cinema in Focus: Black and White of Cinema in India**, Thiruvananthapurani, 1992, p.12.

⁷³**Ibid.**, p.14.

⁷⁴Bunuel was creator of surrealist films in France in the 1920s.

⁷⁵Eisenstein, a Civil Engineer in the Soviet Union, developed the technique of "Montage". According to this technique Image + Image is not third image, but it gives rise to a concept and that is what is called Montage. This is the basic theme developed by Russians in silent era. Griffith also practised this but could not reach the level of Eisenstein. Eisenstein says, `the time of the camera running and that of real happening should be almost equal- Then only a film is said to be realistic one. Interview with S. Hari Purushothama Rao, Film Critic, Hyderabad, 30 June 1994.

Pudovkin and others in the USSR., consciously hewed out a path miles removed from the cliches of Hollywood.⁷⁶

But what is that inspired film language? Oriental art provides the answer. In Chinese and Japanese ideograms, eye drops are shown as eye + sea (pictograph), similarly the Ajanta cave paintings gave them a clue.⁷⁷ Ezra Pound, an US born poet, in his poetry confirms this idea. Similarly, T.S. Eliot brought forth Chinese and Japanese characters in his works. Thus moving picture is a fascinating idea for human beings and the very idea is originated in oriental countries only.⁷⁸ So far as India is concerned, film as technique is imported and as form it is inbuilt one.

Dada Saheb Phalke went on to make over a hundred films, most of which derived their themes from Hindu mythology from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, like *Savitri*, *Sumati*, *Lankadahan*, *Krishna Jananam*, etc. Mythological films, putting Hindu gods and goddesses on the screen, were the favourite ones in Calcutta and Madras based cinemas as well. In 1921, **Bhishma Pratigna** (the vow of Bhishma) was the first movie produced by Rahgupati Venkayya and his son Prakash in Madras. This was the first Telugu feature film. Prakash was

⁷⁶Pranjali Bandhi, **Op.Cit.**, p.15.

⁷⁷Tears. Eye [picture] + Sea [picture]; pictograph script.

⁷⁸That is why mythology has become a part of Indian cinema (including social films). Even today thematic elements and references to the characters in the epics continue to play a major role in cinemas.

hero and director of it. Thus he was the first Andhra director, hero and founder of a lab. From 1921 to 1931 about a dozen films were produced by Telugu people.⁷⁹ These were: **Gajendra Moksham**, **Matsyavataram** and **Nandanar**. C.Pulliah made **Markandeya** in his house at Kakinada (1926). H.M.Reddy (1882-60) directed the silent film **Vijaya Kumar** for Imperial Film Company in which Prithviraj Kapoor made his debut.⁸⁰ Since our films are largely based on traditions, folklore and epics, usually all is well at the end. Even in most modern films, since modernity has not become a way of life, forms of folklore hangover still persist. After all, our present day cinemas are cultural brought forwards only. What type of culture the early Telugu films reflected? What is the ideology propagated by them? What are the values depicted in the early Telugu cinemas? The early Telugu cinemas were the cultural representation of the ruled people. All themes in epics, historical stories and social stories represent the culture of the ruled.

The 1920s in the history of Andhra are called roaring twenties. This period witnessed a galaxy of political and cultural personalities. Unnava Lakshminarayana, Gudipati Venkata Chalam, Alluri Seetharama Raju, G. Jashuva, Tripuraneni Rama Swamy

⁷⁹Arudra, "Two Decades of Telugu Cinema", in K.N.T. Sastry [Ed.], **Telugu Cinema**, Hyderabad, 1986, p.3.

⁸⁰Bommakanti Subba Rao, "Illustrious History of Telugu Film Industry", p.1 and I. Venkateswara Rao, "Telugu Cinema Parinamalu," both in **Amarajeevi Potti Sreeramulu 90th Jayanthi Souvenir**, Not dated, Madras, p.64. H.M. Reddy is considered to be the 'Father of South Indian Talkies.

Chowdary, Sripada Subrahmanya Sastry, Veluri **Sivarama** Sastry, Devulapalli Krishna Sastry and a host of other romantic poets belonged to this period . The social reform activities were already widespread in Andhra.⁸¹ The father of Telugu cinema, Raghupati Venkayya (1869-1941), was a film personality even before Phalke. He organised shows in a tent in Esplanade (1909) and in a theatre Gaiety (1913) in Madras.⁸²

As a tribute to the first Andhra film exhibitor studio owner and producer, the Government of Andhra Pradesh had instituted Raghupathi Venkayya award in 1980. Pothina Srinivasa Rao built Maruthi Cinema, the first theatre in Andhra at Vijayawada in 1921. Mote Narayana Rao, G.K. Mangaraju were the other pioneering exhibitors of Andhra.⁸³ Raghupathi Venkayya was no other than the brother of Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu, a great social reformer. It is the best example of the relation between social reform and cultural field. The results of the great economic depression were still on when Telugu Talkie was born in 1931 with Bhakta Prahlada. Cultural fundamentalism took its birth, with the formation of religious and communal organisations like Arya **Samaj**, Rashtriya Swayamsevak **Samaj**, Zamaet-e-Islam, Hindu Maha Sabha, **Sikh** Movement, etc. In Andhra Caste Associations were found and so new

⁸¹V. Ramakrishna, **Social Reform**, Op.Cit.

⁸²Bommakanti Subba Rao, **Op.cit.**, p.1.

⁸³**Ibid.**

consciousness developed and 1935 was watershed for cultural world.⁸⁴ Liberalisation and democratisation process commenced in 1936. A great debate was going on literature, its purpose and direction. While Chalam was questioning the whole veracity of Hindu family system, on the other side Viswanatha Satyanarayana was being praised for his *Chelialikatta*, *Ekavira* and *Veyipadagal*.⁸⁵ The modernity remained at ideological level only. It was not practical one. Democratic culture in practice was not achieved because of colonial rule. Gopichand and Gudavalli Ramabrahmam were representatives of advanced modernism. While Gopichand showed nihilistic approach, Ramabrahmam represented a practical, realistic, appealing and compromising type of approach. During 1930s and 40s major literary stalwarts worked for film industry. Gudipati Venkatachalam, Tapi Dharma Rao, Kosaraju Raghavaiah, are to name a few. From the emerging bourgeois class many educated people entered films as makers. Challapalli Raja, a Zamindar, was financier to Ramabrahmam's films. This class of people were having social responsibility.

The directors of the early period had their origins in such places which are in line with social reform activity, e.g., C. Pulliah from Kakinada. P.Pulliah from Nellore, Raghupati Venkaiah

⁸⁴Interview with S. Eari Purushothama Rao, 30 June 1994.

⁸⁵Ibid.

from Masulipatnam **and** many others entered the film industry⁸⁶. All these were mostly **from** upper castes, already in the mainstream of economic and educational development.

They believed in idealistic approach. They also believed that cinema can be a very great platform for culture. They were under the impression that cinema can enlighten people and it can be a great force in that direction. The reason for this feeling is the influence of international (Russian) and national situations. Gopichand was believed to be called Andhra Hitchcock and Andhra Pudovkin.⁸⁷ Devaki Bose, Shantaram, Sarat Babu, Premchand, etc. were inspirers for them. Almost all the people acted in early Telugu cinemas were **professionals** - well in touch with theatre/drama/dance/harikatha, etc. The early **producers**, directors and some of the actors men/women were with social **accountability** and in touch with modernist ideas. B.N. Reddy, K.V. Reddy **and** others were men with liberal democratic tendencies. They were archetype of emerging ruling class.

When we consider the content, decor and **technique** of the cinemas of 1930s and 1940s, all cultural forms including folk, were utilised in them. Harikatha, Dance, Song and other **cultural** forms like beggar's songs, *tattvas*, etc., were liberally employed.

⁸⁶Interview with C.S.Rao, Film director and son of veteran director, C. Pulliah, 27 May 1994 in Madras.

⁸⁷**Ibid.**

Text: Hero **was** modeled as dominating social, political **and** cultural, but behaviorally, a conventional type - humble and never speaking loudly. Hero would never utter words that will dismantle the system. Dominant defiant ideology was given vent through subsidiary characters. Patriarchy operates all through. Modern lady character succumbs to conventional ideology only. As is society, so the characters are. As there is no mobility of the social structure there is no decipherable mobility of characters. Usually all characters are stable. This can ultimately be **related** to our traditional aesthetic philosophy and mythological constraints. In the films of those days situations are created from themes but themes are not from situations. This is perhaps because of the influence of *alankara sastra* and also because our society is culturally closed and not democratic. During the period of our study historical films were also created. *Palnati Yuddham* was glorified in a historical manner but its projection was delineating, romantic and dramatic. Films *Vemana* and *Pothana* were treated as folklore subjects.

During war period many folklore films were picturised. **Gulebakavali** was produced earlier to the Second World War. Folklore is that which was already known to the people in a different form, e.g., through **Jangam** story, ballads and *Kasi Majili* stories. But synthetic or structural folklore was the **one** only in form not in content (its text will not be available like the others), e.g., Guna Sundari **Katha**.

Folklore glorifies good while parading evil. **Imagination is** involved. The unbelievable things in life happen recreationally in folklore. The characters are generally with ignorance, foolishness stupidity and **cunningness**.

As a whole, the film makers up to 1950 were having ideological honesty. But later on films are left with patriarchy and pseudo progressive ideas. The audiences up to 1946 were mainly from middle class. After 1946 and by 1950 working class people formed bulk of spectators. The colonial heritage left the legacy of not making pictures like **Griha Pravesam** or drama like *Kanyasulkam*.

Music: The Indian tradition of performing arts has always been full of song, and quite a bit of it was suffused with dance. Before the advent of the talkie, the regional flavours were restricted to the areas where those languages, religions and cultures **reigned** for the most part. A celebrated exception is the *Natya Sangeet* from Maharashtra, the stage music of the area in that period. A peculiar amalgam of classical modes and folk influences made itself felt all over the South, originally through drama, later through gramophone records and finally through films.⁸⁸ The Parsi and Bengali stage too influenced Telugu film music. Folk traditions were **better** used by the early music directors. For example, B.Narasimha Rao used them in **Mala Pilla** cinema.

⁸⁸V.A.K. Ranga Rao, "The Musical Film," in **Genres of Indian Cinema**, Platinum Jubilee of Indian Cinema, Bombay, 1988, p. 86.

Coming of Telugu Talkie:

The complete list is given in the Annexure V. **Mythologicals** like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* attracted people since they **were** for long in the form of drama, folk songs, *Harikathas*, puppets, etc. Gradually theatre with mythological themes gained peoples patronage. The songs with the aid of music (harmonium) entertained the audiences because of their easy attractive nature. With the emergence of talkie all the theatre themes were adopted into cinema along with more or less the same cast. In fact, mythologicals are permanent. If they are produced properly they are acceptable to audiences any time unlike social films. They are as valuable as puranas.⁸⁹ Hanumanthuni Muni Reddy, i.e., H.M.Reddy, directed the first talkie in Tamil (**Kalidas**) and Telugu (**Bhakta Prahalada**) to earn the title, father of the South Indian Talkies⁹⁰. **Bakta Prahlada** was released in Andhra on 15th September 1931. **Kalidas** was the first Tamil film. The first Telugu talkie **Bhakta Prahlada** had Muniyappa Subbayya and Surabhi Kamala in the lead.⁹¹ L.V. Prasad donned a minor comedy role in this film. Interestingly, L.V. Prasad acted in bit roles in all the three first films (Hindi, Tamil and Telugu). These three were filmed in Imperial Film Studio of Bombay

⁸⁹Kamalakara Kameswara Rao, "Mana Pauranika Chitralu, " in **Vijayachitra**, Special Annual Issue 1986, p.196.

⁹⁰**Ibid.**

⁹¹Arudra, " Two decades of Telugu Cinema," **Op.cit.**, p.4.

by Imperial Company. H.R. Padmanabha Sastry was the Music Director of **Bhakta Prahlada**.⁹²

Bhakta Prahlada was an instant success and the commercial profits prompted the business instinct to exploit the language medium. Next year, **Paduka Pattabhishekam** and **Sakunthala** with Yadavilli Suryanarayana and Rama Tilakam in the lead were produced. Neither the producer nor the director knew Telugu. In 1933, **Prithviputra** based on the story of Narakasura, was made by Pothina Srinivasa Rao, the first Andhra exhibitor, casting Raghuramayya and Parupalli Satyanarayana. This was the first Telugu talkie financed entirely by Andhra people.⁹³ C.Pullaiah made **Lava Kusa** with Sriranjani and Parupalli Subba Rao as Sita and Rama which was a sensational box-office hit⁹⁴. The scenes of hundreds of villagers traveling with food packets in scores of bullock carts to nearby towns to see **Lava Kusa** confirms the power of this cinema medium.⁹⁵ Sita **Kalyanam** of P.V.Das, the proud owner of first studio, Vel Pictures at Madras, was directed by Chitrapu Narasimha Rao⁹⁶. In 1935, P.Pulliah produced **Harishchandra** with Kannamba as the leading

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid., p. 5.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Interview with C.S. Rao, S/O C.Pullaiah, in Madras, 27 May 1994. C.S. Rao is a well known film producer and director.

⁹⁶Arudra, Op.Cit., p. 6.

lady under star combines of Kolhapur; **Addanki** was its hero.⁹⁷ Dasari Kotiratnam of **Sakkubai** fame emerged as the first woman producer of Telugu film industry by producing **Anasuya** in 1935. **Sri Krishna Lilalu** of Vel Pictures starring Gaggayya and Sriranjani, produced by P.V.Das, in 1935 was a great success. In this, Master Saluri Rajeswara Rao, who later became a renowned music director played, the role of Krishna in this film." 1937 was a milestone in the history of Telugu cinema, for it presented **Kanchanamala** the most glamorous lady of the early Telugu films as the heroine in **Vipranarayana**.⁹⁹

Thus more than 60 films of mythological themes have been produced from 1931 to 1947. Mythologicals developed in people the habit of seeing films.

Folklore:

In the name of giving message to spectators in social cinemas, film makers at times have to face the displeasure of the people and there by incur box office losses. Folklore subject is free from bias and far from naturalness. Hence some of the producers thought folklore is the best bet and they can be hundred **per** cent entertainers. Another advantage of folklore films is that they can

⁹⁷**Harishchandra** was the first film of Kannamba, a noted first generation Telugu actress.

⁹⁸Interview with Saluri Rajeswara Rao, in Madras dated, 22 May 1994.

⁹⁹Arudra, "Two Decades of Telugu Cinema," **Op.Cit.**, p.10.

be dubbed to other languages because the subject is **adaptable** to any region. These films did achieve the same what mythologicals once did. These films attract vast rural masses easily.

Gulebakavali (1938) was the first important folklore film. It is a Liberty Picture's production whose director was Kallakuri Sadasiva Rao.¹⁰⁰ **Balanagamma**, produced in 1942, with the cast Kanchanamala and Govindarajula Subba Rao, was directed by Gemini's C. Pulliah, while **Mayalokam** (Magic World) of 1945, was from the Sarathi banner, directed by Gudavalli Ramabrahman with the main cast by Dr.Govindrajulu and Kannamba.¹⁰¹ The story of the latter film is based on *Kambojaraju Kadhalu*. Sarabandiraju character was played by Akkineni Nageswara Rao. This film was a box office hit.

In 1946, **Mugguru Marathilu** was directed by Ghantasala Balaramayya for Pratibha Pictures. Govindrajaula Subba Rao and Kannamba were the lead artists.¹⁰² **Balaraju** was a roaring success (1948), with Akkineni Nageswara Rao and S.Varalakshmi¹⁰³ as the lead pair.

CINEMAS WITH SOCIAL THEME

¹⁰⁰Gudipudi Srihari, *Op.cit.*, p. 62.

¹⁰¹**Natasamrat**, a silver jubilee souvenir, Madras, 1970.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*

¹⁰³*Ibid.*

From the very beginning, Telugu film industry was obsessed with adaptation of successful mythological stage plays and crowd pullers into films. Departing from this, for the first time, an attempt was talkie with semblance of a made to produce a social theme in 1936. Krithiventi Nageswara Rao of India Aru cinetone produced a movie called **Prema Vijayam** (triumph of love).¹⁰⁴ Though, this theme of ultimate triumph of true love had been dealt perennially, its exposition in the contemporary setting and in the latest medium, was a fine reflection of the times. This solitary attempt, however, like a small island in the ocean, was submerged by the continuous flood of mythological movies and failed to carry any impact. Prabhala Krishan Murthy was hero of the picture.¹⁰⁵ [No more details are available]. K.Subrahmanyam's **Balayogini** (1937) was an attack on the caste system and a daring exposure of the hypocrisy in the priesthood. Child artist Baby Saroja was introduced in this film.¹⁰⁶

FILM MUSIC:

Today our national music is nothing but film music though it is popular. Never before the music reached people like this. Firstly, the music of theatre made inroads into cinemas. There was initially no orchestra but except harmonium and tabla. Film music

¹⁰⁴Arudra, **Op.cit.**, p.10. Details about **Prema Vijayam** are not available.

¹⁰⁵**Ibid.**

¹⁰⁶**Ibid.**, p.11.

started popularising since **Lava Kusa** (1934) only. The songs of this film came as disc plates (gramophone). The tunes were in Hindustani style with Bengali flavour. Prabhala Satyanarayana was its music composer.¹⁰⁷ With **Malapilla** film music was modernised. Bhimavarapu Narasimha Rao was its music director. Folklore was freely used. The song tunes used by New Theatre's pictures were utilised in the songs for **Grihalakshmi, Vandemataram, Sumangali Chandidas, Devadas, President, Street Singer, Amarajyothi, Duniya no mane, Gopalakrishna, Admi**, etc., set example for Telugu film songs. S.Rajeswara Rao, Gali Penchala Narasimha Rao and Ogirala Ramachandra Rao were the noted music directors after Bhimavarapu Narasimha Rao¹⁰⁸

FILM JOURNALISM:

Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao pantulu was the first person who encouraged film journalism.¹⁰⁹ Film news found place in **Andhra Patrika** under his insistence. The early film journalists were men like Inturi Venkateswara Rao, B.S. Rama Rao, Kodavatiganti Kutumba Rao and others.¹¹⁰ **Chitra Kala** was the earliest pioneering film journal whose editor was Inturi Venkateswara Rao. K.J. Mohan,

¹⁰⁷Adinaraya Rao, "Cinema Sangeetam mariyu Parinaamamu, " in **Vijaya Chitra** [Telugu], Special Issue, 1986, p.162.

¹⁰⁸**Ibid.**, pp. 161-2.

¹⁰⁹Bommakanti Subba Rao, "Telugu Film Journalism, " in **Vijaya Chitra, Op.cit.**, p.162.

¹¹⁰**Ibid.**

Gudavalli Ramabrahmam, Kamalakara Kameswara Rao, Kathanjali Acharya Rupavani Seetaramayya, Dhanka Achari, Suryaprabha Appa Rao, M.S. Sarma were a host of other film journalists.¹¹¹ Tapi Dharma Rao, Samudrala Raghavacharya, Narla Venkateswara Rao, Gopichand were some others who contributed with their writings¹¹² The harsh criticism on **Draupadi Vasthrpaharanam** earned a place for Kamalakara Kameswara Rao in the company of H.M. Reddy, the director of **Grihalakshmi**. Most of the above mentioned men settled in film industry.¹¹³

MELODRAMA:

The structure of a family melodrama on the Hindi screen has the following elements¹¹⁴

- (a) A common and stereotype story-line;
- (b) a straight narrative with visual flash backs;

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Gudavalli Ramabrahmam, the Editor of **Prajamitra** used to organise "Durbars" in his press office wherein many critics participated and discussed contemporary Telugu cinemas. Tapi Dharmarao, Samudrala Raghavacharya, Gopichand and many others participated in the symposiums. Their film criticism found place in **Prajamitra**, **Krishna Patrika**, **Andhra Patrika**, etc. For example, see **Andhra Patrika**, **Ugadi Sanchika** [Annual Number], 1945-46 where Samudrala Venkata Raghavacharya wrote an article, pp. 82-84. Also see **Krishna Patrika**, 22 March 1952 and Etukuri Prasad, **Tapi Dharma Rao Jivitamu-Rachanalu**, [Telugu], Hyderabad, 1989.

¹¹³Bommakanti Subba Rao, "Telugu Film Journalism", pp.95-96.

¹¹⁴Shoma Chattarjee, "The Family Melodrama," **Genres of Indian Cinema: Platinum Jubilee of Indian Cinema**, Bombay, 1983-89, p.73.

© too many coincidences - the loving boy in the neighbourhood turns out to be the long lost son of the widowed mother;

(d) emotional relationships among the family members are grossly exaggerated - both negative emotions like anger and hate as well as positive emotions like love and respect;

(e) women are largely allowed to remain passive, submissive and dominated by men;

(f) all family melodramas are extremely sentimental,

(g) too much dialogue based.

COMEDY:

The early films of Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd provided a sound foundation for latter day Hollywood exponents of comedy like Billy Wilder, Ernst Lubitseh and a few other masters in this genre. In the talkie era both in Europe and America comic had both political content and social bite.¹¹⁵

Starting as the Indian cinema did with an obvious bias on well known epics and stories from mythology, as in Phalke's film, it seemed natural that the first talkie era would rationally follow that very path which it did. The films of the early talkie

¹¹⁵Rinky Bhattacharya, "The Comedy Film," **Genres of Indian Cinema: Platinum Jubilee of Indian Cinema**, p. 79.

era were therefore preferential to epics where comedy was considered a fatal flaw.

India's first authentic comedy film was that of Dhiren Ganguly's **England Returned**: B.N. Sircar followed the suit with **Excuse Me Sir**. P.C. Barua's **Rajat Jayanti** was another popular comedy. **Brahmachari** (1938), **Mantra Mugdha** (a social satire) of Bimal Roy, and Master Vinayak's films are worth mentioning in this context.¹¹⁶ Soon comedy in any Indian film was reduced to a single comic figure.

In Telugu, L.V. Prasad acted in **Bhakta Prahlada**, the first talkie of Telugus as a comedian. Kanchi Narasimha Rao and Rangoon Rama Rao acted in **Bhakta Prahlada** (1942) as comedians. In Tamil films the popular comedian of yesteryears was N.S. Krishnan. Krishnan and Madhuram acted in **Bhagya Lakshmi** (1942), the Telugu film.¹¹⁷ **Barrister Parvateesam** (1940), **Bondam Pelli** (1940), **Taru Maru** (1941), **Bhale Pelli** (1941) - are the first full length comedy pictures. Siva Rao acted in **Swarga Seema** and **Mugguru Marathilu**. Linga Murthy, Bhimavarapu Narasimha Rao, C.S.R. Anjaneyulu and Sivaramakrishnayya made their mark as comedians. Siva Rao brought an image to the comedians.¹¹⁸ From 1938 onwards upto 1947 (ten

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 80.

¹¹⁷Padmanabham, "Mana Hasyam - Hasya Natulu," **Vijaya Chitra** [Annual Special], 1986, p.150.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

years span) many films have been made. Only important social films are taken for indepth study. These are **Malapilla** (1938); **Grihalakshmi** (1938); **Vandemataram** (1939); **Malli Pelli** (1939); **Rythu Bidda** (1939); **Vara Vikrayam** (1939); **Sumangali** (1940); **Illalu** (1940); **Dharmapathni** (1941); **Mahatma Gandhi** (1941); **Devatha** (1941); **Apavadu** (1941); **Pantulamma** (1943); **Swargasima** (1945); **Grihapravesam** (1946); **Palnati Yuddham** (1947) and **Yogi Vemana** (1947). These films are analysed in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER III**FORM AND CONTENT IN TELUGU CINEMA 1938-47:
THE STRUCTURE OF THE NARRATIVE**

The intellectual life of mankind is the mainspring of historical progress. Literature is the expression of the intellectual life of the nation.¹ Literature is a powerful mediation of social dynamism in historical process and it has always been a most precise reflection of the society which produced it.² Therefore, in reconstructing the historical past, literature helps to comprehend not only the dominant cultural patterns but also the popular conceptions of the world.

Similarly, arts are the depositories of human creativity. Four doctrines of art emerged during the renaissance period and they were:³ definition of art as an imitation of the hidden society; location of art in perpetual imitation and embodiment of the idea of beauty; art as idealisation of nature, i.e., showing things not as they are but as they ought to be; and the idea that while nature is God's creation, art is man's creation.

During Reformation movement, the Protestants used print extensively for propagation of their ideology in a battle to win

¹Georgi V. Plekhanov, **Selected Philosophical Works**, Vol.IV, Moscow, 1980, p.314.

²Howard Fast, **Literature and Reality**, Bombay, 1952, p.1.

³Raymond Williams, **The Long Revolution**, London, 1961, p.6.

men's minds ⁴ With the emergence of Industrial Revolution, print became a **great** industry, popularly described as "print capitalism." ⁵ Similarly, under capitalism, literature has been used very effectively for the rise and spread of nationalism and bourgeois liberal democratic ideology.

In traditional and orthodox literary and cultural theory, history of literature has been located in imitation of beauty and artist's individual creativity. In this scheme, the history of literature is the history of individualised tendencies, genres and forms, etc., and was never considered part of a broader total historical cultural process. This conventional way of looking at literature not only undermines its true ideological and political mediation in history but also fails to grasp how literature does express tastes, views and aspirations of the ruling class or a section of the ruling class that rules.⁶ Therefore, we have to draw upon the alternative tradition of literary analysis for a meaningful appreciation of literary mediation in social process. For us, the departure is located in Marxist theory of literature and art, for it gave a radical shift to the conventional understanding of literary production.

⁴Benedict Anderson, **Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism**, London, 1983, p. 43.

⁵**Ibid.**, p.42.

⁶Georgi V. Plekhanov, **Op.cit.**, p.317.

Marx locates culture and intellectual production in a broader historical process of changing socio-economic structures and material conditions. According to the materialistic conception of history, the determining element in history is ultimately the production and reproduction in real life.

For Marxian cultural theory, the ruling class always reinforces its hegemony through various ideological apparatuses, literature is one of those powerful ideological mediators. Further, for Marxist cultural theory, the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society is, at the same time, its ruling intellectual force.⁷ Therefore, the dominant ideas and values, which in turn, legitimize and reinforce dominant social relations, are available to us only in literature.

Following the Marxian tradition, Antonio Gramsci argued that the reality of any hegemony in the extended political cultural sense is that while by definition it is always dominant, the dominance is never either total or exclusive. At any time, forms of alternative or directly oppositional politics and culture exist as significant element in the society. But the dominant meanings, values and traditions always try to control, transform or even

⁷Raymond Williams, **Marxism and Literature**, London, 1977, pp.109-110.

incorporate the alternative or counter hegemonic processes.⁸ Therefore, in any cultural analysis, hegemony should be understood in sense of dynamic processes since it is always alert and responsive to the alternative hegemonic processes.

No art form can be separated from the social process. The general social process is always dynamic one in which there is continuous struggle between dominant and dominated, hegemonic and counter hegemonic ideologies and cultural processes. Therefore, we have to locate this dynamic social process in cultural production in each particular period. In other words, the theoretical need is to locate literature and arts in the social process and then use them in reconstructing human history.

Our study of Telugu cinemas is done against this theoretical backdrop. Several ideas developed as part of broad Marxist cultural studies [literary studies in particular], as enunciated above, have helped us in comprehending various complexities in film narratives. The idea of "national popular" developed by Antonio Gramsci is very useful to our study of pre-independent Telugu films.

In this chapter we have not taken up any in depth analysis of the narratives in Telugu films. We have only given synopsis of each

⁸Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, op.cit., p.44.

film, particularly the central story, so as to make our later analysis meaningful. So far we did not find any secondary works on the central themes and story lines of the movies we have taken for our study and hence felt the need for making such an information available, as the first logical step. Therefore, what we have shown in the entire chapter are:

1. Story of each film taken up for the study; and
2. An Appendix giving details on several inputs of each movie like producer, actors, etc.⁹

The following four chapters [4 to 7] are the critical analysis of the structure of each film, but grouped under subject category.

MALA PILLA [Harijan Girl]

In the movie, the opening scene starts with the dawn of the day and a moving procession of Harijan Seva Sangh, praising Gandhiji.

The scene shifts to the hutment of the Sangh, where the volunteers were shown spinning on the *Charkas*, while Raĉhabayamma, the President of the Sangh, was speaking about Gandhiji. There was a photo of Gandhiji on a wall of the hutment. "The Hindu Society cannot loose seven crore of Harijans:" was the sentence written on the photo, beneath Gandhiji's image. As if to reinforce the slogan

⁹See Appendix VI.

on Gandhi's photograph, the volunteers were shown singing the song:

"*Kollai Gattitenemi maa Gandhi . . .*"¹⁰

In contrast, at some other place in the village, the **Brahmins** were in conference. And in that meeting one Brahmin says that with the entry of Harijans into Hindu temple, not only Brahminism but the entire Hinduism will get polluted.

That day happened to be the Sivarathri day and, on that occasion, a *jatara/tirunal* was organised in the village.¹¹ It was also a day of car festival.

Suddenly, the narrative brings into sharp focus religious fervour and social rebellion. For the Harijans of the village, by chanting "*Hara Hara Mahadev Sambho Sankara*" in chorus tries to make good their entry into the Shiva temple. The Congress volunteers stop them from entering into the temple, but the tension mounts up. The Congress leader, Chowdary, intervenes and prevent them from

¹⁰ **Mala Pilla** - original film deposited in National Film Archive of India, Pune.

¹¹**Jatra** or **Tirunala** literally means "a temple festival." It is like a "carnival," where the peasant society not only celebrates the religious festival but also organises an elaborate fair for exchange of goods and recreation. The portrait of life in a small French city during 1579-1580, with an interesting interpretation of the parades, masquerades and feasts of carnival time by Ladurie is, methodologically instructive. See Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, **Carnival In Romans: A People's Uprising At Romans, 1579-1580**, [Translated by Mary Feeney], Harmondsworth, 1981.

entering into the temple. The Congress people, by laying down on the ground prevents the Harijans: they challenge them to walk over their bodies, if the Harijans really want to go inside the temple. Realising the seriousness of the situation, the Harijans worship Lord Shiva from outside the temple and return to their homes.

On the hillock two girls were singing "*Nalla vade Golla pilla vade*" before the idol, Krishna¹². Hero Nagaraju reaches there and he sings Jayadeva's ashtapadi: "*saa viraha Krishna,*" and on hearing this song heroine sheds tears out of over joy. Intimacy develops between the heroine, Sampalatha and the hero, Nagaraju. When the hero touches her, the heroine reveals that she is an untouchable girl. And also adds that she may be of an inferior caste but not character wise.

The relationship slowly matures into a love affair, but interceded with one episode which brings them to the stage of marriage. On one occasion, when one Harijan boy tries to outrage the modesty of Sampalatha, hero Nagaraju saves her and promises to marry her.

The larger social crisis around the issue of Harijan insistence to enter into the Shiva temple, which is not resolved as

¹² This song was written by Basavaraju Appa Rao, a contemporary Telugu romantic poet.

the Brahmins were adamant and the love affair between two individuals: Nagara ju and Sampalatha were now fused into a paradigm, for the issue of untouchability is not just a moral and religious issue but an issue in the life of each individual, be it one is from an upper caste or a lower caste. Even the very introduction of crisis into love affair is because of the spill over of the broader social crisis.

Coming back to the main story, the village caste Hindu Brahmins took strong objection to the temple entry attempt by the Harijans. Compromise was not in sight. To reassert their caste social and cultural domination, the Brahmins prevent Harijans from fetching drinking water from the village tank. Starved of drinking water, on a rainy day, the Harijans come to Sastri, the temple Priest to strike a compromise, but in vain.

Ten days lapsed without a single drop of water for Harijans. On drinking muddy water, one person becomes ill. The disturbed Harijan youth blame Mur.eyya, father of Sampalatha for taking sides with Brahmins. One boy discloses the love between his daughter and the son of the Priest, Nagaraju. They go to an extent of accusing him of treason, i.e., his support to Brahmins was because of his daughter's love affair with a Brahmin boy.

The broader social crisis is brought to a climax with the revelation of Nagaraju's Brahmin caste identity to Sampalatha through a dramatic event. Sampalatha and Nagaraju were immersed in a duet: "*Aa Vagu, Ee Vagu. , Aa Konda, Ee Konda.*" Seeing this, a group of Harijan youth fetch Muneyya to the scene. Muneyya's addressing of Nagaraju reveals his Brahmin parenthood. Then only the heroine comes to know about the identity of the hero. Thereupon, the heroine accuses Nagaraju of deceit.

It is not only the village which is split on caste lines but also the lovers. The paradigm is now in need of a resolution both at the social and individual level.

At another level, Chowdary and his Congress volunteers were also thrown out of the hutment by Brahmins for their support to Harijans. "If this is the fate of Chowdary what will be ours!" Harijans exclaimed.

The narrative in the movie rapidly acquires complexity, as the available form of resistance to the Brahmin social tyranny was perceived by the Harijans at the level of refusing all forms of labour to the upper caste Hindus in the village. The social and religious dimensions of the crisis is now brought into the orbit of class conflict. The consequence of the reversal of the boycott weapon by the Harijans on the peasant upper castes, particularly

Kammas and their response to it is shown as an important element in the conflict.

To bring around the Brahmins, Chowdary advises the Harijans to go on strike, as even, according to him, Jawaharlal Nehru would have advised them the same path of action. An ideological justification is provided through a background song extolling "all workers to unite". Before the starting of the strike, Chowdary takes a word from Muneyya and others not to use violence. While workers of neighbouring villages were brought for work, they were persuaded to go back with the argument that all workers must show solidarity towards each other. The upper caste non-Brahmin peasants in the village, whose economic stakes are high, were shown as joining hands with the Harijans. This enrages the Brahmins, for the Hindu religion is sacrificed for economic needs. The village Priest, Sastry who earlier warned Chowdary on ruining of Hinduism by the Harijans, now turns towards his son and tries to impress upon him the glory of Hinduism.

The counseling of the Priest did not have much impact on the hero. He determines to marry Sampalatha. Here heroine also experiences the bitterness of separation. She goes to the hillock along with her sister to meet Nagaraju, but could not find her hero there. Seeing his daughter still longing for the Brahmin boy, Muneyya gets angry and throws her out of the house.

Suddenly a heavy rain breaks out. Sampalatha, caught in the heavy storm, reaches hero's house for shelter. Fearing the wrath of his orthodox father and the society, Nagaraju asks her to go off. But repents later for his harshness towards her. As Muneyya continues to be harsh towards his daughter, Sampalatha goes to the hillock. Heroine manages to meet the waiting hero on the hillock. Heroine's sister advised them to go somewhere and get married. Both of them decide to elope to an urban center where the social identity is not strapped within the traditional contours.

At one level the individual problem is resolved with the elcping of Nagaraju and Sampalatha, but the social and cultural conflict is getting out of hand. The conflict around the issue of use of water by the Harijans is shown through certain events. One day when mother of Sampalatha goes to fetch water from the tank in a mud pot, the watchmen objects her and breaks the pot.

The water crisis is overshadowed by the events associated with the movement of internal reform among the Harijans. Chowdary initiates, what Mahatma Gandhi has been **preaching**, the voluntary internal reform among the Harijans. The prevention of animal sacrifice and the drinking of toddy during ~~the~~ popular folk

festival, *Poleramma jatara*,¹³ were the two issues on which Chowdary and his Congress volunteers were shown involved in.

Noticing the disappearance of heroine, the Harijans attack "he priest. Moving from the conventional notion of upper caste outcry in such instances, for it is the Brahmin boy who eloped of with an "untouchable" girl, the Harijans were shown getting outraged at the Brahmin father of the hero. In *varna sankara*, it is no longer the upper caste who have to sanctify the deviation but the oppressed "untouchables" who have to accept the traditional social oppressor. In the story, when Harijans attack the Brahmin priest, Chowdary intervenes to save the priest and gets himself wounded in the process. He convinces the Harijans to retreat to their *gudem* (living place).

In another frame, the hero, heroine and her sister reach Calcutta by a train. Their parents bemoan for their absence. In Calcutta, Anasuya, sister of the heroine gets injured in a car accident. Bose Babu, the car owner admits her in a hospital. Bose Babu appoints hero as his Personal Assistant. Gradually by dint of his hard work he was promoted as manager. Heroine learns English.

¹³ In rural Andhra the village deities are worshiped in the name of mother goddesses. *Poleramma* is one such Goddess. Annual festivals in the name of *Jatara/Tirunal* are performed.

Chowdary tries to reform Sastry, the priest. He reads a **news** from a newspaper about the temple entry of Harijans in Indore, a native princely state. The larger social [religious] issue of temple entry is brought into fore as the terrain where the issue of 'untouchability' is sought to be resolved within the frame work of Gandhian non-violent, voluntary and internal repentance of upper caste soul, actively aided by the highly 'humane' character of the Harijans, treated as untouchables.

One day, hero Nagaraju's mother breaks down out of grief for her son and in the process hits a lamp and their house **catches** fire. Horrified Sastry cries for help. Muneyya jumps into fire and saves the mother of hero. Brahmins, in spite of Muneyya's help, comments Sastry for caste contamination. Chowdary and the Congress volunteers give first aid to Sastry's wife. Sastry and his wife acknowledge the help rendered by Muneyya. Chowdary praises the humanitarian help of Muneyya and says Good men are found even in Mala caste (Harijans). All these events and timely efforts of Chowdary transformed Sastry, the priest. He decides to open the doors of temple for Harijans. Press and Radio covered the news. Hero and Heroine listen to the news and come to the village.

The only shift from the Gandhian paradigm is the use of colonial state's coercive state apparatus, police. For, on that auspicious day of opening of temple doors for Harijans, **other**

Brahmins oppose Sastry and resort to physical attack. One Harijan saves the Priest. Meanwhile, on Chowdary's report, police come and arrest the Brahmin culprits. Hero's Brahmin and heroine's Harijan parents repent, reform and reconcile. And the conflict is resolved with a happy ending with Chowdary's song and a *Bhajan* in the temple in the background.

GRIHA LAKSHMI [Goddess like Housewife]

There is nothing like paradise but a happy family. Buz there are many a demon to destroy that paradise.

Dr. Krishna Rao is son of a millionaire, Rama Rao. Radha is his dearest wife and he leads a happy family life. They ate like the mythical Radha and Krishna. Gopinath is Radha's brother, whose whole time occupation is service to Harijans and is a Secretary of Harijan Seva Samithi, 'Schedule Caste Welfare Council.' One day, Gopinath arranges a dance recital for the benefit of Harijan Ashram and Dr.Krishna Rao is asked to preside over the programme, *Bharata Na tyam*.

The Dancer, Madhuri, and her mother, Manikyam planned to bring Dr.Krishna Rao under their spell. A poor Brahmin Purohit [priest], working in the house of Dr.Krishna Rao, for the sake of money, joins the plot planned by Madhuri.

One day, **Madhuri** comes to the clinic of **Dr. Krishna Rao** to test his character. Then subsequently he goes to the house of Madhuri to give treatment. Madhuri lures him. The spell bound doctor seduced by Madhuri neglects even to attend the birthday party of his daughter Rohini. He started consuming liquor also. Good sense prevailed for sometime and doctor stopped going to the house of Madhuri. But unfailing **vampish** Madhuri hunts him on the seashore. He again falls a prey to Madhuri and he has become a slave to her. He neglects his family and even his practice. He borrows liberally on high rate of interest from Seth Ram Lal. Pro-notes were written for more amounts than what he has borrowed.

Gopinath advises his brother-in-law to stop **consuming** alcohol and be a good householder. Dr. Krishna Rao hits him on cheek. Entire family comes to know about the downfall of Dr. Krishna Rao. Higher officers terminate him from the service. Since then he openly drinks on the roads even. In the **intoxicant** mood he manhandles Radha. His father kicks him out of house and Madhuri 's house has become permanent address of the doctor. Rara Rao, the disheartened father of doctor became sick . He wants to see his son. His daughter-in-law goes to the house of Madhuri where she was whipped by her husband. Rama Rao hands over all the **property** to kids, through a will, by fixing office manager **Viswasa Rao** as attorney. Seth and Sastry come to know about this in a newspaper. Seth decides to recover his loan amounts at any cost. Viswasa Rao

tries to bring the doctor back home from **Madhuri's** place wherein a wordy duel forced him strangle the throat of Madhuri. Seth kills Viswasa Rao with a pistol given by Krishna Rao. On the wrong evidence of Seth and Sastry police arrest the doctor, but he escapes and reaches Radha and repents. Police reach there and takes him in to custody. Seth and other money lenders confiscate Dr. Krishna Rao's property. Radha and child were thrown out of the house. Gopinath comes to know all about and reach the town and take Radha and child under his care. The trial continues in the session court. The evil forces were divided regarding sharing of Krishna Rao's property court decides Krishna Rao guilty of the murder of Viswasa Rao. However, case was posted to next day.

Radha finally approaches Madhuri to save her husband, but she was thrown from upstairs. Radha became insane. The mad Radha roams around questioning the existence of God. Meanwhile Madhuri meets with an accident. The injured Madhuri comes to court with the help of prosecutor and reveals the truth. Dr. Krishna Rao was acquitted. Gopinath take his sister and brother-in-law to the Harijan Ashram. At the Ashram all praised Gandhiji.

In Griha Lakshmi, besides, the evil of drink, the story tackled a contemporary social problem of illtreatment and desertion of wife by husband, lured by another woman of easy virtue. Contemporary literateur Kodavatiganti **Kutumba** Rao in a write up to

Andhra Patrika, dated 23 March 1938 praises Griha Lakshmi as the best among the Telugu Cinemas in spite of many a flaw.

VANDEMATARAM [Mangala Sutram]

Raghu, a graduate, belongs to a rural farming family. His wedding with Janaki is almost stopped before the tying of the sacred *mangalasutram* because of his parents' demand for the instant payment of the dowry. Heedless of their orders, Raghu goes ahead with the wedding ceremony.

The mother-in-law hates Janaki and makes her life miserable at every turn. The kindly father-in-law, a hen pecked husband, watches in sheer helplessness. Poor Janaki suffers in silence, her only solace being her unemployed husband's love.¹⁴

Raghu fails to get a job in spite of his best efforts. Soon he becomes a father and his responsibilities increase. Unemployment and problems of joint family living force him to leave home for the city in search of a job.

¹⁴"Vandemataram" a cine social novel published in **Vijayachitra**, from November 1970 issue onwards; B.V.Dharap, **Indian Filmography**, NFAI, Pune, p.693. Randor Guy, **B.N.Reddy: a monograph**. pp.20-23; **Andhra Patrika**, 7 and 15 April 1936; **Grihalakshmi**, [Teluru monthly] May 1939, pp.217-8.

Anonymous and lost in the city, and still jobless, Raghu by sheer accident buys a Derby lottery ticket and forgets all about it. Alone at home, Janaki suffers and soon her mother-in-law's evil machinations force her to leave home with her child in search of her husband. Tears, agony and sorrow are her companions in her quest.

Raghu wins the Derby lottery, Rs.500,000 and his life takes a new turn. He rushes home and is shocked when his mother tells him that Janaki is gone forever. She persuades him to marry again but he refuses and returns to the city.

Rich but sad, Raghu and his friend, a rich man's daughter and college-mate, serve the poor. He starts factories to create employment: opportunities for his fellow men. People spread ugly rumours about Raghu and his college-mate but he does not care.

Janaki and her son reach the city in search of a living. They manage to live by selling flowers. Janaki making garlands and her son selling them. Raghu and his friend are regular customers and he takes a liking to the boy, unaware that he is his son.

Janaki sees her husband and his friend and thinks the two are lovers. She suffers in silence like a traditional Hindu housewife.

And then she meets her husband who is surprised to find her alive. Truth triumphs, and all live happily ever after.

MALLI PELLI [Re-marriage]

Widow marriage is the theme of this film **Malli Pelli**. Y.V. Rao warned the people by picturising in those days the fake Swami and his deceitful nature. Janardhana Rao Pantulu is an **advocate**. **His** only daughter is Lalitha. Fearing the forthcoming operation of Sarada Act, Janardhana Rao performs marriage to Lalitha at her **6th** year. But unfortunately soon she becomes a widow in her young age. She grows and acquires worldly knowledge. But her life becomes miserable in society. Janardhana Rao is an orthodox man. He does not like social reform.

One Swami named Kaliyugananda enters the village and stays in the house of Janardhana Rao. Soon his name spread far and near. People flock at him for *darshan* and *prasadam*. People believe **that** his *prasadam* gives them the opportunity of reaching heaven. **Soon** Janardhana Rao becomes puppet in the hands of **Swami**.

One day some ladies come to Advocates' house to invite the female members of the house to a family festival at which ladies with their husbands alive should only attend. Not **knowing** that Lalitha is a widow, one of those ladies apply **kumkum** (saffron

powder) on the forehead of Lalitha. At which Swami and others took objection and pass on bad comments. Lalitha is grief stricken. In the house opposite to that of advocate Sundar Rao and his sister Kamala reside. Sundar Rao is a graduate but unemployed. He is unable to get his sister Kamala married. Kamala and Lalitha are friends. The nephew of advocate, Venkata Rao, is friend of Sundar Rao. Sundar Rao falls in love with widow Lalitha. He is determined to marry her against the social barriers.

One day Kamala who goes to advocate's house and was about to be molested by the advocate, but in vain. Sundar Rao out of anger at this, manhandles the advocate, resulting in his arrest and he was also jailed.

Word spread throughout the village that Lalitha is pregnant. The fake Sanyasi offers a country medicine to terminate her pregnancy. Lalitha refuses to take it saying she is innocent. Swami is planning to shave her head. Lalitha leaves the house and meets Sundara Rao who is in jail. As already Sundar Rao comes to know about the pregnancy he showed cold shoulder to her proposal of marriage. Disgusted Lalitha falls and becomes unconscious. Sundar Rao got released next day and while returning home found Lalitha in unconscious position. He admits her in a hospital with the help of one Ramudu who is already in search of her. Lady doctor discloses that Lalitha is not pregnant but it was a kind of disease. Sundar

Rao confessed. He sends Ramudu to Lalitha's mother to get money in order to pay doctor's fees. Lalitha's mother gives him gold bangles as she was not having money. Janardhana Rao, the advocate comes to know about this and on the evil advise of fake Sanyasi got arrested Sundara Rao and Ramudu on a charge of theft. At the intervention of Venkata Rao, the nephew of advocate, Lalitha's mother reveals the actual fact in witness box in the court of law. Meanwhile the fake Sanyasi was also caught by police as he was a culprit in a Bank theft case. Janardhan Rao regrets for all that had happened. With the consent of the elders, Lalitha and Sundar Rao, Kamala and Venkat Rao got married. That's the end of it.

RYTU BIDDA [A Peasant]

The story of this picture relates to the pre-independence era. *Rytu Bidda* is dedicated to *Rytu Bandhava* the Late Bollina Munuswami Naidu, Ex-Chief Minister, Government of Madras Presidency.

"Ownership of the land to the tiller of the soil" and "End of Zamindarism" are the central themes of *Rytu Bidda*.

Zamindarism is eating away the very vitals of India. Not only peasant community but entire India is ruined. Human nature is changed to a mean level. Wherever there is Zamindarism there is destruction. Ryots face untold misery. Sarathi films took up **the**

story of a Zamindar at **Savalyapuram**, a fictitious Zamindar as an example. It depicted the terrorist activities of Zamindar and his henchmen. Those were the days of elections. **Rami Reddy** was a candidate representing ryots. Savalyapuram Zamindar backed Venkaiah in elections. Both parties turned their attention to **Nagapuram**. In Nagapuram also there were two parties. Munsab and Karanam oppose each other.

In Nagapuram there is one ryot **Narsi Reddy** who cultivates his ten acre piece of land and lives happily with his wife and children. He is much loved and respected in the village. But he borrows some amount from the village sowcar **Kanakayya**. The indebted **Narsi Reddy** was coerced by Sowcar and Karanam to vote for Zamindar's candidate. But **Narsi Reddy** did not accept. He frankly said, 'I am a ryot. I will vote only to ryot'. This reply infuriated karanam and sowcar. Karanam encouraged sowcar to create troubles to **Narsi Reddy**. Sowcar manipulated the debt amount through wrong accounting and forced **Narsi Reddy** to mortgage his land in lieu of the outstanding debts. The word mortgage made **Narsi Reddy** mad. The enraged **Narsi Reddy** thundered, "surrendering one's own land was it not like surrendering one's own mother?" Consequently Karanam and sowcar conspired and reported to Zamindar about **Narsi Reddy's** denial to give his vote to Zamindar's candidate and also he is active in splitting the villagers. Zamindar sent his men to confiscate **Narsi Reddy's** bullocks. **Narsi Reddy** is still adamant.

The Zamindar's officials pressurised Narsi Reddy through Ranga Reddy, the would be father-in-law of his daughter. Narsi Reddy's daughter pleads with her father not to think of her marriage alliances till they overcome their woes of indebtedness. Narsi Reddy sends his wife and daughter with *pasupu kumkum* (Turmeric and Saffron powder) to canvas on behalf of Rytu Sangham.

Now the full family is immersed in doing service to Rytu Sangham. Sowcar and karanam could not digest this development. Sowcar decides to recover the debt: amount at any cost. Narsi Reddy's request for 10 days time is not heeded. Notwithstanding Sowcar's humiliation, Lakshmi the wife of Narsi Reddy surrenders her jewellery including *thali*.

Elections are fast approaching. There is no chance of getting a single vote for Zamindar's candidate in Nagapuram. Zamindar's men planned and arranged the performance of Kuchipudi *Bhagavatham*¹⁵ in an enclosure in a Zamindari village. When all the people were immersed in the show, they were locked in. Rytu candidate Rami Reddy comes there and discloses the fact by crossing over the wall. The enraged ryots were inspired by Narsi Reddy's advice and broke open the doors and came out like a stream. "Zamindars may come and

¹⁵ Kuchipudi form is a well established dance tradition of Andhra. The dance director and also the performing artist in the film was Vedantam Raghavaiah, the reputed Guru of the form.

go but long live Ryot Sangham" so says Narsi Reddy. Eventually, Ryot candidate registers a spectacular victory in the poll.

The defeat made Zamindar depressed. Zamindar's henchman Kasa Subbanna, let loose a reign of terror. Nagapuram was ransacked. Ladies were molested. When Narsi Reddy's son was seriously ill Sowcar on the instigation of Subbanna brings attachment of property and in the process wounds the already sick son of Narsi Reddy. He died. Narsi Reddy family's grief knew no bounds. At the same time cyclonic rain and gales wrought havoc. It hit the rich and poor alike. The drowning Karanam was saved by Munsab. Bandits loot Sowcar and made him poor.

At Savalyapuram, Zamindar's brother conspires and kidnaps the boy Zamindar in order to grab the entire Zamindari. Dasi Subbulu and Kasa Subbanna were a party in this plot and entire blame was thrown on Narsi Reddy. Not knowing all this, Narsi Reddy with the active support of one and all in Nagapuram, put forth certain minimum demands and sent an appeal to the Zamindar. Narsi Reddy was summoned by Zamindar. Thinking Zamindar changed morally, entire village garlands Narsi Reddy and sends him to Savalyapuram. But to his surprise, Narsi Reddy was treated like a criminal for the kidnap of boy Zamindar. Narsi Reddy pleads innocent. Tahsildar breaks the mystery. Zamindar's brother accepts his guilt. The

transformed Zamindar accepts Ryots demands. He sacrifices his estate to ryots, Hailing Ryot Sangham!

VARA VIKRAYAM [Sale Of Bridegroom]

The movie, **Vara Vikrayam**, is based on Mahakavi Sri Kallakuri Narayana Rao's play '**Vara Vikrayam**' (Bridegroom price) is a social evil like bride price (*Kanyasulkam*) and leads to many untoward incidents. This social evil started, strangely among educated people and is growing more along with the development of education. Only educated persons should take up the responsibility of eradicating this evil. Unfortunately even the educated have to be taught of this evil. **Vara Vikrayam** takes up this task. The film was directed by C. Pullaiah.

Kalindi and Kamala are the two daughters of **Punyamurtula Purushotama Rao**. He plans to get them married without offering dowry but **fails** in his attempts. Then he arranges a marriage alliance through a mediator called **Peraiah**. A match was fixed for Rs. 5,500/- as bridegroom price. The boy was one **Basava Raju**, the adopted son of **Singaraju Lingaraju**. But, Kalindi, the bride failing to persuade her father not to offer price (**dowry**), commits suicide by drowning herself in a well. So, her **younger** sister Kamala was given in marriage to **Basava Raju**. After marriage Kamala did not go to her in law's place. She argues that since Basava

Raju was bought by her, Basava Raju should go to his **in-law's house**.

A case was filed in the court against this. Basava Raju gives witness in favour of his wife and so the case was dismissed in the court of law. From thenceforth **Basavaraju** and Kamala campaigned for the eradication of bridegroom price or eradication of sale of bridegrooms.

SUMANGALI [A Married Woman]

Satyam and Parvathi are cousins. Parvathi, since childhood, after her mother's death, grows in the house of maternal uncle. Gopalakrishnayya and Subbamma rear her on par with their son Satyam. Satyam, a modern young man, with progressive ideas and views, got selected for the ICS. Parvathi, a simple rustic girl, deeply in love with him and hoping to become his wife soon, is all excited, unaware of what life has in store for her.

But things are different with Satyam. He, in town, during his graduation days was attracted by Saraswathi an educated, urbane, fashionable and rich and soon falls in love with her. Satyam promises to marry Saraswathi after his return from ICS training from Delhi.

Nageswara Rao, father of Saraswathi becomes a pauper because of Bank crash where he saved all his money. He dies of heart break because of this event. Her paternal aunt Lakshmi and uncle Narsayya take her to their village. Her aunt discloses the secret of her life. Till then she is not aware that her tradition-bound father had got her married during her childhood and her husband had died soon after. Poor Saraswathi has no memory of this shocking event. Afraid of breaking her tender heart, her father keeps the secret from her. On learning of her widowhood, the happy world around her crashes on her.

The village where she is taken to is the same place of Satyam, Kapileswaram. At Kapileswaram, Saraswathi's life becomes miserable. Her urban way of life is disliked by the villagers. The sister of her uncle, Gangamma, becomes a bugbear to her. Pitchiah, son of Gangamma, teases her. He is after her. Only solace to Saraswathi in that village is Parvathi. Both have become friends. Saraswathi reveals about her love with Satyam to Parvathi. Parvathi's world again becomes dark.

On the return of Satyam, Gopalakrishnayya wanted Satyam marry Parvathi. Satyam refuses and his infuriated father asks him to leave the house. Satyam quits the house. Parvathi tells Satyam all about Saraswathi. Parvathi sacrifices and helps Satyam meet Saraswathi. They both go away. But in the journey Saraswathi

abandons Satyam. After some hardships in the end **Parvathi dies**, but not before bringing Satyam and Saraswathi together.

ILLALU [House-wife]

The theme of **Illalu** is that blind imitation of the West and obsession of Western culture leads to many troubles. *Pativratya* (*Thorough devotion of a married woman to one's own husband*) should be the objective of every woman. Woman is not a playing doll. Kanchanamala plays the role of Indira in *Illalu*.

Early marriages lead to many complications. In this film hero leaves his wife whom he married at her very young age. Later on he falls in love with one ultra modern girl, Lila, in town. Indira's parents become bankrupt. Her mother dies. Indira in search of her husband reaches Madras. She finds that her husband is in love with Lila and staying with her. She, as servant-maid, enters the house of Murthy, her husband. She as servant, wins the goodwill of Lila. Indira through her good behaviour brings change in Lila. Lila dies in a car accident **not** before uniting Indira and Murthy.

DHARMA PATNI [Virtuous Wife]

There is that a girl brought up by a prostitute can be married. A woman on her death bed is much worried about her little daughter. She is more worried about the baby. No one is ready to take the

responsibility **of** the girl Radha. Sridevi **a prostitute pities** the girl and comes forward to look after Radha. The dying **mother** hesitates because she wishes her daughter to be a **housewife**. Sridevi promises to bring Radha as per the expectations **of** her mother. Then mother of Radha dies. Sridevi's life is totally changed she leaves her profession. Her only motto is to make **Radha** a good family girl Sridevi's past life haunts her. So she leaves for a new place and brings her up in a true Hindu Style. *Pativratya* ideology is instilled in her.

Radha falls in love with one Mohan. Mohan marries her in a temple. But Mohan's father settles another match to **him**. Ananda Rao, a pseudo social reformer, wants to spoil Radha. Sridevi fights tooth and nail. Upon this, Ananda Rao reveals the background of Radha to Mohan's father. So Mohan's father did his son's marriage with Uma, an educated rich girl. Uma gradually comes to know **about** Mohan's secret marriage with Radha. She was unable to tolerate the mischief. She wants to take revenge. She moves in clubs. She comes under the influence of Anand. Her ultra modern behaviour wounds the parents of Mohan. **Sridevi's** words come to their memory. "Sridevi says that **Radha's** real mother was not a prostitute. Radha ultimately wins the hearts of Mohan's parents. Her *pativratya* settled everything.

MAHATMA GANDHI

Kaba Gandhi was Diwan of Porbundar, native state in Gujarat. His son Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in 1869. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi studied in England. He came back to India as a qualified Bar at Law., i.e., Barrister. Dada Abdul Seth, an Indian Business man in South Africa, was involved in a court litigation. Mohandas got appointed as lawyer to plead his case in South African Court of Law. Abdul Seth won the suit. Mohandas Gandhi determined to stay back in South Africa as lawyer. Polak couple became his friends. These people began to think of Indians' problems.

Those were the days of Boyar war in South Africa. Gandhiji established Indian Ambulance core to help English in the war. Along with Boyars, Zulul tribe also revolted against the English. Then Gandhi along with Indians helped the English.

Gandhiji meanwhile visited India and returned with many Indians. This became eyesore for the English. They planned to kill Gandhi.

Gandhiji started a *Ashram* called phoenix in Durban for the Indians. He started publishing a paper Indian Opinion. His son anilal and his Wife Kasturba were staying with him.

In those days, Gopala Krishna Gokhale visited South Africa to see the realities of Indian peoples lives. In Johannesburg, he was given a warm welcome. Gandhiji was shown dressed up in European style. Gokhale fought against the unnecessary taxes imposed on Indians there, but in vain. Gandhi, thinking of alternatives decided on Satyagraha.

Meanwhile, Deena Bandhu Andrews was sent to South Africa by Gokhale to serve the Indians there. Satyagraha started. The Indian mining workers started strike. Even ladies participated and they were in the forefront. Madame Lassarus gave shelter to the Satyagrahis in her home. Thousands of men and women participated in Satyagraha. A South Indian young lady, Valli Ammal by name, who was just seventeen years old participated in Satyagraha. She was sent to jail where she was dead.

Satyagrahis marched from Natal to Transvaal in order to intensify the Satyagraha there. Some Europeans too were in Satyagraha. Kelambak was important among them. He was also sent to jail.

South African government was shaken by Satyagraha. Smutts compromised with Gandhiji. He abolished the taxes imposed on Indians.

The Indians in South Africa established a library there. The coronation ceremony of George V took place in Delhi in 1912.

Afterwards, Gandhiji went to England along with his family. A grand reception at Bombay was arranged when Gandhi ji returned to India. Gandhiji began dressing in Indian style.

Gandhiji spent sometime with Ravindranath Tagore in Santhiniketan. Later on he toured entire India. At last, settled in Sabarmathi Ashram in Ahmedabad. He made up his mind to serve Harijans. One Harijan girl Lakshmi was brought up by Gandhiji. He realised the sorry state of affairs of the peasants of Champaran. He noticed that only Satyagraha was the solution. He won the battle through Satyagraha.

Some time passed. Rowlatt Committee recommended some administrative reforms. But Indians were not satisfied. Unrest started. Protest meeting was held at Jallianwallah Bagh in Amritsar. Officials indiscriminately opened fire Gandhiji could not tolerate.

Meanwhile Lokamanya Tilak passed away. The length and breadth of India mourned his death. A Statue was erected in his commemoration.

Gandhiji decided that Non-cooperation Movement was only solution. Congress met in Nagapore and **Vijayaraghavachari** chaired the session. Congress accepted the Gandhian ideas.

Ms. **Slade**, an English woman, changed her name as Mira Behan and became Gandhiji's disciple. Non-cooperation Movement started. Boycott of foreign cloth became the main characteristic of movement. Demand for national education led to the founding of National Educational Centers in Gujarat, Bihar and Benaras.

Government arrested **Gandhiji** and imprisoned him for six years. He fell sick when he was in jail. An operation was conducted and later on he was released.

In 1924, All India Congress Sessions were held in Belgaum. **Gandhi ji** was the President. On his advise, Sarojini Naidu left for South Africa. In order to continue unrest in legislative councils, Desabandu Chittaranjan Das started Swarajya Party.

Congress passed a resolution to boycott Simon Commission, in the session held at Madras in 1927. Foundation for the demand of 'urna Swaraj was also laid in the same session of Madras. Entire India boycotted Simon Commission.

The Congress met in 1928. A deadline, 1929, **was** fixed for **the** acceptance of Pandit Motilal Nehru's report, failing which, it **was** decided upon through a resolution to launch another non-cooperation movement.

Gandhiji sailed for England to attend Round Table Conference. A grand welcome was given there. Gandhiji was invited to the palace of King George the fifth. Gandhiji visited the textile mills of Lancashire. There he keenly watched the machines. Americans also invited Mahatma but he could not go. Vithal Bai Patel was deputed. Gandhi visited France and Switzerland. In Switzerland he met Romaine Rolland and others. He also visited Italy and met many warriors there. Afterwards reached motherland. Then he sought for an interview with the viceroy but permission was not granted.

Gandhi ji gave a call for salt Satyagraha. He started along with some followers to make salt at Dandi. Lakhs of Indians were at the back of Gandhiji. But notwithstanding the reality, Governor of Bombay, Sir Frederick Sykes, was addressing that entire India was pro-British. The people of India disobeyed the salt laws. Mahatma was re-jailed. Some days lapsed. Gandhi was set **free**. He started Harijan Movement. Mother Bharat Temple was built in Kasi. Gandhiji once again toured India as part of Harijan Movement. The doors of Meenakshi temple at Madurai and also Tanjore temple were opened for **Harijan entry**.

During **the** Bombay Congress Session in 1934, **Gandhiji** resigned the membership of Congress. But the proceedings of Congress **were** conducted in accordance with **Gandhiji's** word.

Textile industry is dearer to Mahatma. A Khadi Exhibition **was** held at Tiruvur. Two thousand women participated in it.

Gandhiji advised to convene Congress meetings in rural areas but not in towns. Accordingly Faizpur Congress was held. It was the first incident of holding Congress meetings in rural places.

Congress then decided to make entry into legislative bodies. Elections were held and Congress won. Congress came to power. Raja Gopalachari became Prime Minister of Madras. Prohibition was introduced. Salem district experimented prohibition and later it was extended to all other districts. Toddy shops were converted into Tea shops.

Gandhiji said that for the economic growth of India, Cottage industries alone have to be developed. Rural industries started reviving . Prohibition let loose unemployment and hence **Gandhiji** encouraged. Sweet toddy for the manufacture of jaggery **and country** sugar.

When Subhash Chandra Bose was in Australia on health grounds he got elected as President of Indian National Congress. He came to attend the Haripur Congress Session. He was led in a historic procession seated in a cart pulled by 51 pairs of good bullocks. One should witness the beauty of it.

Gandhiji established an Ideal School in Wardha wherein each student has to make Cotton Threads. They need to learn while sitting under shade giving trees. No benches were in school.

Many a time Gandhiji was invited to frontier states. This time he visited these places.

Gandhiji was immersed in constructive activities. Many changes crept in the world. It was time for Tripuri Congress. Subhas Bose got elected to Presidentship on contest. His health deteriorated by the time of Congress Session Almost all Andhra leaders attended it.

Gandhiji at that time was fasting in Rajkot native state for peoples rights there. He could not attend Tripuri Congress. Gandhi ji declared open the Bharata Mata temple constructed by Birla.

Differences cropped up between Subhas Chandra Bose and **members** of Congress Working Committee. So Bose started Forward Block, **a new** party. He resigned as president of Indian National Congress.

War started in Europe. Working Committee met in Wardah. **They** demanded to know the war aims of British government from Viceroy. In 1940, the Congress met in Ramgirh. Gandhiji, who quit party in Bombay came Ramgirh to rejoin the party. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad was second time elected as president of Congress. All members expressed solidarity and complete faith in the leadership of Gandhiji. The resolution moved by Gandhiji was accepted. Gandhiji started residing at Sevagram Ashram near Wardha. It is a peaceful place.

DEVATA [Goddess]

Mangamma is rich woman living in a village. She is kind hearted and godfearing woman. Her son Venu returns to his village after finishing his legal studies in England. His sister Sita **and** mother, who have been praying for his safe return, are delighted. Lakshmi, though born in a respectable family, whose father **has** become a boozier and becomes pauper has to serve the family of Mangamma as maid servant. Lakshmi is treated as one of the family members. Under **the** guidance of Mangamma both Sita and Lakshmi have become **ideal** women.

Venu feels attracted to the poor maid Lakshmi. One day, Mangamma and Sita went out to a neighbouring village and **only** Venu and Lakshmi remained at home. Venu in a moment of lust seduces Lakshmi. Next morning Venu consoles Lakshmi by promising to marry her.

Balaramaiah is the maternal uncle of Venu. He was claiming to hooking him as a husband for his fashionable daughter, Vimala, who has a mind of her own. Venu lives with Balaramaiah in Madras practising law. The richness of his uncle made Venu to agree for the marriage. Balaramaiah sends a telegraphic message to Mangamma to go Madras for fixing Venu's marriage. For Lakshmi the news is like a bolt from the blue. She has to accompany Mangamma to Madras. Venu offered money to Lakshmi to marry somebody else. Lakshmi refuses the suggestion and requests him to be her husband at least mentally and leaves for her village.

Venu feels guilty, and avoids talking about his proposed marriage to Vimala. His problem solves itself when Vimala elopes with a pseudo poet, **Sukumar**. At the village, **Lakshmi's** father fixes her marriage. Lakshmi reveals her mind and also discloses that she was pregnant. **Lakshmi's** father loses his temper and slaps her. In order to save the honour of her father Lakshmi leaves the home to an unknown destiny.

Venu and his mother reach the village and come to know that Lakshmi left the village and her father is on death bed. Mangamma and Venu could not console the old man. He dies by angrily shouting at the man who spoiled the life of his daughter.

Filled with remorse, Venu confesses to his mother about his guilt. Then she agrees to accept Lakshmi as her daughter-in-law. Venu leaves home in search of Lakshmi.

Lakshmi delivers in the house of a Haridas who gave her shelter. For this, he faces a lot of problems and hardships and consequently she leaves the place, although her kid brother also accompanies her. Lakshmi, helpless in a wicked world with her child and brother wanders in search of food. In the process, Lakshmi goes out to earn money to treat her sick child, and, is lured into a brothel. She escapes but lands in prison.

Her kid brother and child are forced to resort to begging and meet Sita and her mother who have come to the city to join Venu. They all go in search of Lakshmi and find her in prison. She is set free and Venu apologises to her and they live happily thereafter.

APAVADU [Scandal]

Prakash was a Taluk Office clerk. His wife Kamala was as beautiful as she was a melodious singer. His sister **Kantham**, though simple looking, was cleverer than she seemed.

There dwelt Venkaiah - a retired officer, an old widower who had married for a second time. He had a daughter **Bojji**, by his first wife. Anasuya, his second wife, was an ultra modern, pleasure seeking girl. **Mangapathi**, a local rowdy, was her handyman.

Wealthy **Kamaraj**, **Prakash's** Chum since boyhood, was so accomplished in singing too, that there were gramophone records of his **songs**.

It was a day of **Kittu's** birth day party. **Kittu** was **Prakash's** son. All the neighbours were there as guests. Under pressure from the ladies Kamala sang a song. The mellifluous melody of her song spell-bound even **Kamaraju**. To his friendship with Prakash was added his admiration for **Kamala's** musical talent and a further bend. And from that day the two families of Prakash and **Kamara j** came closer in friendship and mutual exchange of visits were taking place.

The pleasure bound Anasuya longed to enmesh **Kamaraj** in her net by any means. Anasuya made bold to personally solicit **Kamaraj's**

favour. **But he** spurned her firmly. And to the spurned **woman** came the seething fury of jealousy at **Kamaraj** ' s intimacy with **Prakash**' s household. Kamala became for her an object of burning **hatred**.

Helped by the recommendation of **Kamaraj** , **Prakash** got the post of Revenue Inspector to the great joy of **Kamala** and **Kantham**. **Prakash** left on his circuit of camps entrusting the welfare of his family to **Kamara j** ' s care. Seizing this to lend colour to their evil story, **Anasuya** and **Mangapathi** set about spreading the rumour that there was illicit relationship between **Kamala** and **Kamaraj**. **Anasuya**, with three months old pregnancy set her heart on abortion, lest child birth should take away from her youth. **Mangapathi** brought for her three packets of a "Cure all" claimed to be effective for abortion, from a bearded quack of the bazaar. **Prakash** had returned from camp. **Kamaraj** sent through his servant **Kotappa** some sweetmeats to **Prakash**' s household. **Anasuya** way laid the servant and slipped into the sweetmeats a bit of paper with the words, "Love's tribute to beloved **Kamala**". It was **Prakash**' s sister **Kantham** who received the sweet **meats**. She gave one of the sweet meats to **Bojji**, **Anasuya**' s step daughter who happened to come there just **then**. she crumpled the wrappings and the chit without looking at it and threw them off, keeping the sweets aside.

Two out of the three packets that **Mangapathi** brought **were** enough **for** the abortion - seeking **Anasuya** to **death**' s door but **even**

in her suffering she lied that her illness was the result of eating one of the sweets sent by **Kamaraj** to Kamala though Bojji vehemently tried to expose this falsehood. The examining doctor sent her to the hospital sending the discarded third packet on the floor for chemical examination.

The whole place was simmering with cheap gossip. **Kamaraj's** sweets to Kamala and **Anasuya's** sudden illness was the talk on every tongue. **Ratnamma** too heard about it. It reached **Prakash's** ear too. But the innocent and unsuspecting husband gave serious attention to it. One night on the way to his home **Kamaraj** stopped his car at **Prakash's** house. Going inside he tumbled and fell down. **Kantam** hurried out and stood aghast. Kamala was frightened. **Mangapathi** made decisive notices from the neighbouring compounds. Before the day broke scandal broke out in all its lurid and varied issues. Finding **Mangapathi** and **Anasuya** guilty of attempted abortion, the court sentenced the rowdy to six months and **Anasuya** to three months imprisonment. **Venkaiah** the old husband fled the disgrace by going on an extensive pilgrimage. But **Mangapathi's** gang continued their campaign of malicious propaganda against **Kamaraj** and Kamala.

Kantham was pacing in the room restlessly, agitated by the scandalous talk that had come to her ears too. Some ants stung her feet, all of a sudden. On investigation she found the wrapper

around **the sweets** with the fake chit introduced **by Anasuya**. **Kantam** was stunned at the contents of the chit and **Kamaraj's** seeming wickedness. From the club she went straight to Ratnam. Ratnam **was dumb** struck at the discloser. Brushing aside Ratnam's pleas for patient investigation, Kantam rushed out for her brother. Ratnam looked at Kamaraj. Together they took Kotappa to task and wrung out a confession from him about **Anasuya's** trickery. By comparing with the note, once Anasuya sent to Kamaraj, they established her handwriting.

Returning from camp, Prakash thought of calling on Kamaraj. The moment he set foot into the street he noticed funny things happening. People laughed at him derisively and mocking sounds from women carrying water to street vendors, tongues were clapping about Kamala and Kamaraj. There was even a poster on the wall with the words Kamala- Kamaraj Talkie. In a volcanic rage he poured lava upon the poor Kamala. Horrible words flew like **machine** gun bullets at the innocent girl. **Kamala's** heart bled white with mortification. A thousand tragic thoughts ran through her. Suicide beckoned her as preferable to a life of slander and shame. With a last, anguished look through eyes with tears at her beloved husband and darling son, both fast asleep, she left the house **and** jumped **into a ruined well**.

Dawn. The doors were wide open and Kamala not to be seen. Kantham was deeply agitated. She woke up her brother and insisted Kamala was innocent. She told him about the chit in the sweets. Kamaraj's intentions were bad perhaps, but Kamala was pure, she pleaded.

Patience and temper against Kamaraj rode high in Prakash's heart. With Kantham frantically running after him, he rushed to Kamaraj and fell on him.

Ratnamma and Kantam restrained him. Ratnamma convinced him about Anasuya's deception.

Just then Kotappa came rushing in, with the news that Kamala had been hauled out of the ruined well and that she was injured all over. All ran to the scene and got medical aid to Kamala.

Realising Kamala's purity and Kamaraj's innocence, all felt deeply remorseful. Anasuya's vile scheming was now patent to all.

Anasuya and Mangapathi were pining in prison. And once again the families of Kamaraj and Prakash, emerging into sunlight out of the clouds of scandal, were happily restored to the old harmony of Friendship.

PANTULAMMA [Lady Teacher]

While man proposes, God disposes is the irony. Nirmala is a teacher in a girls' school of Rangapuram. Raoji is the Municipal Chairman of that town. He is instrumental in her appointment who was an orphan. Raoji is an evil man and Rajayya supports him in such activities. Suri Sastri is a music master who teaches music to Nirmala. He advises Nirmala to be cautious with Raoji. Nirmala, out of gratitude, hosted a dinner, where he misbehaves and tries to seduce her. Nirmala escapes and seeks refuge in Suri Sastri's music hall. Raoji targets his tirade at Suri Sastri. The parents of Suri Sastri misunderstand him. Nirmala had to lose her job also. Both Suri Sastri and Nirmala set out for a fresh life in a new place. In the journey they were way laid and robbed off everything. One friend of Sastri's father helped them thinking they were wife and husband. Sastri was forced by them to tie *thali* thinking robbers took away her original *thali*. Suri Sastri and Nirmala restarted their life by opening a music school. They were leading a life of mental worry and instability. Gradually Nirmala made up her mind to accept Sastri as her husband but Sastri did not agree. Meanwhile, Raoji's political fortunes dwindled with no confidence motion moved against him. Sastri was summoned back home to see his ailing mother. Sastri reveals about his marriage with Nirmala. Sastri's father tells him to live with her as Hindu dharma insists it. However, he allowed the couple to lead a happy

life as representatives of a new era. Nirmala got her old teacher post and leads a happy life with her husband.

SWARGA SEEMA [A Place Like Paradise]

Murthy is an editor of *Natya Bharathi*. His wife is Kalyani. He is blessed with two children papa and Prabhu. Murthy went with his family to his in-laws house. Kalyani is the dearest daughter of Raghavaiah. He reared Kalyani with all affection as she lost her mother in her childhood. In the village Ganganna and his troupe plays *Rukmangada* a street play. Ganganna's daughter Subbi acted as Mohini in the play. Subbi is an attractive girl. She yearns to get on well in life and has enough talent. She can sing and dance. Attracted by the talents of Subbi, Murthy recommends her to a theater company. Murthy was instrumental for her meteoric rise. Everybody liked Subbi in theater plays. Her clothes and life style change along with her name, Subbi, Subbulu, Subbalakshmi, Sujatha and finally Sujatha Devi. She establishes her own theatre company and finally reaches Madras where Murthy is working as an editor- In Madras *Lakshmi Nivas Natya Mandali* played '*Menaka*' in which Sujatha acts as heroine. Murthy and Kalyani come to know that Sujatha is no other than Subbi and were very happy for her fame. Sujatha acknowledges her gratitude by presenting fruits and garlanding the Murthy couple. Pleased Kalyani, promised Sujatha to

have a drama written by her husband Murthy. Kalyani thought it gives lot of reputation to Murthy.

Days and Months passed but drama was not complete. Murthy writes the play in Sujatha's house. This long period of time was well utilised by Sujatha. She lured Murthy with her lusty looks and cunning talk. Murthy becomes her lover and she is all for him. He abandons his wife and children. Murthy did not heed to the good advise of proprietor of *Natya Bharathi* press. He quits the job and chooses to act the role of hero in the play, *Rishyasringa* written by him. Soon Murthy and Sujatha shot to fame by playing *Rishyasringa* at various places. Murthy completely neglects Kalyani. Her letters are not replied. Sad and facing poverty, Kalyani goes with her children to meet her husband in Bangalore. She returns insulted to her crumbling world as a broken woman. She was more sad for his behaviour towards children.

In order not to give pain to her father, Kalyani, instead of going to her father's village, left for an unknown place and took up tailoring as her occupation.

Soon Sujatha is bored with Murthy and looks around for a new lover. She finds in Naren such a man. Sujatha was waiting to abandon Murthy. One day an accident occurs on the stage and Murthy was seriously injured. He was hospitalised. He could not recover

soon. Murthy soon realised **Sujatha's** relationship with Naren. Murthy finds the ground under his feet pulled **away** by **his** nymphomaniac mistress. What can he do? The only thing he can do is to seek pardon from **Kalyani**. He was shocked to find that Kalyani and children were neither at his home nor at his **in-law's**. **Kalyani's** absence to save his honour further depressed Murthy. He madly moved around to find the whereabouts of Kalyani. He started selling *Ektaras* (country made musical instruments). In the process, he recognises his papa (daughter) and also finds his wife's place of residence. The poverty and hardship of Kalyani move him thoroughly and makes him further guilty. While papa was playing a tune of her father's song, Kalyani comes to know that Murthy is around. Murthy with guilty conscience enters the house at mid night. In the cover of darkness he hits a plate and the sound makes Kalyani awake. On seeing Murthy she falls on his feet. True love triumphs and all is well. A new chapter started in the life of Kalyani and Murthy. They regain the lost place of paradise i.e. **Swarga Seema**.

6RIHA PRAVESAM [Entering A New House]

The film begins with a shot of Janaki, the heroine, playing badminton in the college. Somalingam, the hero is her class mate. While she is playing, a few of her friends encourage her to protest against Somalingam, who was lecturing to the students about the

necessity for celibacy. **Janaki** interrupts the meeting, snatches the microphone from **Somalingam**, and delivers a passionate lecture about human relationships, defying **Somalingam's** view.

Janaki's father, who is in his late seventies, married **Tulasamma** after the death of his previous two wives. **Janaki's** step mother, **Tulasamma**, is not happy with **Janaki's** behaviour and fears she may go astray.

Unable to face her step mother's constant nagging, **Janaki** prays for strength. **Tulasamma** has decided to get **Janaki** married and has found a husband for her, **Ramana Rao**, a great actor and poet. During a meeting between the two, **Janaki** pretends to be slightly insane to discourage him. In spite of this **Rao** decides to marry her. Because of this, **Rao** is forced to cheat his girl friend, **Lalitha**, with false promise of marriage.

One night, **Janaki** accidentally enters the house of **Somalingam**, the self confessed celibate. He tries to send her off, but **Janaki** is adamant about staying. She shows **Somalingam** that without human relationships people would not be able to function. When she is with **Somalingam** people doubted the character of **Somalingam** and they broke the furniture and sends **Janaki** out. **Somalingam** finds shelter in an ashram. **Janaki** is misunderstood by the people there and they injure her. The injured **Janaki** is admitted to the ashram where

Somalingam lives. There too Janaki tries to change Somalingam. After some days Ramana Rao finds out that Janaki is staying with Somalingam. By that time Somalingam is still undecided to accept Janaki's argument to leave celibacy or to continue to remain a Sanyasi. The ashram head scolds Janaki. Somalingam does not support her. Ramana Rao takes her home. The ashramites kick Somalingam out of ashram.

After considerable hardships, Somalingam realizes what Janaki said was true. Tulasamma again proposes marriage of Janaki with Ramana Rao. Janaki has to accept this proposal for the sake of her old father. But Janaki comes to know about the love of Lalitha and Ramana Rao. Janaki works out a plan. On the wedding day Lalitha takes the place of Janaki. No one recognises the veiled face of Lalitha. Somalingam by this time makes up his mind and comes there. He too thinks veiled Lalitha is Janaki. He tries to stop the wedding saying it is a forced marriage. Then Janaki appears and discloses how Ramana Rao deceived Lalitha. Along with the marriage of Ramana Rao and Lalitha, Sundara Rao, the father of Janaki, gets Somalingam and Janaki also married.

PALNATI YUDDHAM [The Battle Of Palnadu]

Revenge cannot be put down with revenge is an old Indian maxim. It is by revenge between the brothers that once happy and prosperous Palnadu turned into a barren and bleak country.

Nalagamaraju, the son of Anuguraju, is the ruler of Palnadu. His step brother Narasinga Raju is the viceroy. They are only figureheads and Brahmanaidu, the minister, is the sole steer man of the state. **Nagamma** of Gamalapadu, known as Nayakuralu, is jealous of **Brahmanaidu**'s leadership. She is a past master of state craft and diplomacy. But **Brahmanna** desists a woman to become popular politically with her tact and brilliance. Thereby internal rivalry arose between them. Both wait for an opportunity to wrest control from the other and this is provided when religion and caste become issues in the kingdom.

Brahmanaidu, a visionary as far as politics was concerned, wide opens the gates of the Chenna Kesava temple at Macherla for the Harijans, which has enraged Nagamma (a Shaivaite) and **Narasinga** Raju. Brahmanna appoints Kannamadasu, a lower caste person, as commander of the army - the entire army is outraged.

Realizing the political situation, Narasinga Raju invites Nagamma to sacrifice her communal and religious feelings and **come** to the aid of the kingdom - this is the beginning of the end.

Palnadu is **divided**. The divided territory of **Macherla** was ruled by **Malideva** with peace and tranquility with the guidance of **Brahmanna**, while at Gurjala, **Nagamma** took up the ministerial post by the request of **Nalagama** and **Narasinga Raju** who vested dictatorial powers in **her**.

The ingenious brain of **Nagamma** finds no rest until she harps upon a plan to bring **back** Macherla territory under the tag of Gurajala. She makes the viceroy a tool in her hands and invites the Macherla party for cock-fights on the Sankrati day, as she knows perfectly well about **Brahmanna's** weakness for them. She wins the dominion of Macherla with a false cock. **Malideva** and party, for the sake of the word given, leave their territory and go to Srisailam forests for seven years exile.

This horrid news had greatly affected the poor soul of **Peramma**, the only daughter of **Nalagama** and the wife of **Alaraju**, who had accompanied Macherla party to spend the horrid seven years in exile.

After the expiry of seven **years**, **Brahmanna** and party reach the boundary and send **Alaraju** as envoy as he is closely related to **Nalagama**, to regain their rights over Macherla. **Nalagama** and **Peramma's** joy knows no bounds on hearing this good news. But, **Nagamma** and **Narasinga Raju** planned and poisoned **Alaraju** and put **the**

blame **for the murder on** Brahmanna. The disillusioned **and** broken hearted **Peramma** commits *Sahagamanam* (sati) with the body of her husband, cursing the heartless and selfish politicians.

Balachandrudu, the martial son of **Brahmanna**, hears the news **of** the fatal death of Alaraju and rushes towards **Macherla** camp. There, Brahmanna is pleading for peace, but due to the mighty-intervention of his son, finally strikes the war drum. Balachandrudu takes the oath to get the head of Narasinga Raju.

Then ensued the bloody war. The parties clash with deadly strength. The battle between the brethren results in a number of people losing their lives. At last Balachandrudu according to his oath brings the head of Narasinga and throws at the feet of Brahmanna, but sadly he also succumbs to the deadly wounds. All the great warriors fall as victims. Palnadu becomes a veritable grave yard. When Brahmanna rushes to the battle field unarmed and directly goes towards **Nagamma**, Nagamma advances with sword in hand to strike him. But on approaching him, she falls a victim to the super human powers of Brahmanna. Both Brahmanna and Nagamma pray before Lord Chenna Kesava to stop the deadly war and establish peace.

YOGI VEMANA [Saint Vemana]

What is the secret of birth and death? Who is responsible for it? Vemana was one of those great men who endeavoured to find answers to these questions.

Those were the days of decline of Reddy Kingdom. Kondaveedu came under Gajapathis. Anavema Reddy elder brother of Vemana, was local ruler of Mooga Chintapalle. Narasamamba, wife of Anavema is a pious woman. The couple are tradition bound, god fearing and give much importance to values. Vemana does not have belief in all these. He does what he believes without any fear of society. He is attracted by two persons - one is his brother's daughter Jyothi and the second is Mohanangi, a prostitute. His best friend is Abhiramayya who wishes much to produce gold through the supposed skill with some herbal juice. Mohanangi is Vemana's world.

Vemana covers the shivering body of a poor old woman with the cloth of Goddess in a nearby temple. He argues cloth is more needed by that poor lady than the stone image of goddess. Poojari, the priest of the temple brings the matter to the notice of Anavema. Narasamamba gives a mild rebuke to Vemana. Anavema ordered for (*Samprokshanamu* [ceremonial sprinkling of water] or consecration. Narasamamba attends this ceremony where Mohanangi saw her wearing a beautiful necklace. After this Mohanangi insisted to have that

particular necklace. Vemana **gives** her **the same**. **Narasamamba gets** angry and demands it be taken back. Abhiramayya came to the rescue of Vemana and brought back the necklace in disguising **himself as Jangama**. Anavema falls in arrears of paying revenue to the King. Not knowing this, Vemana stole away all the amount collected **as** revenue by his brother and did kanakaabhisheka to Mohanangi. Anavema unable to pay revenue surrendered himself to king. **Vemana** comes to know about this all and determined to get his brother released. Jyothi falls ill. Not heeding to her request, Vemana sets out to Mohanangi and asks her to give back the amount. She refuses to do so. Now wisdom dawns on Vemana. With the help of Abhiramayya, Vemana determines to produce gold. Days and nights passed without sleep. With power of the will and arduous trials he succeeds in producing gold. Jyothi's illness grows and her waiting for Vemana ultimately kills her. Vemana thinks that **can** the gold, produced by him, bring Jyothi's life back? Where has Jyothi gone? Or, for that matter, death is to all human beings like that! The death of Jyothi kindled the light of wisdom in Vemana. He searched for an answer to the secret of death. Who plays all this drama? Abhiramayya remits the gold produced by Vemana in the exchequer and gets Anavema released. Vemana after rigorous search got **the** darshan of Lord Shiva and enlightened. Vemana thus becomes **a** saint. Meanwhile Abhiramayya searched for the whereabouts of Vemana and found **a** different Vemana. He is proud to be a friend of Vemana the **saint**.

Vemana moved round Andhra and delivered sermon like maxims. Love towards all living beings, equality of all religions, worship of God are the main tenets of his preaching. He becomes considerably old before he decides to sit in a tomb alive (*Samadhi*) . Vemana's brother and sister-in-law come to know about this through **Abhiramayya**. They visited him along with many and had the darshan. Vemana blessed all those who saw him entering the tomb alive. He still is alive through literature.

CHAPTER IV**REFRACTION OF CULTURAL AND IDEOLOGICAL
STRUGGLES IN TELUGU CINEMA 1938-1947**

Colonial Capitalism and Cultural Feudalism: Ideological Construction of Harijan Issue in *Mala Pilla*. and *Rytu Bidda*

The ideological moorings of Harijan issue as refracted in **Mala Pilla** and the rich peasant class strive for partial liberation of agristic slaves from feudal domination in **Rytu Bidda** will have to be contextualised.

At material level, the particularities of colonial commercialisation of agriculture which is described in historiography as 'colonial capitalism' created differential social and cultural changes in the ryotwari and Zamindari areas. In the ryotwari areas, the development of commodity production, marketing system, price rise, high rentals, unequal revenue burdens and system of peasant money lending helped the emergence and consolidation of rich peasant class by 1920s.¹ This had a particular bearing on polarisation of agrarian social structure, where the ryots with a defined title to the land turned into an actual entrepreneurial cultivators.² Right from 1920s, it was this entrepreneurial peasant cultivators who were at the centre of social and political struggles.³ In the realm of culture the old

¹**The Madras Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee Report.** , Vol.1, Madras, 1930, p.30.

²This category of ryots were the hard working, enterprising, intelligent, skillful and businesslike cultivators.

³For details, see Atlury Murali, **Social Change and Nature of Social Participation in National Movement in Andhra, 1905-1934,**

feudal value system and the social practices like **untouchability** have been hindering the process of transition of traditional agricultural labouring castes into wage labour. Without liberating agricultural labour from feudal cultural value **system**, the market oriented agriculture would not take off as the wage labour will not be available for production. Naturally, the peasant entrepreneur will be up in arms against such feudal values and practices like **untouchability**.

The famous Telugu novel, Mala **Palli** (1922)⁴ and the first popular Telugu movie, Mala **Pilla** (1938) have mainly reflected on the issue of feudal control over agriculture labour and the ways and means of creating necessary socio-cultural liberating conditions for the Harijans.

In any case, the feudal ideological resource is typified either in traditional intellectual class like Brahmins, or the benefactors of the feudal ideology, the feudal class. It is this

Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1986, Chapter-II; A.Satyanarayana, Andara **Peasants** Under British Rule: Agrarian Relations **and the Rural Economy**, 1900-1940, New Delhi, 1990.

⁴For an in depth analysis of this novel, see Atlury Murali, "Changing Perceptions and Radicalisation of the National Movement in Andhra, 1922-34," *Social Scientist*, No.183, August 1988, pp.3-29. Also see, Modali Nagabhushana Sarma, **Telugu Navala Vikasam** [Telugu], Hyderabad, 1971, pp.255-69; Srinivasa Siromani, "**Malapalli Nirmata** Unnava Lakshminarayana," *Bharati*, Vol.22, No. 11, 7 Nov. 1945.

social base of cultural feudalism or the social system which sustains it, is at the core of both literary production and creative arts like cinema.

As we have indicated in the beginning '**colonial** capitalism' created differential social and cultural changes in the ryotwari and Zamindari areas. A total contrast to the ryotwari is the Zamindari system, wherein the feudal ideology had its deeper social and cultural presence. In Andhra, the percentage of Zamindari to total agricultural area was 35.1. However, the districts like Chittoor, Godavari, Ganjam, Krishna, Nellore and Visakhapatnam have high concentration of Zamindari tracks ranging from around 34% to 71%. This differential land tenure pattern which is crucial for our later analysis is indicated in the table given below.

PER CENTAGE OF DIFFERENT LAND TENURES DURING 1920-21

Name of the District	% of Ryotwaris	% of Zamindaris	% of Inamdaris
Ganjam	36.88	55.53	07.57
Visakhapatnam	12.22	70.95	16.83
Godavari	59.55	34.31	05.74
Kistna	51.25	36.40	12.35
Guntur	91.41	02.82	05.77
Nellore	49.57	42.88	07.56
Agency Division	24.02	73.82	02.16
Kurnool	97.46	00.00	02.54
Bellary	96.83	00.00	03.17
Anantapur	96.94	00.00	03.06
Cuddapah	94.23	00.00	05.77
Chittoor	91.10	03.37	05.53
Average of Andhra	58.67	35.10	06.23

Source: A Statistical Atlas Of The Madras Presidency, 1920-21 [Govt. of Madras. Madras, 1923].

These specific material conditions had a different bearing on the cultural system and social life in Zamindari areas. The central material and cultural problem is between the Zamindar and the cultivating tenants. Like in several literary works, in the movie **Rytu Bidda**, the material and social struggle is centered around the vision of cultivating tenants to transform into peasant proprietors, which may not necessarily involve the total abolition of zamindaris. For the broader Gandhian model of **reform** envisaged

a **radical** transformation in the realm of individuals attitude, ideas and cultural practices, without imposing any material deprivation of a particular social group or a class. It is this problematic which sought to be highlighted in **Rytu Bidda**. We therefore, see not a demand for total abolition of Zamindaris, but removal of rent burden, and some other rather peripheral demands as we will show in the subsequent **sections**.

(I) **Mala Pillai Issue of Untouchability**

The issue of untouchability stirred the conscience of the social reformers and the intellectuals since 19th century. Efforts began to be made to bring the Harijans into the mainstream of socio-cultural and political life. Words such as **Asprusyulu, Ant arani varu, Nimna j atulu**, etc., came to be used as English equivalents of untouchables, outcastes etc. These words refer to those exterior caste groupings that were considered to be outside the Varna System according to the Hindu **Smritis** and **Dharma Sastras**. These were referred as Chandalas, Matungas, Plavas, Pulkasa and Antyevasulu in **Puranas**.⁵ They held a low ritual status, whose mere touch was considered to be polluting to the upper **Varnas**, particularly Brahmins and whose very degraded social and material life severely reinforced the stigma of pollution attached to them. In the legal and administrative terminology of the British

⁵Nanduri Venkata Krishnamacharyulu, **Harijana Samasya** (Telugu), Kakinada, 1933, p.5.

Government, words like scheduled castes and depressed classes, came to be used to refer to the people whose extreme poverty, low ritual status and lack of opportunities invested them with social and civil disability.

In the Telugu speaking areas of the Madras Presidency, the Mala and Madiga were the two major untouchable castes to be classified as depressed class, in 1901 and 1911 census.⁶ The Madigas were traditional leather working caste, whereas the Malas were traditional weavers and hereditary servants of village officials and landlords. Madigas, besides their traditional occupation, performed other defiling acts in the capacity of village servants such as removing the dead cattle, sweeping, etc.⁷ It was these services and duties performed by these castes that made them "polluting" in the Brahmanical ritual notion of purity and pollution and, therefore, contact with them was considered 'ritually' polluting. It was this ritual notion of purity and pollution which kept them out of human contact for centuries. This seems to be the reason for these castes living separately, on the fringes of the villages, far away from the upper caste residences. But, the social and religious significance of the tasks performed

⁶J.V.B.Sailaja, **Literature and Ideology: A Study of Intellectual Perspective on Harijan Issue in Andhra(1900-1930)**, Unpublished M.Phil Dissertation, University of Hyderabad, 1995, p.1.

⁷Ibid., p. 2.

by these untouchables make them an integral part of the cultural and social continuum.⁸

The late 19th century saw a marked deterioration in the economic conditions of the untouchables. As a result of the British economic policies, many of the traditional occupations of these castes lost their importance and proved to be less remunerative. For instance, the Malas of Krishna and Godavari districts, whose traditional occupation was weaving, found weaving less remunerative due to the competition from Lancashire.⁹ As a result of this, they switched to agricultural occupation where they formed the bulk of field servants. Thus, as has been pointed out by the 1901 census, only one eighth of the population of Madigas and 25% of the Malas, drew their sustenance from their traditional occupations and the rest from agriculture, as field servants.¹⁰ This might have probably resulted in the growing dependence of these castes on the upper castes and at the same time their relegated position in relation to other castes, which had better access to the educational and other

⁸Such tasks as beating the drum at village festivals, acting as messengers and the key role they play in marriages and at funerals, besides their role in agriculture make them a part of the socio-cultural system.

⁹Duncon B. Forester, **Caste and Christianity**, London Studies on South Asia, No.1, London, 1980, p.76.

¹⁰Uma Ramaswamy, "Protection and Inequality Among Backward Groups," **Economic and Political Weekly**, Vol.21, No.9, 19 March 1986.

occupational opportunities in the colonial system. Thus, to the ritual impurity was added material deprivation, making it impossible for them to escape the stigma of pollution. Further, it may be added that these material conditions which reflected in their unhygienic and poor life styles were also effectively made use of by the upper caste Hindus to keep them at a distance, both physically and socially. At the bottom of hierarchy, the material deprivation and ritual impurity have reinforced one another.

The notion of 'brotherhood' and Christian emphasis on the abolition of caste distinctions, attracted untouchables to Christianity¹¹. Conversion to Christianity was really looked upon as the major avenue to escape from the burden of pollution and the practice of untouchability. The Christian population which had been estimated as mere 29,402, in the 1871 census, had reached 400,000 mark by 1921.¹² Besides the desire to escape the stigma of pollution and rise in social status, material considerations also played a major role in motivating conversions. There were tangible benefits to be gained by way of education, medical help and employment opportunities by their entry into the Christianity fold.¹³ The fact

¹¹**Census Report of 1921**, as quoted in **Bharati**, June, 1929, p.71.

¹²A. Venkateswara Rao, "Andhra Desamu Harijana Samasya," **Bharathi**, June 1929, p.72.

¹³Uma Ramaswamy, "Self Identity Among Scheduled Castes: A Study of Andhra," **Economic and Political Weekly**, 23 November 1974,

that Christian education do not recognise caste distinctions, further added to the popularity of Christianity and Christian missionaries among the untouchables. The Christian missionaries came to be looked upon as champions of the oppressed and liberators from their stigmatised identity.

These Evangelical activities of the Christian missionaries were perceived differently by the other Indians. Once the untouchables, who comprise one sixth of the Hindu population, gets converted to Christianity, it would not only boost the European merchandise in India, but also break the traditional patron-client relationship which was the basis of the supposed unity of the whole nation. This, in turn, was considered an impediment in the way of progressing nationalism among the Hindus. In the words of Duggirala Surya Prakasa Rao, a contemporary nationalist: once having adopted Christianity, a Panchama would try to become an independent land owner. Having joined a religion, which taught self respect, no one would be willing to be servant under others and be regarded as a menial. Hence, the people in whom the nationalist spirit has taken its birth, it would be only an illusion to think that they would accept the help of the followers of other faiths in the struggle for independence.¹⁴

p.1959.

¹⁴Duggirala Suryaprakasa Rao, "*Nimna Jatyuddharana Sadhanamu*, *Andhra Patrika Ugadi Sanchika*, 1911, p.145.

These suspicions were further strengthened by the attempts of the British administration to distinguish untouchables from other Hindus, in 1911 census operations. The nationalist Indians began to regard this as another manifestation of a sinister design on the part of the Imperialist British, to keep alive the numerous divisions, already existing in the Indian society.¹⁵ Further, the British Indian Government established the principle of equality before law and the lower castes and untouchables were formally given access to law. Thus, they were supposed to have equal access to such public facilities as schools, wells, roads, etc.

The economic changes brought about by the British, such as the development of communications and transport, the beginning of modern industry, the development of commercial agriculture, etc., opened new avenues of employment and of social mobility, not only for the elite, but also for the rural poor. Though, the new professions and occupations, dependent on modern western education, were filled overwhelmingly by the upper caste educated elite, the men power in the lower end jobs in the administration and the unskilled labour on railways was provided by these untouchables and lower castes. In spite of the fact that they came to occupy the lowest, most degraded and low paid positions in industry as well as in agriculture and administration, the fact that at least some jobs

¹⁵J.V.B.Sailaja, Op. Cit., p.12.

were made available to them, outside the village, provided an opportunity for breaking free from traditional restrictions and bondage imposed on them, in the name of caste. Thus, the missionary activity, the British policies and new avenues of mobility, unequivocally reduced the seclusion of the untouchables from the rest of the population.

All this brought about a realisation on the part of the national intelligentsia to the need to bring about this left out section of the Indian population into the main stream of the socio-cultural life of the people.¹⁶ This realisation found expression in making the issue, i.e., the reform of the untouchable conditions, a central issue of the socio-cultural reform movements in the present century¹⁷. The main aim of the reform movement was to meet the threat that this alienation of Harijans has posed to the Hindu unity on one hand and on the other hand, to bridge the gap among Hindus by building up confidence among untouchables.¹⁸

¹⁶The Indian National Congress had adopted a resolution in 1917 urging the people of India, to recognise 'the necessity, justice and righteousness of removing all disabilities imposed upon the depressed classes.' Refer Bharat Patankar and Gail Omvedt, "The Dalit Liberation Movement in Colonial Period," **Economic and Political Weekly, Annual Number**, February 1979, p.420.

¹⁷M.K. Gandhi, **Young India (1924-26)**, Madras, 1927, p.653.

¹⁸A.Murali, "Changing Perceptions and Radicalisation of the National Movement in Andhra (1922-34)," **Social Scientist**, No.183, August 1988, p.3.

A two way course of action was followed. One was aimed at **moulding** up the cast Hindu perception of the problem and persuading them to assimilate the untouchables into the *Varna* fold through inter caste marriages and inter dining. The other was to launch welfare programmes aimed at opening up roads, water resources, temples and other public places, eradicating illiteracy through establishing schools and educational institutions, providing scholarships to Panchama students, etc.¹⁹

In Andhra region, a whole generation of leaders, even before Kandukuri Veeresalingam, took up the issues of reform and worked for the upliftment of the untouchables.²⁰ The first to evolve a systematic programme were the Brahmo Samajists. Prominent Brahmo Samaj leaders, like Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu and Raja of Pithapuram were active in providing education and starting many

¹⁹ M.K. Gandhi, **Op.Cit.**

²⁰ Leaders like Enugula Veeraswamaiah [1780-1836], a Brahmin and a Dubashee in the Sadr Supreme Court at Madras, left in his travelogue, **Kasi Yatra Charitramu**, traces of impressions on the contemporary social evils. He levels severe criticism against the practice of untouchability as not being originally sanctioned by the *Smritis* and attributes the large scale conversions to Christianity to the ill treatment meted out to the lower castes in society. His **Kasi Yatra Charitramu** was compiled by Komaleswarapuram Srinivasa Veeraswamiah and published in 1838. Vennelacunty Subba Rao [1748-1839], Samineni Muthoonarasimha Naidu, Vembakam Raghavacharyulu, Gajula Lakshminarasu Chetty and Ananta Ramaswamy were some of the others reformers who described untouchability irrational and inhuman, and worked for female education, widow marriage and female education. For details, see V. Ramakrishna, **Social Reform, Op.cit., pp.57-58.**

hostels and schools for the untouchables²¹. Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu went further and brought up untouchable girls and got them married to high caste boys. Chilakamarti Lakshminarasimham Pantulu, another prominent writer and Brahmo social reformer, started a school, known as Raja Rama Mohana Roy *Vidyalayamu* (for Harijans) to spread education. He successfully maintained it for quite sometime without going for state assistance and this school considered to be the first of its kind in Andhra.²² A similar school was established by Vemuri Ramoji Rao in Bandar. In Eluru, the Adimandhra Mahasabha and in Peddapalem (Guntur district), Sri Krishnasramam were some of the other schools established during this period. Thus the work of reform was carried out defying the restrictions imposed by traditional caste ridden society.²³

The major attempts of the reformers were aimed at changing the perceptions of the caste Hindus: religiously convincing them that the untouchables were an integral part of Hindu society. Hence, from the beginning, the reform programme did not go beyond the traditional Varna ideology, which, according to them, ordained the Hindu society based on the nature of duties, rather than superior and inferior divisions. Further, untouchability had no place in

²¹Y.Vaikuntham, **Education and Social Change in South India: Andhra, 1880-1920**, Madras, 1982, p.193.

²²**Ibid.**

²³**Ibid.**

Hinduism as the Hindu *Sastras* and scriptures did not suggest the existence of a fifth *Varna*.²⁴ The internal reform of Hinduism, therefore should aim at the removal of untouchability, with which the 'moral' and 'original positive character' of *Varna dharma* is restored within the *chatur varna* system.²⁵

Gandhiji emphasized an internal reform and self purification on the part of the untouchables, it was to make the upper castes realise their folly and duty towards their fellow religionists, their position was that of the children of God - Harijans, where their position was to be retrieved within the framework of caste system.²⁶

The numerous literary works produced centered round the problem of untouchability ventilate the changing perceptions of this issue under the circumstances of colonial rule and in relation to the on going nationalist struggle for independence.²⁷ Novel is one of those literary devices that has become a part of Telugu literature due to the contact with the western literary tradition.

²⁴Uma Ramaswamy, "Self Identity Among Scheduled Castes," Op.Cit., p.1961.

²⁵This aspect is well brought out by J.V.B. Sailaja, Op.Cit.

²⁶M.K. Gandhi, **None High-None Low**, Bombay, 1965, p.21.

²⁷Mangipudi Venkata Sarma, **Nirudha Bharatam**, [Telugu poetical work], Rajahmundry, 1927.

inspired by the actualities of the rural life it reveals the **uncertainties, ambivalence** and contradictions of contemporary attitudes, beliefs and values as no other conventional device does. And hence, in this literary form one can find various levels of reactions to the issues and problems of the day.

The problem of untouchability being one such social problem a number of novels were written from time to time based on **this**. Of such novels, Tallapragada Suryanarayana Rao's **Helavathi** (1913)²⁸, Unnava Lakshminarayana's **Malapalli or Sanga Vijayamu** (1922)²⁹ were reflective of contemporary Andhra society. Helavathi was the first novel written on the issue of untouchability in 1913. Helavathi is the daughter of an untouchable, Veerabaludu, who becomes rich with the money given to him by the Mughal emperor, Humayun, for saving his life during his exile. But, Veerabaludu's material prosperity does not bring him social acceptance in the Hindu social hierarchy. Helavathi desires to move away from the stigmatised existence and, therefore, refuses to accept an untouchable as her partner in life. At the same time, in spite of the material prosperity of her family, no upper caste person comes forward to accept her in

²⁸Tallapragada Suryanarayana, **Helavati** (Telugu), Rajahmundry, 1913.

²⁹Unnava Lakshminarayana, **Malapalli or Sangavijayamu**, First Pub., in 1922, reprint Vijayawada, 1992.

marriage due to her birth in an untouchable family. Ultimately, conversion of the whole family into Islam brought the family social acceptance and a rise in the social hierarchy, which had been denied to them by Hindu religion and society.

The propagation of Christian religious faith by the Christian missionaries in India was seen as part of the colonial attempts at acculturation, an integral feature of colonial **hegemonisation** process. And acceptance of it means cultural and ideological subjugation which would strengthen and justify the political conquest of the country. Hence, the movement for the upliftment of the untouchables has emerged as a clear response to this hegemonisation. In its initial stage, the movement was aimed at bringing about a change in the perceptions of the caste Hindus and to persuade them to assimilate the untouchables into their fold.³⁰ Such literary works as **Helavathi** and **Matru Mandiramu**,³¹ emphasis was laid on bringing about social equality among castes rather than creation of radical anti caste feeling. Thus efforts were made to achieve the peaceful co-existence of all castes through the inculcation of the feelings of brotherhood towards untouchables. But no where the Aryan notion of *Chaturvarna* was really

³⁰In the **Helavathi** novel emphasis was on bringing about social equality among castes.

³¹**Venkata** Parvateeswara Kavulu, **Matrumandiramu** (Telugu novel), Rajahmundry, 1918,

challenged.³² This is nothing but the cultural **hegemonisation** of the dominant leadership of the Hindu society.

Added to the intervention in cultural domain was the active intervention of colonial rulers in educational and other regions of public behaviour. The process of cultural change generated by this within the Hindu society not only contributed for the emergence of a dominant consciousness about the colonial rule but also brought to the surface the underneath struggle for power and hegemony within the Hindu social groups.³³ The development of the mass movement phase of the nationalist struggle for political independence by the second decade of the century, necessitated the harmonization of these divisions and to pacify these struggles for power. Thus the issue of untouchability has become an integral part of the political movement for independence.

The widening of social base of the political movement thus has been related to the structure and dynamics of the society and to the interests of various social classes, their opposition as well as coming together. In order to persuade people of the feasibility

³²The characterisation of Sangadasu, the character, as an aware and articulate Harijan in Malapalli is an example.

³³The Hindu Literary Society in Madras was founded in Madras during 1830s. The spread of education and the generation of political consciousness among people were its objectives. For details, see R. Suntharalingam, **Politics and Nationalist Awakening in South India**, Tucson, 1974.

and desirability of the political ends, there arose need for **the** creation of a new socio-cultural atmosphere and the **justification** of its legitimacy. Here lies the **justification** of the nationalist approach to the issue of untouchability which was not seen as a part of the original Hindu social system, for this practice is contrary to the original spirit of Hinduism. This untouchability is rather a curse to Hinduism and hence the need to root it out. The result of this is a nationalist programme which treats the existence of the six million untouchables as a symptom of degradation of Hindu society. The reform and **upliftment** of the untouchables thus is only a means through which the reform of the Hindu society could be achieved. The emancipation of the untouchables therefore is made a moral obligation of the upper castes to save Hinduism from further degradation.

As untouchability, a social institution, is not a part of the original Hindu society, the question of altering the social structure, in order to assimilate the untouchables, did not at all arise. What is required is readjustment of social hierarchy. By uplifting the untouchables to the position on par with the **Sudras**, the social **equilibrium** is sought to be achieved.³⁴

³⁴This dimension is very well brought out by J.V.3. Sailaja/
Op.Cit.

In spite of the presence of a radical perspective, started gaining currency by the end of second decade of the century, which made religious freedom, social justice and a better economic **life** as a part of the political consciousness of the untouchables, the national perspective of the issue continued to dominate the movement for the emancipation of untouchables.

Another novel which tried to tackle the problem of untouchability as part of the ongoing Gandhian mass **nationalist** movements is **Malapalli**. This was the first novel where the author tried to project the problem of untouchability not merely as a social problem but an economic one rooted in rural India.³⁵ The author, Unnava Lakshminarayana himself was an active social reformer and a front line nationalist leader in Andhra in 1920s. The novel is a faithful depiction of the contradictions existing in rural Andhra between caste Hindu landlords and the untouchable field labourers and of the socio-political consciousness **among** the lower castes in 1920s.

It is also the best example of the realisation of the need for total reconstruction of the social system and its economic base and the resulting fusion of the awakened consciousness in **both** the caste Hindu and the untouchables themselves resulting in uplifting

³⁵Akkiraju Ramapathi Rao, **Navala**, [Telugu], Rajata Ranjani tejatotsava Sanchika, Hyderabad, 1988, p.63.

the **Panchamas**. **Sangadasu** on whose name the novel titled *Sanga Vijayamu* represents the ideological position of the contemporary nationalist intellectuals which is rooted in the bourgeois ideology, and who believed that to avoid the disintegration of the society on the basis of caste and region, it is necessary to uplift the untouchables economically and socially and for this the upper castes have to be brought down to help the untouchables in their endeavours. Thus by mutual cooperation the ever widening gulf could be bridged, [i.e., through consensus].³⁶

Malapalli is also the first novel in Telugu written under the influence of socialist ideology, the propagation of which led to the banning of the publication of the novel twice by the British government.³⁷ **Venkatadasu** upholds the socialist stream rooted in the communist ideology (impact of 1917 Bolshevik Revolution). This

³⁶**Srinivasa Siromani**, Op.Cit., p.4 02. The central character in **Malapalli**, novel is **Sangadasu**, the Harijan leader. He says, "If we ask land to all people do they agree? It is not a justified demand. We only demand a share in the crop. The arid lands, the forest lands should be distributed to depressed classes for which the land lords should say no. Let the rich should strive for the educational advancement of the poor." Unnava **Lakshminarayana**, **Malapalli**, Part I, p.181. Also see Atlury Murali, "Changing Perceptions," **Op.cit.**

³⁷**Bellamkonda Rama Rao** published **Malapalli**, a novel, written by Unnava **Lakshminarayana** in 1922 in Vijayawada. The Government of Madras Presidency proscribed it in 1923. A serious debate in the Legislative Council went on. **Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao** invited the debate. Though the ban was lifted in 1928, in 1936 ban was reimposed. **C.Rajagopalachari**, the first Prime Minister of Madras Presidency in 1937, at last, waived the ban order. See **Bangore, Malapalli Navalapai Prabhutva Nisheedhalu**, Hyderabad, 1979.

character preaches a direct confrontation between the rich and the poor in order to achieve social and economic equality.

Another path shown in the novel for the emancipation of untouchables is through spiritual means. This has been upheld by Ramadasu in the novel. He believed that the untouchables can attain a higher social standing by keeping their inner and outer selves pure and through devotion to God. This shows the Gandhian ideological influence, which aims at removing the curse of untouchability from the Indian society through internal and self purification from the lowest rungs of the social system a reform which would prove the spiritual richness of the lower castes over, the caste Hindus. This establishes the firm faith of untouchables in Hindu religion.

In this novel the problem of untouchable Malas and Madigas is identified with not only the social relations but also with production relations in agriculture. The main issue is conversion of coolie wages into money as against the practice of paying in kind, which is the usual mode of paying and is the accepted practice for centuries in India and the reaction of the coolies to this change.

In **Malapalli**, untouchability issue is not understood in **the** sense of a **mere socio-cultural** readjustment which would solve the

problem amicably. But as an issue which is related to the reconstruction of the entire Hindu society with a changing world view.

Like a typical nationalist leader of the time, Unnava the author, favoured a change in the social relations of production at such a level that it would not disturb the existing relations of production but put the country on the path of bourgeois social development. This is evident in his approach to the issue of coolie wages. Supporting the coolies demand for a higher wage, he provides justification for the demand saying that "Labour is the property of the coolies and land is the ryots property. Each should have its own rate. When the ryot is getting a higher price for his commodity land, should not there be a relative increase in the price of the coolies commodity - labour?"³⁸

The issue of untouchability is a socio-religious problem rooted in *Varnasramadharm*. The struggle against the practice of untouchability was linked with the political struggle for the emancipation of the country from foreign rule. The struggle for national liberation, in other words, necessitated the socio-cultural remodelling of the traditional society, by solving the internal social and cultural contradictions. Harmonizing the social

³⁸Unnava Lakshminarayana, Op.Cit., p.114.

divisions in order to strengthen the Hindu society was the main concern of the nationalist intelligentsia. It was this context which gave a politico-economic direction to the issue of untouchability besides the socio-religious angle. By the second decade of the present century, these changing concerns and perceptions got reflected in Telugu literary production.³⁹

The literary production from the beginning therefore, remained to be a powerful source for the creation and propagation of ideologies and ideological struggles in the early 20th century Andhra. Naturally, the intellectual perceptions as refracted in literature and the broader ideological struggles, also reflected in the newly emerged mass medium, cinema.

³⁹The best examples are Tallapragada Suryanarayana, **Helavati**; Venkata Parvateeswara Kavulu, **Matrumandiram** and Unnava Laskshminarayana, **Malapalli**. For details on other works, see Nallapati Sivanaraiiah, et.al. [Compiled], **Telugu Sahitya Kosamu: Adhunika Sahityamu (1851-1950)**, [Telugu], Hyderabad, 1986.

Kala Pilla (An Untouchable Girl) :

Gudavalli Ramabrahmam's **Mala Pilla**, as the name suggests is the story of a Harijan girl. This film touches upon the burning social evil untouchability, upliftment of Harijans, fundamentalism of orthodox people, social oppression of upper caste Hindus, social reform activities of Harijan Seva Sangh are the other issues that are prominently figured in this film. However, the central theme is inter caste marriage. With the entry of Harijans into a temple the film came to a happy end. This film was produced under the influence of Gandhian ideology. Mahatma's objective was made known to the people through this powerful medium and gave tremendous moral boost to the vast multitude of Harijans.

Theme : **Mala Pilla** is so natural a cinema, one will feel as if it is relevant even today. The historical space is pre-independent India. The theme is adaptable to any or for that matter every village of India. There is no bar of time. the inter caste marriage is the theme applicable to our times too i.e. contemporary. Untouchability is a crime constitutionally. By making it a constitutional obligation can we eradicate untouchability? How many of us are prepared to bring social equality through inter caste marriages? Facing social problems through this event is not new, of course problems may be different from what the hero of this film faced. Nativity in Mala Pilla is heart touching. The cinema starts with a cocks call to rural

people who start their daily work no sooner than the call of a cock from upon a thatched hut, is given. In Telugu cinemas the other traditional way of indicating the dawn of a day is to show the rising sun.

In this film the internal contradictions are better portrayed. The socio-economic relations between the landlord and agricultural labour are more strong than between the priestly class and the working class. when the land labour launched a strike the landed class is more affected. As agricultural operations depend more on nature, they cannot be postponed and this was the reason why landed ryots joined Harijan labourers against the will of priestly members in the village. Likewise, liberal political outlook is seen in this film. Issue of class identity and class relations are depicted in this film. Initially, all the village dwellers were one against the Harijans of the same village in enforcing restriction of fetching drinking water from the village tank. Mala Pilla is a powerful social cinema.

In **Mala Pilla**, Gandhian ideology is predominantly used. Evidence of a specific form of visual address tells us about the particular effects of cinema on society; and also about the means by which it persuades an audience of the legitimacy of a certain ideological position.

The character of **Chowdary** is created to propagate **Gandhiji's** Harijan Seva. More **women** are members of this Harijan Seva Sangh. Radhabayamma is Chairperson of the Sangh. Khadi clothes, wearing of Gandhian cap, spinning of cotton are all the images of congress party. The photos of national leaders along with Andhra leaders are prominently shown. There is one song praising **Gandhiji**:
 `Kollai Gattitenemi maa Gandhi.'⁴⁰

During Sivarathri day congress volunteers collected sums for 'Harijan Fund' roaming around with Hundies. At one point when the Harijans enmasse attempted forcible entry into the temple, Chowdary adopted Gandhian technique of Satyagraha. He demanded while lying on the floor along with volunteers to walk over them if they wanted to enter the temple. This is one way of persuasion. Chowdary after giving advise to go on strike insisted a word from Harijans not to use force. 'The strike should be purely non-violent', he demanded. Gandhiji's temperance movement is also used by the director Ramabrahmam, in this film. The lady volunteers picketed toddy shops and appealed not to consume toddy. One man in the intoxicant mood hit one lady volunteer with stone making her

⁴⁰Lyricist of this song was Basavaraju Appa Rao, a popular Telugu romantic poet of the contemporary period. In total Basavaraju Appa Rao wrote 10 national songs. "Swarajya Lakshmi Pendli," "Jatiya Patakamu," "Venunadam," "Bapuji ma boss," etc were to name a few. See **Basavaraju Appa Rao, Basavaxaju Appa Rao Gitalu**, Hyderabad, 1991. Also see Paidipala, **Telugu Cinema Pata**, Madras, 1992, p.219.

unconscious. **Chowdary** then sings a song disclosing the evils of liquor.

Chowdary throughout the film strove hard for the upliftment of Harijans. He championed the cause of social equality. He vehemently stood for the cause of temple entry to Harijans. He reads a news item from newspaper about the temple entry of Harijans in the native state of Indore. When Muneyya, a Harijan saves the life out of fire of hero's mother, Chowdary points out that there are good people in Harijans also. '**Character** counts but not caste', says Chowdary. In the film *Desodharaka* Kasinathuni Nageswara Rao Pantulu's photo is extensively used along with the photos of other national leaders. In fact Ramabrahmam dedicated this film to the memory of Nageswara Rao Pantulu **Garu**.⁴¹

Thus **Mala Pilla** was used for motivation for instruction, for purposiveness and for social engineering under the influence of Gandhian ideology. Agricultural workers' solidarity is given a special treatment in this film. There is one song enunciating unity of workers: "*Koolivarandaru Ekam Kavalera*". Crushing of

⁴¹**Desodharaka** Kasinathuni Nageswara Rao Pantulu was a veteran freedom fighter of Andhra. The director Ramabrahmam, himself being sympathiser of Congress, expressed his gratitude towards Nageswara Rao Pantulu by dedicating the film to him, as shown in the starting of the film. *Desodharaka* was the founder of **Andhra Patrika** and **Bharathi**. In fact, he was one of the two nationalists who took to business [**Amritanjan** Company], the other being **Dr. Bhogaraju**.

sugar cane, manufacture of jaggery, plantains, mustard oil crop **are** picturised impressively. During labour strike coolies from neighbouring villages were persuaded not to accept work **even if** they were offered attractive remuneration. All of them accepted to the demand of the striking labour and expressed their solidarity. Another specific feature of the film is Kamma land owners rejected the orders of Brahmins, When their own economic interest was at stake. They stood by the side of Harijans.

Evidence of a specific form of visual address tells us about the particular effects of the cinema on society; and also about the means by which it persuades an audience of the legitimacy of a certain ideological position. On the whole, in **Mala Pilla** the underlying point is about social reform. The film is silent about the ruling class, its colonial character and finally about its overthrow. But the party which is striving for its overthrow is thoroughly dealt with. Gandhian ideology is made pretty clear.

The oppression of caste Hindus was so dominant that they could not tolerate even a Harijan goes under an umbrella in a hot sunny day. He was scolded Mala Vedhahva 'idiotic Harijan.' The caste Hindu members ascribed this to the influence of Harijan Seva Sangh. Similarly, when the Harijans came for a compromise to the house of Sastri, they were forced to stand in the open soaking under downpour. Sastri denied them entry, even into the verandah of his

house and what is pathetic is he says let them remain in rain so that they are rid of some dirt. The hero's father is very orthodox type Brahmin. When he receives a letter from his son he simply tears it off and washes his hands. He feels he is sinned by touching a letter of Varna **sankara**, as his mingles freely with other caste members and marries a Harijan girl.

Hindu society is caste ridden. *Varnasrama dharma* continues from times immemorial. Members of the four varnas worship pantheon of Hindu gods and goddesses. But the peculiar feature of Hindu religion is Sudras are barred from religious rites and rituals. Harijans are treated untouchables. Mere bodily contact pollutes the upper caste Hindus - is the feeling. But this social ill treatment does not deter their faith on Hindu Gods and Goddesses. Karma theory is all pervasive. Even today it is the order of the day. On the walls of the hut of Harijan Muneyya Sri Ram is written. **Muneyya's** daughters worship Lord Krishna. Muneyya pleads the Harijan youth not to ridicule God with -he anger over Brahmins. Most of the Harijans took self pity in the name of karma. **Muneyya's** younger daughter's worship of Krishna is under the influence of Vaishnavite Bhakti cult. During later medieval times **Brahmanayudu**, a Vaishnavite, opened temples for Harijans and mass dining was also allowed by him.⁴² Sastri, a protagonist lectures the

⁴²Roghair, Gene H, **The Epic of Palnadu: A Study and Translation of Palnati Virula Katha, A Telugu oral Tradition From Andhra**

greatness of Hinduism to his son **Nagaraju**, the hero. On another occasion, he warns Chowdary that Hinduism is getting ruined. Animal sacrifice is common during **Jataras** celebrated around local Goddesses in rural areas. When Chowdary pleads against sacrifice of sheep, the Harijans pose the question: 'you are anyway not giving us entry to temples why also stop worship of our local goddess as per our custom? During the *Jatara* of **Poleramma**, the village deity, the Harijans consume toddy and meat. This is the practice of the downtrodden rural people even today.

The hero of Mala **Pilla** is a highly educated Brahmin, Nagaraju. By defying orthodox father he marries an untouchable girl. He is progressive minded young man who is very zealous about social reform. The hero's costume is an imitation of national leaders. On the disclosure of his identity to the heroine she utters betrayal. Afterwards hero undergoes introspection. The image of his mind advises him to marry **Sampalata**, the heroine. Then he remembers about her caste. Suddenly he listens a song from Chowdary and party: "are not the Harijans human beings!" (*Malalu matram manushulu kara!*)⁴³ Then once for all he decides to marry Sampalata. This type of introspection of the hero is part of Gandhian **methods**.

Pradesh, India, New Delhi, 1982, p.10.

⁴³Lyrics of this was provided by **Basavaraju Appa Rao** referred to earlier.

The most frequent images of women in Telugu cinemas are sacrificing and persevering wife. The heroine of **Mala Pilla** is a Harijan girl **Sampalata**. The heroine's song attracts him to her. ~~When~~ the hero touches Sampalata she reveals her low social status. ~~She~~ is very **conscious** about her degraded position and fears about the upper social position of the hero. Hero encourages her and makes her sing a duet. But when once heroine comes to know that Nagaraju was the son of Sastri, the priest, she accused him of betraying her. But she was unable to forget him. Later on hero sought excuse. Her anger subsides and love starts blossoming **further**. she tries to meet hero which alerted Muneyya, her father. Muneyya throws her out of house. After some ordeal, hero and heroine escape to Calcutta. Hero gets employment. Heroine learns English and becomes modern. All is well at last. Their love got the approval of **parents**.

Hero's mother, on looking the grief of hero for heroine, tries to solve the problem in an ingenious way. She was not prepared to ~~accept~~ a Harijan Giri as her daughter-in-law and at the same time ~~she~~ cannot see her darling son in so pathetic a mood. She advises ~~her~~ son to have illicit relation with Sampalata. In patriarchy the ~~hegemony~~ of male desires and aspirations operates supreme. For the hero's mother it does not seem wrong if a male member has illicit relationship with another lady. Women are so **hegemonised** in Indian society that they at times go against the interests of their **own**

gender. The mothers of both hero and heroine could not go against their authoritative husbands and ultimately succumbed to grief.

Coincidence in narrative device that has always been a favorite of melodrama. In Mala **Pilla** the director adopts this technique of melodrama. In Calcutta the man who does the accident comes to the rescue of unemployed **Nagaraju** and offers a job. This gave the needed security for the runaway three members -hero, heroine and her sister. Meanwhile situation in the village also changes. Heros house caught fire, heroines father rescues the life of hero's mother and thereby transformation of Sastri takes place. Thus car accident and fire accidents are used as melodrama.

Liberal democracy is envisaged in dialogues. The same spirit is evident in the short stories of **Sripada Subramanya Sastry**, **Malladi Ramakrishna Sastry**, and other creative writers, like **Chilakamathi**, **Garimella**, **Damaraju Pundarikashudu**, etc., of the period.⁴⁴ Dialogues in Mala Pilla are very harsh regarding social matters and critical concerning religion. Extreme devotion is expressed towards patriotism. Worship of **Gandhiji** is the underlying phenomenon in dialogues. Social reform is the objective

⁴⁴V. Ramakrishna, "Literary and Theatre Movements in Colonial Andhra: Struggle for Left Ideological Legitimacy," in **Social Scientist**, Numbers: 23 6-37, Vol.21, p72.

of the cinema and as such dialogues have the flavour of reformation zeal. Tapi Dhanna Rao Naidu's pen has shown a new taste.⁴⁵

The romanticism of 1930s is reflected in the songs of **Mala Pilla**. The current political situations are well utilised. The following song is prevalent on the lips of everybody in every nook and corner of Andhra of the period:

Kollai Gattitenemi. mā Gandhi
(Our Gandhi. what if he wears country made short cloth)

Komatai Puttitenemi...
(what if born in Vaisya family)
Vennapoosa manasu Kannatalli prema...
(Cream like heart showers the love of mother)

Pandanti momu pai **brahma** tejassu ((Kollai))
(Glory of God facially)

Nalgu parakala pilaka natyamade pilaka ((Kollai))
(scant hair dances on head)

Nalguvedala Nanyamerigina pilaka
(the scant hair knows quality of Vedas) ((Kollai))

Bosinorippite **Mutyala** Tolakare
(Shower of pearls if opens mouth)

Chirunawu **navvite** varahala varshame
(drizzle of rain through smiles) ((Kollai))

Chaka Chaka Nadistenu Jagati **Kampinchenu**
(Brisk walk tolls earth)

Paluku Palikitenu Brahma Vakkenu ((Kollai))
(A word from his mouth is word of Brahma)

⁴⁵Screen adaptation of **Mala Pilla** cinema was done by Tapi Dharma Rao Naidu.

'*Kollaigattitenemi maa Gandhi*' is a special political song. Congress ideology is well depicted in songs of the period. Basavaraju Appa Rao's songs awoke the slumbering people of Andhra and instilled a new spirit of nationalism. '*Nallavade Golla Pilla Vade*' was a super hit song. '*Vadakave Vadakave Ratnama*', '*Maalalu matram manujulu kaara*,' etc., songs stirred up whole of Andhra.⁴⁶

Mala Pilla proved the power of mass medium, cinema. It was a tremendous box office hit movie. It broke all time records of collections. It was for the first time **Mala Pilla** released in 12 centers simultaneously. No other picture before was released in so many centers at a time. It was for the first time the songs of a social film spread every nook and corner of Andhra. *Nallavade Golla Pillavade* was a rage. The songs were with a touch of folklore tunes and hence were very easy to remain on the lips of illiterate rural folk. In the words of eminent music director Pendyala Nageswara Rao: "**Bhimavarapu** Narasimha Rao, the music director of **Mala Pilla** for the first time modernised cine music."⁴⁷ "Between the verses of the song BNR gave link music a practice unknown previously", said Adinarayana Rao another noted music

⁴⁶All the above songs were penned by **Basavaraju** Appa Rao.

⁴⁷Padidipala, *Telugu Cinema Pata*, Madras, 1992, p.236.

director.⁴⁸ Maddipatla Suri a reputed dialogue writer for most of the Prabhakara Reddy's movies said, '**Mala Pilla's** impact is astounding.⁴⁹ After viewing **Mala Pilla** the Travancore Raja facilitated the opportunity of temple entry to Harijans in his native state. Is it not the positive contribution of the film **Mala Pilla**?"⁵⁰ As a token of appreciation **Mala Pilla** was dedicated to the Raja of Travancore.

Besides the usual love story of a high caste Brahmin boy falling in love with an untouchable girl, the picture **Mala Pilla** projected the agricultural labour problem and the need for an organised Kisan movement. There was a militant strike song with a refrain that all the coolies should unite. The film was an instant success.⁵¹

Nagaraju is the hero of **Mala Pilla**. It is strange thing that hero never bothers nor shows any inclination towards the social conflict between Harijans and the orthodox Brahmins. The social tension was restricted to Brahmins and Harijans. What about the

⁴⁸Adinarayana Rao, "Evolution of Film Music," **Vijayachitra**, (Telugu), (Annual Number), Madras, 1967.

⁴⁹Interview with Maddipatla Suri, Madras, 27.6.1994.

⁵⁰**Ibid.**

⁵¹From an article by Arudra, "Two Decades of Telugu Cinema," in K.N.T. Sastry [ed.], **Telugu Cinema**, Hyderabad, 1986, p.12.

remaining village dwellers of other castes, what was their attitude towards Harijans was not shown except during strike period. There was no mention about the village officers of Kalyanapuram. the love of Nagaraju and **Sampalata** was viewed as sensual pleasure (**kamamu**) only by the nameless critic. He never approves the pre-marital moving of Nagaraju and Sampalata - either at Kalyanapuram or at Calcutta. This picture rather envisages the forthcoming social revolution than depicting the contemporary social situation. that is why it is far from reality.⁵²

'Social Reform or Social Antagonism?' - Criticism on **Mala Pilla** by Pandrangi Kesava Rao⁵³ **Mala Pilla** stirs of social antagonism. Harijans were oppressed not by Brahmins only. this picture blames only **Brahmins**. A Brahman conference was held in Bezawada and urged the Government to take suitable action against **Mala Pilla**. This was produced to insult one Brahmin priest. In the film Chowdary was shown a reformer which is untrue. Real reformers in Andhra were all Brahmins, look for instance, Veeresalingam, Guduru Ramachandrudu, etc. In fact the writer of this film **Chalam** is no other than Brahmin. The man who champions for the cause of temple entry of Harijans - C. Rajagopala Chari. Who is he? So to give credit to Chowdary or Gandhi is not

⁵²**Andhra Patrika**, 16 September 1938.

⁵³**Andhra Patrika**, 30 September 1938.

i justified. Rama **Brahmam** should have invented a story - marrying Harijan girl by a Kamma. Eradication of caste cannot be done by films of this type. It cannot be achieved by Gandhi or Congress. A Kabir or a **Ramanujacharya** or a **Ramadas** or a **Namadev** has to be reborn. Even I too wish **castelessness**. But how?

The above criticism seems totally biased and it is nothing **but** a tirade against Gudavalli Ramabrahmam. In his scathing attack, the critic goes to an extent of belittling **Gandhiji's** ideology. The Brahmin organisation met in Bezawada on 27 September 1938 and demanded for a review of **Mala Pilla** by an impartial committee. If the objectionable parts are not removed within one week, the organisation threatened to go on Satyagraha. A resolution was unanimously moved to this effect.⁵⁴

Another critic Gopala Raju Brahmanandam⁵⁵ also criticizes Ramabrahmam. The director of the film with mean mentality throws mud on Brahmin Sangha . The veterans like Kandukuri, Kasinathuni, Guduru, Unnava, Ayyadevara, Konda, Gollapudi and Nallpati were all from Brahmin community. Ramabrahmam created a character Chowdary who cannot be compared to even with anyone of the above mentioned stalwarts. In any village in Andhra Harijans conflict with Kammas

⁵⁴**ibid.**

⁵⁵**ibid.**

and other non Brahmins but not with Brahmins is a universal fact. The events mentioned in **Malapalli** did not happen, are now happening and will not happen in Andhra. Earning money in the name of **Gandhiji** is accusable.

Along with brickbats **Mala Pilla** received bouquets too. Guntur Harijan Seva Sangh met in Satyanarayana Talkies of Tenali at 8.00 A.M on 26th September 1938 and presented a felicitation paper to Ramabrahmam. While garlanding Ramabrahmam and Dr.Govinda **Rajula**, President of the meeting was veteran Congress man **Muddula** Giri Rao.⁵⁶ The members of the Harijan Sangh were extremely happy. They desired their vows will be over within short time.⁵⁷

Maganti Bapineedu	:	Public Information Parliainentary Secretary
P. Sambanda Mudaliar	:	Retired Judge
V.I. Munuswamy Pillai	:	Agricultural Minister
J.S.Shanmugam Pillai (MLA)	:	First Harijan Mayor of Madras
Tenneti Viswanathanam (MLA)	:	Revenue, Parliamentary Secretary
tfyapati Narayana Murthy	:	Editor, Prabhatam

were all in praise of **Mala Pilla**.⁵⁸

⁵⁶**Ibid.**, p.2.

⁵⁷**Ibid.**, 2 October 1938. In this issue, another resolution for a ban on **Mala Pilla** was published, sent by Brahmin Association of Kakinada.

⁵⁸**Ibid.**, p.2.; **Andhra Patrika**, 2 October 1938.

A Bombay Talkies film **Achhut Kanya** (untouchable girl) made in Hindi in 1936 was the best of **Devika Rani** films. Ashok Kumar was hero. Caste barriers stand in the way of lovers. Unlike in **Mala Pilla**, in **Achhut Kanya** the untouchable girl sacrifices her life at the altar of bigotry.⁵⁹ When compared, these two films with the same theme, **Mala Pilla** is far superior. G. Ramabrahmam provided a positive solution to the problem. After all life is not to end abruptly.

(ii) **RYTU BIDDHA: Congress and Peasant Politics in Andhra, the Ministry Experiment Period, 1937-39**

The Indian National Congress passed a resolution on the fundamental rights and economic programme in its Karachi Session in 1931.⁶⁰ On economic front, the resolution said that the organisation of economic life must conform to the principle of justice to the end, that it may secure decent standard of living and the state shall safeguard the interests of industrial workers, labour to be freed from serfdom. With regard to agrarian sector it advocated that the peasants and workers shall have the right to form unions to protect their interests. The system of land tenure, revenue and rent shall be reformed, and equitable adjustment made of the burden on

⁵⁹Erik Barnouw and S.Krishna Swamy, **Indian Film, Op.cit.**, p.101.

⁶⁰History of Freedom Struggle, File No.931., Andhra Pradesh State Archives, Hyderabad.

agricultural land; **immediate** relief to the smaller peasantry, by way of substantial reduction in the existing agricultural rent and revenue payments and in case of uneconomic holdings a complete exemption from rent, and with such relief as may be just and necessary to holders of small estates affected by such in exemption in rent.⁶¹ This proposed reform programme did not however, satisfy the left wing. The congress socialist party which met for the first time in Bombay on 21st October 1934, prepared a much more radical socio-economic programme.⁶² Its objections included the elimination of princes Zamindars, and landlords without compensation and redistribution of land to the cultivating peasants, encouragement of cooperative and collective farming by the state, and complete exemption from rents and taxes of all peasants with uneconomic holdings.⁶³

But both these attempts did not materialise and they appeared much as high sounding words. However, the peasantry as a whole identified themselves with the congress and their struggle for independence. What is the reason for this?

⁶¹A.M. Zaidi, (ed), **A Century of State Craft in India**, New Delhi, 1985, pp.148-151.

⁶²**Ibid.**,

"Secret file No.931, dt.1-9-1935, "History of Freedom Struggle File," Andhra Pradesh State Archives, Hyderabad.

N.G. Ranga, a well known peasant leader points out that the congress deliberately avoided transforming the spontaneous types of class struggles against local exploiting classes into more organised and politically linking them with other exploited strata on a national scale which could have made the anti imperialist struggle more broad based, militant and revolutionary.⁶⁴ The non cooperation movement was a watershed in the History of peasant movement in Andhra, since it revealed the congress strategy of involving the peasantry in the anti imperialist movement. However, But, with the passage of time the congress never permitted the peasant movement to go beyond reform pressure for economic relief or a movement for political bargaining with British rulers.⁶⁵ In 1923, Ranga goes on to argue that when the first, conscious attempts were made in the Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh, some leaders tried to discourage them on the plea that the congress organisation itself was a mass organisation working for the basic rights and needs of peasants. However, in their daily struggle with the public works and revenue departments, the peasants never received help from the congress committees. The Godavari, Krishna and Guntur, Kurnool resettlements, the Rayalaseema and Ganjam

⁶⁴C Radha Mohan, **Congress and Peasant Politics in Andhra: Ministry Experiment Period, 1937-39**, Unpublished M.Phil dissertation, Department of History, University of Hyderabad, 1993, p.34.

⁶⁵N.G. Ranga and Swamy Sahajananda Saraswati (ed), "Agrarian Revolts" in A.R. Desai (ed), **Peasant Struggles in India**, Delhi, 1979, pp.47-65.

famines had to be fought mostly by peasant organisations independently, since the official congress leadership had failed to stand by the peasants. There cannot be a more glaring failure of the congress to lead the peasants than its cold shouldering of the Andhra Zamindari ryot movement. In this context, being a contemporary peasant leader N.G. Ranga had stressed the need for the development of an independent, class consciousness and self reliant movement.⁶⁶ All India organisation with a network of organisations all over the country which found favour with the peasants in all the provinces. Moreover, the peasants knew, as a fact, the British imperialism with all its variegated facets cannot be fully overcome unless its most important Indian allies, the Mahajans and Zamindars, were completely prevented from carrying on their ceaseless class warfare against the masses.⁶⁷ So far as the Indian National Congress was the only effective political body with a countrywide organisation which claimed to champion the cause of the masses, it should have most necessarily worked to offer the solutions to the problems of the peasantry and made it the chief plank of its political and economic programmes. If such political support was not forthcoming, the peasants, if they were to save themselves from utter ruin, had no option but to fight independently to secure their **rights**. It was in the context of the

⁶⁶C. Radha Mohan, **Op.cit.**, p.36.

⁶⁷N.G.Ranga, **The Modern Indian Peasant**, Delhi, 1979, pp.19-28.

above dilemma that the contemporary peasant leaders like N.G. Ranga sought to merge the struggle of the peasantry into the fight for Swaraj. In this sense that the Kisan and political movements have become interdependent, the strength of the one adding to that of the other. Ranga further stresses that the congress must also strive for the removal of all those obstacles that stood in the way of the true and lasting solution conducive to the fullest well being of the agricultural masses of the country. thus the peasants fight for bread and land have to be linked up with the national fight for political freedom.⁶⁸

After the withdrawal of civil disobedience movement, the most important event was elections conducted to the provincial legislature, in 1937. The significant outcome of the election of 1937 was the sweeping success of the Congress. C. Raja Gopalachari formed his ministry. T. Prakasam was given the Revenue department.

Under Zamindari tenurial system the perpetual right in land was given to the Zamindari with a permanently fixed government land revenue demand, while the Ryotwaris, the peasant proprietorship in land was established with a provision to review the land revenue demand after every 30 years. With each resettlement the tax burden on the agriculturists increased several fold in the Ryotwaris and

⁶⁸N.G. Ranga, **Kisan speaks**, Madras, pp.58-59.

the main demand that emerged out of this context was the permanent fixation of land revenue demand by the government. The Zamindari agrarian structure in Andhra evolved under the impact of permanent settlement enabled landlords to appropriate a large share of the agricultural produce. The important mode of surplus extraction was rent both in kind and cash. But there was no uniformity with regard to the methods and rates of rent and they varied from estate to estate. The enhancement of revenue demand after resettlement operations in 1920s was 25% in Divi delta, 29% in Godavari, 36% in Divi and Krishna uplands and the implementation of which resulted in the increased indebtedness of cultivators.⁶⁹ The peasants in Andhra complained to the Prakasam Committee, in 1938, that "the Zamindars pushed the rents high up against all the principles of the permanent settlement under the threat of evicting them."⁷⁰ It has been pointed out that in the Zamindari areas, the rents bear no relation either to the nature of soil or the conditions of the peasantry when compared with neighbouring government rates of similar soils and they are at least thrice higher and in some cases up to four or five times.⁷¹ Therefore, rack renting led to friction between landlords and tenants. Various struggles were launched,

⁶⁹**The Report of the Economic Enquiry Committee 1930**, quoted in A.V. Ramana Rao, **Economic Development of Andhra Pradesh, 1766-1957**, Bombay, 1958, p.292.

⁷⁰T. Prakasam, **Madras Estate Land Act Committee Report, Memoranda, Supplemental Volume, p.604.**

⁷¹**Ibid.**, p.605.

including legal battles by the peasantry **against the rent** enhancements. The peasants in Bobbili, Mandasa, **Parlakimidi** and Pithapur estates launched a vigorous agitation against rack renting.⁷² The Zamindaris in Andhra were also harsh in **terms** of collecting rents. Very often estate officials resorted to physical assault, torture, punishments and other illegal methods to collect rents. The Zamindars in Andhra never granted rent remissions at the time of calamities and disturbances. It has also been said that in many estates granting of remission was used as a weapon for political considerations.⁷³ The refusal to comply with peasants demand inevitably accentuated **antagonism** between landlords and tenants. But threat of eviction and lack of collective strength always forced the tenantry into submission. Exorbitant rents proved quite burdensome to the peasants during the world economic depression.⁷⁴ In a number of estates the Zamindars resorted to litigation both to realise rents and to subjugate the peasantry. In Vizianagaram and Bobbili estates, for instance, the number of

⁷²G. Parthasarathy, **Peasant organisations and movements in Andhra Pradesh**, Waltair, 1979, p.81.

⁷³T. Prakasam, **Op.cit.**, Memoranda, p.605.

⁷⁴G.O.No. 353, Public ., dated 28 February, 1935, Tamil Nadu State Archives, Madras. In the Venkatagiri, Bobbili and Vizianagaram Estates, the ryots are paying (a kist of) Rupees 35,45,85 per acre. But the maximum **assessment** on Government lands is **Rs. 12**, according to the Joint Parliamentary Committee Report, 2 February 1934.

rent suits increased by 70% between 1931 and 1936.⁷⁵ In the ^{Andhra} districts as a whole, the rent suits were nearly doubled, i.e. 12,481 in 1927 to 24,743 in 1935.⁷⁶

Having inspired by the nationalist movement during the 1930s the peasants of Munagala estate formed their own association - Munagala Rytu Sangham to fight against the tyranny of the Zamindar. So also the ryots of Nellore district had started their own Sanghams to resist feudal exploitation and oppression.⁷⁷

The Andhra Pradesh Zamin Rytu Association under the inspiring leadership of N.G. Ranga and other radical nationalists took active part in conducting economic enquiries and highlighting the pathetic conditions of Zamindari ryots in many estates. Several anti landlord struggles were launched in the estates like Venkatagiri, Munagala, Challapalli, Mandasa Kalipatnam. The most prominent struggle among them was Venkatagiri Satyagraha 1931-32 which was organised to protest against the principles of leasing Kanchas (grazing lands) at exorbitant rates.⁷⁸ N.G. Ranga organised a large

⁷⁵ **Reports on the working of the Madras Estate Land Act of 1908 for the years 1928-1935.**

⁷⁶ N.G. Ranga, **Revolutionary Peasant**, New Delhi, 1949, p.79.

⁷⁷ T. Venkateswarlu, **Munagala Paragana Praja Udyama Charitra (Telugu)**, Vijayawada, 1981, pp.2-13.

⁷⁸ **Zamin Rytu Patrika**, 5 September 1932.

number of peasant marches and peasant weeks during 1937-39 ⁷⁹ The basic demands were - (I) the judicious interests of the ryots in relation to land holders (ii) collection and remission of rent (iii) survey, record of rights (including water rights) (iv) levies from ryots in addition to rent (v) utilization of local natural facilities by tenants for their domestic and agricultural purposes and maintenance of irrigational works (vi) the complete abolition of Zamindari system (vii) reduction of rentals and 50% reduction in land taxes. N.G.Ranga was the President of the Peasants Protection Committee with head office at Bezwada and Gottipati Brahmayya and N.Veera Raghavayya as Joint Secretaries. Ranga was said to have organised more than six peasant marches to the Collectors' offices. Meetings were held at villages en route and attracted considerable attention of the people. In this connection the Andhra peasants march is worth mentioning.⁸⁰ A number of speeches were delivered by N.G. Ranga at Ellore, Nuzvid, Tenali, Appikatla, Govada, Edupugallu, etc.⁸¹ On 3 July 1937, the Andhra peasant marchers began their historic march from Itchapuram under the leadership of Kommareddy Satyanarayana Murthy, President of Andhra Provincial Ryots Association and reached Madras with 800 Petitions.⁸² The

⁷⁹G.Parthasarathi, **Peasants Organizations and Movements in Andhra Pradesh**, Waltair, 1979, p.81.

⁸⁰G.O.No. 353, Public , dated 23 February, 1935.

⁸¹**Ibid.**

⁸²G.O. Ms. No. 2276, Public (Gen), 26 November 1937.

success of the congress in 1937 elections raised hopes and expectations of the peasantry in so far as the congress role in the legislatures was concerned. But the ministry did not do much. Reduction in revenue and rent demands were not fulfilled. The problem of rural indebtedness remained as chronic as before. However, the work of the Madras Estate Land Act Committee, popularly known as the Prakasam Committee was monumental with regard to the history of Zamindari system and the revenue administration in the Madras Presidency.⁸³ The Zamindars opposed the recommendations of the committee.⁸⁴ the Zamindar of Mirzapuram criticized the report as unjust and inequitable to Zamindars. Violent disputes between peasants and Zamindars over the issue of rents occurred in Kalipatnam and Munagala estates in Andhra. The negative attitude of the congress ministry towards the anti-zamindar struggles disappointed the peasantry. Adding insult to injury the congress leadership opposed and suppressed the anti-zamindari struggles in the name of non-violence and law and order. It protected the land lords by watering down the growing peasant militancy. This was in spite of the peasants mass support which enabled the congress to occupy seats of power in the government, defeating the Raja's of Bobbili, Pithapur and Venkatagiri.

⁸³Report of Madras Estate Land Act Committee, Memoranda Supplementary pt.II.

⁸⁴The Mail, in Native Newspaper Reports, Madras Presidency, 1 February 1939, HFS, AP, Hyderabad.

Despite failures, the **Zamin** ryot movement in Andhra **was** an organised movement right from its inception. It was not **like** the movements in Malabar and Pabna where after a series of violent outbursts, the peasant movement was channelized into a constitutional struggle. In Andhra, the Andhra Pradesh **Zamin** Rytu Sangham had systematically organised the peasant movement through Satyagraha, annual conferences, marches and so on⁸⁵.

It's against this backdrop one should understand the picture of Rytu **Bidda**.

In the History of Telugu films, perhaps no other film, till date, has generated so much attention as **Rytu Bidda** did. The creativity of G. Ramabrahmam, the director, is simply superb. Creativity regarding cinemas means generation of ideas, themes and thoughts for films and then the translation of these ideas, themes and thoughts on the celluloid. All creativity is a result of some compulsion may be inner or outer. A beautiful sunrise, a moving note of music, a touching personal tragedy is a compulsion which stirs the artist and creation becomes inevitable. Struggle for political, economic and spiritual emancipation is compulsion strong enough to inspire **him**.⁸⁶ About land reforms and economic relations

⁸⁵C.Radha Mohan, **Congress and Peasant, Op.Cit.**

⁸⁶K.A.Abbas, "What the Talkies Talked About?" in **T.M. Ramachandran** [ed.], **50 Years of Indian Talkies [1931-1981]**, Bombay,

there was some awakening in those days of Andhra. **Unnava Lakshminarayana's Malapalli** and Sri Sri's poems spread Marxist ideology among the people.⁸⁷ The Communist Party in Andhra **was** in formative stage. From Karachi Session (1930) onwards Congress party showed more leanings towards land **reforms**.⁸⁸ Along with Indian National Congress Sessions in 1936 at Lucknow, All India Kisan Conference was also held. Swamy Sahajananda as President, N.G. Ranga as Secretary got elected. The then President of Indian National Congress, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru accepted Ryots' demands. Nehru gave a message thus: "Workers, peasants and agricultural labour need complete socio-economic freedom where there will be no exploitation of any kind." With their participation in freedom struggle they will realise their political rights."⁸⁹ In 1937 elections congress party emerged victorious in composite Madras State. All the ryots who were paying land revenue had voting right and all of them were instrumental in the victory of congress party. The Justice Party dominated by Zamindars fared badly **in** this election. But subsequent history is not favourable to ryots. The

1981, p.31.

⁸⁷Sri Sri, **Mahaprasthanam**, [Telugu], Vijayawada, 1954.

⁸⁸Mahidhara Rama Mohana Rao, "The impact of Marxism on Telugu Social life," in C. Narasimha Rao [ed.], **Telugu Culture - Impact of Marxism**, (Telugu), Vijayawada, 1992, p.100.

⁸⁹Mukkamala Nagabhushanam, "Impact of Marxism on Ryot labour movements of Andhra Pradesh," in C. Narasimha Rao [ed.], **Telugu Sankranthi -Marxism Prabhavam** (Telugu) ,Vijayawada, 1992., p.124.

Congress ministries failed to fulfil Nehru's message. Then **the** ryot protection league under the leadership of **Kommareddy** Satyanarayana Murty and Chalasani Vasudeva Rao launched long march on 1937 July 3 from **Itchapuram**. On 27 March 1938 it reached Madras. The league received many a petition from ryots and agricultural labour and submitted them to the ministry. As a result Prakasam Committee was constituted. But nothing significant turned out later.

Against this background, Gudavalli Ramabrahmam chose to produce **Rytu Bidda's** theme. The cinema, **Rytu Bidda's** production time was late 1930s. The contradiction between ruling classes and the ruled was dominant then. One of the main functions of the ruling class, then, in addition to ensuring the economic organisation and political power of their class was to preserve the hegemony of their class over a society as a whole, by means of a justifying ideology.⁹⁰ In any time ruling class creates **the** cultural atmosphere which serves its vested interests and try to present it as the ideology. In class society music, literature and all other art forms are created in this frame work only. However, on the other hand, there would be an alternative peoples culture. However, the cultural values and ideology which get the official propaganda and patronage, will that only continue to be dominant,

⁹⁰David McLellan, **Marxism After Marx**, London, Second Edition 1979, p.184.

at least visibly.⁹¹ The Telugu **cinemas** of the earlier times represented the culture of the ruled. The **mythologicals**, the historicals and the social films did not in any way conflict with the ruling **interests**. All these cinematic themes were useful **for** the emerging new class from ruled which was going to be a part of the ruling class. The creators of 1938 cinemas were no other than that class which got a share in 1937 government.⁹² They inaugurated social films with reform zeal. Hitherto cinemas catered to the entertainment needs of middle class. When once the rural folk also joined the bandwagon of cine audience, there arose a need for different themes. How the Zamindars were **feeling** about ryots and what impression they carry about rural folk, etc., attracted the attention of some creative film makers. They were content with middle class consciousness, but not proletarian consciousness. The second item is taken care of after independence by progressive Writers Association, IPTA 1943, Prajanatyamandali, etc.⁹³ But they too failed in creating alternative peoples culture. It's a **harsh** historical reality.

⁹¹Hari, "Aanati Cinemarangam," in Kalipatnam Rama Rao, [ed.], Manalo **Manam**, Visakhapatnam, 1990.p.126.

⁹²**Ibid.**, p. 128.

"Indian Peoples Theatre Arts in Bombay and **Prajanatyamandali** in Vijayawada were founded in 1943.

The specific feature of the time is legitimization of bourgeois hegemony and legitimization of dominant nationalist ideology. **Rytu Bidda** succeeded in manipulating peasant consciousness.

Rytu Bidda means a peasant. India is predominantly an agricultural country. Popular saying is that ryot is backbone of the country. Historically, agriculture offers a settled life to a nomadic man. For quite a long time the produce was just sufficient to feed the hungry people. Marketable surplus is a rare phenomenon. Hence, ryot's living condition is mostly hand to mouth. He is prone to natural calamities such as drought and cyclonic storms apart from high land revenue burden. The nature and character of land revenue depends upon the ruler who has control over the ryots. The story chosen by the maker of the movie is that of colonial period and place is coastal Andhra. With Lord Cornwallis permanent land revenue settlement, the Zamindari mode began to operate along with ryotwari system. In **Rytu Bidda**, a particular Zamindari is studied. Since the story mainly revolves round a peasant, the title is appropriately chosen.

The theme of **Rytu Bidda** is about the necessity of unity of peasants. The village usurer and his evil designs, the election scenario, the factionalism, the vandalism of Zamindar's henchmen were better portrayed in this film. The rural indebtedness is

vulnerable point of exploitation. This is more relevant even to the present day.

Contemporary social life is well depicted. Unlike mythologies, **Rytu Bidda** cinema is about living human beings. In any frame, there is evidence that this film is about the village of contemporary times. One gets the impression that there is direct link between this film and actual life. The cyclone of 1938 which shook the Krishna district found a place in **Rytu Bidda**. The opening of the film is with sunrise. Ramajogis song awakens the ryot folk. There is cock fight, goat fight, thrashing of paddy, watering of fields by using *Etam* (pumping of water from well in a traditional native style), bullocks with ploughs, transporting of grain bags in bullock carts are the visuals that are extensively used in this film. The urbanisation has made the peoples lives mechanical. Those urban audience whose origins were villages definitely admire the scenes of churning of curd, spinning wheel, feeding bran to buffaloes, girls playing hide and seek game by tying cloth over their eyes, fetching of drinking water from village common well with pairs of pots borne by a yoke and thrashing redgram or pulses.

There is a message in this film. Through Ramajogi's character the duties of Ryots are envisaged.

Nidra **melkonara tammuda**, Gadha nidra **melkonara tammuda** O! Zamindari
rytu tammuda!

[Brother, awake from the slumber o Zamindari Rytu brother arise and
awake from the deep slumber].

Karu chikatulu **vichera**, swatantrya **Bhanududayincher**a.
[Night has dawn, sun of independence did rise] .

Rajyamunaku Rytu Gunde **kaya**
[Ryot is heart of the state]

Samrajyamunaku Rytu Raksha **ra**
[Ryot is saviour of empire]

Nivipudu kandlu Teravakunna, Ni kennatiki Mukti ledura
[Open your eyes otherwise no emancipation ever]

Eruvaka vachindira, Dukkiteddu Ranke vesera
Tolakari pulakarinchera, Ni B.hoodevi Pooja Salpara

[Sowing season started, bullocks are anxious for ploughing,
seasonal rains started. It's time do worship mother earth].

Similarly the importance of ryot is made pretty clear.

Rytu pai Anuragam choopani **Rajulundaganela**

[**Why** there should be any ruler who do not love ryot] .
Rytu lenide **rajyam** ledanu **nitini** encharadela

[**Why** don't they point out that without ryot there is no state] .

In one of the election speech the contesting candidate of
ryots **Rami Reddy** tells: ryots are responsible for the survival of
government.

In Nagapuram village Ryot Sangham was very active. In Ryot
Sangham office there was photo of Bollina **Muniswamy** Naidu, **who** was

popular leader of the Non-Brahmin Movement in Madras Presidency. The following words were written: Rytu *Bandhava* who dedicated his life in the service of ryots. In coming days ryot state will be established and ryots Sangham will rule. Gandhiji's portrait was also hanged. The symbol of ryot Sangham was plough and sickle. In the village public meetings were held by the contesting candidates. Here, the value of vote is preached excellently in **Rytu Bidda** which is relevant any day in democracy.

Rytu ke **votiyyya** valenanna

[Brother cast your vote for Ryot only]

Ni **kashta** sukhamulu ryot pratinidhi Tirchagala~~ca~~anna

[Ryot representative solve your miseries]

Sistu **bharam chala** hechchanna

[You are burdened with high rates of land revenue]

Pantella udchina sistu kainanu chaladoyanna

[Entire yield is insufficient even to pay land revenue]

Ni kashtamula dircheti yodhudu Ryot

[Only Ryot representative emancipate your sorrows]

Votu viluva telusukoranna

[Brother know the worth of your vote]

Oka poota tindike votunichchuta siggu chettanna

[Brother its shameful thing to sell your vote for one day meal]

Otutone **mundu** swecha kota pattavalasiyunnadi

[you can seize the fort of freedom through vote only]

Mundu **kalam** rytu denanna!

[Brother don't forget coming future is of ryots]!

palanam nichetidi rytenanna

[Brother you will emerge as ruler]

Nivennukonna pratinidhiye pettanadaranna!

[Your representative will be your master]!

kulamuto **manakemijolamma**

[why do you mind caste]!

.. , '

kashtinchi dunne **kalamu** sangati telusukondanna
 [know that tillers of the soil are all one caste]!
kulapu kakshalupetti **manalo** kalahamulu Ragulimpajesi
 [They divide us on caste line by creating conflicts among us]
Balamu sampadincha nenchidi **tuluvatanamunu** vidhi
 [Thus they desire to become powerful]
Rami Reddy ke votiyanna
 [Vote for Rami Reddy]
 Ni **kashtamulu** Rami Reddy Tirchagaladanna
 [Brother, Rami Reddy only wipe out your miseries] .

This song is very powerful. B.Narasimha Rao's music is melodious and the tune is catchy.

The class character is dominant in this song. It is conceived that ryots are all one lot, one caste against Zamindari class. There should be no division in this vast ryot caste and any attempt to divide this caste should be foiled. The vision of future India is envisaged in this song. It is so optimistic! Eventually Rami Reddy wins! Celebration of victory, procession with band music, etc. follows.

Truth and non violence is the stand taken by Gandhiji. Narsi Reddy adopts this philosophy and remained true to his word at the cost of loosing anything. His daughter's engagement is canceled, his son is involved in an accident and eventually died, he lost the jewelry of his wife including her *thali*, he lost his bullocks, civil court attachment was brought against **him**. Narsi Reddy tells tolerance and non-violence were his philosophy. He wants to bring mental transformation in Zamindar. The cyclone hit **Nagapuram** was

extensively damaged. Heaps of paddy submerged. Plantains destructed. Many trees were uprooted. Nature wrought so much havoc that rich and poor became alike. The drowning Karanam was saved by unsiff. Karanam's wife got killed. Sowcar's entire property was looted by bandits. Both Karanam and Sowcar were now changed men, they decided to help ryots. Narsi Reddy preaches the dire need of unity. He tells the importance and need of self help. All the ryots united and present a charter of 15 demands to the Zamindar. Narsi Reddy reads them:

1. Abolish Bribery
2. Abolish Bonded Labour
3. Eradicate Illiteracy
4. Handover arid lands to peasants
5. Handover arid forest lands to peasants
6. Handover common lands to peasants
7. End Nazarana system (presentation of gifts)
8. Reduce Irrigational cess
9. Give remission of land revenue when crops fail
10. Write off outstanding land revenue taxes
11. Introduce permanent settlement
12. Cut short Zamindari expenditure to 1,10 of its income
13. Rule Zamindari with the counsel of peoples representatives.
14. Only ryots are landlords
15. Zamindars are only trustees of lands.

He presents a charter of 15 demands to the Zamindar and fixes a deadline of one month. In case of the eventual failure of getting demands fulfilled he declares nonviolent Satyagraha till the end. When Narsi Reddy was summoned to Zamindar's court there he declares: "He does not have enmity with Zamindar. His target is the authoritarian Zamindari officers and their policies." Narsi Reddy sympathises with the Zamindar whose son is kidnapped. When

Zamindar expresses his parental anguish **that he has only one son**, Narsi Reddy consoles him that he lost his grown up son. He consoles not to worry and his ryot Sangham would help in tracing the kidnaped little Zamindar. At last truth triumphed, with members of the Ashram spinning Charaka, picture ends with the sentence:

"Universal love is good
 Universal love is happy
 No difference between rich
 and poor.
 No difference between ryot
 and king".

The Zamindar could not tolerate defiance of his word even in unimportant matters. Soothing words pay rewards and unpleasant words cause cut of salary in Zamindaris. Anything can be through bribe is the rule of Zamindari administration. But when this strategy failed he gets irritated. He wants to dismiss all of them who are in his service and acted against his will. At this point Zamindar's wife advises that instead of dismissing and changing many officers, why **zamindar** cannot transform himself? The transformation of Zamindar was hastened with the kidnap of little Zamindar. When once he realizes that his own brother was responsible for the kidnap of his son and Kasa **Subbamma** was at the back of all the evils done to Nagapuram people and Narsi Reddy was innocent the Zamindar **was** totally reformed. He dedicates his **zamin** to Rytu Sangham and declares himself as one among the ryots. Thus **Ramabrahamam**, the director gave a melodramatic end to the cinema.

Ravages of cyclone, united people of all castes and distinctions of the village.

Gudavalli Ramabrahmam took up a revolutionary theme for his **Rytu Bidda**. The landlord-peasant relations are the basis for this film. Most of the present day electoral irregularities, crime, wickedness, etc. were well depicted in this film. They were shown as a heritage of electoral politics. Coercion, appeasement, cruelty, buying voters, etc. were the tools used by contestants who wish to be elected by wrong means. The political objectives of Rytu Bidda belong to middle class. **Rytu Bidda** is a sample of forthcoming bourgeois rule. No doubt it is an anti Zamindari film. In the history of Telugu motion pictures, **Rytu Bidda** sounded the kettle drums in triumph.⁹⁴

Those were the days when Prakasam Pantulu was about to move a Zamindari bill in Madras Assembly in 1939. **Rytu Bidda** helped Prakasam as propaganda picture. Similarly, this film helped in the District Board Elections too with anti Zamindari propaganda. There was no question of voting either to Zamindars or to their candidates by the voters who had seen **Rytu Bidda**. In fact., there is nothing in the picture which ignites the people to raise a banner of revolt against Zamindars. Attempts have been made only

⁹⁴ Jayadhir Tirumala Rao, "Rytu Bidda Cinema Pai Ankshalu - Nishedhalu," in **Praja Sahiti**, August-September 1986, p.54.

to bring mental **transformation** through peaceful means and thereby getting ryot's **demands** fulfilled. However, **Venkatagiri** and Bobbili Zamindars issued notices for a ban on the exhibition of **Rytu Bidda**. The irony is, censors had no objection while releasing the **film**.⁹⁵ The provincial rulers saw a threat in the film in as much as the obedient labourers on the field might turn against them after seeing the film. Not only they got it banned but also they indulged in setting fire to prints of the film in some places.⁹⁶ Nellore Magistrate banned the film in Venkatagiri town and in the entire Gudur Division. In Gudur Division there were not only Zamindari villages but we find many government villages also. District Magistrate issued ban orders in these villages also subject to the approval of government. The Madras Government deliberately delayed. One Chekuson company which was exhibiting **Rytu Bidda** in a tent was given lot of trouble by men of the Zamindar.⁹⁷ In spite of many hurdles people patronised **Rytu Bidda**. This was the first film where peoples role was portrayed. The contemporary press, the *Navashakti*, *Zamin Rytu*, *Vauhini*, etc., gave full cooperation.⁹⁸

⁹⁵Aditya, "Profiles of Prominent Film Makers," in K.N.T. Sastry [ed.], **Telugu Cinema**, Hyderabad, 1986, p.98.

⁹⁶Aditya, **Op.cit.**, p.99.

⁹⁷Jayadhir Tirumala Rao, **Op.cit.**, p.55.

⁹⁸**Ibid.**

Rytu Bidda won the acclamation of important persons. **Maganti** Bapineedu, Parliamentary Secretary, of Congress Party, said, "This is the first film of this kind in entire south India **Rytu Bidda** has a message to the people."⁹⁹ One film critic Nanduri Bangarayya in his article¹⁰⁰ praises the film for its nativity. One important observation is that India attained independence on 15 August 1947 and thereby colonial rule came to an end. But the ban imposed on the exhibition of **Rytu Bidda** has continued even under self government. In Vuyyuru, the proprietor of Sri Ekambareswara Picture palace sought the permission for the exhibition of **Rytu Bidda**. The Krishna District Collector ruled out the application saying there was still ban on **Rytu Bidda**. It was unfortunate that colonial restrictions should continue even after 1947 on such a progressive social film like **Ryot Bidda**.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹**Andhra Patrika**, 1 September 1939.

¹⁰⁰**Andhra Patrika**, 8 September 1939.

¹⁰¹Sivaram Manne's review article in **Anand Vani**, 7 December 1947, reprinted in **Praja Sahiti**, August-September 1986, p.57.

CHAPTER V

**COLONIAL CULTURE AND TRADITIONAL VALUE
SYSTEM: DISCOURSE ON MORALITY, SOCIAL
CUSTOMS, VALUE SYSTEM, PATRIARCHY AND
GENDER**

The colonial conquest is not only an act of political subordination and economic exploitation of the colonised society but also a complex way of creating new convictions through colonial ideology and thus define the newly converted ambit of colonial culture. Colonial cultural processes also create a stratum of intellectual community hegemonized by colonial ideology and mentality. As Antonio Gramsci has rightly pointed out, "that culture is a mental self discipline' and culture is always organised to interpret 'a need'; a need which could be of the ruling class or any subordinated social group or a subordinate society."¹ However, the ruling class, in any society, more so in a colonial society does not define the whole of culture, though, it tries to. In this situation, as one critic put it, "It is the task of oppositional critic to re-read culture so as to amplify and strategically position the marginalised voices of the ruled, exploited, oppressed and excluded."² In this sense, the continual remodelling of cultural processes in the indigenous society, under the impact of contact with British/European traditions, should be treated as a typical strategy of colonised and dominated peoples' way of reclaiming their cultural space and autonomy. It is within this

¹ Antonio Gramsci, **Selections from Cultural Writings**, Cambridge, 1985, pp.17, 22 and 25.

²Frank LenTricchia, **Criticism and Social Change**, Chicago, 1983, p.15.

context we must locate the process of Telugu intellectuals' act of organising culture so as to "interpret a **need**" of their people.

Right from 19th century, the intellectuals in Andhra have reflected on and worked for creating a new conception of the world. The boundaries of art under colonialism were very much conditioned by this intellectual perception of the new liberated world, i.e., the liberation from cultural yoke of colonialism. While literature and theatre were the early vehicles of the spread of new nationalist ideas and cultural regeneration, from 1930s the medium of cinema took their place. In 1930s and 1940s several Telugu movies were produced articulating new perceptions on morality, social customs, value system, patriarchy and gender. The most dramatic aspect of the cultural and ideological mediation of cinema was the conflict between the colonial culture and traditional value system, for the nationalist intelligentsia was neither prepared totally to subordinate themselves to colonial culture and western modernity nor were they willing totally to reject the indigenous traditional value system. In this chapter, we propose to study this cultural conflict as reflected in **Vandemataram, (1939); Malli Pelli, (1939); Varavikrayam, (1939); Sumangali, (1940); Illalu, (1940); Devata, (1941); Pantulamma (1943)** and **Swarga Seema (1945)**.³

³For particulars of these films, see Appendix VI and Chapter III.

The issue of dowry was taken up in the films **Vajademataram** and **varavikrayam**. The woes of daughter-in-law in a joint family were depicted in **Vandemataram**. Unemployment issue also was touched upon in **Vandemataram**. In the Hindu families, widowhood is a curse upon women. Widow marriage was the central theme of **Malli Pelli**. *pativratya dharma* is an unquestioned devotion to one's husband. This theme is focused in **Grihalakshmi**, **Illalu** and **Devata**. The importance of turmeric and saffron powder (*Pasupu Kumkum*) and karma theory were dealt with in **Sumangali**. The body of a woman is considered to be the property of that man who first had sexual relationship with her. *Thali* or *mangalasutram* is the central relationship which gives social identity to a wife. Pre-marital sex and un-wed motherhood is a curse. Tolerance is the only solution for all family problems of a woman. It is with this virtue of tolerance, woman makes her life happy at the end. **Devata** is with this theme. Sacrifice, austerity and self deprivation are accepted in the Indian ethos as noble values. Woman's purity, faith and devotion to her husband are considered to be high values of Indian society. All these values are dealt with in the cinema **Swarga Seema**.

Vandemataram is not a political film as is suggested by its name. It does not represent India's freedom struggle. The issues found in this film are (a) dowry, (b) unemployment, and © the daughter-in-law's hardships in a joint family.

(a) Dowry!

A century ago, the predominant social practice used to be offering price to bride, i.e., *Kanyasulkam*. In this system, **the** bridegroom offers a price and buys bride. Perhaps the logic of commodity could be seen in this practice. But one cannot see any such logic behind *varavikrayam* or selling of bridegroom.

Gradually, the system has grown to such a proportion that taking dowry is being viewed as a prestige. The more dowry one takes the higher his social status will be. The bridegroom does not think about his belittling image and society too legitimizes this and thus the hegemony of males continue over females.

The third problem touched upon in **Vandemataram** is daughters-in-law's difficulties in joint families. This problem is closely linked with the first one. The dowry creates certain complexes. Daughter-in-law who comes with dowry is a cause of inferiority complex of mother-in-law. She thinks her authority over the family receives a set back and the son's love towards her diminishes. There is generation gap too. Closely on her heels, her daughter too misbelieves the new girl. Here, the problem being not generation gap but identity crisis. If a bride who does not bring sufficient dowry or if she could not fulfil the agreed amount her life in the in-law's house becomes miserable. Reverse is the situation in some cases where daughter-in-law with fabulous dowry wields head strong

behaviour, again a cause for differences between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law and her daughters.

Thus one should view the socio-economic factors behind this problem i.e. daughter-in-law's difficulties in joint family living. For daughter-in-law's woes mothers-in-law are not responsible. The economic inequalities in the society are solely responsible. In patriarchal system mother-in-law is the second boss of the family. That is why mothers-in-law, forgetting about their probation as daughters-in-law, try to wield power now unmindful of their past.

In a society with full of feudal values, the ultimate goal of a girl is marriage rather than importance to self respect. Reverence to God, king, feudal lord and husband are some of the important characteristics of feudal society. To get their girls married parents offer dowry and also take dowry for their boys. If a father fails to get his daughter married at the appropriate time, it is considered as his inefficiency. When such perceptions are prevailing, there cannot be an end to this evil.

Now, coming to the second problem, namely, unemployment, it is so deep rooted. It is a legacy of the economic policies of the colonial rule. The colonial system of education results in unemployment to many. A great bane of our society is not giving importance to dignity of labour. In our social hierarchy Sudras are

meant for manual labour. Resting of few upon the labour of many is the system of the day. With the advent of the colonial rule, attempts at the introduction of capitalist mode of production started. Nevertheless the roots of society continued to be in the feudal mode (of production) . Besides this change, the doctrine of *karma* rules over the psyche of Indians. This is another dominant ideology which comes in the way of the notion of dignity of labour. The general belief is that but for *karma* or past life, human beings need not do menial work. If one enjoys life in this world that is because of the credit of *punya* in his/her balance sheet of previous life. The solution to unemployment problem in this film is sought within this frame work. The hero's life in this film took a dramatic turn by winning Rs.5,00,000 in a Derby lottery. It's a melodramatic twist given to the unemployment problem by the director B.N.Reddy. It looks unnatural. Solution should have been found by making hero to do agriculture or any constructive work.⁴

Vandemataram is the maiden film of Vauhini Pictures Limited of B.N. Reddy. Its phenomenal success brought both name and fame to B.N. Reddy and hero V. Nagaiah. For Nagaiah too, it is the first picture as hero. Those were the days of mythologicals. B.N. Reddy took the risk of producing social film like **Vandemataram**.

⁴Criticism of the film **Vandemataram** in **Grihalakshmi** [a woman's journal in Telugu] [Monthly], May 1939, Madras, p.218.

The title of the film aroused some suspicion. Even the British censoring officers had to screen the film closely. In order to show that there was no political intention he gave the title **vandemataram** or **Mangalasutram** making it clear that the film was a family drama and not a patriotic tract.

B.N. Reddy ran into another problem with censors. In a well-depicted scene, Nagaiah, in a moment of frustration and rage, throws the B.A. degree scroll and tramples upon it. S.E.Ranganathan, then a prominent educationist and later Sir Samuel Ranganathan, Indian High Commissioner in England, a member of film censor Board, objected to this sequence and recommended its deletion. He felt that B.N. Reddy had deliberately insulted University education.⁵ B.N. Reddy had to argue at length to convince him that he had only shown a person's reaction in such circumstances. Somewhat reluctantly, B.N. Reddy recalled decades later, Ranganathan yielded.⁶

In Vandemataram, veteran stars like Nagaiah, Kanchanamala, Kalyani, Lingamurthy, Seshamamba and others acted. The hero, Raghu, showed remarkable determination in tying *thali* against the wish of parents. They wanted him not to tie *thali* because they agreed upon

⁵Randor Guy, **B.N. Reddy: A Monograph**, Pune, 1985, p. 22.

⁶**Ibid.**, p.22.

dowry amount was not fully paid. Janaki had to face the distrust of mother-in-law as her father failed to pay full amount of dowry. Janaki showed exceptional restraint. She is the personification of sati or *pativratya*.¹ When Janaki and her child were thrown out of house, by her mother-in-law, she never lost confidence. She shifts to the town where she makes her living by selling garlands. She took up life positively.

Vandemataram was based on an unpublished Telugu novel *Mangalasuthram*, written by B.N. Reddy before he came to the movies. The story was built around an actual incident and agriculturalist family in his native district in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh. The film was a success and enjoyed silver jubilee runs in many centres, including some non-Telugu speaking towns.⁸

Critics lavished praise and singled out B.N. Reddy as a film maker destined to make history, a promise which was amply fulfilled soon.

In Vandemataram, the director created two minor characters who attained immortality. One is city bred cook Raja who cheats the hero. He speaks a mixture of Tamil and Telugu. He crosses swords

¹**Grihalakshmi, Op.cit.**, May 1939, p.217.

⁸Randor Guy, **Op.Cit.**, pp.21-22.

and words with the hero and one such expression, 'Poda Gongura, ' attained wide currency and has since passed into colloquial Tamil as an euphemism for Andhras.⁹

The other character is a rustic, dim witted, stage struck man who marries the hero's sister. Once he gets on to the roof, sets fire to it and goes into ecstasy over his realistic production of **Lanka Dahan**. Eccentric sons-in-law began to be called Vandematharam **Allullu** in Andhra.

Music played a significant role in all B.N.Reddy's films. Vandematharam was no exception.¹⁰ He had a fine ear for music, both Hindustani, and Carnatic songs like 'O...O Muralee'. 'Poolo poolo' 'Belathanamu ' and ' Talliniminchina' became popular hits.

Widow **Marriage**:

The colonial conquest underlined the weaknesses of the traditional order and the need for reform and regeneration of its

⁹*Gongura* is that iron-rich leaf vegetable Andhras love to eat day in and day out as a hot chutney mixed with ghee.

¹⁰For the film, **Vandemataram**, the Lyrics were by Samudrala Raghavacharya, while Music was by Chittoor V.Nagaiah and Sound Recording by A.K. Sekhar. These three people played a significant role for the success of B.N. Reddy's other films, **Sumangali**, **De vat a** and **Swargaseema**.

institutions. Colonial hegemonisation tended to destroy the tradition itself. A cultural-ideological struggle ensued on two fronts simultaneously: against the ideological basis of the traditional order as well as against the colonial hegemonisation.¹¹

In the development of cultural ideological struggles the formation of a community of intellectuals distinct from the intelligentsia, cutting across regional, religious and caste barriers was of crucial importance. The early formation of intellectual community was around socio-cultural organisation and voluntary associations which reflected the initial intellectual ferment in colonial India.¹²

Although widow marriage was not organised on an all India basis, the debate about it did assume an all India character. The discussion on widow remarriage comprehended the fundamental question of women's emancipation and the methods to be adopted to achieve it. Although the movement was organised on regional and caste lines,¹³ the problem was perceived as common to all the

¹¹K.N.Panikkar, "Culture and Ideology Contradictions in Intellectual Transformation of Colonial Society in India," **Economic and Political Weekly**, 5 December 1987, pp 2115-2120.

¹²**ibid.**

¹³The problem of widow remarriages, like that of infant marriages was not universal. It was mainly confined to the upper castes in society. We have discussed social reform in Chapter I.

Hindus. Naturally the intellectuals in various Presidencies borrowed arguments and counter arguments from each other in articulating a common discourse on women's issues. The debate on widow marriage also indicated an attempt to construct a reformed Hindu community at the national plane, drawing on the authority of ~~common~~ scriptures.¹⁴ Widow marriage was seen a part of the general issues related to the emancipation of women. The reformers emphasized the importance of female education, for they saw it as a suitable instrument of empowering women.

The intellectual community was the vehicle of the cultural-ideological struggle as well as the vanguard of the national liberation struggle. Although the intellectuals did not share ~~common~~ views on many social and cultural issues, their ideological premises were remarkably similar. The intellectual community in colonial India functioned within the parameters of bourgeois liberal ideology.

"The bourgeois-liberal premises," argues K.N. Panikkar, "had no direct correlation with the nature of the formative influences. Neither were the English-educated the exclusive carriers of this ideology; the vernacular-educated did not fall outside the pale of

¹⁴On marriage of Hindu widows, see the celebrated treatise of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, **Marriage of Hindu Widows** (Summary of Vidyasagar's Bengali Tradets in English), Calcutta, 1976.

its influence. The different strategies for social change, like 'reform' and 'revival', were also enclosed within the same ideological spectrum. Thus, a 'reformist' Rammohun Roy and a 'conservative' Radhakanta Deb, or a rationalist Akshay Kumar Dutt and a 'revivalist' Dayananda Saraswati, or an English-educated Ranade and a vernacular-educated Narayana Guru, had broad areas of agreement over several issues of ideological and structural transformation of society. This was because they were all ideologues of a developing bourgeois order and their social and political premises were liberal-democratic. In course of time, the liberal intelligentsia played an active role in the reproduction of bourgeois ideology and its eventual hegemony."¹⁵ The colonial cultural hegemonisation of which acculturation was an inevitable component tended to be denigrative of indigenous culture.¹⁶

The cultural defence implicit in religious response embraced almost all spheres of culture during the course of the 19th century, particularly during its later half when the consequences

¹⁵K.N. Panikkar, **Culture, Ideology, Hegemony: Intellectuals and Social Consciousness in Colonial India**, New Delhi, 1995, pp.100-1.

¹⁶For details on the activities and ideas of various reformers, see Arabinda Poddar, **Renaissance in Bengal, Questions and Confrontations, 1800-1860**, Simla, 1970; Susobhan Sarkar, **Bengal Renaissance and Other Essays**, New Delhi, 1970; J.T.F. Jordens, **Dayananda Saraswati: His Life and Ideas**, Delhi, 1976; Richard P. Tucker, "Hindu traditionalism and nationalist ideologies in 19th century Maharashtra," in **Modern Asian Studies**, July, 1976 and his book **Ranade and the Roots of Indian Nationalism**, Bombay, 1977.

of colonial cultural intrusion were more intensely felt. It was expressed in two ways : first, the creation of an alternative to colonial cultural practices and, second, the revitalisation of traditional institutions.¹⁷

Social reform endeavours in Andhra were a part of the all India efforts and Kandukuri Veeresalingam was the first and foremost reformer in Andhra. One of the most glaring evils that beset the Andhra society in the 19th century was *Kanyasulkam* (bride price) . *Kanyasulkam* produced, in its turn, evils such as infant marriages and cases of pre-mature widowhood.¹⁸ Child marriages and the consummation of the marriage at a very early age caused a number of problems - apart from early widowhood, stoppage of education of girls also. Premature consummation leads to early motherhood, weak progeny, maternal mortality, etc. The condition of a widow, mainly among the upper castes, was tragic. Among the upper castes, the widow's head was shaved and all ornaments taken off, the unfortunate woman was deprived of all pleasures of life. She was not even allowed to participate in family ceremonies as her presence was thought to bring misfortune.¹⁹ She became often an

¹⁷This process is shown by K.N. Panikkar, **Culture, Ideology, Hegemony, Op.cit.**, pp. 1-33.

¹⁸V. Ramakrishna, **Social Reform in Andhra 1848-1919**, New Delhi, 1983, p.11.

¹⁹**Veeresalingam** gave a vivid description of the condition of widows in his novel **Rajasekhara Charitramu**. A widow was treated as

object of contempt and maltreatment. This miserable condition drove some of them to prefer death to much tortuous existence; many committed *sahagamana* (self-immolation). Sometimes the birth of illegitimate children led to infanticide. Among the upper castes widow remarriages were almost absent.²⁰ Veeresalingam, quoting *Shastras*, declared that infant marriages were not justified. Writing in 1884, he stated that 80 percent of the girls married quite early became widows. Veeresalingam wrote a satire *Brahmavivahamu* vividly portraying the evils of infant marriages. This social comedy popularly known as *Peddayagari Pelli* (wedding of an old man) was staged several times.²¹ Veeresalingam quoting mainly from the *Smritis* stated that the cruel practice of enforced widowhood "is found nowhere in the world except in our country. Even in our country it is confined to the Hindus, and among them only to the three upper castes."²² The first widow remarriage was celebrated on 11 December 1881 and by 1905 the total number of widow remarriages performed was 63.²³ In Andhra the Widow remarriage movement became fairly widespread in the towns. Besides

a maid servant in her parental home and her appearance was so detested that the word widow became a highly abusive term. See Akkiraju Ramapathirao [ed] **Veeresalingam Rachanalu** [Telugu], Vol.3, **Navalalu**, Hyderabad, 1985.

²⁰**Ibid.**, p.11.

²¹**Ibid.**, p.104.

²²**Ibid.**, p.114.

²³**Ibid.**, p.123.

Rajahmundry, the headquarters of Veeresalingam, Guntur, Bellary, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, Bobbili, Machilipatnam, Berhampur and Kakinada. It was a successful campaign against orthodoxy. It sanctified the individual revolt against traditions and made men more rational in their outlook and independent in action. Child marriages were thus a national malady and all, irrespective of caste colour, creed or religion, more or less suffered from it. The educated public started an intense campaign against early marriages. Thanks to the indigenous rationalist forces who worked for eradication of child marriages.

Their efforts led to the passing of Child Marriages Restraint Act, popularly known as Sarada Act in 1929 which fixed the marriageable age of girls at 14 and above and of boys at 18 and above.²⁴ Though the Act was welcomed in Andhra by the provincial conferences of women and others, child marriages in fact, increased temporarily as parents feared its rigorous implementation. Ultimately the legislative protection, growth of education, changing public opinion growing urbanisation, economic pressures, etc., caused the slow continuance of child marriages among the educated and in the urban centres. However, in the rural areas the impact of these acts and the efforts of leaders was very limited.

²⁴Y.Vaikuntham, **Education and Social Change in South India: Andhra, 1880-1920**, Madras, 1982, p.129.

The film, **Malli Pelli** was produced in this historical background. Weber says that the origins of **patriarchalism** are to be found in the master's authority over his household.²⁵ The patriarch wields his power without legal restraints and unencumbered by formal rules. All that really circumscribes his authority over his subjects is the respect for sacred custom. Any master who repeatedly violated the boundaries etched by tradition would risk forfeiting his legitimacy. Patriarchs are willing to abide by custom but not conform to laws.

Janardhana Rao in **Malli Pelli** is a practical example to this patriarchal ideology. He is a reputed lawyer. In order to escape from Sarada Act, he conducts marriage of his only daughter, Lalitha when she was six years old. Unfortunately she becomes a widow in her very young age. Janardhana Rao is a tradition bound man. His blind faith in traditions and his orthodox nature were exploited by one Kaliyugananda Swamy, a fake sanyasi. He is a tyrannical husband. He never feels for the sorry state of her daughter's life. He thinks that it is the fate of Lalitha but not a consequence of his misdeed of marrying her as a child. He wishes that her fate might be better in the life if she takes the **prasadam** of Kaliyugananda Swamy. Even though the dominant customs are irrational they fear to violate them lest they lose legitimacy.

"Frank Parkin, **Max Weber**, Key sociologists Series, Sussex, 1982, p.80.

The father and aunt's characters express this anguish for fear of societal norms. **Lalitha's** mother blames her fate, for she has to witness the disgrace meted out to widow Lalitha.

The sister of Sundar Rao, the hero in the picture, in one occasion makes Lalitha to wear coloured dress, grooms her hair and decorate with flowers and, on the insistence of Sundar Rao, applies saffron powder on her forehead in order to show how beautiful she is. Dumb found Sundar praises the beauty of Lalitha and ridicules the customs of the society which robbed away the happiness of Lalitha. Exactly on this comment, Ramudu the servant of Jagannadha Rao, reacted by saying that Brahmins were responsible for these things. He gives clarification by saying that seventy year old Brahmin Sabhapathi is going to marry a teenaged girl. This is his fourth marriage. Ramudu belongs to fourth caste and the evils of child marriage, taboos of widowhood, etc., are strange to him. Fourth caste was not Sanskritized yet and hence these problems of Brahminical families are beyond his understanding. **Maru Manuvu**, i.e., remarriage of woman is not new to the fourth castes and hence there will be no forced widowhood. Similarly caste customs are not very rigid. They are not hypocritical.

The varied forms of patriarchal system and the influence of tradition on social life were exposed through a series of events and encounters within the main story of the movie, **Malli Pelli**.

Religion and tradition were repeatedly used by the orthodox brahmins to legitimize the customs like female child marriage and enforcement of widowhood.

Through the encounter between the marriage party of seventy year old Brahmin Sabhapathi and the educated enlightened youth in the village, a powerful critique of female child marriage was offered. We reproduce this encounter in the movie:²⁶

It is a big street in that village. Sundara Rao, Venkata Rao and other friends are coming from one side. Slowly coming from the opposite direction are Brahmin Vakil [Janardhana Rao] Kondu Bhattu [Sabhapathi] and the other Sanatanist group.

"There they are coming! Accompanied by the Bride-groom But, why that Bride-groom is shaking his head like that Is he saying I don't want to marry?" said Sundaram.

"Not that. Yamadharm Raju came calling, but he is shaking his head telling 'I have to marry, no I will not come ... no I will not come' ..." replied Venkata Rao. The group of youth laughed aloud.

In the course of this encounter, Janardhana Rao loses his temper for mocking the marriage and tradition. He scolds Venkata Rao, his nephew.

"Oh! By learning few butler vocabulary [traditionalists' pun for English educated] you are roaming as social reformers. What is our religion, what is our tradition, what is our Sanatana dharama? ..." saying so Janardhana Rao looked back at his group.

"What a pity! Sanatana dharm! Marrying children with old rascals and cutting their throats, is it the Sanatana dharm?"

²⁶This is our English translation of Telugu script published in **Vijayachitra**, Feb. 1978, pp.64-5.

.... what a Sanatana dharma! Your faces are really looking Sanatana [pun for traditionalists], whatever is the position of dharma!" retorted Sundaram looking at his group.

The critique of tradition and religion by the youth is not a total negation of Hinduism, but the degeneration in it.

In one scene, lamenting on the harassment meted out to the widow Lalitha, Venkata Rao asks Sundara Rao, hero, "In any case, where is the tradition of harassing misfortunate widows in our religion?" The hero replied "Oh! . . . The actual religion is relegated to the background. What we are left with are hypocrats like your uncle [Janardhana Rao], this 1939 type Avadhanulu and Venkamma [another widow] type round heads [clean shaven widow, who strongly adhere to Sanatana dharma] . The religion blessed by these people is the religion for us! Their offerings [cooked food and sacred water given by the priest after offering to the God] are our tickets to Heaven!"²⁷

The operation of patriarchal system, the exploitation of gender and the sexual attitude towards female is also sought to be exposed. The attempt to molest Kamala, the sister of the hero Sundara Rao by Janardhana Rao is shown as the operation of patriarchal system which wields power without any restraints. He thinks that as he fixed her brother in a job, she fears his

²⁷**ibid.**, December 1977, p.33 [translated from Telugu].

authority and yields to his sexual desires. Kamala resists the sexual pass at her. Yet Kamala pleads her brother to forget what had happened fearing harm to his job. In the spur of the anger Sundar Rao however injures Janardhana Rao and eventually lands into police station. He was imprisoned for six months.

How repressive a patriarch in a family could be, if noticed a threat to his power, is shown in a moving encounter. Janardha Rao loses temper when his authority started weakening under the symptoms of rebelliousness seen in his wife's behaviour and daughter Lalitha's outlook. For instance, on seeing Kandukuri Veeresalingam's book and a photo of Sundar Rao in the pages of the book in the room of Lalitha he gets mad at her. His anger knew no bounds, for he was opposed to the widow marriage movement and other reform activities of Veeresalingam.

In a patriarchal family, it is not only the female but also male who is sought to be subordinated. The mechanisms of male subordination is through property relations in family. This is shown in another event. One Ramajogi gives shelter to Kamala when Sundar Rao was in jail. Venkat Rao, the would be husband of Kamala expresses his inability to give shelter to her, as he is not economically independent. The poor people like Ramajogi are better than millionaires, for 'they have at least mercy,' he says.

Whenever female rebelliousness takes the form of **threatening**, the most brutal **method** of the suppression, adopted by the traditionalists, be it male or female, is through scandalising the virtue of woman. The same strategy is adopted in the case of widow, Lalitha. Rumour spreads that Lalitha is pregnant. Brahmin patriarchs in the name of abiding by customs decide to blackmail Janardhan Rao with the threat of boycotting him socially. However, the fake Swamy comes to the rescue by advising him to tonsure his widow daughter as a punishment. The fake Swamy even argues that "Vedas and Sasthras are advocating that freedom for women is not useful."

Lalitha on hearing this, particularly the suggestion of her tonsuring, becomes ferocious and confronts emotionally. "What? You are going to tonsure? Forth marriage for Sabha Pathi, who is about to die! Have you thought about what would be her fate tomorrow! . . . I am getting furious. Is it not this way, thinking that Sarada Act is coming, you have married me off and cut my throat. Males can marry any number of times and also can commit atrocities. But marrying off the woman today and making her a widow tomorrow, is it not to make to serve the family like a slave? Why are not the girls like you? Do we not have aspirations like you have? I am not concerned with your restrictions and meaningless traditions. The marriage done to me was not a marriage at all. I am not a widow. I did not lose my **chastity**." The fake Swamy heckles at

Lalitha comparing her with Kunthi, the mother of Karna. She retorts calling him a cheat. Lalitha breaks down questioning the God. "Why did you give me this female life?"²⁸ Her mother also weeps **seeing** the plight of her daughter.

Janardhana Rao with the evil advise of Swamy got Sundar Rao, the hero rearrested on a charge of theft of his wife's gold bangles after his release from Jail. In the court, Janardha Rao's wife prepares to give evidence defying the dictates of her husband. The citadel of patriarchal fort cracks. Janardhana Rao threw the last dice declaring his wife mad. But the Judge allows her to depose the evidence. As a consequence Sundar gets acquitted. Judge warns Jagannadha Rao for initiating the false case. Moreover the Soon Swamy was also arrested as he was not only a fake but an accused in a Bank fraud case. Sundar Rao prostrates on the feet of Subhadramma, the wife of Janardhana Rao. She says she did what was right. Nothing more than that. In turn she said she is grateful to him for having saved the life of Lalitha.

All through the picture Subhadramma believes in destiny (*karma*) . But in the end she was prepared to defy the patriarchal authority of her husband. She even deposes in the court of law. Crossing the boundaries of Hindu home for a Brahmin house wife was

²⁸ **Ibid.**, June 1978, p.61 [translated from Telugu].

indeed a revolutionary step. This is because, in her perception Janardhana Rao lapsed into the hands of evil force Swamy, who has been poisoning the ears of Jagannadha Rao. He has become immoral and thereby loses his authority. Subhadramma knows that she herself has given bangles to the hero and so he is innocent. She has two tasks: one is to get the innocent released and the other is to get her husband liberated from the clutches of evil Swamy.

It is the patriarch, Jagannadha Rao who is shown violating the boundaries of idealised tradition and thereby forfeited his legitimacy in family. Subhadramma though appears to have questioned patriarchal authority by deposing against her husband actually shown as saving his honour by pleading before Judge that her husband is innocent.

The degeneration in traditional values and religion is shown through a fake sanyasi, Kaliyugananda Swamy, who sells the idea to the villagers that he is Lord Krishna's incarnation. Though he misbehaves with one religious minded widow, Venkayamma, the gullible villagers think that she is Radha. Swamy invokes Vedas to deny freedom to women.

The condition of contemporary degeneration of society is also seen in Ramajogi's *tatvas* [the simple poems with hidden meaning].

Ramajogi who is a beggar singing *tatvas* comes to the rescue of Kamala when her brother was in jail. To quote one of his *tatvas*,

Achara Matisayincha
 [Traditions come forefront]
 Adarsa Mantarinche
 [Ideals died]
 Adambarabu Minche
 [Vanity grew]
 Ajanna Mavarinche
 [Stupidity occupied the place of wisdom]
 Nirjivamayya Jati
 [nation becomes lifeless]
 Swarthambu Lagglinche
 [Selfishness grew]
 Dharmambu Tavalinche
 [End of Righteousness]
 Tantralu Daparinche
 [Intrigues appeared]
 Atyasa Lellahadase
 [Greediness grew]
 Satyambu rupumase
 [Truth disappeared]
 Sanghama urmatambu
 [Irreligion in Society]
 Sagincha patakambu
 [continued sin].²⁹

Lalitha is the heroine of **Malli Pelli** played by Kanchanamala and had lived up to the mark as a young widow. Her acting skills made her a popular artist. The conflict between Lalitha and her father; between Lalitha and society, between Lalitha and superstitions were exquisitely displayed by Kanchanamala. Rumour spread that Lalitha became pregnant. She was ill treated by all. She met Sundar Rao in Jail. She was taken aback when even Sundar Rao suspects her. Disheartened Lalitha decides to commit suicide.

²⁹Translated into English by me.

in the process she falls and becomes unconscious. Hero admits her in hospital and saves her life.

Malli Pelli's hero is a man of progressive ideas. He criticises orthodoxy. He doubts the bonafide of Kaliyugananda Swamy. He pities Jagannadha Rao, who being educated falls prey to Swamy. Hero questions irrational religious beliefs of illiterate young widows. 'Hypocrites like Jagannadha Rao, fake Swamy and widows with shaven heads are order of the day,' hero says. He also says 'Hinduism is filled with superstitions and irrational traditions.' Hero admires the beauty of Lalitha. He tries to drive away the inferiority complex of Lalitha. Heroine is conscious of her chastity. She urges to honour her chastity. Then Sundar Rao says: "Do not misunderstand my love. I do not see your external beauty. I love your internal beauty. It is my duty to save your honour. I want to have legitimate family life with you." These words show the culture of Sundar Rao. He wants to revolt against the system. He tells Lalitha, "What is Society? You and I can marry. Society cannot boycott us. We both will boycott it. Let us prove that our marriage is an ideal event."

The deeper operation of patriarchal consciousness and the male attitude towards women and marriage is exposed through rather a strange and contradictory attitude of the hero. The rumour about heroine's pregnancy makes the hero behave like any other ordinary

man. It appears that the so called progressive hero loves Lalitha so long as she was chaste.

The movie narrative seems to have aimed at throwing a pertinent question at the audience: "how many young men were ready to marry widows with earlier conjugal experience?" In **Malli Pelli**, the heroine happens to be the only daughter of an advocate. This economic background too might have been the reason for hero's desire to marry her, as it is the hero is an unemployed graduate. A respectable Brahmin young man with sound financial position may not marry a destitute without property and who earlier led a family life. The widow remarriage movement therefore was like any other issue, linked with the traditional notions of chastity and virginity and the contemporary longing for material prosperity, even if it is acquired through a widow marriage.

The most significant sign posts in the movie **Malli Pelli** are the transformation of female consciousness and the attitude of the untouchable caste towards the whole issue of widows in society.

Varavikrayam

Varavikrayam is a film with message of social reform. The evil of dowry is focusses in this film.³⁰ The film is relevant even today.

³⁰Ogirala Venkata Subba Rao, "Criticism on Varavikrayam," **Andhra Patrika**, 12 May 1939, p. 3.

Unlike in **Vandemataram**, the heroine of **Varavikrayam** demands that as she paid *varasulka* the bride groom should go to bride's house. sometime there used to be *Kanyasulkam* (bride price) and for some other time *varavikrayam*. Both are social evils. In both systems male chauvinism continue.

In Indian society feudal values are so deep rooted that woman is considered a commodity over which male ownership is established. As long as private ownership of property continues, so long as this feudal ideology also continues. Ours is a feudal system. That is why whether it is *varakatna* or *kanyasulka*, husband's control over wife continues unabatedly. Traditions control our psyche.

Dyta Gopalam played the role of father of the girls in **Varavikrayam**.³¹ Kochcherlakota Satyanarayana acted as bridegroom. Kalindi character was played by Bhanumathi. The credit of introducing Bhanumati to film field goes to C.Pulliah. Pushpavalli played as Kamala.³²

Sumangali

The hardships of widowhood and that too, woes of a young widow are too many to describe. In **Sumangali**, these are vividly portrayed.

³¹The ever green hero of Telugu films, Akkineni Nageswara Rao learnt the art of dialog delivery from Dyta Gopalam.

³²Pushpavalli is the mother of veteran Hindi film star Rekha.

Sumangali is a triangular love story aimed at social reform. Saraswathi is a child widow, whom the hero marries going against social norms and tradition. Parvathi, the second heroine who also lives in hero's house wishes to marry him. But later ends her life to make the way for her fiancée, who loves only Saraswathi. This character attracts the sympathy of society. "To oppose the dominant evil traditions of society the sacrifice of Parvathi is necessary at all ?" Is the question of critics. Is there not any other way?³³ Vauhini productions titled the film Nara Bali (Human Sacrifice) at first. They later on changed it but the sacrifice of Parvathi remains in the picture.

Sumangali begins with a dedication in English to 'young Hindu unfortunates made to live a living death by a freak of fate, and the curse of society.' B.N. Reddy in his second film **Sumangali** takes up cudgels against Hindu society to bring home the evils of child widowhood. In the thirties of the present century, as already discussed, it was a serious problem and the position of such widows, prohibited from remarriage was miserable and **painful**.

Social reformers all over the country, especially Kandukuri Veeresalingam Panthulu, a leading Telugu writer and scholar fought hard for a change in social mores and attitudes. In fact the

³³Seetapati, "Review of Sumangali," **Andhra Patrika**, 7 June 1940, p.2.

writings and teachings of Veeresalingam Panthulu had inspired B.N. Reddy to make the movie.³⁴ He even had a character called Panthulu in **Sumangali** a kind hearted, elderly social reformer played by Nagaiah. B.N.Reddy had Nagaiah wearing a white silk Wig, specially imported from Paris. The hero of the hit film **Vandemataram** was not exactly amused to do the minor role of a n old man in a white wig, even if imported, especially when he had to shave off some of his real hair in front of fit in the Paris made wig. However, his performance was remarkably impressive and prompted Baburao Patel, then making a mark in film journalism with his Film India, to describe Nagaiah in his review as the 'Paul Muni of India', high praise indeed. Many people praised Nagaiah as the best character actor. Baburao Patel compared Nagaiah with Saigal. Saigal's song has only melody but Nagaiah's song has melody merged with emotion - he said.³⁵

Technically **Sumangali** is perfect and far ahead of its time, thanks to Ramnath who wrote the story and screenplay, shot and edited the film. A camera wizard, his photography is not only brilliant but also breath taking.³⁶ His creative lighting, effective use of spot lighting to create meanings and camera

³⁴Randor Guy, **Op.cit.**, p.24.

³⁵V.Nagaiah, **Autobiography**, [Telugu], Madras, 1983, p.124.

³⁶Randor Guy, **Op.cit.**, p.25.

placement are even today worth detailed study. The most impressive sequence takes place in a moving train where the heroine comes to know about her widowhood, from her aunt accompanying her. Through the windows, the passing landscape is seen in sharp focus. And in 1940s, there were no process screen (rear projection) facilities in Madras. V. Shantaram, who saw the movie in Madras was so astonished that he asked, how on earth it was done. B.N. Reddy recalled, forty years later. `Ramnath got an old projector, fixed it with a clock mechanism, and he used a screen made of organdie which he dipped in glycerine.... and it worked. He sat with K.V. Reddi and planned it almost overnight.

B.N. Reddy, fond of visual metaphors and symbols, made use of the crucifix as a symbol of sacrifice, perhaps for the first time in South Indian cinema. The heroine after leaving home meets a lecherous rich man who tries to seduce her. He locks up all doors to trap her, and the camera lingers on the doors which form the pattern of the crucifix.³⁷ **Sumangali** flopped at the box-office and almost wiped out Vauhini's capital. It was an expensive film - its cost was Rs. 1,20,000/- as against Y.V Rao's **Malli Pelli**, a similar film on widow marriage, released around the same time and a super hit, which had cost only Rs. 50,000/. B.N.Reddy was never a fast worker and took ten months to complete **Sumangali**, while Y.V.Rao

³⁷**Ibid.**, p.26.

finished **Malli Pelli** in four months and was able to release it earlier.

Why did movie goers reject **Sumangali**? The film appealed to the head and not to the heart, that's why masses did not like it, commented the hero of the film, Giri, forty two years later, recalling the past.³⁸ Some scenes were indeed shocking to the audiences. For example, the most abominable procedure followed to break bangles of the wife of the deceased and rubbing of tilak on forehead. Some junior artistes even refused to act in this scene. 'That was our society in those days, ' B.N. Reddy recalled analysing the film.³⁹ But to our mind **Malli Pelli** is a direct message giving picture. The issue was tackled straight forward. The harsh conditions of a young widow are given much importance, for example *KumKum* mark on forehead, though not deliberate attracted much criticism in the conservative circles. Seeing a widow case in their very amongst one little girl is married to a seventy years old Sabhapati. Like all the events in **Malli Pelli** are powerful. Whereas in **Sumangali** the scenes created are artificial. Saraswathi is brought up in modern environment. Since she lost her father and along with his death she has become orphan, she has to bear the brunt of the attack from Kapileswaram people. Had she been left

³⁸ **ibid.**

³⁹ **ibid.**

with some bank balance, her owes would have been different. She was prepared to do the manual work out of her dependence only and not that she was a widow. Her way of living is different from that of the villagers which might have been the cause of their criticism. Apart from all this, Parwathi's character was given a sad end just for uniting Saraswati and Giri. It's more a triangular love story than of a story directly with reform theme. All these factors counted for its failure at box-office.

However, critics liked **Sumangali**. They said, it was purposeful and timely and congratulated B.N. Reddy for his bold stance. The film soon became a Telugu classic and is still screened at Seminars, Film courses and Festivals. **Sumangali** is considered today as a milestone in Telugu cinema and a fine example of purposeful film with social content and **significance**.

Dominant Ideology

Karma Anubhavinchaka tappadu

(One cannot overrule destiny/fate)

Sastracharalu marchataniki vilu ledu

(One cannot change conventions/tenements of Sastras.)

The picture questions this ideology:

Saraswathi's earlier wedding was like marriage of toys
Sastras, religion and conventions are creations of

selfish men; why she should lead a slavish life?
 Saraswati is not puppet in the hands of society, Pasupu
 kunkuma Niku chala Janma hakku kada; purushunivale stri
 puttaleda. (Is the birth of woman different from man?)
Andaru Devuni Santati (All are children of God).

Turmeric and Saffron powder are your birthright, is the idea that has been propagated in the film. The duet in the film "Mabbu Anakala Doma Tera Chatu Lona" is a romantic song. The period from 1938-1950 is considered as romantic age in the history of Telugu film lyrics.⁴⁰

Pasupu kunkuma nosatana velige

Ada Bratuke Madhuras

(She, who has turmeric and Saffron on her forehead, her life is sweet).

Pasi koonaku palosagusu Murise Talli Bratuke Madhuras

(She who suckles milk to her baby her life is sweet)

House wife who with flowers, turmeric, saffron powder, blessed with children, leads lovely life with husband is called *Sumangali*. This is the dominant ideology of Hindu society. And **Illalu** is a film with the message of *pativrata dharma*.

⁴⁰Paidipiala, *Telugu cinema pata, Op.cit.*, p.41.

The Sati concept is continuously patronised in cinema. Sati means unquestioned devotion to one's husband. Some sati films of earlier days are, **Sati Savitri** 1932, **Sati Anasuya** 1933, **Sati Seeta** 1934, **Sati Anasuya** again in 1943, to name some. The ancient Hindu concept regarding the dual function of woman is that - a woman is the incarnation of either of two forces - a gentle, pious, docile, benevolent and submissive creature, always sacrificing for others, especially her husband, and Shakti, the representation of a kind of female brute force striking terror in the hearts of men. Enlightening this second aspect Nadia films were produced. e.g. **Hunterwali**, **Jungle princess**, **Lady Robinhood**, etc. **Illalu** glorifies the first theme.⁴¹

Devata

Vauhini Picture's **Devata** was released in the following centres on September 11, 1941.⁴²

Bezawada	:	Saraswathi Picture Palace
Bundur	:	Minerva Talkies
Rajahmundry	:	Jaya Talkies
Secunderabad	:	Rejeswari Talkies
Eluru	:	Ramakrishna Talkies
Visakhapatnam	:	Purna Theatre
Vizianagaram	:	Sri Krishna Cinema

⁴¹Sai Paranjpye, "Women in Indian Cinema," in **Genres of Indian Cinema**, Platinum Jubilee of Indian Cinema, 1988-89, p.24.

⁴²**Krishna Patrika**, 6 September 1941.

Kakinada : Cinema Majestic
 Guntur : Bombay Talkies
 Bellary : Royal Picture Palace

The above ten centres considered to be urban places and at present some of them emerged as cities even. They were centres with considerable political activity during the time of study, i.e., 1941. Considering time and place, one can assume that consciousness of the people is dominated by elite ideologies. According to Gramsci, common sense is the ensemble of cultural pre-suppositions by which the subaltern classes make sense of the world they live in.⁴³ The subaltern class has for reasons of submission and intellectual subordination, adopted a conception which is not its own but is borrowed from another group; and it affirms this conception verbally and believes itself to be following it, because this is the conception which it follows in normal times, that is, when its conduct is not independent and autonomous but submissive and subordinate.⁴⁴ The dominant cultural value is "love between man and woman should be a noble one, not just lust."

In **Devata** film, Lakshmi loses her chastity to her master. She determines to remain his wife, even if he does not marry her

⁴³M.S.S.Pandian, *The Image Trap*, Delhi, 1992,, p.31.

⁴⁴**Ibid.**

openly. In order to save her disposition she has to loose **many** things she lost her father. **Circumstances** have driven her to a prostitute's house. Society branded her a woman of vice. Heroine character reminds us the *satis* of epic age. This upper class cultural value, *pativradya*, is well received by the middle class spectators. In the above mentioned semi urban centres, in early 1940s, the spectators are mostly drawn from this class only. Viewing of films by the rural folk has not yet gained momentum. The middle class always look for the values of the class above ~~them~~. The educated among the lower class, i.e, subaltern class is familiar with the stories of Sati *Anasuya*, *Savitri*, etc. The spectators belonging to this group also should have appreciated the film.

The film **Devata** propagated this dominant ideology (utmost value to *pativradya*) and produced consent among the **subaltern** classes. The body of a woman is considered to be the property of that man who first had sexual relation with her is a feudal value which continues till today. That man will have the legitimate right over her sexually, economically and culturally. Wedding gives that legitimate right. *Thali* is the central cultural symbol. Such relationship without *Thali* is looked upon as prostitution in the society. Man's right over woman is thus hegemonised.

The heroine of this film desired for this social identity, a housewife. The hardships what she faced are harsh realities. Pre-martial sex and unwed motherhood is a curse on Indian woman **Devata**, considered as a daring movie in its day, because of its theme. This film turned out to be a big box office success. One of the many who liked **Devata** was none other than the founding father of Indian Cinema, Dada Saheb Phalke.⁴⁵

The trouble of mind upon what he had done is nicely shown by hero of **Devata**. This character is in resonance with Gandhian morals of the day. The hero could not resist falling in lust with the serene country beauty of Lakshmi. Venu, the hero, is a London returned man. Hero without socialising Lakshmi fulfils his lust on a fateful day. It is a clear case of male domination. In the process he neither gets her consent nor much protest from her. Lakshmi's passive attitude brings repentance in Venu. He recognizes that he robbed her chastity. He tries to console Lakshmi. He even promises to marry her. But afterwards his marriage was fixed with some other girl of his rich uncle who stays in Madras. There, Venu tries to do away with Lakshmi by offering money. She retorts saying she is not a commodity to be sold. Lakshmi requests him to allow her to treat venu as her husband at least mentally. Heroine corners Venu every time through her calm

⁴⁵Randor Guy, **B.N. Reddy, Op.Cit., p.30.**

behaviour. Venu drowns further in guilty conscience. Venu thinks that the song of Vimala: *Rade Cheli Nammarade Cheli, Magavarinila Nammarade Cheli* (don't believe men folk) directly hits him. It made him guilty.

Venu's indecision made Vimala to elope with Sukumar. Now, Venu comes to know that Lakshmi is pregnant and abandons home. All this made him sad and finally he decides to search for Lakshmi. Restless with guilt he reveals the secret that he was responsible for the sad life of Lakshmi. Venu, in search of Lakshmi, meets one lady. She praises the character of Lakshmi and she said that she was responsible for Lakshmi's jail life. This event further belittles Venu and finally he meets Lakshmi in Jail and seeks her pardon. Mangamma, the mother of Venu, accepts Lakshmi as her daughter-in-law.

The hero's character warrants much of acting talent. It's a mental exercise. The scenes before seducing Lakshmi have to be picturised carefully, because the seducer is a highly educated man. Nagaiah's facial expressions as Venu are good, after all Venu is not a rowdy who rapes girls. Similarly, hero is restless with guilt and remorse. These feelings are delicately shown by Nagaiah. This character is of a typical Victorian morals. Nagaiah did his role exceedingly well.

Impressive **Scenes**:

Seeta is the dearest sister of Venu. Venu gives Telegram stating he was coming back home from abroad where he did his Bar-at-Law. Seeta with full of nostalgia fails to get sleep that night.

She explains the intimacy between her and her brother. "Lakshmi, we were eating our supper (milk food) in only one plate during moonlit nights. I was pinching brother as he eats all food. Do you know how much my brother loves me. Lakshmi see the moon, he does not move at all."

The car in which Mangamma and Seeta travel develops a snag. Driver tries to repair it but in vain. Then the car was tied to a bullock cart and the bulls pull the car. It creates ovation in the audience. It's a natural scene.

A teenaged girl's life is very gayful. Seeta sings a song "*Ugeda Uyyala Toogu tuyela tarapathamudanuka uyela, Rachilukala venuka egiripoyeda,*" which means I will swing in a cradle, a swinging cradle up to stars up above in the sky. I will fly behind parrots.

The influence of Western literature, especially theatre, on Ramnath, a Madras university graduate responsible for the story, screenplay and photography is seen in this movie.

Devata is cinematic in form and content when most movies of the day were filmed plays. Stagy set ups, steady moving camera, narration through spoken word - all these are absent in **Devata**. There is a liberal use of over-the-shoulder-shots in this film, something very rare in South Indian films those days. Some of the close ups of Suryakumar (Seetha) a wonderful talent, beautifully framed and lit are highly artistic.

Ramnath's use of his camera and lighting are remarkable. One particular scene is impressive. The hero with guilty conscience comes to meet his mother in her prayer room. While he confesses, Nagaiah is at the edge of the frame, totally in the dark, as if hiding in shame and guilt, and his mother, at prayer, her heart kind and pure, dominates the frame, bathed in light.⁴⁶ The scene in which Nagaiah seduces Kumari is shot with restraint and sensitivity. The director, B.N. Reddy conveys the impact with cut-outs of erotic sculpture, wall pictures, and foreign film magazine covers. B.N. Reddy, a Victorian prude in matters of sex, relies on suggestion, rather than direct presentation.⁴⁷

It is interesting to think of a picture of that theme. The theme and the very idea of having an Indian film hero seducing the maid were worse than blasphemy. Everybody with access to B.N. Reddy

⁴⁶**Ibid.**, p.28.

⁴⁷**Ibid.**, p.29.

began to advise him against the making of such a movie. But critics and crowds loved **Devatha** and its success gave B.N. Reddy enormous confidence in himself.⁴⁸ Cinema is a medium of entertainment for middle class. Hence middle class cultural values are mediated through this medium. 1940s are the years in which audiences from working class started increasing.⁴⁹ A servant maid who at last got married to her master is a tremendous moral boost to that class. Those were the days (or for that matter even today) when 'lower' class girls are deserted after fulfilling their sexual pleasure. In **De vata** the life of one servant maid is mediated who ultimately rises to a higher social level.

In two ways the picture is successful, one, because of the Victorian values and Gandhian philosophy of repentance, introspection, etc., of the hero, and, two, labour class **wish of** attaining higher social status.

Thus **Devata** was liked by both middle and labour classes, i.e., the subaltern audience. B.N.Reddy was indeed, a creative genius.

⁴⁸**Ibid.**, p. 30.

⁴⁹Hari, "Anati Cinema Rangam," in Kalipatnam Rama Rao [ed.], **Manalo Mapnam**, Visakhapatnam, 1990, p.128.

Music, as usual for a B.N. Reddy film, dominates the picture. There are many songs, most of them sung by Nagaiah and Bezwada Rajaratnam, a fine singer, with a silvery lit in her melodious voice. B.N. Reddy gives top most importance to nativity. Peasant activities with farm works are depicted in the song "*Rytu Janamala pandaga dinamu Idira, Karuvumasi Chaniyera*".⁵⁰

Sita sings a song "*Vendi kanchalalo Vedi Buvvandoi Pamidi Kancha la lo pala Buvvundoi*" is very popular.⁵¹ The piano song "*Adigo Andhiyala Ravali*" by Vimala is catchy. Her other songs are "*Radhe Cheli Namma radhe cheli, magavarinila nammade cheli*", and "*Evaru makinka sati vere ila satileni janta madi*." "*Lokamanta Lobhula, Kavare Nirupedala*" is a song by the brother of Lakshmi. He carries the child and asks for alms. It's a super hit song and even today after forty years, one can hear this song being sung by mendicants in remote parts of Andhra Pradesh.⁵² "*Anandam Anandam Rave Rave Bangaru Papa*" is a song sung happily after the union of hero and heroine. Nagaiah and Bezwada Ratnam were the singers.

⁵⁰Lyrics by Samudrala Venkata Raghavacharya. This is a harvest song. 'Harvest day is a festive day in the life of ryots. The rich Harvest drives away famine. '

⁵¹Mothers while feeding their kids usually sing this song.

⁵²Randor Guy, **B.N.Reddy**, p.29.

The Lakshmi character in '**Devata**' is not mere Lakshmi. she is really a **Devata** (Goddess)⁶³ Lakshmi 's woes are many and miserable but she forgives the man who is the root cause for all her miseries. Her tolerance is the secret of her victory. **Devata** film proved the fact that even in working class there were virtuous persons like Lakshmi and similarly in the so called civilized upper class there could be vicious person like **Venu**.⁵⁴

Devata is the story of an unchaste woman. Can any traditional bound man can call her **Devata**?⁵⁵ Mr. Adinarayana was harsh at criticising **Devata**. Marriage is to a man and woman relation, what clothes are to human beings. Unless one becomes a beast he will not shun clothes. Lakshmi utters, 'you!' only, when hero seduce her she does not protest at all. she has to reap what she has sown. **Devata** is a film which does not deserve to be seen by children and women. **Devata** is like "washing our dirty linen in public. This picture is lowest in art."

⁵³V. Mallikarjuna Rao, "Review Article" in **Zamin Ryot**, 6 March 1942, p.8.

⁵⁴K.M. Krishna Murthy, "Review on **Devata**," in **Zamin Ryot**, 13 March 1942, p.7.

⁵⁵T.V. Adinarayana, "Review on **Devata**," in **Zamin Ryot**, 3 April 1942, p.3.

The above criticism of Adinarayana is countered by B. Rangayya, as follows: ⁵⁶

Mr. Adinarayana called Lakshmi an unchaste woman because she does not possess *thali* or *mangalasutra*, the secret **simble** of a *sumangali*. Further, Adinarayana continues to harp upon the argument that such women do not enjoy the support of the society as her act is against the so called established norms of the society. For this the critique Mr. Rangaiah puts forth the argument and questions the very basis of the societal norms and the so called ethics. He says the norms have been prescribed by a few wealthy and also tradition bound people. Hence, the rules formed could benefit their vested interests. It is another matter that the general public made to follow these rules as they are bound by the religious scriptures. Also there are double standards, one set of rules for men and the other for women. Men are permitted to practise polygamy and it is not considered as a grave crime whereas women are told to follow strictly monogamy. The critic draws the example of Kunthi who was an un-wed mother and who was not punished. Therefore, drawing a parallel, he states that why should Lakshmi be punished. The norm that a woman who had the first sexual experience with a man should be his wife only. Following this norm Lakshmi remained chaste till the end and therefore to call Lakshmi a bitch is unjust. Vauhini

⁵⁶B. Rangayya , "Devata an unchaste Woman?," in **Zamin Ryot**, 8 Kay 1942, p. 2.

pictures with this offbeat theme created the film **Devata**. Their attempt is praiseworthy.

Patriarchal ideology is taught by this film. **Mangamma** makes her daughter and Lakshmi known, how a girl ought to be. Seeta reads Bhajan song. The essence of the song is about the duties of a woman.

Santa sahanammulu: (peace and tolerance)

polatalaku Devudichina Bhushanamulu: (Jewels given by God to women)

Sirulu Galgina vela Mai **Maruvaradu**: (Do not overjoy when you are rich)

Kashtamulalona Dhairyamu Kalgiyundu: (Do not loose confidence when in troubles)

Nathudamuragamosaginadu Novva Madinappudu pongaku **Alugakamma**

(Do not get overjoy when husband loves)

(Do not be angry when contrary happens)

Attamamamala Tallidandrulattu Lenchi

(Treat your in laws as your parents)

Attavarillu Puttiniti Yathi dahachi

(Treat in laws house as your parents' house)

Mama kutumbala Kireeti Mnupavamma

(Bring fame to our families)

Anuchu Ganudri Nasruval Chinuka **Balike**

(Likewise said with tears in his two eyes)

Janikammamu sampuchu Jankaraju

(Jankaraju bids farewell to Janaki)

Similarly, in another song which Seeta reads:

Poorva punyambu koladi purushudaneda

(Husband according to Punya of past life: it's said

Rata Devaraina Ethivadaina Gani

(Whatever his character be and whoever by)

Padatikihapara Daiva ma patiyē talli

(He is her God in this world and also in the life after
death)

pati padambhoja sevaye paramatapamu

(Woman's duty is to worship him and that is her ideal)

parama sukhadayammu, saubhagyakari

(That gives her happiness and wealth)

Sakala Bhayavarānammu, Bhushanam, Dharmam

(It removes fear, gives money and its ornamental.)

Pati manobhishtamuna Katma Baliyonarchi

(For the sake of husband devote your soul)

Purnakamuni Chesina Polatiminna

(who gives full joy to husband, that woman is great)

Annapurna Samanalai amaravinata charitalainaru

(They become martyrs like Annapurna and others)

patibhakti maruvakunda Janaki Maravvakundu

(Janaki don't forget to worship your husband)

Varidharmapadana janumu

(Go in the path of *Satis*)

Anchu **Anasuya** Sita Divchipalike

(Thus spoke Anasuya with Sita, by blessing her.)

Similarly, **Mangamma** reads another song which enunciates Karma theory:

Enno nomulu nochinagani Ee narajanmamdorakadu

(After many a prayer only you got this human life)

Eejanmambu chesina karmaye mundati janmaku moolamu

(The deeds of this janma (life) becomes origin to next life)

Satyamu dharmamu premamu karuna uttamagatiki sadhanara

(To get higher order practise truth, dharma, love and deed).

Paliki bonkina padimeerina bratukenasanamaunura

(life gets ruined if you go back on your word,)

Moodurojula muchchata koirakai budidaseyakura **bratuku**

(life is after all three days tamasha, don't waste life)

Budida cheyakura **Eenarajanmamu** Cherapakura

(Do not destroy human life)

Cherapakura Enno nomulu nohina phalamidi

(This life is result of many worships, don't destroy)

Eenarajanmamu Cherapakura

(Do not destroy this human life.)

The underlying philosophy of this human life is that ones deeds decide one's life. If ones deeds are good one will get good life next. If anybody misbehaves in this life he/she will reap the consequences. Adhere to what is said and one should not go **back** on the given words. This human life is more valuable. This is the dominant Hindu philosophy.

Pantulamma

Gudavalli Ramabrahman produced another film with social relevance. The problem faced by Nirmala as teacher is just one instance of working women's problems. We come across the character of Raoji in present times too⁵⁷. Another issue touched upon in the film is that of inter caste marriage. Sastri expressed his human values by giving shelter to Nirmala. One has to withstand against many social hurdles. To keep a word is not that easy. It is a virtue one should inherit from our past culture. Sastri hails from an orthodox Brahmin family. In order to help orphan Nirmala, Sastri overcome all traditional barriers. The circumstances forced him to marry her. The orthodox father of Sastri had to concede at last because once the marriage was over one had to learn to live with. Hindu dharma insists this quality. Thus he legitimizes the inter-caste marriage.

⁵⁷In Mandal system of administration in Andhra Pradesh, the school teachers are kept under the supervision of Mandal Presidents.

Throughout the film, the hero character appears to be a man who stood for his word in helping Nirmala. It does not seem marriage was his intention. Circumstances forced him to marry her. Even after the marriage he remains at a distance from Nirmala, but she has expressed her conjugal feelings. Here, hero says that what all he has done that was to keep his word and save her respect, nothing more than that. This gives rise to the fact that inter caste marriage was not his aim. Only circumstances forced him to marry Nirmala.

The central point is given emphasis through a song of cart man.

Saginchumura Yuvaka Dharmam

(Young man continue your dharma)

Jivanaramamuma jankaka Nipani

(Do not fear the battle of life,)

Karmamu Kalamu Kalisi, Nedu Ni

Dharma Parikshaku Punera

(Due to fate you are subjected to severe test)

Marmavedi Vai Dhiruda Vai, Ni Karma Rathammu Tolummura

(Be brave, lead the cart of fate)

Tanavare Tama kedurai rani

(Even your own people oppose)

Tanasakalammunu Dwamsamkani

(Let all your own ruin)

Ranamuna Nilabadi Gelichina Vade

(Those who stand in the fight wins)

Manujudu purushudu charitarthudu ra

(Such man will make History!)

Pantulamma film gives more importance to karma yoga. One should do ones duty, at any cost. The film finds solution in individual sacrifice. It does not offer a solution to problems of working women.

Swarga Seema

Our cinemas are obsessed with Indian mythology. The obsession of our early talkie makers with mythology invites two major conclusions; one that screen adaptations of Indian mythologies was meant as box-office safeguard. Surely, no other works clicked nor broke through the immense class and caste barriers of this subcontinent more than the two dearly loved epics, the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. Also, putting together a mythology on the screen was one of the simplest means of reaffirming myths about our social values. Throughout the long history of Indian mainstream cinema we have seen new myths churned out of the old. Exemplary epic figures like Sita, Gandhari and Savitri keep returning, reinforced under different, often deceptive garbs. Thus playing around with the Sita Savitri images our prolific screenplay writers have produced

some interesting new myths. Women's portrayal in popular cinema is in the mould - woman as victim. It is interesting to note that sacrifice austerly and self deprivation are accepted in the Indian ethos as noble values (a point very well taken in Mahatma Gandhi's political credo). They recur as a physical reality and with a logical model in many myths such as Harishchandra and Nala Damayanthi legends, the latter at a romantic level. It is important that poverty and austerly are qualities recognised in the myths for what they are, and all sacrifices (like uma's for Shiva) are redeemed at the end.⁵⁸ Vauhini's *Swarga Seema* is within this framework.

Swargaseema connotate a simple meaning 'Sweet Home' or a place of paradise. "Your home is a paradise and you need not search for it anywhere outside. You are its creator." This idea is the central theme of this film. **Swargaseema** was a great triumph for B.N. Reddy. The film was inspired by Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* and the famous movie *Blood and Sound*. B.N. Reddy vaguely conceived the plot and worked on it.⁵⁹ **Swargaseema** is a family drama.

⁵⁸Rinki Bhattacharya, "Portrayals of Women in Indian Cinema," in **Indian Films Today: An Anthology of articles on Indian Cinema**, New Delhi, 1985, p.33.

⁵⁹Randor Guy, **Op.cit.**, p.31.

Woman's purity, faith and devotion to her husband, considered to be high values of Indian society, are better picturised in this film. India had its own heritage of cultural and social relations based on a feudal order.⁶⁰ The social milieu of the time of **Swargaseema** demands such qualities of woman and anything against this would become an anti-establishment film. The Indian mind has inherited the value of emotional security from a docile husband worshipping wife. This stereotype is readily acceptable to the Indian spectators. **Swargaseema** is a male cinema. Male cinema depends on a woman figure to restore balance and order into man's world spoilt by himself or by other woman who is responsible for much of his misery. The constant use of the figure of the woman as the metaphor either for man's desires or ambitions or for his failures is a practice used in popular cinema.⁶¹ Popular vilification of woman is 'woman is the woman's worst enemy'. In this film for the fall of Murthy and for miseries of Kalyani, Sujatha is blamed. The dominant ideology of fate gives the needed tolerance to the wronged persons. A climate of blind belief in pre-ordained fate is a tremendous force for maintaining the status quo. The dominant philosophy of fate always served the privileged class. This also served the colonisers who were absolved of any responsibility for the poverty and lack of development of the

⁶⁰N.V.K. Murthy, "The socio-economic Milieu," in **Symposium on Cinema in Developing Countries**, New Delhi, 1979, p.33.

⁶¹Gayatri Chatterjee, **Awara**, New Delhi, 1992, p.48.

people in the colonies.⁶² The propensity of male cinema is to make women fall at their knees and cling to the feet of their fathers, husbands, lovers, to beg for protection, upkeep, love, **etc.**⁶³ In **Swargeseema**, in the last shot showing the union of Murthy and Kalyani, Kalyani falls on the feet of Murthy. To a modern mind it look ridiculous because all through her life it was Murthy who wronged her.

Nativity : B.N. Reddy is well known for his aesthetic values in his films. He gives much importance to nativity. The day after the street play Mohini Rukmangada was over, Ganganna and Subbi **came** to the house of **Murthy's** father-in-law in that village to collect some grain. In rural areas of the times money played little role. Some measures of grain occupies the place of money. Professionals are paid in kind only. Donation of used **garments** was also in vogue. This situation of rural environment is utilised by B.N. Reddy.

The drama programme of **Sujatha** was propagated through carts. This is the old technique of giving publicity which is very native.

⁶²N.V.K. Murthy, "The Socio-Economic Milieu," Op. Cit., p.34.

⁶³Gayatri Chatterjee, **Awara**, p.49.

The influence of Puranas on Indian intellectuals is unquestionable. Ruling class hegemonizes the ruled through ideology. Indian woman made to understand that she should be a **Sati** Savitri, a Anasuya, a Chandramati or a **Sumati**. Marriage, bed room, kitchen, maternity and *thali* are the five cardinal features every woman is made to think of.⁶⁴ The heroine of **Swargaseema** exactly fits into this mould. Kalyani and children await the arrival of Murthy at the gate of their home. The disappointed children ask their mother, 'don't father come?' " Yes he will come".She replied. In giving this reply she gives a sorrowful look. Again when she and children go to Bangalore to meet Murthy and get rejected by him the feelings revealed by Kalyani are marvellous. She looks at children so pathetically that she must owe the entire responsibility of children. Her motherly affection is visibly expressed. At this particular point it is not out of place to mention that Jayamma excelled Nagaiah with her action. In the climax scene, grief stricken Kalyani rests her head on sewing machine and slumbers. At this point Murthy enters the house and finds flowers on his photo. He takes the petals and drops them at the feet of Kalyani as if worshipping a Goddess. This event elevated her image to the highest pinnacle of glory. As a continuation of this scene there is one shot in which Kalyani comes to know that the man whom she thought a thief was no other than her

⁶⁴K. Jaggaiah, "Repatri Taram Yuvathi," in Telugu **Tera** , A film Monthly, Madras, December 1975.

husband. **She** utters the word 'Swamy' and falls on the feet of Murthy. **Here Jayamma's** talent as an actress is superb.⁶⁵ Perhaps this shot is created to satisfy the ego of males because the male centred society opposes at least psychologically to the previous act of worship of heroine by hero. Is it not perpetuation of patriarchy? Heroine tries to save the honour of hero till the end.

Indian housewife always strives to save the prestige of her husband. She always conceals his bad character. Perhaps this may be the reason why bad husbands become more array. Kalyani in **her** attempt to conceal the movements of her husband was embarrassed at the fact revealed by papa her daughter. She slaps the child and later on repents. B.N. brought out this shot very naturally.

Papa becomes ill and sick because of her father's absence/ Kalyani tried and tried to contact Murthy by phone. The agony of Kalyani when hero rejects her appeal wets the eyes of spectators. Kalyani's father enquires whether she was forsaken by her husband. Kalyani refuses to disclose the sorry state of affairs even to her father. On **the** other hand she pretends that 'all the rumours that were spread were done with an eyesore. But she realises that situation was exactly the same as said by her father. The abandoned Kalyani goes to an unknown place with her children instead of going to her father in order to save her self respect.

⁶⁵T.V. Adinarayana Rao, "Review article on **Swargaseema**," in **Zamin Ryot**, 1 February 1946, p. 7.

Murthy's life can be divided into two parts. In the first, he is a respectable man who has full control over the events. He leads a happy life with his wife and children. In the second part he gradually falls a prey to Sujatha and abandons his loving wife and children. Nagaiah who played the hero role is efficient enough in expressing feelings as the situation demands. 1st place - elegance; 2nd place - carefree and thus arrogant; 3rd place - total guilty consciousness. Nagaiah, as in **Vandemataram**, appeared a little too old for the hero, but his emotion drenched performance made amends.⁶⁶ In the course of Murthy's fall towards Sujatha, the state of his mind is shown by visuals like Rama's idol, his wife's appeal not to become a prey to woman, etc. The director cleverly utilised the visuals like cobweb setting to depict hero's complete surrender to Sujatha.

Kalyani and children go to Bangalore where Murthy lives with Sujatha. Children on seeing their father run to him saying 'father'. Murthy does not acknowledge to their call. Nagaiah's facial expressions are dry and stale. He has to depict the mental struggle, his love towards kids and wife and his lust towards Sujatha. He miserably fails to show this conflict.⁶⁷

⁶⁶Randor Guy, **B.N. Reddy**, p.32.

⁶⁷T.V. Adinarayana, **Op.Cit.**, p.7.

Murthy, from hospital, tries to contact **Sujatha** by repeatedly dialling the phone. At last she picks up the receiver from cradle and says "Why, what happened, what the hell is with you? You need not come to see the play I am meeting the medical expenses" and abruptly puts the receiver. This is a parallel event to what Murthy has behaved once towards his wife.

Sujatha under the spell of Naren neglects Murthy. Murthy without invitation attends the play and sees the vulgar performance of Sujatha and Naren. Disheartened Murthy was further depressed to hear Sujatha talking bad about him? Sujatha suggests to Naren, "In the name of art, Murthy abandoned wife and children and ran after me. Can we use this a plot for the next play?"

Murthy witnesses Sujatha's illicit relation with Naren. Wisdom dawns on him and searches for his wife and children. He chooses the occupation of selling country made fidels (Ektaras) and this at last unites him with his family. In the last scenes Nagaiah acted well, especially when he sees papa crying with tears. The guilty Murthy further becomes shy to reveal his identity. At night under the cover of darkness he meets his wife.

The bad woman in the film is termed by script writers as vamp. The term is, of course, borrowed from Hollywood of the 1920s. It is a shortened form of vampire and probably suggests that the

attitude towards the vamp is not only one of contempt, but also one in which is reflected the Indian males, and perhaps the Indian peasant cultures traditional fear of primitive femininity - natural as well as treacherous, active as well as aggressive, powerful as well as smothering. These feared aspects of womanhood are projected through typical characters on the screen who are all bad and, therefore, arouse hostility rather than ambivalence.⁶⁸ **Bhanumathi** was superb in her role as Sujatha. She oozed sex - appeal, with her penetrating glance and coy looks. Her diction and her handling of the Telugu accent, changing with her name, were remarkable. B.N.Reddy made changes in her make up as she changed her name and accent which was an innovation in movies then.⁶⁹ Subbi's rise to Sujatha is meteoric. She is extreme careerist and with her seductive looks and skill of articulation attracts Murthy. Her earlier state was that she has to wear the old saree contributed by Kalyani. After she became Sujatha she enters into the happy home or paradise of Murthy like Menaka. **Bhanaumati** in the role of Sujatha did act extremely well. Herself a good playback singer she added flavour to the song: *Oooooo...oooohohoho pavurama*. The success of the film is due to this song. Mainly it created history. With this song **Bhanumati** scaled unprecedented heights of

⁶⁸Ashis Nandy, "The popular Hindi Film: Ideology and First Principles," in **India International Centre Quarterly**, [Indian Popular Cinema Myth, Meaning and Metaphor], Vol.8, No.1, 1981, p.94.

⁶⁹Randor Guy, **B.N. Reddy**, p.32.

popularity. She came to be known as **pavurama** Bhanumathi.⁷⁰ **Sujatha** wears sleeveless blouse. **By** throwing the pigeon over to the table of Murthy she gave such a look that even Pravarakhya will be seduced into her trap.⁷¹ Her bodily movements made Murthy **mad** and since then he could not stop fall in love with her. Gradually Sujatha and Murthy moved together. With 'Hai Skhi' song Murthy completely lost in lust and thenceforth his **Swargaseema** became a Naraka. He stops going home and abandons his family. **In** the name of Kala Seva he started doing Sujatha Seva.

After some days Sujatha got fed up with Murthy and was looking for another man. She finds **Naren**. When Murthy met with an accident, Sujatha utilised this opportunity and gradually develops **intimacy** with Naren. They both started acting in new plays. Murthy was insulted and heckled by her. Thus Sujatha the **nymphomaniac** mistress ditched Murthy and started living with Naren.

Swargaseema provides both opportunity in allowing its audience to identify with wish fulfilling roles or fantasies - and balm, in expressing and resolving deeply felt emotional conflicts. Thus the

⁷⁰**Ibid.**, p.33.

⁷¹**Bhanumathi** played the role Sujatha on the model of Rita Haverth in Blood and Sound. So says N.R. Chandur, "**Dr.Bhanumathi** Ramakrishna," in **India Today**, Annual Number, 1995, **p.189**.

success of this film could thus be explained by the extent to which it met unconscious emotional needs of the people.

Swargaseema was a great triumph for B.N.Reddy and P. Bhanumathi who played Sujatha considered a modest talent with only a few movies to her credit who had serious thoughts of settling down as a newly - wed housewife living in the shadow of her film technician husband. Bhanumathi rose to stardom with this movie - and one of the most spectacular careers in South Indian cinema began - actress, director, music composer, singer, producer and studio-owner.

B.N.Reddy brought in a new man into the Vauhini camp to write the story. This man, rustic and down to earth, had some reputation as a publisher and translator of Sarat Chandra's novels into Telugu. He had written dialogues for **Dharma Patni** some years ago. Little did he imagine that he would soon create film history along with B.N. 's younger brother, Nagi Reddy, whom he met frequently during his stint as screen writer. His name was A.V. Subba Rao, better known under his pen name, Chakrapani.

B.N. Reddy's engaged an Anglo Indian with a burning passion for photography, Marcus Bartley, to shoot **Swargaseema**. He rose fast and became one of the best cinematographers in India. The film is fast, crisp and cinematic. Orson Welles's classic **Citizen**

Kane had an influence on Bartley and this could be seen in the use of sets with ceilings, something unheard of those **days**.⁷² And the swan set picturised for the song around the episode of Rishya Sringa by **Mayadevi** is spectacular. **Jayamma**, a Kannada stage and screen star, doing her first film, fitted the role of the wronged, suffering wife with her bovine looks and fat body.

B.N. Reddy gave a break to another new comer soon to emerge as a major talent in South Indian cinema as a fine singer and music composer, Ghantasala. He made his debut in **Swargaseema** with a duet he sang along with **Bhanumathi**⁷³.

Music contributed much to the success of the film and one song in particular created history. *Ooooo . . . oohohoho* **Pavurama** sung by Bhanumathi. Inspired by Rita **Hayworth's** humming in Blood and Sound, B.N. Reddy had at first intended it only as a humming tune but the catchy melody fascinated all and it grew into a three minute hit.

Critics felt that B.N. Reddy had made once again a daring movie in the fashion of **Devata** in having the hero become an

⁷²Randor Guy, **Op. Cit.**, p.32.

⁷³**Ibid.**

adulterer. Widow remarriage, **pre-marital** sex, un-wed motherhood, adultery, what would B.N. Reddy think of next, some critics asked.⁷⁴

Swargaseema enjoyed silver jubilee runs in many non-Telugu centres and it showed that a successful movie could be made in a South Indian language within 11,000 feet. Some like S.S. Vasan had thought it was ridiculous, and even suicidal to think of a movie within that length.⁷⁵

Swargaseema is a melodrama presentation interspersed with songs and music. The happy endings of most of the films allay the anxiety of viewers by implying that the problems and contradictions of their lives can be resolved without effort. Melodramatic stories are excessively dependent upon coincidence. The accident on the stage seriously hurts Murthy. This is a melodramatic turning point in **Swargaseema**. Had the accident not happened Murthy would not have been hospitalised. Had he not hospitalised Sujatha would not have had contact with Naren. Had their relation not known to Murthy he would not have forsaken Sujatha and searched for the whereabouts of Kalyani. Again through selling the fidels only Murthy could find his papa. The decision to sell fidels was an

⁷⁴**ibid.**, p. 33.

⁷⁵**ibid.**

accidental decision. Thus B.N. Reddy in **Swargaseema** melodramatically taken the cinema to a happy end.

Nalinikanta Rao's songs are easy to sing. Nagaiah was not only the hero of **Swargaseema** but also its Music Director, particularly the title song **Grihamekada Swargaseema** is marvellous. oo. . . ooho..hoo pavurama song is very catchy which made **Swargaseema** a box office hit. Personally it gave fillip to Bhanumathi too. The songs in the film are melodious.

CHAPTER VI

**PATRIARCHAL FAMILY AND FEMINISM
REFLECTIONS IN GRIHA PRAVESAM**

An essential beginning for us is by way of **overcoming** confusion of different interpretations of certain concepts basic to cultural history and feminist thought. "Words are socially created cultural constructs: they cannot come to life unless they represent concepts accepted by large numbers of people." Thus argues Gerda Lerner.¹ There are two terms which are important for our analysis of Telugu Movies.

Patriarchy and Feminism:

The term patriarchy, originally derived from Greek and Roman law, which made the male head of the household an absolute legal and economic power over the family members, be it male or female. However, the term patriarchy since then had acquired much wider historicity. Therefore for us "patriarchy in its wider definition means the manifestation and institutionalisation of male domination over women and children in the family and the extension of male domination over women in society in general".²

The term feminism on the other hand embodied in itself not only the history of woman's rights movements but also several philosophical aspects of feminist thought which sought to **emancipate** women in the society. Feminism can therefore include

¹Gerda Lerner, **The Creation of Patriarchy**, New York, 1986, p.232.

²**Ibid.**, p.236.

both positions, i.e., philosophical reflections of woman's emancipation and woman's rights movements. As Gerda Lerner rightly argued "the striving for women's emancipation predates the woman's rights movement. It is not always a movement, for it can be a level of consciousness, a stance, an attitude, as well as the basis for organised effort."³

It is within these parameters we propose to look at the perspectives on patriarchal family and feminism in the popular Telugu Movie produced in pre-independent India: **Griha Pravesam**.

GRIHA PRAVESAM:

Feudal ideology dominates our cinemas. God, King, feudal lord and male member (man) - all these four predominate Indian society. Acceptance of social hegemony of these four and legitimising their interests is the gist of feudal ideology. In society where feudal ideology is strong, women are confined to houses as private property. In feudal society religion is instrumental in legitimising patriarchy. Matrimonial fidelity (*pativrata*) lowers status of woman to subordination both physically and mentally and gets legitimised through dharma Sastras. The hegemony of male member is thus achieved. All social reform movements attempted to solve problems pertaining to women only peripherally. They did not

³Gerda Lerner, **Op.cit.**, p.239.

uproot patriarchy and liberated women folk. The ultimate goal of a woman is believed to be marriage and family. The education of girls is a desirable **qualification** of marriage. But this education is within the set framework of ruling class ideology **only.**'

Cinemas work for the diffusion of ideology along with other instruments of Radio, Television, etc. All these emphasise the *pativrata* dharma in hundred and one voices. While many films extol the qualities of *matrutva* and woman's dharma as *Illalu*, **Griha Pravesam** is a film with different purpose. It is a feminist cinema. Its writer Tripuraneni Gopichand attacked many orthodox beliefs. Spirituality is considered to be a national phenomenon even till date, has attracted his scathing attack. Gopichand through Janaki character passed on sarcastic remarks like *Patachintakaya Pachadi ki Jai* (hats off to all that is old) and inaugurated modernism. He was under the influence of left ideology.

"Enough your ideals and your spiritual preachings! Your Brahmacharya (celibacy) a waste!". "Is it not because of you country has become imbecile?" - Janaki thus challenged **Somalingam**, the hero. It is unique in the history of Indian films. It is unbelievable! In a country where *pativrata* is considered to be topmost quality of a woman, Janaki questioned man's topmost

'Katyayani," Mahilalu - Samrajyavadamu - Paryavaranam," in Praja **Sahiti**, [Telugu monthly], August 1994, p.32.

quality, i.e., spirituality. It is some thing remarkable. **Griha Pravesam** propagates Gandhian ideology of celibacy.

Cinema medium is the one which largely propagates ruling class ideology in the entire media field. Cinema penetrates deep into the lives of people. As the other instruments of media, cinema too injects status quo and if possible even backwardness into our ideology. Ideological neutrality is absolutely not possible in cinemas. Even in the name of entertainment a particular ideology is propagated. We all know that cinema is the most powerful medium of communication in our society. Most of our film makers prefer to portray a highly unrealistic image of women emphasizing the glorification of traditional values on one hand, while exploiting her physical beauty emotionally and timidly on the other.⁵ But in **Griha Pravesam** we can find feminist ideology. The cultural system is like the Lakshmana Rekha which is a formidable and impenetrable barrier. **Griha Pravesam** tried to destroy this barrier. Although the subordination of woman is a common feature of almost all stages of history and is prevalent in large parts of the world, the extent and form of that subordination has been conditioned by the social and cultural environment in which women have been placed. The honour and respectability of men is protected and preserved through

⁵Ira Lohani, "Portrayal of Women through different media,* in **Social Change**, A Quarterly Journal of the Council of Social Development, Vol.22, No.2, June 1992, New Delhi, p.58.

their women.⁶ In **Griha Pravesam** Janaki is very assertive. She proves how shallow are Somalingam's ideas. 'In order to eradicate poverty and to establish classless society man and woman should work together', so says Janaki. Thus she protects the honour of Somalingam by bringing him back to normal track from his apathy towards women. Feminism which tries to liberate women does not in any way support the domination of women. It desires gender equality. Though women get equal rights legally, unless socio-economic and psychological changes are brought forth inequality continues forever.⁷

In **Griha Pravesam** heroine slaps on the cheek of hero. This event is unheard of in the history of Telugu cinema till then. Even today such an event is considered to be negative. Immediately after the event Janaki repents for what she had done, of course. Somalingam in his undecided mood refuses to go with Janaki and says his ideals are more important for him. Janaki in frustrated mood curses the hero. No one who has left fire in the mind of woman did ever flourish! After seeing her father Janaki says woman cannot live in society and all her desires were in vain. The character thus shows defeatism to some extent but eventually she succeeded in

Chakravarthy, "Conceptualising Brahminical Patriarchy in Early India: Gender, Caste, Class and State," in **Economic and Political Weekly**, Vol. XXVIII, No.14, 3 April 1993, pp. 579-585.

⁷Jayaprabha, "Stri Vimukti - Feminist Drukpadham," in Kalipatnam Rama Rao [ed.], **Manolamanam**, Visakhapatnam, 1990, p.260.

marrying Somalingam, and devoted her life for the service of the society in order to exterminate poverty and establish equality and fraternity.

In the opening scene, Janaki is seen with a badminton racket believed to be a symbol of modernity. In contrast, Somalingam's baggie dress and his appearance presents a picture that he is anti-woman. In a meeting he praises brahmacharya, i.e., celibacy. He Urges to do away with lust for woman. He continues his speech saying spirituality gives self power. Peculiarly Somalingam links up brahmacharya with India's independence. He requests all the youth not to marry till India attains freedom. His attire is that of a congress leader - a khadi cap, pyzama, kurta and short overcoat with a khadi sling bag hanging over his shoulder. Hero Somalingam adopts Gandhian style not only in physical appearance but his mental make up also suits the Gandhian philosophy. Observance of celibacy is in the light of Gandhian framework. The hero Somalingam goes to an extent of cursing women that **they are** responsible for all the evils in world.

In another frame, Somalingam reiterates the value of celibacy to his follower Acharyulu. He wants to fill the world with divine shine. His room is a replica of Gandhian abode. Along with the picture of Gandhi many a portrait of national leaders were hanged to the walls. Somalingam presents a book called, *The Gist of Self*

Restraint [author not known] to his follower Acharyulu. He asks his follower not to get discouraged. One should have courage and social welfare has to be his aim. **Griha Pravesam** is a heroine oriented film. Heroine Janaki tries her best to transform **Somalingam** through her sound arguments. Many times **Somalingam** fails to defend his line of thought. He gets angry. In the house of **Somalingam** Janaki with her powerful song tries to convince **Somalingam**. She awakens him to look society and react to poverty. 'In establishing a joyful world where there will be no inequalities, man and woman should work **together**', she says. **Somalingam** is fickle minded. He fails to make up his mind till the end. His vacillation throws Janaki into troubles. However, at one point when heroine slaps hero, hero admits that this slap was not on his cheek but on his ignorance. **Somalingam**, although a protagonist of celibacy, shows sympathy for lunatic young widow. He realizes that marriage is the only cure for her illness. When the widow commits suicide, this event left a deep mark on the psyche of **somalingam**. Thenceforth he changes his philosophy. The transformation is visible when he says spirituality does **not** suit to the present times. In order to achieve equality and fraternity equal participation of man and woman is essential. The hero is completely a changed man when he tries to stop the marriage of **Ramana** Rao. **Somalingam**, thinking the bride as Janaki, shouts that it is a forcible marriage which is against the will of Janaki. With this attempt finally he came out openly in expressing his love

for Janaki. The father of Janaki performs the marriage of Janaki and Somalingam. Story comes to a happy end. In **Griha Pravesam**, the hero role has become pale before the dominating character of heroine.

The director of **Griha Pravesam**, Mr. L.V. Prasad also acted as hero of the film. Gopichand's creation of the character of Janaki was well presented by the director on the celluloid. Janaki's role is created as a cultural symbol of future society. The director's skill is praiseworthy in showing the contrasts in **Janaki's** character. Janaki outside her home is a protagonist of change and symbol of modernity while at home she is a tradition bound and under the dominance of her step mother. Janaki as a feminist outside and a weak woman (*abala*) at home is a dichotomy. The director **marvelously** picturised this dichotomy. **Griha Pravesam** mirrored a conflict between orthodoxy and changing values of society. **Griha Pravesam** is undoubtedly a progressive picture. Both the writer Gopichand and director L.V. Prasad made known their progressive outlook giving importance to human effort. Through the character of heroine, they revealed that human miseries have to be faced in an objective manner not relying upon the unknown supernatural force, i.e., God. In one scene heroine was praying before Lenins' statue where on the wall was her mother's portrait also. In the hour of crisis Janaki remembers her mother and not God. **She** listens to the words 'do your duty never wait for result.'

Janaki sees a promise of better future in her mother's portrait. It is definitely a positive thinking. By picturising such a scene the director Prasad and writer Gopichand displayed their positive outlook towards social problems. It represents a progressive trend of the contemporary times. In a way it is nothing but denouncing Gandhian ideology, while dominant ideology is to search for solution in a Gandhian way. The director emphasized that social problems have to be studied in an objective manner. He gave top priority to human endeavour. Evidence of a specific form of visual address tells us about the particular effects of the cinema on society, and also about the means by which it persuades an audience of the legitimacy of a certain ideological position. **Oriha** Pravesam cinema has become the focus for the assertion and the contestation of different orders of identity. The director fully exploited the acting talent of C.S.R. Anjaneyulu who played in this film the role of Ramana Rao. In the visuals of the marriage proposals of Janaki and Ramana Rao both of them acted humorously with tickling performance. But for the ability of director **Oriha** Pravesam would have been a serious feminist monotony. He established a mark of his own in this **film**. ie., inclusion of mild comedy in serious films. But this inclusion of comedy no way hampers the continuity of the film. L.V.Prasad, the director, perhaps neglected his own role as hero, particularly in the

presence of **Bhanumathi** as heroine **Janaki**, whose skills are noteworthy both as singer and great **actress**.⁶

Generally **Griha Pravesam** indicates the meaning of entering into a new house, an event to be celebrated. Here, in the film, **Griha Pravesam** has wider context although with the same spirit. Heroine Janaki reminds hero about the existing miseries. He awakens him through her song to look into human miseries like poverty, religious and caste fundamentalism, political slavery, economic inequalities, etc. She gives emphasis to solidarity between man and woman. She denounces celibacy vehemently. She calls the hero arise, awake and with pure heart join hands with her in order to establish a new order where there is equality and fraternity. This new order is compared to a new house. Both man and woman hand in hand enter this new house and this event is called '*Bhavyasaya Maha Griha Pravesam*'.

Griha Pravesam is a progressive cinema. It inaugurated a banner of revolt against many orthodox beliefs. It is the reflection of a dominant left ideology of the times and indication of modernity. The criticism on celibacy is an indirect attack on Gandhian belief system.

⁶K.N.T. Sastry, "Feminist Heroine in **Griha Pravesam**," in **Andhra Jyoyhi**, Daily, 26 February 1989.

"Tina Tindi Leni Talli
 Tana Pilla Namma Juche
 Kanaleni Desa mata Garbhana
 Chichu leche, Matamanuchu
 Kulamulanuchu Bhedhamulu Perigi Poye
 Sadvala Syamal Bhoomi
 Rakta Sansigdha Maye"

["Mother without food
 Try to sell her child
 Mother Bharati could not deliver,
 she is pained of increased conflicts of caste, creed;
 India of lush green fields become red with bloodshed.]

The above song sounds contemporaneous even today. Ideas in the song are implanted from contemporary Communist literature. Those were the days when Bengal was under the grip of famine. The plight of Bengalis found place in communist songs. K.A. Abbas's *Dharti Km Lal* (1945) was the first articulation of a film critic, writer and film maker who was totally committed to a leftist vision. The film depicted the heart rendering condition of the hungry masses in the horrific aftermath of the man made Bengal **famine**. The hunger marches in the film were compared with the Odessy steps sequence in *Potemkin*. The impact of Abbas the writer and film maker of the forties and early fifties was considerable.⁹

⁹Maithili Rao, "Films of Social Relevance," in *Genres of Indian Cinema*, Platinum Jubilee of Indian Cinema, 1988-89, p.45.

The lyrics in **Griha Pravesam** were penned by Balantrapu Rajnikanta Rao whose pen name was Nalinikanta Rao. He was instrumental in translating the international working class song into Telugu. "**Akali Mantache Mala Mala Lade Anadhalandaru Levandoi,**" i.e., 'the hungry starving people of world **Awake!**' It is no accident that **Rajanikanta Rao's** father, Venkata Rao, was an active leader of congress socialist party in Andhra¹⁰.

There is no hiding the fact that those were the days when 'cinemas not far from politics and cine personalities had direct contacts with politics of the day. The writer of the film **Gopichand** was close to M.N. Roy, International communist and radical humanist. M.N. Roy used to be a guest to Gudavalli Ramabrahmam one of the founder members of Sarathi Films under whose creation **Griha Pravesam** came out. So **Griha Pravesam** championed the ideology of the times current within the mainstream of nationalist ideology.¹¹

Patriarchy in our society operates in a powerful way. It's hegemony is all pervasive. That woman has to surrender to any situation is the design of patriarchy. Woman who face any eventuality with smile is praised as **Sadhvi**. **Sadhvi** needs to face

¹⁰Interview with S.Hari Purushothama Rao, a film critic, Hyderabad, 2 September 1994.

¹¹**Ibid.**

any adverse situation whether she likes any event or not and she should also accept the event as the work of divinity.

When the marriage was settled to Janaki with **Ramana** Rao, Janaki expresses her dislike at her father. He says '**whether** you like it or not, it's the work of divinity. NO one can rule it out'. Janaki then reminds her mother to **father** and asks had she been alive, would not she say no for the alliance? The ready answer was that she would have faced any eventuality with smile. When Janaki was thrown out of **Somalingam's** house, both men and women in the crowd take her to task. In the streets women tease her and some even hurt her unto unconscious. They never heed to what Janaki says. Its how women were hegemonised by men. Janaki remarks that India cannot be emancipated till women are changed for better. Making woman an enemy of woman is part of this hegemonised patriarchy.

In a stage play where Janaki acted, she sings a song which goes like this:

Banisalam, Banisalam, Bharatha Narimanulam

(Slaves, slaves, womankind of India),

Pitako, Patiko, Sutulako Banisalam

(We are slaves to Father, Husband and to sons)

Meluko, Banisa Batukula Bandham Pata Pata Tenchuko

(Awake, break the shackles of slavery)

Purushulu panchina chikati teralu tenchuko

(Drive away the darkness spread by Males)

Griha Pravesam thus questions patriarchy in the Indian Society. The director makes use of visuals in order to convey the legitimizing relationship between *thali* and male control over female sexuality. *Mangalashtra* is a central cultural symbol in Indian society. In this film **Griha Pravesam**, Lalitha is a girl lured by Ramana Rao. Notwithstanding the desire to marry him he reaches the house where Ramana Rao lives. Ramana Rao promises to marry Lalitha. Lalitha insists him to marry her because the neighbouring people questioned her relation with Ramana Rao. Claiming that she is being loved by a man is not sufficient. Indian Society does not accept man and woman living together without wedlock. The tying of thali represents the binding of a woman's sexuality which can now be controlled by her husband for the good of the family and community. This is the central theme for most of the films. It is another way of the operation of patriarchy. *Philosophy of Karma* is a popular belief among many Indians. *Bhagavadgita* symbolises this theory. It is used in this film. The *karma yoga* book is used by the father of Janaki, the heroine. India's **Map** is used to denote that the social customs are same throughout India. Gandhiji's miniature statue is found in the house of Somalingam. This is associated with concept of celibacy.

similarly, Hanuman statue and Photos of Bhishmacharya and Vivekananda represent the *Brhmacharya vrata* of Somalingam.

When Janaki enters Somalingam's house, in the veil of darkness, she throws Hanuman statue unconsciously and the statue breaks. This is used as metaphor that Somalingam is going to loose celibacy by marrying Janaki.

CHAPTER VII

**COLONIALISM, HISTORY AND NATIONALIST
POLITICS: A study of films Grihalakshmi,
Mahatma Gandhi, Palnati Yuddham and Yogi
Vemana**

COLONIAL MODERNITY: INDIVIDUAL AND GANDHIAN WORLD VIEW

Grihalakshmi is a Telugu social film produced and directed by a Telugu veteran H.M. Reddy. It is a propaganda cinema. Gandhiji's temperance movement is the underlying theme of this film. This picture is a mixture of many objectives viz., (I) anti liquor, (ii) anti-prostitution, (iii) chastity of housewife (*pativratya dharma*), (iv) upliftment of Harijans, (v) divine power is superior to human power and (vi) truth alone triumphs (*satyameva jayathe*).

There is similarity with Chintamani drama to some extent.¹ It is also said that **Grihalakshmi** is based on Rangoon Rowdy, a drama in Telugu with a theme - prohibition of liquor. Social reform and patriotism are the messages hidden in **Grihalakshmi**. Harijan Ashram is portrayed on the lines of Gandhian Ashramas. Grihalakshmi is instrumental in propagation of Gandhian ideology.

Those were the days when Gandhiji's *Harijanodharana* was talk of the country. Anti-liquor program was on the agenda of most of the state governments. Exactly with this background, **Grihalakshmi**

¹Sathiraju Venugopala Rao, "A Criticism of **Grihalakshmi**," in Andhra Patrika, 29 July 1938. Kallakuri Narayana Rao, **Chintamani** [drama in Telugu], first pub. in 1949, reprint Tenali, 1989. **Chintamani** is a popular play. The central concern is, institutionalised social evil, Prostitution, in contemporary society. Chintamani is a typical *Vesya* (call girl) because of whom many wealthy persons who go to her become paupers. The negative influence of prostitution on individual and family are shown in this work.

was produced. *Harijanodharana*, service to scheduled caste people and prohibition of liquor are the two issues taken up in **Grihalakshmi**. All the visuals used in this film show the consciousness of contemporary nationalist movement. National flags, volunteers, *charakas* (*spinning wheels*) and ashramites praising Gandhiji - all are indicators of nationalist consciousness. Radha, the woman ashramite, prays before Gandhiji's photo. Photos of many national leaders like Andhraratna Duggirala Gopala Krishnayya, Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Kamala Nehru, etc., adorn the walls of ashram. In the end, Dr. Krishna Rao, the hero, after his acquittal from the prison, dedicates his life along with his wife and children in the service of country, with an offering of lighted camphor to Gandhiji's photo picture².

The flaw of this film is that there is no connection between the main story and Harijan Seva Samithi. In the beginning only some connection is shown. The benefit show of dance is made use of to introduce Madhuri to Dr. Krishna Rao. In fact the link ends up there. But H.M. Reddy brings a connection at the end. Dr. Krishna Rao finally dedicates his life to the service of Harijan Samithi. Main theme does not revolve round the Harijan issue.

²"**Grihalakshmi**," a review in **Krishna Patrika**, 28 May 1938, p.9. **Krishna Patrika** was a leading nationalist newspaper of Andhra in Telugu.

The hero deliberately ruins his career by indulging in sensual pleasures. If we come across such a person in our daily life we don't show any sympathy at all. We consider him a careless and unwise person. In Gudipati Venkata Chalam's '*Adrushtam*' there is a story of one Viswapathi who buys a girl in a circus for one night for rupees three hundred. Chalam's Viswapathi character outlives Dr. Krishna Rao's character in this film. Being educated, he does not find the lecherous behaviour of Madhuri till the end. Only when he was charged with murderous crime he realises what Madhuri is. It is out of place to believe that he has no conjugal happiness because in the beginning it was shown that he leads a happy family life. He was solely responsible for his own decline. Radha's character is also very weak. Any wise housewife questions the drunkard husband. But Radha allows him to continue his habit for long time and instead defends him as an innocent person when her brother brings the matter to her notice.

Similarly what is that she sacrificed for her husband? Tolerating a drunkard and debaucherous husband is her mistake. After her husband reveals his innocence in the murder when he was going to be hanged, any common wife will react the same way as Radha did. The intensity of the agony made her insane. She questions the existence of God. She at one point asks Lord Krishna that what else was in store for her as already much havoc has been wrought upon her. "All the epithets of God of more than one crore

are only hollow? Is there any defect in my way of praying you? What is my crime? O! Lord Krishna," she expresses her anguish thus. The dominance of feudal ideology is hidden here.

The ruling class always takes the responsibility of extending and encouraging the ideology such as *pativrata dharma*. Madhuri, a Vamp, naturally attracts contempt from society. Any prostitute girl would behave the same way in squeezing the wealth of the man who goes to her. But why she should have so much vengeance to the doctor, is not known. Why should she join hands with a Marwadi in killing Viswasa Rao and conspiring to prove the doctor guilty? Only after she meets with an accident and on the verge of losing life, she reveals the truth in sessions court. Hero was acquitted and thenceforth lives happily with his wife.

Throughout the film it is shown that woman is her worst enemy. Hero is womanizer, slave to his bad habits, irresponsible, neglected his wife and family, why to mention all this, he is solely responsible for his own doom. This picture gives an impression that Madhuri is responsible for the miseries of Radha, the **Grihalakshmi**. Even at the climax it is not shown that hero is repentant for all his flaws. The maker of the film gives the idea that Radha's prayers, either at the idol of Lord Krishna or, at the photo of Gandhiji, brought forth mental transformation in Madhuri

and whose evidence saves the life of hero. All this is part of ruling class ideology.

Indian woman through *Pativratya* can achieve any thing. The tradition bound housewife serves her in-laws **dumbfound** and always strive for the betterment of her husband. She prays gods and goddesses. **Punyam koddi purushudu, danam koddi biddalu** (Indian woman begets good husband according to her luck gained out of her prayers and begets children according to her charity towards poor people). *Pativratya* saves her husband from evil spirits.

Radha's madness is not a solution for the crisis of Dr. Krishna Rao's family. But, actually, **Madhuri**'s change of mind is climax. Only car accident brought this change. The dialogues through the mouth of the mother of Madhuri are obscene.³ Thus the images shown in this film are the sacrificing and persevering wife and the self centred erotic woman.

Through the propagation of *Pativratya* dharma patriarchy is perpetuated. This film is a living example of this ideology. Woman is believed to be a commodity and male has right over female is a concept of feudalism. This has origin in private property. Monogamy is a feature of this society. Prostitution is also part

³Kodavatiganti Kutumba Rao, **"Grihalakshmi** a good film despite many flaws, * in **Andhra Patrika**, 23 March 1938, p.11.

of it. Monogamy and prostitution continue as long as system is dependent on private property.* Cinema is a tool which help bringing about national integration. From 1938 to 1947 many songs in Telugu films contributed to the spread of nationalism and patriotism with Congress flavour. In **Grihalakshmi** cinema, contemporary nationalist ideology is well potrayed. Patriotism, Khadi movement, *Harijanodharana*, Hindu Muslim unity, **Anti-liquor** movement, *Pativratty dharma*, are all touched upon in the songs. Gandhiji is elevated to the status of God through songs. A few songs portraying these issues are given below followed by a brief analysis.

Songs :

A Secular Song

(1) Vande Vande Bharatamata

(Mother India, Hail, Hail)

Varna Vibhedam Kalpitamaina

(Created are caste differences)

Andaru manavulokate Aina

(Though all men are one)

Makikarmamu Tappadidela

*Pinakapani, "Nija Jeevitamlo Kanyasulkam, " in **Manalo Manam** , Visakhapatnam, 1990, p.76.

(Can't our fate rid off)

Muslim Hindu Harijanamata

(Harijan, Hindu, Muslim Mother)

Samastha Jagati Gita Mata

(Mother, all world one)

Sahodara

(Brother)

Sahodara

(Brother)

Sahodara Dikshanu Gaikonara

(Brother do dedicate)

Malala Meluku Pranamulira

(Prepare to sacrifice for the welfare of Schedule Castes)

Dasya **Vimochana** Margamidera

(It's the way of liberation)

Harijana Seva Hari Sevara

(Service to Harijan is service to Hari **the** God)

Avasyakaraniyam Bidiera

(This is the path to be followed).

A verse axing by Gopinath encouraging the Harijans

(2) Uttama Kulala Durnayammulaku Longi

(No need to bow your heads for upper castes oppression)

Miru talayettarani dusthiti gatinche

(Gone are the bad days)

Viswabharathi madhura swagata mosanga

(Viswabharathi heartily welcomes)

Yuga **mahapurushundu** Mahatma Gandhi

(Mahatma Gandhi epoch maker)

Midu samskaramunakai Nadumu Gatte

(Determined for your culture)

Lendu! Mi Bhagya rekhala didukonaga

(Arise! Evaluate your fate)

Anti-liquor

(3) **Lendu Bharata** veerulara

(Awake heroes of India)

Niduralevandoi! Meeru Nidura

(You Awake from slumber!)

Il lu Vallu Kooladose

(Houses and bodies destroyed)

Ka llumanandoi Babu

(Stop consuming toddy sons)

Kallu Teravandoi

(Open your eyes) ||

|| **Lendu** ||

Kuduva kudu Toduga Valuva

(Food to eat, cloth to wear)

Leni **Pillala** Godu chuchi

(Plight of child without)

Niluvu Nirou Satini Ganchi

(Seeing depressed wife)

Tagakandi **miru** tage

(Don't consume toddy,)

Kalladi vari **raktame** sumandi

(No toddy, but their blood only)

|| Lendu ||

Bidala Pilchitine **mahammari**

(Epidemic that eats the children)

Prabhurlu Kolchukone **Pinjari**

(**Pinjari** worshipped by rulers)

Desa Daridrataka **Rahadari**

(A highway for country's poverty)

pama pisachamu paradoli

(Drive away the drunkard demon)

Bharata **Kirtini** Nilpaga Randu

(Come, establish the glory of India).

||Lendu||

Virtues of Housewife

(4) **Badha Sahaname** Satitwamu Badha Sahaname

(Tolerance of pain is virtue of housewife, Tolerance)

Badhalo korchi Sadhana jesi

(Through tolerance and practice)

Samsarambudhi nidina vare

(Swim the ocean of family life)

Atarakamoui Kirthiganchiri

(reach the pinnacle of glory life)

Sailakumari sumathi Brinda

(Sailakumari and Sumathi)

Nadhuni seva mahimame kada

(with the blessings of Lord Krishna)

Saukhyamuchendi Riwla

(lived happily here)

Entati badhaku guri kani

(To whatever pain they are subjected to)

pramamaimaovalasima poni

(Let it be at the cost of life)

Sati ki nathuni Seva Dharmamu

(Housewife has to serve her husband)

Bharata Satiki Nathuni seva dharmamu

(Service to her husband is the dharma of Indian housewife).

Praise of Gandhiji

(5) Dina loka sarama jagadabharana

(Solace of the poor, ornament of the world)

Anuragamuna kanaga tagana

(am I not eligible for affection)

Swajanavanamunakai poritine

(fought for own people)

Satyamu sthiramani chatitine

(proclaimed truth is permanent)

satyagrahabalamu chupitive

(you have shown the strength of Satyagraha)

janulaku premanu **bodhinchitive**

(you have taught love to people)

Kadalenı vyadha nurumadagala

(to fight out the unending sorrow)

gati niva vina maridorakadura

(without you no way)

EDi Egatiaina **mananura**

(no stopping at any cost)

Raju jivanamaragamu Jupumura

(Show me the right path).

*Song in **praise** of **Gandhiji***

(6) Jaya Jaya Mahatma **Gandhi** ji He

(Victory to Mahatma **Gandhiji**)

Bharata Bhagya Vidhai

(Giver of Glory to India)

Patita **pala prema sila**

(ruler of vicious and virtuous quality of prema)

Harijanabhayadata

(Fearless to Harijans)

Ni padankamulanti **Naduva**

(follow your footsteps)

Jayamu konguna muta kada

(victory is not near)

natajana badha pahari

(remover of pains of the poor)

Nijamu ni pada seva

(Your service is true!)

Song 1 gives the message that all human beings are one. "Let us be prepared to die for the welfare of Malas, i.e., Harijans. " Ramakrishna Paramahansa said that service to humankind was service to God. Similarly in this, it is made known that Harijan seva is Hari seva, i.e., service to Harijan is service to God.

In Song 2, there is a message to Harijans. A clarion call is given to the Harijans to arise. In order to improve their condition an epoch maker Gandhiji has come.

Song 3 is the highlight of **Grihalakshmi**. The relevance of this song is much more in present days in the light of anti arrack campaign launched in Andhra by women of Andhra. A tremendous movement originated in Dubagunta village went on thanks to women activists of the movement, ban on liquor is achieved.⁵

⁵**Contrary** to the public mood, recently the ban on liquor was lifted in Andhra Pradesh.

The message in song 3 is so powerful that independent **India** introduced prohibition in many states. It is urged, to open the eyes and recognise the harsh reality of liquor consumption. It is made clear that the habit of consuming liquor/toddy spoils **health**, drains wealth, robs off the peace of housewife who cannot take care of her children who were malnourished and maldressed. The song warns the addicts that what they consume is not toddy but the blood of their family members. The evil habit is compared with an epidemic.

The rulers perpetuate it for financial benefit, but it is a sure road that leads the country to astute poverty. So Indians, drive out the devil and implant Indian glory. This song was a rage which made the film a box office hit.

In song 4 however the dominant patriarchal ideology is propagated. Female's birth, living, giving birth to children and her dying are all seen in relation to their benefit to a male **in** family and society.

In short, woman is created, shaped and explained by the **male** world and is to be understood in terms of this world. Popular sentiment is, "woman's honour is like a clay pot, once broken it cannot be **mended**." So, only a man protects her honour. *Pativratiya* is her honour. *Thali* is her honour and her husband is **her**

everything. The happiness of her husband is her happiness. She should say no to her husband. Only God can save the situation and mend her husband. As a housewife she has to suffer silently and be tolerant. The great *Satis* like **Anasuya, Sumati** are role models of Indian women. Even at the cost of losing her own life, service to husband ought to be her ideal. By quoting the tales of *Satis* male order legitimizes its sway over females. This is cultural hegemony.

In song 5, the spirit of Gandhian ideology truth and **non-violence** are mentioned. Radha prays before the photo of Gandhiji. She prays for the needed courage to continue the path of truth and nonviolence. At any cost she decides to continue the right path. She thinks excepting Gandhi none can guide her. Through this song the film maker endorses the Gandhian ideology.

Song 6, shows how the hero and heroine are united at last. The reformed and transformed hero, the Gandhian worker **Gopinath**, the heroine who has utmost faith on Gandhiji and many other inmates of the **Ashrama** praise Gandhiji. They say Gandhi is giver of wealthy India, saviour of Harijans and works for the upliftment of downtrodden. They wished victory to Gandhiji.

Grihalakshmi: A Political Propaganda

Charlie Chaplin attacked the evils of capitalism not politically but through films showing humanitarian values. American imperialism could not tolerate even this subtle reference and chased him out of America.⁶ **The Kid** [1921], **The Gold Rush** [1927], **The Circus** [1927], **City Lights** [1931], **Modern Times** [1936], **The Great Dictator** [1940] and **Monsieur Verdoux** [1947] were the films of Charlie Chaplin, produced between 1920 and 1947. Chaplin through his films criticised the social system. He never gave any political plan. The naked picture of contemporary society was well depicted by him.⁷ Contemporary political situation finds a place in cinemas. In India, national movement was intensified by 1935. As a result the need for historical films has arisen. They acted as morale boosters by reminding ancient glory of India and enhancing the old value system. The great historical films like **Pukar** [1936], **Jhansi Ki Rani** [1936] and **Sikandar** [1941] were produced to instil feeling of 'pride of motherland'. In this process a mild communalism was encouraged, e.g., **Pukar**. Telugu film industry did not lag behind and in fact is even more conscious. Social reform, patriotism, conscious recognition of the plight of contemporary India, right reaction to the existing situation and giving message

⁶Rahi, "Cinemas - Political Propaganda," in **Praja Sahiti**, August 1987, p.34.

⁷David Robinson, **Chaplin: His Life and Art**, London, 1986. The full particulars of the above films are given in different pages of this book. Also see Kodavatiganti Kutumba Rao, "Charlie Chaplin - The Art of Cinema," in **Abhyudaya**, [Telugu Monthly], March 1948.

were all the themes of early Telugu movies. **Mala Pilla** is the pioneering social cinema of Telugus. The speciality of **Mala Pilla** is that social standards are better defined in this film. (A critical study of **Mala Pilla** is done in chapter four). **Grihalakshmi** was released immediately after **Mala Pilla**. Gandhiji's political activities find a place in **Grihalakshmi**. Though **Grihalakshmi** is a social movie about a man who doomed his career through vices it is better used as a propaganda film of Gandhian politics. *Kallumanandoi* song is replica of the picketings done at the toddy shops in the national movement. As a matter of fact, the specific feature of Telugu films from 1938 to 1945 is the inclusion of patriotic songs, verses, symbols, etc., all echos of Congress ideology. Jashuva, Tummala Sitarama Murty, Garimella Satyanarayana and a host of others penned the glorious past of Andhras and thereby created self respect among the people. Cinemas of the time **Mala Pilla**, **Ryotu Bidda** and **Grihalakshmi** also propagate this ideology.⁸

Historical Films

⁸Rahi, "Cinemas - Political Propaganda," in **Praja Sahiti**, October 1987, pp.86-87.

Next to the myth comes history and its related types: biographies of well known saints and other great people, historical legends, films with wars as a background and the sagas of patriots and freedom fighters. Being non fictional, they are supposed to be based on the truth, but the Indian cinema has mostly acted under the presumption that they need not be strictly **factual**.

In the early silent years the motivation was to show the heroic quality of kings like Shivaji, whose exploits against the Mughals had a strong nationalist impact too. Another episode, **Kalyan Khajina** (Treasures of Kalyan) where Shivaji honourably protects a woman belonging to the Mughal enemy camp produced by Saburao Painter, gained wide popularity.⁹ These two were a few to be mentioned. In the talkie period Sohrab Modi set the tradition for grand historical. **Pukar, Sikander and Prithvi Vallabh** were a massive success. Straight biographical pictures like **Light of Asia** (1925-26) on Buddha, **prabhats Sant Tukaram, Dr.Kotmis Ki Amar Ka ha ni** acted by V.Shantaram are legendary. **Sant Tukaram** becomes the first Indian film to win a Venice festival award. The saints on the screen are loved and worshipped and the actors playing them have the not so deserving honour of feet touching obedience and their

⁹Feroze Rangoonwalla, "The Historical Films," in **A Pictorial History of Indian Cinema**, London, 1979, p.28.

photos and posters being garlanded in the smallest of towns and villages.¹⁰

With the same spirit in Andhra also some films are made. The cinemas of such nature taken for our study are - **Mahatma Gandhi**, [more than a documentary], **Palnati Yuddham** and **Yogi Vamana**.

Song 1 : Chittoor V. Nagaiah and Smt. Rajyaratnam

Vandemataram Vandemataram

(Hail mother, Hail mother)

Song 2 : Smt. Tanguturi Suryakumari

Padave **ratnama** pranavabharatagiti

(Sing spinning wheel the song of sacred Bharati)

Edu divulalonu eparu ni khyati

(Your glory spread to seven islands)

Adave kadura ni ataye **makota**

(play of spindle is our fort)

Veduke ni **nulu leta** vennala **chalu**

(Your thread is delightful like early moonlight)

Nikovaye **maku Nijamu** mukthi ki trova

(Your path is our real salvation)

Ni sevaye maku **Viswamanawaseva**

¹⁰ **Ibid.**, p.28.

(Service to you is service to humanity of the world)

Ni **darame Jivanadharam**e dhatri

(Your thread is the life string in earth)

Ni sutriye **maku** nityamangala sutri

(Your twine is our perennial sacred thread.)

The importance of *Khadi* is sung in a **metamorphory** way. Religion is mixed with the manufacture of *Khadi*. Gandhiji's economic ideology is that through cottage industries India's economic growth can be achieved. Spinning is selected as one of the cottage industries. He practised it apart from preaching.

The song continued further like this -

Kaduradi nannallu **karuvule** levaye

(No famines as long as spindle moves)

Kaduragipogane Kadagallu lavaye

(the moment spindle stops miseries grow)

Mudakapatalakaina Millulegatiyaye

(Even for coarse cloth, mills are needed)

Modati pallela jivakala **masipoye**

(the beauty of early villages gone)

Viswasodarabhava Vijnana **Vibhavambu**

(the ideal of universal brotherhood)

Velayinchi Khandanta **Vilayambu** manpane in continents lost

(Edu sandralalo **Vadavadalalona**)

in villages far of in seven seas
 (padave **ma** Gandhi **kalyanamaya**giti)
 (Sing the sacred song of our Gandhi.)

Song 3 : Srimati Rajyaratnam

Vara Gandhi karuna kanara
 (Look the mercy of blessed Gandhi)

Maseva mahatma **birama**
 (Service of Mahatma)

Ni seva **chala** lila Anandamosagu maura
 (The **miralce** of your service)

Ni **tyagamahimambe**
 (Your sacrifice give happiness) •

Ahimsa sakti **maku** nira kripaluvega
 (Give us your kindness and power of nonviolence)

O tyagi Udara Sudhira Mahatma
 (Mahatma oh the giver sacred liberal.)

Ni to **Ide** Swadesa Seva **Seyagalamu**
 (We serve motherland **alongwith** you)

Bapu Nidu Mahasrama Niyyara Mataku
 (Bapu give us your laborious quality)

O tyagi Udara Sudhira Mahatma
 (Mahatma oh the giver sacred liberal.)

Song 4 : Smt. Pasupuleti Kannamba

Anta Santi Kada

(Is not all peace)

Santi Kanti Satya Ahimsa

(peace, light, truth, non-violence)

Puja Vidhiga Seya

(do the daily ritual)

Ramanamamu Harijana seva

(Name of Rama service to Harijans (untouchables))

Manava dharmamu kada

(Is not the work of Humankind.)

Song 5 : Smt. Rajyaratnam

Endu chuda Nive Gandhi

(Gandhi you are everywhere)

Edesakega Antata

(Wherever we go everywhere)

Ni mahimega GAndhi

(Your miracle Gandhi)

Bharata Sobha Bhuvilojupi

(You have shown the glory of India on earth)

Santisamaramuna Sadhana chesi

(Tried in the battle of peace)

Matri seva Mahima chati

(You have propagated the service to motherland)

Santa Hridaya mahita sadaya

(Oh heart of peace on earth)

Hotalulona Edurou Gandhi

(Gandhi you are to be seen in hotels)

Calendar pai Mohana Gandhi

(The beautiful Gandhi on Calendars.)

The Telugu film **Mahatma Gandhi**, as stated, is not a mere documentary. This film's running time is more than two hours, something like a short feature film. The commentary and songs in the film have made this almost a regular feature film. Particularly, the songs are in very easy telugu and were sung by popular singers like Swarajya Kumari and others.¹¹ The lyrics have the flavour of Gandhian ideology. Particularly the *Charaka* song is appealing. The story of **Mahatmaji** is better understood as the commentary is written by noted writer Tapi Dharma Rao Naidu who has already made himself familiar with the cine going audiences in Andhra.

The life and contribution of **Mahatma Gandhi** to India is visualised through this film.¹² The vast illiterate innocent mass of Andhra who could not read newspapers were delighted to know who

¹¹**Tanguturi Swarajya kumari** was a very popular and melodious singer of yesteryears in South India.

¹²**The** story is given in Chapter III.

was Gandhi and what was the role being played by him in their emancipation.

Palnati Yuddham is a historical film. A historical film would be one where history itself is the subject of the films, and not merely the background of a plot that could be transposed into any other context.¹³ The aim of a historical film is to give the average spectator who may not know much history. Today, with cinema and television, history experiences a new form of expression; what asset does this bring to its intelligibility? The example of the Battleship **Potempkin** is linked to the preceding problem: The images of the Revolution of 1905 which dominate our memory are by far those from **Eisenstein's** work.¹⁴ The contribution of cinema to the intelligibility of historical phenomena varies according to the degree of its autonomy and its aesthetic contribution. Whether they deal with the history of great men (Napoleon) or highlight the action of groups (**Pudovkins** Mother, Renoir's **La Marseillaise**, etc.) these films reproduce dominant (or oppositional) currents of thought. Similarly, historical films in Japan can make use of

¹³Frederic Vitoux, "Cinema and History," A Symposium in **Deep Focus**, [Film Quarterly], November 1988, Bangalore, p.15.

¹⁴Mark Ferro, "Is there A Filmic Writing of **History?**," in **Deep Focus**, November 1988, p.28.

traditions and structures which are still to be found in contemporary Japanese life and mentality.¹⁵

In India, **Death of Narayana Rao Peshava**, produced and directed by S.N. Patankar was the first historical film (1915). In 1926 Himanshu Rai produced, in collaboration with, a German concern, **The Light of Asia** directed by Franz Osten, starred Himanshu Rai as Buddha and narrated the life story of Buddha. It is even today considered to be a classic. The first historical talkie feature film was produced by Imperial in 1931. Directed by Ezra Mir, it recounted the historic romance of Nurjehan and Jehangir. **Pukar** was the most spectacular historical made in India. It recreated the pomp and glory of the Mughal Empire. The legend of Anarkali was a great success. So far the best historical feature film is **Gandhi**, produced partly by National Film Development Corporation and directed by Richard Attenborough.¹⁶

Coming to **Palnati Yuddham**, it is the foremost and the first historical film in Telugu. It is a story of Telugus which really happened in Palnadu in Guntur District. It's very popular as story and ballet. It was released in 1948. In fact Gudavalli Ramabrahmam

¹⁵Wolfgang Ernst, "Distory: Cinema and Historical Discourse," in **Journal of Contemporary History**, London, Vol. 18 (1983), p.399.

¹⁶V.P. Sathe, "The Historical Film," in **Genres of Indian Cinema**, Platinum Jubilee of Indian Cinema, 1988-89, pp.59-63.

had conceived it in 1937 itself, but it was postponed. After filming 3 sets, Gudavalli Ramabrahmam became ill. L.V. Prasad continued it. Gudavalli Ramabrahmam extensively read books relating to **Palnati Yuddham**. He specially organised ballads on **Palnati yuddham** and was instrumental in giving programmes in Bezawada, the sole aim is to create awareness among people by **thils** story. Srinatha's Dwipiada gave him much historical understanding. The script was completely prepared by G.Ramabrahmam only. Later L.V.Prasad proceeded strictly in accordance with the script. According to Associate Director K.J. Mohan of the film, all the weapons used in the film were manufactured on seeing the original ones preserved in a temple in **Karempudi**. The battle scenes were produced in Madras. But mostly there were original scenes of the battle which were already produced in a Marathi war film "**Chandarao More**". The **Palnati Yuddham** roles were superimposed on these battle scenes.

The most significant feature of the film is the character of **Brahmanaidu**. **Brahmanna** lived for one religion, one caste and one God. For him there were no caste barriers. He organised community dining. Harijans were allowed to enter temples. The social reform activities of **Brahama** Naidu attracted the spectators more than the war scenes. The film ran to packed houses.¹⁷ **Palnati Yuddham** was

¹⁷Sukumar, "First Historical Film in Telugu: **Palnati Yuddham**," in **Vijaya Chitra**, January 1989, p.47.

a musical hit. It won the praises of critics. The success of **Palnati Yuddham** became a trend setter in the history of Telugu historical films.

In the beginning of the eleventh century, the Andhra region with its fertile coastal tracks was still under the political sway of Eastern Chalukyan dynasty. Later, sandwiched between the two rival neighbouring dynasties, the Western Chalukyas and the Cholas of Tanjore, the rule of the Chalukyas of Vengi turned out to be a shortlived one, for they were effectively replaced by the regional feudatories. The political destiny of Andhra, till the end of twelfth century, was marked by the internecine warfare among the mandalikas or feudatories; the prominent among them were Velanadu Chodas, Kota chiefs of Dharanikota, **Kondapadmati** chiefs of Nadendla Parichchedi's for Omerumarga and Haihayas of Palnadu.¹⁸ This political rivalry among the Chalukya Chola feudatories reached a flash point in 1182 A.d. in a battle at Karempudi (Palnadu) in Guntur District. This war was immortalized in several folk ballads and also in Srinatha's *Palnati Vira Charitram* (the history of Heroes of Palnadu).¹⁹ While the political consequences of the war was clearly the establishment of Kakatiya `overlordship' in Andhra,

¹⁸K.A. Nilakanta Sastry, *The Cholas*, Vols. 2, Madras, 1937.

¹⁹Srinatha, **Palnati Vira Charitram**, written in Telugu in the 15th century - between 1400-1420 A.D. It was a beautiful Manjari Dwipada metre and reads like a war song. Akkiraju **Umakantham** [ed.], Madras, 1955.

the social and religious ramifications were not so important. One can, however, discern a broad pattern of social and **religious** changes that preceded and followed the Palnad war. In *Palnati Veera Charitram* and *Kre edabh iramamu* the events that led the feudatories into a destructive battle were suggestively linked to the radical, social and religious reforms initiated by Brahmanaidu within Vaishnava tradition.²⁰ Though the rise of militant **Virasaivism** in Karnataka, under Basava was contemporaneous to **Brahmanaidu's** Vaishnava **reform**, the influence of the former on Andhra events was suggested in the oral and written tradition at the level of hostility, for Nayakuralu **Nagamma**, who said to have brought war on Brahmanaidu, was an ardent supporter of Saivism.

Being the virtual ruler, Brahmanaidu, an ardent follower of **Vaishnavism** started a radical social and religious reform movement in Palnad. This brought him in direct conflict with **Nalagammaraju**, who, like his ancestors was a follower of Saivism.

Meanwhile, the King's step-brother (Peda Malideva) and others), **came** under the influence of Brahmanaidu and actively championing the cause of reformed Vaishnavism. This conflict between the followers of two rival religions spread over 12 years, resulted in a civil war among the step brothers for nearly seven

²⁰B.S.L. Hanumantha Rao, **Religion in Andhra**, Guntur, 1973, p.257.

years (1175-82), ultimately culminating in the destructive war at **Karempudi** in 1182 A.D.²¹ The role of **Nayakuralu Nagamma** was perceived in contradictory ways. Being a woman, a **widow** and a Saivite from the Reddi caste, she challenged **Brahmanaidu's** reformed Vaishnavism. A critical study of oral tradition and the texts produced on her, especially from the early decades of the 20th century, would enable us to comprehend the popular admiration and at the same time, hostility towards women's intervention in public life.²²

During the war at Karempudi, as per the version of Srinatha's **Palnati Veera Charitra**, the soldiers of Branmanaidu drawn from various kulalu (professional classes) i.e., brahman, panchama, shepherd, potter and washerman were **made** to inter-dine (*sahabantibhojanam* popularly known as *chapakudu* or cosmopolitan dinner) in the battle field. **Vallabharayudu**, in his work **Kreedabhiramamu**, goes to the extent of suggesting that the policy of inter-dining adopted by Branmanaidu to break the socio-cultural and religious barriers among the castes was the chief cause for the war. The intermingling of several communities through inter-dining had initiated a cultural change resulting in the formation of a very powerful middle level Padmanayaka peasant artisanal warrior

²¹B.V. Krishna Rao, *The Haihayas of Palnad*, p.37.

²²Unnava Lakshminarayana, *Nayakuralu*, [Telugu], Machilipatnam, 1969.

community. However, the community of Padmanayakas, forged by Brahmanayudu was not devoid of internal fissures.

The *kulas* of the Malas and Madigas considered to be *untouchables* were also integrated into the Padmanayaka community, albeit loosely, for they seem to have remained on the periphery during the war at Karempudi in 1182 A.D. One Kannama, being a Mala completely devotes himself to Brahmanaidu. Today in Palnadu, the Malas and Madigas might very intensely relate themselves to the creed and tradition of Brahmanaidu as is shown by Gen. H. Roghair.²³

Palnati Yuddham is compared with the epic **Mahabharat**. The parallels sought for are - (both are civil wars for kingdom)

Nalgamaraju : Duryodhana

Nagamma : Karna

Malideva : Dharmaraju

Brahmanaidu : Krishna

Cockfight : Game of dice

Seven years in forest : Twelve years in forests

Compromise by Alaraju : Compromise by Krishna

War at Karempudi : War at Kurukshetra

Balachandrudu : Abhimanyu

²³Gen H. Roghair, **The Epic of Palnadu: A study and Translation of Palnati Virula Katha**, Delhi, 1982, pp.26-39, 86-139.

We find a close parallel between **Brahmanaidu** and Mahatma Gandhiji. **Brahmanaidu** was much against the division of Palnadu. He was a Vaishnavite and his belief for Lord **Chennakesava** was unquestioning. He was against the differences of caste, creed and religion. He never practised untouchability. He brought caste unity through cosmopolitan dining. But for him, depressed classes would not have dreamt of their entry into the temple of Chennakesava at **Macherla**. Balachandra had close friends from all castes. Brahmanaidu treated all of them as his children. Thus the maker of this film wanted to bring a parallel between Brahmanaidu and Gandhiji. The division of Palnadu reminds us of the division of Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan. Gudavalli Ramabrahmam a thorough nationalist felt the pinch of proposed partition of India and he wanted to remind us that the division of India would bring forth the same evils as did the division of Palnadu wrought upon. 'United we stand, divided we fall' **was** the maxim which the director Ramabrahmam wanted to bring forth.

Generally, all wars in India were alleged to have waged in the name of religion. **Palnati Yuddham** also is in the same line. Brahmanaidu in the name of Vaishnavism brought depressed classes such as Malas and Madigas into the **mainfold** of society, but **Nagamma** protagonist of **Saivism** stood for traditions. She championed the cause of social hierarchy.

Mala kuduga mare mana matamu mana dharmamu

(Changed our religion and tradition in the name of
dining) with malas (the depressed classes)

Malalu palanati sima, manyamuga pondadvrata

(The land of Palnadu is going to be handed over to Malas)
(depressed classes)

Vinnara Samantulu, kannara Gandumagalu

(Oh feudatories, listen!, Oh! brave look!)

Rachapadi Nilupandi Randi! Randi!

(Come! Come! restore the valour of kings.)

This is the call given by Nalagamma to all feudatories to save Palnadu from going into the hands of Malas. It's an attempt of saving the social hierarchy against Brahmanaidu's attempts to bring social equality.

The hero worship continued to date in Karempudi every year. Their weapons are still preserved and worshipped. People from Yadavas and Malas participate in this function in large numbers. Members of Madigas are not allowed here, because it is believed that Madigas fled from battle of Palnadu without fighting on the side of Brahmanaidu.²⁴

²⁴Gopichand, "Palnati Virula Charitra, Tenugunati Bhratam," in **Prajamitra** [special issue], January 1939 (Pongal) pp.8-10.

End The battle was a destructive one. In the end it **was** shown in the film that both Nagamma and **Brahmanaidu** got united. With repentance they sing a song in front of Lord Channakesava extolling the importance of peace.

Namma : Tanavaru Peravaralani, Tara Tama Bhavamulumani
 (Let there be no difference between we and they
 Let there be no difference between our ideas)

Brahmanna: Jagadanandame Paramarthamuga
 (Divine bliss should be our goal)
 Narulu Bratukarada
 (With aim let the human beings live)

Namma & Brahmanna: Satyam, Sivam, Sundaram
 Tolerance is permanent
 Love, Equality, peace be permanent
 Peace is permanent
 Peace is permanent.

Doctor G.V. Subba Rao as Brahmanna, Smt. **Kannamba** as Nagamma phenomenally contributed for the success of **Palnati Yuddham**. Akkineni Nageswara Rao, the romantic hero of Telugu films acted as Balachandrudu. *Namma Talagotti Nalagamubatti* song was sung by Akkineni Nageswara Rao himself. Nageswara Rao is all in praise for

Gudavalli Ramabrahmam²⁵ and he treats him as his guru. The scenes of Manchala (acted by S.Varalakshmi) and Balachandra were effectively picturised by G. Ramabrahmam. Nageswara Rao says GR was encouraging him as this will bring him fame.

The moonlight scene is highlight of this film. The quality of director Ramabrahmam is very distinctive. The shadows of clouds are portrayed on the face of Manchala - a high quality of technique.²⁶

²⁵A. Nageswara Rao, "*Nenu Na Darsakulu*," in *Vijayachitra*, Annual Number 1985-86.

²⁶**Views** of Sri K.S. Prakasa Rao, renowned film producer and S. Hari Purushothama Rao a noted film critic expressed during our interview with them on 21 May 1994 and 3 June 1994 respectively.

Yogi Vemana

Reformer Vemana ' s birth year : 1672²⁷

birth place : Moogachintala in Cuddapah or
Kurnool or Chittoor Districts.

Vemana was a villager by birth belongs to Reddy caste. By no means a learned man, but a man of profound thought, of great reflective power and penetrating intuition into life and its secular and spiritual problems. His poetry is a spring, pure and undefined, entirely spontaneous and original in thought and in style. In three short lines he gives us a whole poem. If brevity is the soul of wit, perhaps there has been no greater wit in the world. All his smiles and metaphors are drawn from woods and fields and rural scenes. His deep intuition penetrated into the problems of life, secular and spiritual. It is the hypocrites whom he denounced, that pretend to spirituality while grovelling in sensuality. Vemana attacks with ruthless logic the different religions current in his time, Saivism, Vaishnavism, Lingaithism and Buddhism. Vemana's style ranges from bitter and caustic to mild sarcasm, gentle irony and sweet humour. Humour is his characteristic. It was Voltaire who laid down that most powerful

²⁷Marupuri Kodanda Rami Reddi, **Lokakavi Vemana Yogi Jivitam**, [Telugu], Vijayawada, 1983, pp.7-9.

of all was that in dealing with superstition. There is no **use** arguing. For superstition is not **amenable** to reason. Sneer at it and make it ridiculous, that will have more effect. Here is an instance of voltarian humour of Vemana. Evils like social inequalities, gradations and degradations based on birth are attacked by him. There is not even a single aspect of Hindu religiosity which has not been the target of Vemana's satire. To cite, "Can we get salvation by bathing frequently? Why, then, all the fishes must be saved! can we get salvation by smearing ourselves with ashes? Why then, a donkey rolls frequently in ashes?"²⁸

Historicity of Vemana:

The changes in the political economy during the 16th through 18th centuries brought certain changes in the social and cultural life of the people of Andhra. The recent historiography shows that there was expansion in internal material production and a progressive integration of this region into international maritime trade and **commerce** which undoubtedly had positive social consequences.²⁹ The changes in production and the emergence and economic expansion of several artisanal classes brought pressures on the existing socio-cultural system, as it closed the internal

²⁸Bangore, **Vemana** - C.R. Reddy, Visakhapatnam, 1981, pp. 92-94.

²⁹Sanjay Subrahmanyam, **The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India, 1500-1650**, Cambridge, 1990.

mobility. The basic characteristics of any system which is opening up economically needs an open, dynamic and fairly secular cultural system. It is in this context, one must locate the growth of critique of **Vaishnavism** cum Varna system by reformers like Potuluri Veerabrahamam and Vemana.

The Veerasaiva tradition of the transgression of traditional social order with its distinction of high caste, low caste and outcaste once again revived in the ideas of Vemana. He attacked everything which was held only and inviolable by the Brahmanical elite. In a way, Vemana replicates at a popular cultural level/ the pattern of earlier ideological critique of Varna, Jati, **Kula**, Vedic sacrifices and moral precepts, codes of law elaborated **by** Dharmasastras, mediation of priestly class, idolatry and Hindu religious beliefs. He did not even spare **Veerasaiva's** worshipping of Lingam. He affirms the need to honour different artisanal and other economic activities, as did Virasaivas. He sees God in human being and negates any mediation of gurus in real life.³⁰ To quote Narla,

"It will be wrong to conclude.... that Vemana is irreligious. On the contrary he is very religious. He forsake everything mundane. His religion repudiates polytheism; it pours scorn on idol worship, it condemns all ritualism; it discourages

³⁰V.R. Narala (ed.), **Vemana Through Western Eyes**, Madras, 1969, p.1.

pilgrimage. **Vemana's** religion places man right in the **centre** of the universe. He affirms that man is one with God, **may**, is himself god, provided he attains perfect self realization. Because of this central place of man in Vemana's religion, even if one is not in agreement with its metaphysical connotations, it is basically **humanistic.**"³¹

K.V. Reddy has taken up this lively subject, the life of Vemana, a social reformer and a literary genius. Chittoor V. Nagaiah lived in the role of historic Vemana. There is slight distortion regarding story. The available theses on Vemana tell that he is married. His wife gave him lot of trouble. In the film Vemana is not married and indulges in **womanization**. **Mohanangi**, the courtesan, is his weakness. The earlier part of hero is happy go lucky type. He couldn't help falling a prey to **Mohanangi's trap**. Vemana's second weakness is his attachment to Jyothi, the daughter of his brother. We find a daring frankness in him. Vemana admits the guilt of taking away the necklace of his sister-in-law in order to present it to Mohanangi. Similarly, his will power is so strong that he determines not to see the face of his brother unless he procures gold through **rasavada**. His dearest **Jyothi's** ill health too never deviates his decision. He ultimately comes to know **the** harsh truth that the gold he created out of chemicals does not **any**

³¹**Ibid.**, p.2.

way bring back the life of Jyothi . This brought radical change in Vemana. After considerable search or renunciation Bhogi Vemana becomes Yogi Vemana.

Idena Intena Jivita Sara **M**idena

(Is it, This much only Is this all life)

Antuleni **I**i jivana vaibhavamu Antayu

(This unending glory of life))

Tudaku nasinchutakena Intena

(Is to perish at the end, is it) .

Atapatala nalarinchusu selayetiole

(Like a stream, promising in games)

Velivare **b**ratuku Idena

(life is closed, is it.)

Kilakila **n**avvenchu Tolakarivalapula

(Laughing like monsoon showers - love life)

Olakavoyu javarali **o**yaram idena

(of the love's youthfulness is this,)

Dachukunna Vayasantayu **m**aganiki

(All the hidden youth sacrificing)

Dochi ichchu illalugati idena

(to husband - is this fate of housewife)

Puritipapa Chirupedavulatakuna

(On the touch of **i**nfant's lips)

Murisipoiru Balenta bratuku idena

(Liking mother's life is this much only)

Tamabalagamu dhana dhamyamulamugani

(Looking at the riches of grain and wealth and ones own strength)

Tanise mudusali perasa phalamidena

(The desire and proudness of the aged man is this)

Sakalasastramula parachadivina, akhila desamulakraminchi na

(Though read all vedas and conquered all countries)

Kattakadaku Ii Kayamu Vididu

(At last leaving this body)

Mattigalisipovalena, Mattigalisipovalena

(Should end in crematorium, end in soil.)

Vemana thus understands what is life.

Vemana 's philosophy as seen in film

This body and this wealth are not permanent. Only virtues are permanent.

The charity with pomp and show is bad. Charity with kindheartedness is good both here and in the outerworld.

Do not get entangled with wife, children and all. Lead virtuous life. That is permanent.

Shun violence. Love all the living beings.

Lord Shiva does not like those who indulge in violence.
Shiva is in living bodies.

Show no difference to you and me let there be no
differences. The spirit is universal in all beings.

In the end there is praise of Vemana thus :

Vedateetudu Vemana Sumandi

(Vemana is above Vedas)

Vemana bodhalu Vinarandi

(Come listen the teachings of Vemana)

Matamula Perita - Matsaralato

(Divisions in the name of religions)

Manava himsalu manandi

(Stop harm to humankind)

Anni matalaku Ari thamboka te

(The central theme of all religions is one)

Anta cheruta Achatenandi

(Know all reach there only (crematorium))

Bahu **punyarjitham** narajanmam

(the existence of this human life is the result of
many a past virtue)

Vyartham cheyuta tagadandi

(wastage of this life is not desired)

Janana **maramamula marmamerigina**

(Those who know the secret of birth and death)

Janmame Dhanyamu - Teliyandi

(is fortunate)

The poetry of **Vemana** is like air and is all pervasive. It is said that 'there is no one who do not wet in rain and who do not hear about Vemana'. So, Vauhini pictures through K.V.Reddy immortalised Vemana by producing **Yogi Vemana**. Everybody who is aware of verses of Vemana is attracted to view this film. Their appetite to know about the great man Vemana is noticed by K.V. Reddy and a grand feast *Yogi Vemana* is served. Nagaiah is already a rage among Telugu cine audience and this time they viewed him in the historic role of Vemana. The viewers well appreciated the film.

Vemana hails from a feudal family. The dominant feudal values found space in this film. Vemana's attachment to undivided family, respect to the male head of the family i.e, his brother, reverence to sister-in-law who extends motherly affection, fondness towards brother's daughter Jyothi and, apart from all, going astray are his qualities. His economic position and social status made him carefree and go astray. This is the society which gives less importance to manual labour. Prostitution as an institution continues in this feudal order. **Kamalakara** Kameswara Rao is a reputed film director who worked as assistant director for the picture **Yogi Vemana**. He says, **Yogi Vemana** for him is an ideal

cinema.³² He thinks that it is his fortune to work for such a film like **Yogi Vemana**.

Vemana preached in simple telugu for reaching common man is his objective. Vemana initially was Bhogi (who enjoys life to the brim of his heart) and later on turned a Yogi. Vemana a pleasure seeking man is unusually a progressive, an atheist and a humanitarian. The plight of shivering old poor lady made him to grab the cloth of goddess in the temple and covers the old lady with this cloth unhesitatingly. His carelessness never made him anarchic. He has every respect for his brother and sister-in-law.

In order to give a good treatment and maintain tempo, some new characters have been introduced although they are not found in the original life of Vemana, a historic person. The character of Abhiramayya is one such creation. Vemana questions, '**chavu nergugaleni chaduveti chaduvaya**' i.e., '**the** education which does not know what is death, is not education at **all**.' This is **the** central point of Indian philosophy and it is precisely the central theme of the film. Vemana master minded this philosophy. **We** cannot find a film so spiritually well made as Vemana.

³²K. Kameswara Rao, "Naku Adarshaniyamaina **Chitram: Yogi Vemana**," in **Vijaya Chitra**, December 1982, p.48.

How Vemana renunciated worldly life is unknown in history. This gap was filled with the creation of Jyothi, the child character in the film, and the death of Jyothi brought radical change in the life of Vemana. Jyothi 's death very much moved him and he began to think of the secret of death. In the process Bhogi Vemana became **Yogi Vemana**. He propagated the knowledge that he had acquired in easy Telugu verses. He had become people's poet. No ascetic person before him made known oneself to the people so easily as Vemana.

Vemana's story is most uncinematic but by using sequences and characters carefully Vemana is produced as a prestigious movie of Telugus. It's technically high quality picture. The well known writer and Poet, **Samudrala** Raghavacharyulu, penned the dialogues, laden with philosophy. In *smasana*, i.e., graveyard Vemana hits one scull which he picks up and sings "is it? is it the essence of life". The scene is highlight of the picture (The full text of the song is given in this chapter). Human life since infancy to old age is philosophically explained in this scene which earned the appraisal of critics and producers and directors of foreign films who attended International Film Festival of India in 1952."

³³K. Kameswara Rao, *Op.Cit.*, p.49.

Yogi Vamana brought many laurels to the music composer, singer and actor V. Nagaiah. His action is simply superb. Particularly in the scene where he is going to be buried alive (*sajiva samadhi*). **Nagaiah's** action is unparalleled. The picturisation of this scene deserves special mention. The photography of Marcus Bartley, the art direction of Sekhar, the acting skills of actors all merged into one and took shape as **Yogi Vamana**.³⁴ Its creator is the great K.V. Reddy who is well versed with film techniques and also known for his managerial abilities in film industry. **Yogi Vamana** is the idol and K.V. Reddy is the sculptor.

³⁴**Ibid.**

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The medium cinema is a powerful tool to propagate an ideology as it can reach millions of people. Feudal ethics, though outlived in Western civilization, still have a say in India. Age old conventions continue to shape the consciousness within Indian society. Religion, caste, community and a host of other traditional values play a major role among the majority of Indians. Religion plays not only a pivotal role in articulating social relations but it legitimizes state power also. Early films no doubt had social concern and yet mirrored pre-modern ideologies and value system. The nature of colonial modernity was such that the pre-modern and modern value systems never turned contradictory to each other. A detailed study of cultural and ideological contours of Telugu cinema of pre-independent era is attempted in this study.

In a developing country like India, where half the population are illiterate, cinema is relatively cheap and popular medium within the reach of rural populace. It is an instrument that helps bringing consciousness. Unlike literature, cinema is at the beck and call of people. It is a combination of all fine arts and science and technology.

Cinema can have varied influences on the society. While tragedy of love is shown in **Devadas**, the positive aspects of life are highlighted in Shantaram's **Admi** and **Parchhain**. Gudavalli Rama

Brahmam produced **Rytu Bidda** at a time when feudalism had been struggling to retain its social and cultural roots despite colonial modernity. The contrast, of course, is the recent movie, **Premnagar**,¹ believed to be a *kalakhandam* [master piece] that celebrates the dead feudal culture and life.

In India, the film industry predominantly represents a bourgeois culture, where the objective of art is to give **pleasure**. Patriarchy is part of bourgeois culture. In this system **woman** is an object of beauty and a symbol of biological reproducer of male lineage. **Due** to the colonial peculiarities the bourgeois culture in India has been ushered in, not by destroying feudalism, but by incorporating its value system. The main clientele of cinemas are **common** and lower middle class people. They constitute the financial backbone to the industry. The hegemonization of popular classes with various cultural forms is essential for the bourgeois rule. **And** cinema is one such form. Through *pativrata* ideology this class is controlling half the population, i.e., women. In the present study, an attempt is made to show how the operation of patriarchy in bourgeois **system** is seen or depicted in cinema. For cinema, like literature, refracts social reality.

¹**Premnagar** [1971] was a Suresh Productions film directed by K.S. Prakasa Rao. D. Rama Naidu was its Producer. Hero and heroine were Akkineni Nageswara Rao and Vanisree. An attempt was made to eulogize the feudal class and its value system luring the lower class into its fold.

Irrespective of class, caste and religion or social and political differences all people view cinemas. What is it that mesmerizes all and sundry in cinema? What are its' roots? What are the historical processes that influenced the evolution of Telugu cinema? The differential impact of cinema on the society and also the varied response of different social classes to it are the other interesting questions that are addressed in this work.

The production of Telugu cinemas began with **mythologicals**. The social films were produced only from 1936. The widespread social and caste reform movements, national liberation struggle and peasant movements had their influence on Telugu cinema. Themes like untouchability (**Mala Pilla**, 1938); temperance (**Grihalakshmi**, 1938); widow marriage (**Malli Pelli**, 1939); dowry (**Varavikrayam**, 1939) and Zamindari system (**Rytu Bidda**, 1939) were taken up. The visual depiction of these issues was so powerful that they had awakened people in Andhra in late 1930s and early 1940s and contributed considerably to the transformation of their consciousness. The film, **Griha Pravesam** (1945), was of a different category, for the crucial contemporary issue, feminism, was for the first time presented in it. A historical film, **Palnati Yuddham** (1947), was also of this period. All this had been happening in a social and cultural atmosphere which was permeated by feudal ideology. Therefore, despite some progressive deviations, most of the films

still refracted the dominant feudal ideology. Feudal ideology legitimizes the interests of the God, the King and the Feudal Lord and the Patriarch. The hegemonization process of these interests and ideas, as articulated in the films; is explained in this work.

The period of our study, 1931-1947, was crucial in the colonial history of India. The electoral institutions and legislative methods of struggle were already emerging as the dominant forms of highlighting popular grievances in society. The preceeding half a decades' development of commercial agriculture contributed to the rise of dominant rural elite. Politically, Gandhiji and his methods of struggle were in full control of the anti-colonial movement. The increasing circulation of vernacular press played a major role in shaping public opinion. It was an age of mass politics. The role of mass media was significant. The silent cinema was already popular in attracting crowds. The themes adopted by this popular entertainment, i.e., cinema, reflected all these rather conflicting ideas and aspirations of the colonial society.

While reconstructing the popular movements in modern period, historians so far have been relying primarily upon archival material. They also make use of contemporary press. Historians, by and large, are yet to grasp the significance of the visual medium

like films as a valuable source.

The media studies are increasingly attracting the attention of historians in the West. The study of feature films, for instance, is an important part of their historiography on political, social and cultural changes in the 20th century. We are convinced that, in general, film is one of the most modern and far reaching methods of influencing the social consciousness or what the French historians would term the 'collective mentalities.' The medium was such that through it several divergent ideas and views could be conveyed. "Film, in other words, is uniquely equipped to record and reveal physical reality and hence gravitates toward it."² The value of the feature film, as an historical source, is similar to that of a literary document used in intellectual or social history.

The importance of film as a study of history is well understood in the case of USSR. The context of Soviet Cinema in the last 1920s and early 1930s has been formed by four principal factors: the aesthetic, the ideological, the technical and the audience factors. In the feature films, which we have taken up for our study, importance is attached to their cultural and ideological contours.

²Siegfried Kracauer, "From Theory Of Film: Basic Concepts," in Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen [ed.], **Film Theory And Criticism: Introductory Readings**, New York, 1974, p. 8.

We undertook a discussion of historian and his **relation with** the study of films. Important concepts have been explained. **The** initial attitude of reformers towards traditional culture and their later changing approach to colonial and "modern" cultural practices and ideas had a deeper influence on Telugu cinema. Particularly, the perspectives of intellectuals on important issues such as patriarchal family and the subordinate position of women, traditional value system, social customs, religious beliefs, rural-urban dichotomy, cultural notion of money and commodity, etc. Reflection of these aspects could be seen in the movies produced during 1930s and 1940s.

Performing arts, with particular reference to theatre, and their relationship with the evolution of early Telugu cinema has been discussed. In order to show the cultural and literary resources used by the Telugu cinema an analysis of the nature of social and cultural themes used predominantly in Telugu theatre during the 19th and early 20th centuries has also been made. It is the cultural and literary source which in turn had a profound ideological influence on the content of Telugu social cinema.

The anicuts built across Godavari and Krishna rivers brought significant economic changes in the coastal districts of Andhra and contributed to the emergence of new social classes. It was the

growth of education, educated middle class and the **urbanisation** process which developed need for a modern form of **popular** entertainment.

A significant consequence of the rural economic **growth** was increased migration of rural rich to the urban centres **and** this brought far reaching change in urban life. The rural agricultural surplus was invested in the establishments like coffee hotels, shopping markets and other business establishments. **Cinemas** grew out of this new business in the urban centres. The native capitalists who could not compete with colonial capitalism in both national and international business, got involved in the production of cinemas as non-competitive business ventures.

During this time nationalist consciousness **made** its appearance. The mass movements under the leadership of veteran congress leaders like Andhra Ratna Duggirala Gopalakrishnayya, Desabhakta Kondavenkatappayya, etc., inspired the people of Andhra. Mass movements such as Non-cooperation movement, Civil disobedience movement brought political consciousness among the masses. Nationalism was the order of the day. The spirit of nationalism was reflected in the cinemas of this period.

The history and significance of film as a **medium in mass**

communication and popular source of recreation for the masses have been dealt with. The importance of film for artistic, cultural, educational and propagative value is an universal fact. A brief survey of the development of Indian films was attempted.

On our study special, special attention has been paid to social themes. There were only few social films during 1938-1947, but importance given to social issues in them is noteworthy. The issues like social reform, national movement, peasant struggles, untouchability, the evil of liquor, feudal value system, etc., found a prominent place in the films.

An in depth study of Harijan and peasant issues in colonial Andhra was made in the section titled, "Colonial Capitalism and Cultural Feudalism: Ideological Construction of Harijan Issue in *Mala Pilla*. and *Rytu Bidda*." The ideological moorings of Harijan issue as refracted in *Mala Pilla* and the rich peasants' struggle for partial liberation from feudal domination in *Rytu Bidda* were contextualised. At the material level the particularities of colonial commercialisation of agriculture created differential social and cultural changes both in the ryotwari and zamindari areas. In the ryotwari areas the development of commodity production, marketing system, price rise, high rentals, unequal revenue burdens and system of peasant money lending helped

emergence **and** consolidation of rich peasant class by **1920s**. **Right** from 1920s it was this entrepreneurial class who were at **the centre** of social **and** political struggles.

In the realm of culture the old feudal value system **and** the social practices like untouchability have been hindering the process of transforming traditional agricultural labour into wage labour. Without the liberation of agriculture labour from feudal cultural value system, the market oriented agriculture would not take off, as the wage labour will not be available for production. Naturally, the peasant entrepreneur will be up in arms against such a feudal value system and practices like untouchability. Well known Telugu novels such as **Mala Palli** (1922), and the first popular Telugu movie like **Mala Pilla** (1938) have intensively reflected on the issue of feudal control over agriculture labour and the ways and means of creating necessary socio-cultural liberating conditions for the Harijans.

Gudavalli Rama Brahman's **Mala Pilla (An Untouchable Girl)**, as the name suggests, is the story of one Harijan girl. This film touches upon the burning social evil untouchability, upliftment of Harijans, fundamentalism of orthodox people, social oppression of upper caste Hindus, social reform activities of Harijan Seva Sangh are the other issues that are prominently figured in this film. However, the central theme is inter caste marriage. With the entry

of Harijans into a temple the film comes to a happy end. **The** influence of Gandhian ideology on the film is evident. **Mahatma's** objective was made known to the people through this powerful **medium** and gave moral boost to the vast multitude of Harijans.

The theme of Gudavalli Ramabrahmam's **Rytu Bidda** is an extension of social problems related to colonial agriculture. The production time of the film was late 1930s. The enmity of **ruling** class and the ruled was dominant. One of the main functions of the ruling class, then, in addition to ensuring the economic organisation and political power of their class, was to preserve the hegemony of their class over the society through ideology. In all historical phases, ruling classes create the cultural atmosphere which serves their vested interests and try to present it as the ideology. In a class society, music, literature and all other art forms are created broadly in this frame work. However, on the other hand, there would be an alternative peoples' culture. Nevertheless those cultural values and ideology which get the official propaganda and patronage, such will continue to be dominant, at least visibly.

The Telugu cinema of the earlier times represented the culture of the ruled. The mythologicals, the **historicals** and the social films did not in any way conflict with the ruling interests. All these cinematic themes were useful for the emerging new class from the ruled which was being copied into the ruling class. **The**

creators of 1938 cinemas were no other than that class which got a share in 1937 government. They made social films with reform zeal. Hitherto cinemas catered the entertainment needs of middle class. When once the rural folk also joined the ranks of cine audiences there arose a need for different themes. The relations between zamindars and ryots and interaction attracted the attention of some creative film makers. They were content with middle class consciousness, but not proletariat consciousness. This aspect is taken care of after independence by progressive Writers Association and Prajanatyamandals [IPTA]. They too failed in creating alternative peoples culture.

The specific feature of the time is legitimisation of the hegemony of rural rich peasant class and the dominant nationalist ideology. **Rytu Bidda** succeeded in manipulating peasant consciousness in tune with these two processes.

The theme of **Rytu Bidda** is about the necessity of unity of peasants. The village usurer and his evil designs, the election scenario, the factionalism, the vandalism of Zamindari henchmen were well portrayed in this film. The rural indebtedness is vulnerable point of exploitation, which is relevant even today.

A detailed study of colonial culture and traditional value system were discussed with an analysis of morality, social customs, value system, patriarchy and gender as they were articulated in

Telugu cinema.

Earlier literature, and theatre were the vehicles of spread of new nationalist ideas and cultural regeneration. From 1930s the medium of cinema took their place. The crucial aspect of the cultural and ideological mediation of cinema was the conflict between colonial culture and traditional value system, for the nationalist intelligentsia was neither prepared totally to subordinate themselves to colonial culture and western modernity nor were they willing totally to reject the indigenous traditional value system. We have studied this cultural conflict as reflected in the Telugu movies, viz, **Vandemataram, Malli Pelli, Varavikrayam, Sumangali, Illalu, Devata, Pantulamma** and **Swarga Seema**.

The issue of dowry was portrayed in the films **Vandemataram** and **Varavikrayam**. Widow marriage was the central theme of **Malli Pelli**. *Pativratya dharma* is an unquestioned devotion to one's husband. This theme is focused in **Grihalakshmi, Illalu, Devata, Vandemataram, Malli Pelli, Sumangali** and **Swarga Seema**. The importance of turmeric and saffron powder (*Pasupu Kumkum*) and karma theory were dealt with in **Sumangali**. **Devata** eulogised the virtues of chastity and tolerance. Sacrifice, austerity and self deprivation are accepted in the Indian ethos as noble values. Woman's purity, faith and devotion to her husband are considered to be high values of Indian society. All these values are dealt with in **Swarga Seema**.

The structure of patriarchal family system and **feminism** were analysed through the study of **Griha Pravesam**. It showed the character of the patriarchal ideology and its influence on the female psyche, at the level of its acceptance and its critique as well.

Generally **Griha Pravesam** indicates the meaning of entering into a new house an event to be celebrated. Here, in the film **Griha Pravesam** has wider context although with the same spirit. Heroine Janaki reminds hero about the existing miseries. She awakens him through her song to look into human miseries like poverty, religious and caste fundamentalism, political slavery, economic inequalities, etc. She gives emphasis to solidarity between man and woman. She denounce celibacy vehemently. The heroine exhorted the hero to arise, awake and join hands with her in order to create a new order with equality and fraternity. This new order is compared to building of a new house into which man and woman enter hand in hand. **Griha Pravesam** was a progressive cinema. It inaugurated a banner of revolt against many orthodoxical **beliefs**. It was a reflection of dominant left ideology of the times and indication of modernity.

A Study Of films **Grihalakshmi, Mahatma Gandhi, Palnati Yuddham**

and **Yogi Vemana**" was made to map the ways and means of appropriation of history by the contemporary politics as predominantly reflected in **Palnati Yuddham**; or furtherance of temperance movement in **Gribalaksbmi**; or the propagation of Gandhian ideals through **Mahatma Gandhi**; or the revival of the 18th century critique of social and moral degradation as refracted in **Yogi Vemana**.

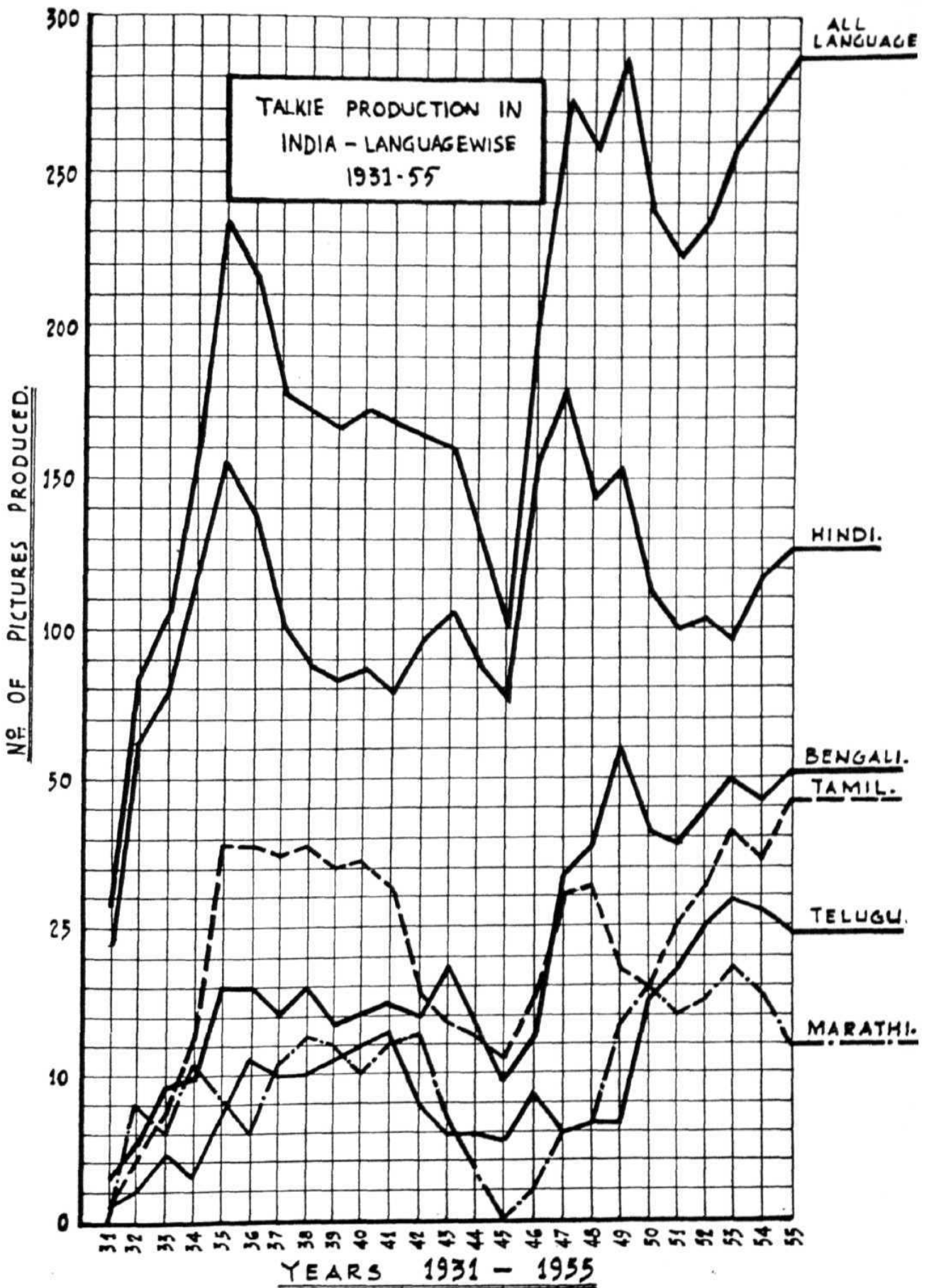
We made an attempt, in the thesis, to bring out the cultural and ideological dimensions of Telugu cinema by analysing the original films. We have analysed the role of cinema as a medium; its ideological mediation between social, political and cultural consciousness. The culture and society in which films were produced are broadly analysed. Popular film can be used to read or diagnose the state of mind of those large sectors of society to which popular films made an appeal. Cinema has been studied to show how it was not merely giving a new shape to old cultural forms but also as an instrument of change. A thorough study of social, economic and cultural background is made and it is against this backdrop a critical study of every social picture is undertaken. Much importance is given to changes in social life, the cultural and ideological struggles in the urban middle classes and the rural peasant families.

Our analysis of the films, produced prior to independence,

showed the presence of contradictory ideas of feudal and colonial [modern] cultural values, competing for social hegemony. Within this ambit, we noticed the presence of reform ideas more prominently. They represent nativity. At all levels it was the nationalist ideology that got expressed overtly and covertly. In these films personality was not important, but the society that determined the individual. Many a social problems were better depicted and solutions were sought within the broad socio-cultural frame work as articulated by the nationalist intelligentsia and the anti-colonial movements. In this sense the pre-independence cinema was as much part of ongoing cultural and ideological struggles within the colonial context as that of the broader social reform and political movements.

But some change in Telugu film world could be noticed by the later forties, particularly after the Second World War. Because of war boom, the nature of audiences as well as the producers who sunk their money into films have undergone a change. Many working class people formed bulk of spectators. Prior to the Second World War only the middle classes were the main spectators for cinema. The family audiences that predominated in the pre-War years made way for heterogeneous groups, comprising largely the labour class, who with better earnings, had more money to spend on entertainment, of which cinema turned out to be the only form of mass entertainment available in our country.

APPENDIX II



Source: NFAI, Pune.

APPENDIX III

LAND - MARKS IN INDIAN FILM STORY

- 1896 The **Lumiere** Brothers, French **Pioneers**, brought the cinematograph to India for the first time and gave shows at the Watson's Hotel, Bombay. On July 14, **1896** first show was given at Novelty Theatre, Bombay.
- 1897 First regular **film show (Life of Christ)** was held by Manek **D.Sethna**.
- 1901 The first topical film when Dr. **R. P. Paranjpye** returned from England.
- 1912-13 First Indian film. **Raja Harischandra (3,700')** produced and directed by D. G. **Phalke**, was released at Coronation Cinema, Sandhurst Road, Bombay.
- 1918 **Indian** Cinematograph Act passed providing for censorship of films and licensing of cinemas.
- 1922-23 Entertainment Tax levied in Bengal and Bombay.
- 1925-26 **The light of Asia**, produced by the Great Eastern Film Corporation in collaboration with a German concern. **Emalka** Film Co.
- 1927-28 Cinematograph Enquiry Committee appointed by the Government of **India** under the Chairmanship of Dewan Bahadur T. Rangachari.
- 1929 Formation of the Prabhat Film Co., Poona and Ranjit film Co., Bombay. Foreign Talkie (first **Universal's Melody Of Love**) came to India.
- 1930 New Theatres Ltd., established in Calcutta.
- 1931 **Alam Ara**, first Indian Talkie feature produced by Ardeshir M. Irani (**Imperial** Film Co.).
- 1932 The Motion Picture Society of India formed.
- 1935 **Pu ran Bhakt Devdas and Chandidas**, produced by New Theatres, **Calcutta**, set a high standard in Film production. Playback introduced in films. The first All India Motion Picture Convention was held at Bombay (**February**). **Himansu Rai and Devika Rani** founded the Bombay Talkies Ltd., at Bombay.
- 1936 **The** second All India Motion Picture Convention was held in Madras under **the** Presidentship of **Chimanlal B. Desai**. **Amar** Jyothi of Prabhat sent to **the** Fourth International Exhibition of Cinematograph Art at Venice.

- 1936 Bengal Motion Pictures Association established in **Calcutta**
- 1937 Formation of Indian Motion Picture Producers Association in **Bombay**. Release of **Kisan Kanya**, the first Indian film in **colour**, produced by Ardeshir M. Irani after the first unsuccessful effort of Prabhat in **Sairandhri**. **Sant Tukaram** was ranked among the three best pictures at the Fifth International Exhibition of Cinematographic Art Venice.
- 1938 Formation of South Indian Film Chamber of Commerce in Madras and Indian Motion Picture Distributors' Association in **Bombay**.
- 1939 Indian **film** industry celebrated its Silver **Jubilee** in May.
- 1941 **The Court Dancer**, of Wadia Movietone, **first** exclusively Indian Film in **English**, released at Metro in Bombay and sent to the U.S.A. Formation of the Motion Pictures Association, Delhi.
- 1942 Shortage in the supply of raw **film** and equipments due to war and government **restrictions** on the length of **film** (11,000' for features and 400' for trailers).
- 1943 Government control on the distribution of raw **film**.
The Information Films of India and Indian News Parade set up by Government to produce **documentaries** and newsreels. Exhibition of "Government Approved" films made compulsory under D.I.R 44A.
- 1944 Death of Dada Saheb Phalke.
Film Advisory Committee set up by Government to advise them on the distribution of raw **film**.
Increase in entertainment tax in Bombay, Madras, U.P. and C.P.
- 1945 Resignation of Industry's representatives from the Film **Advisory** Board. Removal of control on raw film distribution (December) on the length of films.
- 1946 Restrictions on the length of films and obligations to show "approved" films lapsed with the expiry of the Defence of India Rules.
Closure of the Information Films of India.
Neecha Nagar, produced by Chetan Anand was shown at the International Film Festival at Cannes. All India Film Conference held in Bombay under the Presidentship of Rai Bahadur Chuni Lal, President, **MPSI**.
- 1947 **Indian** Independence. **IMPPA** Produces **Azadika Utsav**. Death of K. L. **Saigal** and Master Winayak.

Increase in Entertainment Tax in U .P.C.P.. Bihar and Assam.

Stricter Censorship of Pictures

Ram Rajya. Shahjehan and the **Story Of Dr.Kotnis**, exhibited at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto. Dr.Kotnis sent to Venice Exhibition.

APPENDIX IV

List of Important Hindi Films produced in colonial India

Year	Name of the Film	Persons connected with
1913	Raja Harishchandra	Dada Saheb Phalke (Bombay) (Producer)
1921	England Returned	Dhiren Ganguly (Calcutta) (Producer)
1925	Gun Sundari	Chandulal Shah (Bombay) (Producer)
1931.	The Light of Asia	A German Indian project organised by Himansu Rai Stars: Himansurai & Sita Devi.
1931	Alam Ara	Ardeshir Irani. Star:W.M.Khan, Zubeida; 1st Hindi sound film.
1934	Karma	Himansurai's Devika Rani film.
1935	Devadas	P.C.Barua. A Bengali film; later produced in Hindi also.
1936	Acchut Kanya	Himansurai's film. Starring: Ashok Kumar and Devika Rani
1937	Sant Tukaram	A Prabhat film which won Venice Festival Award.
1937	Mukti	New Theatres; Starring: P.C. Barua & Kanan Devi
1940	Naya Sansar	Produced by Bombay Talkies
1941	Sikander	A Minerva Movie Tone Picture.
1945	Dr.Kotnis Ki Amar Kahani	Shantaram (A Rajkamal film) in English & Hindi.
1947	Shakuntala	Shantaram's 1st Indian feature film screened in U.S.A.

¹**Source:** Erik Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy, **Indian Film,**
pp.297-300.

Some of the famous directors of the period

1. Dada Saheb Phalke
2. Dhirendranath Gangopadhyaya
3. Devaki Bose
4. Shantaram
5. Himansu Rai
6. Bimal Roy

Reputed Stars:

Debaki Bose	Devika Rani
P.C. Barua	Durga Khote
Saigal	Kanan Devi
Pahari Sanyal	Gohar
Ranjit	Uma Sashi
Shantaram	Chaya Devi
Prem Adib	Sobhana Samant
Prithvi Raj Kapoor	Sulochana
Ashok Kumar	

Play Back:

Naushad Ali - Music Wizard
 Talat Mahmood
 Shamsad Begum
 Geeta Rai

APPENDIX V

Statement Showing the number of Talkies released in Telugu during the period of our study 1931 - 1947 Jyoti Chitra A Film Periodical in Telugu (Weekly) Published from Vijayawada Special Pongal Issue 1980.

S.No	Year	Name of the Film	Production Company	Name of the Director	Cast
1	1931	Bhakta Prahlada	SriKrishna	H.M. Reddy	Munipalle Subbaya, Surabhi Kamalabhai
2	1932	Paduka Pattabishekam	Sagar	Badami	Yadavalli Suryamarayana, Surabhi Kamalabhai
3	1932	Sakuntala	Sagar	Badami	Yadavalli Suryamarayana, Surabhi Kamalabhai
4	1933	Ramadasu	Imperial	-	Arati Satyanarayana, Ghantasala Radhakrishna Murthy.
5	1933	Ramadasu	East India	-	C.S.R. Anjaneyulu, Rama Tilakam
6	1933	Savitri	East India	C.Pulliah	Vemuri Gaggayya, Rama Tilakam
7	1933	Savitri	Krishna Film Company	B.V Ramanandam	Munipalle Subbaya, Surabhi Kamalabhai
8	1933	Chintamani	Madras Theatres	Kallakuri Sadasiva Rao	Pulipati Venkateswarlu, Ramatilakam
9	1933	Prithviputra	Saraswathi Cenitone	Potina Srinivasa Rao	Raghurmaiah, Parupalli Satyanarayana
10	1934	Sitakalyanam	Vel Pictures	Chitrapu Narasimha Rao	Kalyani, Bnazawada Rajaratnam
11	1934	Lavakusa	East India	C. Pulliah	Parupalli Subbarao, Sriranjani (Senior)
12	1934	Ahalya	Pioneer Films	Kochcharla Kota Ranga Rao	Kochchralakota Ranga Rao

13	1935	Sakkubai	Bharatalakshmi Pictures	Arora	Dasari Koti Ratnam, Tungala Chalapati Rao
14	1935	Kuchela	Radha Film Combines	Kallakuri Sadasiva Rao	Kurumaddala Ramachandra Rao, K. Raghuramaiah
15	1935	Harischandra	Star Combines	Rajopadhyay & P. Pullaiah	Addanki, Kannamba
16	1935	Srikrishnalilalu	Vel Pictures	Chitrapu Narasimha Rao	Vemuri Gaggayya, Sriranjani, Saluri Rajeswara Rao
17	1935	Srikrishna Tulabharam	Kasi Films	C. Pulliah	Raishyendramani, Ramanatha Sastry
18	1935	Anasuya	Arora Films	Ahin Choudhury	Tungala Chalapati Rao, Dasari Kotiratna
19	1936	Pramilarjuniyam	-	-	Thota Niranjana Rao
20	1936	Kabiru	Oriental	-	Ghantalasala Radha Krishna Murthy
21	1936	Premavijayam	Indian Art Cinetone	Krithiventi Nageswara Rao	Prabhala Krishna Murthy
22	1936	Draupadi Mana Samrakshanam	Lakshmi Films	S. Jangannath	Ballari Raghavacharya, Surabhi Kamalabhadri
23	1936	Draupadi Vasthrapatranam	Saraswathi Talkies	H.V. Babu	C.S.R. Anjaneyulu, Kannamba, Madhavapaddi
24	1936	Sulochama	Devadatta Films	Kallakuri Sadasiva Rao	Rajeswari
25	1936	Sampurna Ramayanam	Durga Films	E. Nagabhushnam S.B. Narayana	Koderu Raju, Pushpavalli
26	1936	Mayabazar	Vel Pictures	P.V. Dasu	Lakshmanaswamy, Santakumari, Rami Reddy
27	1936	Veerabhimanyu	Sagar Movietone	V.D. Ameen	Pulipati, Kanachanamala
28	1936	Sati Tulasi	Srirama Films	Chitrapu Narasimha Rao	Gaggayya, Sriranjani (Senior)

29	1936	Anasuya and Dhruva	East India	C. Pullaiah	Krishnaveni, G.N. Swamy
30	1936	Lanakadahanam	Radha Film Combindes	Kalhakuri Sadasiva Rao	Natesan
31	1937	Rukmini Kalyanam	Sribharata lakshmi	Vibhutidas	Raghuramaiah, Santakumari
32	1937	Dasavataramulu	Quality Picutres	K.C. Bhawe	Parupalli Rajakumari
33	1937	Vijayadasami	Venkatanarayan	D.G. Gune	Madhavapeddi
34	1937	Sarangadhara	Star Combindes	P. Pulliah	Santakumari, Banda
35	1937	Kanakatara	Saraswathi Talkies	H.V. Babu	Kannamba, Dommeti
36	1937	Mohini	National	Chitrapu Narasimha Rao	Gaggayya, Ramatilakam
37	1937	Rukmangada	Movietone	Kochcherlakota	Pulipati Venkateswarlu
38	1937	Naranarayana	Wadia	Ranaga Rao	
39	1937	Balayogini	Movietone	K. Subrahmanyam	S. Varalakshmi, Baby Saroja
40	1937	Vipranarayana	Motion Pictures combindes		
41	1937	Tukaram	Arora Films	Ahindra Choudhuri	Kasturi Narasimha Rao, Kanchanamala
42	1938	Mala Pilla	Central Studios	M.L. Tandon	C.S.R. Anjaneyulu, Surabhi Kamalabhai
43	1938	Grihalakshmi	Sarathi	Gudavalli	Dr. Govndarajula Subba Rao, Kanchanamala
44	1938	Chitranaliyam	Rohini Pictures	Ramabrahamam	Kannamba, Ramanujachari
45	1938	Satyanarayanavrata	Srirama Films	H.M. Reddy	Madhvapeddi, Sriranjani
46	1938	Kasulaperu	Chamria Talkie Distributors	Duvvuri Rami Rdddy C. Pulliah	Kamaraju, Hymavathi
47	1938	Kasulaperu	Chamria Talkie Distributors	C. Pulliah	Kallakuri Hanumantha Rao

1938	Chalmohanaranga	Chamria Talkie Distributors	C. Pulliah	Sundramma, Vali, Pushpavalli
45	Jarasandha	Jeya Films	Chitrapua Narasimha Rao	Gaggyya, M. V. Rajamma
46	Gulebakavali	Liberty Films	Kallakuri Sadasiva Rao	Kameswarao Rao
47	Kacha Devayani	Chamria	Dronamraju China Kameswara Rao	S.P. Lakshmama Swamy, Krishnaveni
48	Markandeya	Kubera	Chitrapu Narayana Murthy	G.N. Swamy, Gaggyya
49	Bhakta Jayadeva	Andhra Cenitone	Hiren Bose	Renduchintala, Surabhi Kamalabai
50	Mohini Bhasmasura	Andhra Talkies	C. Pullaiah	Pushpavalli, A. V. Subba Rao
51	Sri Venkateswara Mahatmyam	Famous Films	P. Pulliah	C.S.R. Anjaneyulu, Santakumari
52	Vandemataram	Vauhini Productions	B.N. Reddy	Nagaiah, Kanchnamala
53	Pasupatasthram	Ramgopal Pictures	Kochcherlakota Ranga Rao	Nidumukkala
54	Malli pelli	Sri Jagadesh Films	Y. V. Rao	Kanchanamala, Y. V. Rao
55	Rytu Bidha	Sarathi	Gudavalli Ramabrahamam	Ballari Raghava, Suryakumari
56	Vara Vikrayam	East India	C. Pulliah	Pushpavalli, Bhanumathi
57	Jayaprada	Sarada	Chitrapu Narasimha Rao	C.S.R., Ballari Lalitha
58	Mahananda	Rayalasila Jeya	Dromamraju Chinna Kameswara Rao	Kannamba, Addanki
59	Amma	Arora	Niranjan Pal	Kumari, Subba Rao

60	1939	Radha Krishna	Lakshmi Cinetone	-	Sthanam
61	1939	Usha	Modern Cinetone	G. Venkateswara Rao	Narada Ramakrishnaiah, Padmavathi Saligram
62	1939	Panduranga Vithal	Radha Films	K. Ramachandra Rao	Y. Bhadra Rao
63	1940	Mariravana	Kubera	Chitrapu Narayana Murthy	Kanchanamala, Gaggayya
64	1940	Bhoja Kalidasu	Jeya Films	H.V. Babu	Addanki, Kannamba
65	1940	Malathi Madhavam	Metropolitan	C. Pulliah	Srinivasarao, Kameswara Rao
66	1940	Chandika	Bhavani	R.S. Prakash	Ballary Raghava, Kannamba
67	1940	Sumangali	Vauhini Productions	B.N. Reddy	Nagaiah, Kumari
68	1940	Kalachakram	Naveena Bharat	Amancharla Gopala Rao	Banda, & Laksmi narayana Kanaka Lingeswara Rao,
69	1940	Barrister Parvateesam	Madras United	-	Lanka Styam, G. Varalakshmi
70	1940	Bondam Pelli	Artistes	H.M. Reddy	L. V. Pradsad
71	1940	Chaduvukunna Bharya	-	-	-
72	1940	Illalu	Indiradevi	Gudavalli Ramabrahmam	Kanchanamala, UmaMaheswara Rao
73	1940	Jeevenajoyti	Jeya Films	Dronamraju China Kameswarao Rao	Narayana Rao, Krishnaveni
74	1940	Visvamohini	Sri Jagadeesh Films	Y.V. Rao	Y. V. Rao, Lalitha
75	1940	Meerabai	Nayakala Films	B.N.R	Miss Chelam, G. V. Subba Rao
76	1940	Bhukailash	Saraswathi cine Films	Sundar Rao Nadrakami	Subbayya Naidu, Lakshmbai

77	1941	Dharmapatni	Famous Films	C. Pulliah	Santa Kumari
78	1941	Mahatma Gandhi	Documentary	-	Ramanujachari
79	1941	Tenali RamaKrishna	Rohini Pictures	H.M.Reddy	L.V. Prasad, Tilakam
80	1941	Dakshayajnam	Sobhanachala	Chitrapu	Gaggaya, Krishnaveni
81	1941	Choodamani	Janaki Pictures	NarayanaMurthy	Pushpavalli, Narayana Rao
82	1941	Talli Prema	Raja Rajeswari	Raja Sando	Kannamba, C.S.R
83	1941	Devatha	Vauhini	B.N. Reddy	Kumari, Nagaiah
84	1941	Bhaktimala	Bhaskar	Haribhai Desai	Addanki, Bhanumathi
85	1941	Apavadu	Kasthuri	Gudavalli	K.S. Prakasa Rao, Lakshmi Rajyam
86	1941	Tarumaru	Jagannath	Ramabrahmam	Parabrahma Sastry
87	1941	Bale Pelli	Jagannath	Jagannath	Hemalatha, Dr. Sivarama Krishnayya
88	1941	Chandrasaha	Vani Pictures	M.L. Rangaiah	G.N. Swamy, Surya Kumari
89	1941	Parvathi Kalyanam	Pratibha	Balaramayya	RadhaKrishnayya, Santa Kumari
90	1941	Tara Sasankam	R.S.P. Pictures	R.S. Prakash	Suri babu, Pushpavalli
91	1942	Bhakta Potana	Vauhini	K.V.Reddy	Nagaiah, Hemalatha
92	1942	Sumati	Raja Rajeswari	K.B. Nagabhusanam	Kannamba, C.S.R
93	1942	Balanagamma	Jemini	C. Pulliah	Kanchanamala, Govindarajula Subba Rac
94	1942	Jeevanmukti	Jemini	Lanka Satyam	Suribabu, Raja ratnam
95	1942	Santa Balanagamma	Santa Vasundara	S.V.S. Rama Rao	Kumari, Manjuluri Krishnarao
96	1942	Bhaktaprahlada	Sobhanachala	Chitrapu	Gaggaya, G. Varalakshmi
				Narayanamurthy	

97	1942	Satyabhama	Sri Jagadeesh Films	Y.V.Rao	Y.V. Rao, Pushpavalli
98	1942	Deenabandu	Roopavani	M.L. Bandal, R. Prakash	Narayana Rao, SuryaKumari, Sadasiva Rao
99	1942	Babruvahana	R.S.Pictures	Gudavalli Ramabrahmam	K.S. Prakasha Rao
100	1942	Patni	Sarathi	Gudavalli Ramabrahmam	Rishyendramani
101	1942	Gharana Donga	Rohini Pictures	H.M. Reddy	L.V. Prasad, Tilakam
102	1943	Bhagyalakshmi	Sri Renuka	C.Pulliah	Nagaiah, Malati
103	1943	Chenchulakshmi	T.N.T	S. Soundararajan	Kamala Kotnis, Narayana Rao
104	1943	Garuda Garava Bhangam	Pratibha	G.Balaramaiah	Gaggya, Bhanumathi
105	1943	Krishna Prema	Famous Star Combines	H.V. Babu	Bhanumati, G.V. Rao
106	1943	Pantulamma	Sarathi	Gudavalli Ramabrahmam	Lakshmirajyam, Uma Maheswara Rao
107	1943	Patibhakti	Jeyanth	P.S. Srinivasa Rao	Srinivasa Rao, Subhadra
108	1944	Bhakta Kabir	Chamria Talkie	-	-
109	1944	Bhishma	Sobhanachala	Chitrapu Narayana Murthy	Gowrinatha Sastry, Krishnaveni
110	1944	Okaroju Raju	Parachur	Joythi Sinha	Gourinatha Sastry, Purnima
111	1944	Samsara Varadhi	Sobhanachala	Barodkar, Chitrapu Narayana Murthy	Maddali Krishna Murthy, Bharata Sastry
112	1944	Sri Sita Rama jananam	Pratibha	Ghantasala Balaramaiah	Gaggya, Kamala Kotnis
113	1944	Tahsildar	Sri Jagadish	Y.V.Rao	Y.V. Rao, Kamala Kotnis

114	1944	Circus	Bharat	-	-	-
115	1945	Mayalokam	Sarathi	Gudavalli Ramarahmam P.Pulliah	Govindarajula Subba Rao, Kannamba Addanki, Kannamba	
116	1945	Maya Machchindra	Famous Star Combines	K.B. Nagabhushanam	C.S.R, Kannamba	
117	1945	Paduka Pattabhishekam	Vauhini	B.N. Reddy	Nagaiah, Bhanumathi	
118	1945	Swargaseema	Bhama	Duncan Tandon	Narasimha Rao, Taramani	
119	1945	Valmiki	Raja Rajeswari	Lanka Satyam	Suribabu, Rajeswari	
120	1946	Bhakta Tulasidas	Prabhakar	D.S.Kotnis	Prabhakara Rao, lakshmi Rajyam	
121	1946	Mangalasutram	Sarathi	L.V. Prasad	L.V. Prasad, Bhanumathi	
122	1946	Grihapravesam	Jaganmani	Dev - Pulliah	Suribabu, Lakshmi Rajyam	
123	1946	Narada Naradi	Joythi	R. Padmanabham	-	
124	1946	Setubandhanam	Pratibha	Gantasala Balaramaiah	Govindarajulu Subba Rao, Kannamba	
125	1946	Mugguru Marathilu	Sri Renuka	Nagaiah	Nagaiah, Jayamma	
126	1946	Tyagayya	Ananda	B.V. Ramanandam	Ranga Rao, Tilakam	
127	1946	Varudhini	Bharat	Atyam Suryam	G. Varalakshmi	
128	1946	Vanarani	Victory	-	-	
129	1946	Returning Soldier	Sri Sarada	L.V.Prasad	Govindarajula Subba Rao, Kannamba	
130	1947	Palnati Yuddam	Sri Venkatrama	Chitrapu Narayana Murthy	Addanki, Jayamma	
131	1947	Brahmaratham	Sobhanachala	C. Pulliah	Krishnaveni, Raghuramaiah	
132	1947	Gollabhama	Sri Chatrapati	Kallakuri Sadasiva Rao	Padmanabha Rao, Bala Sarawathi	
133	1947	Radhika				

134 1947 Ratnamala Bharani P.S. Ramakrishna Bhanumathi, Govindarajula Subba Rao
135 1947 Yogi Vemana Vauhini K.V. Reddy Nagaiah, M.V. Rajamma

APPENDIX VI

(I) MALA PILLA (Harijan Girl)¹

No. of Reels : 15
 Black and White,
 150 minutes
 (16,000 feet)

Censor C.No. : 2 052
 Date of Censor : 01.09.1938
 Madras
 Released on 25.09.1938.

Language	Telugu
Director	Gudavalli Rama Brahman
Story & Dialogues	Gudipati Venkatachalam, B.A., L.T.,
Screen Adaptation	Tapi Dharma Rao Naidu, B.A.,
Photography	Sailen Bose
Editing	Dharma Vir Singh
Art Direction	S.V.S. Rama Rao
Sound (Audiography)	P.K. Viswanath
Lyrics	Basavaraju Appa Rao, Tapi Dharma Rao
Music	B. Narasimha Rao

Characters

Sundara Rama Sastry
 Sampalata (Heroine)
 Harijan girl, Anasuya
 Chowdarayya
 Nagaraju (Hero)
 Mallikarjuna Sarma
 Muneyya
 Radhabayamma
 Production
 Produced at

Dedicated to

Cast

Dr. Govindarajula Subba Rao
 Kanchanamala
 Sundaramma
 Suri Babu
 Venkateswara Rao
 V.V. Subbaiah
 Raghavan
 Hemalata Devi
 Sarathi Films Limited, Madras
 Motion picture Producers Combine
 Limited, Madras.
 Late Mr. Kasinadhuni Nageswara Rao
 Pantulu, the departed Andhra Leader

¹The original film is available at National Film **Archive of India**, Pune. [hereafter as NFAI].

(II) GRIHA LAKSHMI
(Goddess like Housewife)

Censor Certificate : M 2000; Black and White; 35 mm; 16,500 feet;
Running time : 185 min. Print not available even at National
film Archive of India, Pune. Data partially available.

Production	Rohini Pictures Limited
Story & Screenplay	S.V. Raghavacharya
Music	Prabhala Satyanarayana
Photography	Ramanath
Sound	Sekhar
Studio	Kartikeya Films
Director	H.M. Reddy
Asst. Director	Tangirala Hanumantha Rao
Production Executive	D.L. Ramachandran
Laboratory	Ramaswamy

Character**Cast**

Radha	Kannamba
Madhuri	Kanchanamala
Santhi	Miss Sarala
Rohini	Kum. Rohini
Manikyam	Kantamma
Ganga	Anjani Bai
Dr. Krishna Rao	Ramanujachari
Gopinath	Nagaiah
Prachandra Sastri	Gouripathi Sastry
Ramlal Seth	Subba Rao
Viswasa Rao	M.C. Raghavan
Rama Rao	Koteswara Rao
Crown Prosecutor	Doraswamy
Vakil to the accused	Hanumantha Rao
Lawyer	Nagabhushanam
Marwadi Clerk	Appalaswamy
Police Inspector	Jagadeesh
Compounder	Rama Rao
Court Ameena	Venkateswarlu
Constables	Aziz & Subba Rao
Eunuch	Dorasami Raja
Settings furnished by	Spencer Company Limited, Madras

²The **Songs Book** of the movie, **Griha Lakshmi** and B.V.Dharap, **Indian Filmography**, NFAI, Pune, 1936-40, p.606.

(III) VANDEMATARAM
OR
MANGALA SUTRAM
(HAIL MOTHERLAND)
or
(Token of Marriage) 1939

35 mm; 20,000 feet; 223 min.; Censor Certificate No. M 2081

Production	Vahini Pictures
Director	B.N. Reddy
Story	B.N. Reddy
Screenplay	K. Ramnath
Dialogues & Lyrics	Samudrala Raghavacharya
Music	Chittoor V. Nagaiah
Photography	K. Ramnath
Art & Sound Recording	A.K. Sekhar
Editing	T.A.S. Mani
Production Executive	K.V. Reddy
Studio	Newtone, Madras

Characters

Raghu
Janaki
Ramayya
Parwathamma
Venkayya
Doctor
Gopalam
Anand 1
Anand 2
Lakshmi Devi
G. Subba Rao
Kalyani
Krishna Murthy

Cast

Chittoor V. Nagaiah
Kanchanamala
Doraswamy
Seshamamba
M.C. Raghavan
Mudigonda Linga Murthy
Gouripati Sastry
Usharani
Master Krishna
Kantham
Pulliah
Jayalakshmi
Rajabahadur

(IV) MALLI PELLI
(Re-Marriage)

Released on : December 17, 1939

Black & White; 35 mm; 188 min; 16,842 feet; No. of Reels : 16;
C.C. No. DT & Board : M 2129.

Director	Y.V. Rao
Dialogues & Songs	Balijepalli Lakshmikantha Kavi
Music	Vogirala Ramachandra Rao
Production	Sri Jagadish Films, Madras
Produced at	Newtone Studio, Madras

Characters

Sundar Rao (Hero)
Vakil Janardhana Rao
Lalitha (heroine)
Kaliyugananda Swamy
Subhadra
Venkata Rao
Others

Cast

Y.V. Rao
Balijepalli **Lakshmikantha Kavi**
Kanchanamala
Bezawada Raja Ratnam
Kakinadad Rajaratnam
Kocharlakota Satyanarayana
Vidwan Srinivasa Ayyangar, Vidwan
Natesa Ayyar, Rmachandra Murty,
Rajahamsa Bhagavatar, **Manikyamma**,
etc.

(V)RYTU BIDD A (A Peasant)

Black & White; 160 mins; C.C.No. : 2103, Censored by Madras Board of Censors on 29 July 1939; No. of Reels: 19; Length: 16,000 feet; Language: Telugu; Released on: 27 Aug. 1939; 6.54a.m in 11 centres.

Director	G. Rama Brahmam
Story	G. Rama Brahmam
Scenario	G. Rama Brahmam
Dialogues	T. Gopi Chand
Camera	Sailen Bose
Editing	B. Narasimha Rao
Art Director	A.V. Basavaiah Chowdary
Sound	P.K. Viswanath
Lyrics	T. Dharma Rao Naidu, Kosaraju Raghavaiah Chowdary Basava Raju Appa Rao Nellore Venkatarama Naidu & Tummala Seetharama Murty Chowdary
Music	B. Narasimha Rao
Character	Cast
Narsi Reddy (Ryot)	T. Raghava
Kasa Subbamma	B. Narasimha Rao
Zamindar	G.V. Seethapati Rao
Ramajogi	P. Suri Babu
Tahsildar	N. Nagaraja Rao
Zamindar's brother	K.N. Simha
Karanam	V.V. Subbaiah
Rami Reddy	K. Raghavaiah Chowdary
Sowcar	M.C. Raghavan
Zamindar's son	Master Nehru
Venkaiah	E. Seshiah
Village Munsif	G. Venkataramaiah
Krishna Reddy	V.V. Subbaraju
Police Inspector	G. Prasad
Jokey	Bh. Pulliah
Seeta	Surya Kumari
Rajaratnam	Sundaramma
Lakshmi	Padmavati Devi
Rani	Parvathi Bai
Beggar Girl	Varalakshmi
Kasa Masta	Gangaratnam
Dasi Subbulu	Sanjiva Kumari
Dasi	Balamba
Production	Sarathi Films Limited, Madras.

The original film is available at NFAI, Pune.

(VI) VARA VIKRAYAM
(Sale of Bridegroom)

Censor Certificate No. C 19552; 35 mm/39 W; 17,500 ft.; 195 min;

production	East India Film Company, Calcutta.
Director	C. Pullaiah
Cast	Balijepalli Laxmikantam Daita Gopalam K. Satyanarayana Tungala Chalapathi Rao M. Ramachandra Murty Sriranjani; Dasari Kotiratnam Pushpavalli Bhanumathi Subhadra, etc.

⁴A review by Khasa Subba Rao, [Editor: **Indian Express**], in **Andhra Patrika**, 28 April 1939; B.V.Dharap, **Indian Filmography, 1936-40**, National Film Archive of India, Pune, p.426.

(VII) **SUMANGALI**
 (A Married Woman)
 1940

C.C. No. M2165; 17,546 ft; No. of reels : 17; 195 min;

Production	Vauhini
Director	B.N. Reddy
Story, Screenplay	
Editing & Photography	K. Ramnath
Dialogue & Lyrics	Samudrala Raghavacharya
Music	V. Nagaiah
Art & Sound Recording	A.K. Sekhar
Production Executive	K.V. Reddy
Studio	Newtone, Madras
Characters	Cast
Saraswathi	Kumari
Parvathi	Malathi
Satyam	Giri
Pantulu	Nagaiah
Gopalakrishnaiah	Doraswamy
Nageswara Rao	Lingamurthy
Pitchaiah	Gouripati Sastry
Brahmam	Subba Rao
Narasaiah	Narsimha Reddy
Sub-inspector	Satyanarayana
Zamindar	Chandrasekharam
Subbama	Parvathi Bai
Gangamma	Seshamamba
Lakshmi	Rajaratnam
Gangadhara Kathagadu	A. Rama Rao and many other

⁵Randor Guy, **B.N.Reddi: A Monograph**, National Film Archive of India, Pune, 1985; **Krishna Patrika**, 8 June 1940; **Andhra Patrika**, 16 Feb., 24 and 31 May 24 and 7 June 1940; Descriptive list of films in NFAI, Pune.

(VIII) ILLALU
(House-wife)

C.C. No. M2188; 17,000 feet; 189 min.; Released on September 27, 1940 in 11 centres.

production	Indiradevi Films Limited
Director	Gudavalli Ramabrahmam
photography	Silen Bose
Audiography	Viswanathan
Music	Rajeswara Rao
Dialogues	Dharma Rao
Cast	Uma Maheswara Rao, Kanchanamala, Rajyam, Bala Saraswathi, Rajeswara Rao, Sitapathi Rao, Suribabu, Raghavan.

⁶B.V.Dharap, **Indian Filmograph**, NFAI, Pune, p.781; **Andhra Patrika**, 2 and 9 August, 27 Sept., 4 Oct. 1940; **Zamin Ryot**, 31 Jan. 1941, p.13.

(IX) DHARMA PATNI
(Virtuous Wife)

C.C.No. B23164; 15,306 feet; 171 min; Released on January 10, 1941.

Production	Famous Films, Bombay
Direction & Scenario	P. Pullaiah
Story	V.S. Khandekar
Dialogues	Chakrapani
Lyrics	Dyta Gopalam
Music	Anna Saheb Mainkar
Editing	Baburao Barodkar
Photography	N.K. Pai
Studio	Shalini Cinetone
Laboratory & Processing	Famous Cine Lab, Bombay

Characters

Radha
Uma
Sridevi
Mohan
Anand
Father of Mohan
Mother of Radha
Judge

Cast

Shanta Kumari
Bhanumathi
Raju
Hanumantha Rao
Kutumba Rao
Adinarayanayya
Narimani
Achari

⁷B.V.Dharap, **Indian Filmograph**, NFAI, Pune, p.781. The **Songs Book** of the film and also recorded personal interview with Shantakumari [on audio cassette]; **Zamin Ryot**, 17 and 24 Jan., and 14 March 1941.

(X) MAHATMA GANDHI⁸

1941

C.C.No. M2223; 12,000 feet; 134 min; A Great Telugu Historical Film.

Production	Documentary Films Limited, Madras.
Background Music	Kannamba
Distributors	Hemalatha Pictures, Madras
Editor	A.K. Chettiar
Technical Director	Dr. P.V. Pathi
Camera	P. Subrahmanyam and Raghuvir Singh
Recording	Behram Barucha
Studio	Wadia Movitone, Bombay
Story Editor	Rao Bahadur Sri S.V. Chari
Commentary Written by	Andhra Visarada Tapi Dharmarao Naidu
Commentators	Smt Padmavathi Devi Sri Mohana Rao V. Ramachandra Murthy
Music	Bezawada Rajaratnam Pasupuleti Kannamba Tanguturi Surya Kumari Chittoor V. Nagaiah

⁸Booklet Mahatma Gandhi; B.V.Dharap, Indian Filmography, NFAI, Pune, p.867.

**(XI) DEVATA
(Goddess)**

C.C. No. M2257; Black and White, No. of Reels : 17; Length
16,751 feet - 187 min; Released on : September 11, 1941.

Production	Vauhini
Direction	B.N. Reddy
Story, Screenplay & Photography	K. Ramnath
Dialogue & Lyrics	Samudrala Raghavacharya
Music	V. Nagaiah
Editing	Narayanan
Art & Sound Recording	A.K. Sekhar
Production Executive	K.V. Reddy

Characters

Venu (Hero)
Venkayya
Sukumar
Balaramayya
Chennadu
Haridas
Rangadu
Lakshmi (Heroine)
Seeta
Vimala
Mangamma
Tripuramba

Cast

Nagaiah
Linga Murthy
Narayana Rao
Subba Rao
Gowripati Sastry
Rendu Chintala
Aswathama
Kumari
Suryakumari
Rajratnam
Parwati Bai
Seshamamba

(XII) APAVADU
(Slander)

C.C.No. M2280; 1941; length : 17,950 feet - 200 min;

Production	Kasturi Films Sarathi Fame
Director	Gudavalli Ramabrahman
Story & Dialogues	Andhra Visarada Tapi Dharma Rao
Music Director	Bhimavarapu Narasimha Rao
Songs	Basavaraju Appa Rao Tapi Dharma Rao K. Raghavaiah Chowdary
Photograph	Sudhish Chandra Ghatak
Audiograph	Ramaswamy Aiyar
Editing	D.R. Barodkar
Art Director	Janakiran
Studio	Central Studios Limited., Coimbatore.
Distributors	Saraswathi Talkies Limited., Bezawada.

Characters

Kamala
Kantham
Prakash
Kamaraju
Anasuya
Ratnam
Venkayya
Mangapathi
Bojji
Rani
Kotappa
Others

Cast

Rajyam
Bala Saraswathi
Prakasa Rao
Raghuramayya
Purnima
Balamani
Raghavan
Seshagiri
Varalakshmi
Sarasiruham
Krishna Murty
J.V. Subba Rao, Vimala Kumari,
Master Prabhakar, Raju, Pushpavathi
J.Rama Rao, Tatayya, Saja, Anjanibai.

(XIII) PANTULAMMA
(Teacher)
1943

Production	Sarathi Films
Director	Gudavalli Ramabrahmam
Story	Malladi Viswanatha Kaviraja
Dialogues & Songs	Samudrala Raghavacharya
photography	P.V. Krishna Aiyar
Sound	V.S. Raghavan
Music	Galipenchala Narasimha Rao
Art	V.M. Vaturkar
Cast	Uma Maheswara Rao
	Vangara Venkata Subbaiah
	Kumpatha Subba Rao
	Dr. Seethapathi Rao
	Rajyam
	Parwathi Bai
	Sitabayamma
	Hemalatha
	Samrajyam, etc.,

⁹B.V.Dharap, **Indian Filmograph**, NFAI, Pune, p.1044 and The **Songs Book**.

(XIV) SWARGA SEEMA
(A Place of Paradise!)

Censor Certificate No.917; Date of Censor: 14 July 1953; Black and White; length: 10,996feet;originally believed to be released in 1945.

Language	Telugu
Director	B.N. Reddy
Story	Chakrapani
Screenplay	B.N. Reddy
Dialogues	S.V.R. Acharya
Photography	Marcus Bartley
Editing	V.S. Narayan
Art Direction	F. Nagoor
Songs	Acharya and Nalinikanth
Audiograph	Dinshaw K. Tehrani and T.T. Arasu
Music Direction	Chittoor V. Nagaiah and Ramachandra Rao

Character

Murthi
Kalyani
Sujatha
Naren
Gangamma
Srinivas
Raghaviah
Ramakrishna Rao
Production
Producer
Produced at
Released on

Cast

Nagaiah
Jayamma
Bhanumathi
Narayana Rao
Linga Murthy
Siva Rao
Rangaswamy
Dr. Seethapathi
The Vauhini Pictures Limited
B.N. Reddy
Newtone Studios
January 10, 1946.

¹⁰The original film is available in NFAI, Pune.

(XV) GRIHA PRAVESHAM
(Entering a New House)

Censor Certificate given by President Madras Board of Censors,
Government of India on August 26, 1946, Black and White, Length
10,995 feet - 146 min; No. of Reels : 14.

Language	Telugu
Director	L.V. Prasad
Story and Screenplay	Gopichand
Dialogues	Gopichand
Camera	Selvaraj
Director of Photography	Jiten Benerjee
Editing	Ramakrishna
Art Direction	Nagoor
Sound	Dinshah K. Tehrani
Lyrics	Nalinikantha Rao
Music	Nalinikantha Rao

Star**Cast**

Bhanumathi	Janaki
Hemalatha	Tulasamma
Sri Ranjani	Lalitha
Baby Inidira	Chitti
Prasad	Somalingam
C.S.R.	Ramana Rao
Rangaswami	Sundara Rao
Siva Rao	Acharyulu
Krishnaveni	Rajeswari
Production	Sri Sarathi Films, Madras

This film was dedicated to the founder of Sarathi Films and
progressive Director late Sri Gudavalli Ramabrahmam.

(XVI) PALNATI YUDDHAM
(Battle of Palnadu)

Length : 15,181 feet - 169 min; Released in 1947.

Production	Sarada Productions
Founder	Gudavalli Ramabrahmam
Direction	L.V. Prasad (First 3 reels directed by Ramabrahmam)
Associate Director	Mohan Katoor
Production Executive	Koganti Venkata Subba Rao
Production Manager	Anumukonda
Screenplay & Dialogues , Lyrics	Samudrala Raghavacharya
Music	Galipenchala Narasimha Rao
Dance	Vendantam Raghavaiah
Photography	Jiten Benerjee
Audio	Dinshaw K. Trehani
Art Director	Nagoor and Wali
Editor	Manikyam
Distributors for Andhra & Bengal	Famous Films Circuit, Nellore and Vijayawada.

Distributors for
ceded, Mysore, Nizam
Bombay provinces

Mallikarjuna Pictures, Bezwada

Characters

Brahmanna
Nagamma
Nalagammaraju
Narasinga Raju
Kommaraju
Malideva Raju
Balachandrudu
Alaraju
Kannamadas
Veera Reddy
Subbanna
Manchala
Peramma
Koyapilla
Dancer
Aitamba
Rekhamba
Annamma

Cast

Dr. G.V. Subba Rao
Srimati Kannamba
Srivatsa Venkateswara Rao
Lingamurthi
Dr. G.V. Seetapathi Rao
D.N. Sadasiva Rao
Akkenini Nageswara Rao
Koneru Kutumba Rao
V. Koteswara Rao
Lingam Subba Rao
Vangara Venkata Subbaiah
S. Varalakshmi
Chandra
Narimani
Rajabala
P. Visweswaramma
Annapurna
Gangaratnam

(XVII) YOGI VEMANA
(Saint Vemana)

Production	Vauhini Pictures Limited
Direction	K.V. Reddy
Story-	S.V. Raghavacharya
Screenplay	K.V. Reddy & K. Kameswara Rao
Music	Chittoor V. Nagaiah
	Ogirala Ramachandra Rao
Director of Dance	Vedantam Raghavaiah
Photography	Marcus Barttley
Sound	T.T. Arasu
Art	F. Nagoor 6, S.V.S. Rama Rao
Editing	Jambulingam & P.V. Koteswara Rao
Laboratory	Harikrishna & Yathi Raja Rao
Studio	Newtone, Madras
Asst. Directors	K. Kameswara Rao & C. Nageswara Rao
Production Assistant	A.V. Koteswara Rao

Characters

Vemana
Abiramayya
Anavema Reddy
Karanam
Siva Yogi
Mohanangi
Narasamamba
Komalangi
Jyothi
Kanakam
Appanna
Archakadu

Cast

Chittoor V. Nagaiah
M. Linga Murthy
R. Rami Reddy
V. Lakshmikantham
Rayaprolu Subrahmanyam
M.V. Rajamma
Parwathi Bai
B. Kanthamani
Baby Krishnaveni
A. Seeta
K. Doraiswamy
C. Nageswara Rao

APPENDIX YU

THE FIRSTS IN TELUGU CINEMA

Producer	Raghupati Venkaiah of Machilipatnam b/o The great social reformer Raghupati Venkata Ratnam Naidu
Studio proprietor	Raghupati Venkaiah of Machilipatnam b/o The great social reformer Raghupati Venkata Ratnam Naidu
Exhibitor	Raghupati Venkaiah of Machilipatnam b/o The great social reformer Raghupati Venkata Ratnam Naidu
Exhibition Hall	Victoria Public Hall in Madras (1909)
Cinema Theatre	Gaiety in Madras
Studio	Glass in Madras
Director	RS. Prakash
Silent Feature film	S/o Raghupati Venkaiah Bhishma Pratigna 1921
Hero	RS. Prakash in Bhishma Pratigna
Film Laboratory	Govardhan Laboratories of RS. Prakash
The Telugu Silent film produced in Andhra	Markandeya by C. Pulliah (1926)
Permanent Theatre in Andhra	'Maruti' in Vijayawada (1921) built by Potina Srinivasa Rao
Sound Film	'Bhakta Prahlada (1931)
Hero of Sound film	Munipalle Subbiah
Heroine of Sound film	Surabhi Kamla Bai
Music Director of Sound film	H.R. Padmanabha Sastri
Social Film	'Prema Vijayam'

Hero of social film	Prabhala Krishna Murthy (1936)
Popular Hero	Chittor V. Nagaiah
Popular Heroine	Ranchana Mala
Tragedy Film	Sumangali (1940) of B.N. Reddy
Pre-Marital Sex related theme	Devata (1941) of B.N. Reddy
Telugu Cinema exhibited in International Film Festival. Vietnam	'Swarga Seema' of B.N. Reddy.
Feminist Heroine	Bhanumathi in Griha Pravesain (1946)
Akkineni Nageswara Rao's First appearance in	'Dharma Patni' (1941)
NT. Rama Rao's First appearance in	'Mana Desam' (1949) of L.V. Prasad
Cinema with high technical values	Malleswari (1951) of B.N. Reddy
Famous film of Akkineni Nageswara Rao	Keelu Gurram (1949)
Famous film of NT. Rama Rao	Paatala Bhairavi
Woman Director	Bhanumathi through 'Chandi Rani' 1953
Multi Star Film	'Chandralekha' of Jemini Studios 1948
Film gained International Recognition	Bangaru Paapa (1955) of B.N. Reddy
Great Mythological cinemas that made NTR Avatara Purusha	'Maaya Bazar' (1957) of K.V. Reddy 'Sri Venkateswara Mahatmyam' ¹ (1959) of P. Pulliah
Tragedy king	'Lava Kusa' (1963) of C. Pulliah Akkineni through Devadas (1953)

Dual Role Cinema	Iddaru Mitrulu (1961) - ANR
Urvasi Awardee	Sharada
Awardee of Afro Asian Film Festival at Jakarta or Telugu Cine Artist of International Recognition	S.V. Ranga Rao for his action in Nartanasala (1963)
Cinema with all new Faces	Tene Manasulu (1962) of Adurthi Subba Rao
Detective Cinema	Goodhachari - 116 acted by Krishna (1966).
Novel Based Hit Cinema	Dr.Chakravarthi(1964)
Romantic Hero	A. Nageswara Rao through 'Premnagar' (1971)
Scope Cinema	Alluri Seetha Rama Raju (1974) of Krishna
70 mm Cinema	Simhasanam (1986)
3D Cinema	Sagar (1985)
Cinema on Freedom Fighter	Alluri Seetha Rama Raju (1974)
Commercial Trend Setter	Adavi Ramudu (1977)
New Wave Cinema or Parallel Cinema	Oka Voori Katha (1977) of Mrinalsen
Block-buster in Entire South India	Sankarabharanam (1980)
Best Feature Film with Mass appeal and aesthetic appeal	Sankarabharanam (1980)
Dada Saheb Phalke Awardee	B.N.Reddy (1975)
Hero who became Chief Minister of A.P.	N. T. Rama Rao

Powerful Heroine	Vijaya Santhi through 'Pratighatana' (1985) and 'Kartavyam' 1990
With Cartoons in Mainstream Cinema	Bobbili Raja (1990)
With Special Effects of Photography	Bhairava Dwipam (1994) by Venki Samba Murthi
With Optical Effects and Computer Graphics	Premikudu Mukaabala Song by Azim
ANR and NTR combindly acted in	Palleturi Pilla (1950)
National Award was given to a writer for a song	Telugu Veera Levara in Alluri Seetha Rama Raju to Sri Sri
Comedian	L.V. Prasad as Chandamark in Bhakta Prahlada (1931)
Relangi's First film	Srikrishna Tulabharam (1935)
Comedy Film	Barrister Parvateesam (1940)
Relangi Became Popular	Golla Bhama (1947)
Allu Ramalingaiah's First Film	Puttillu (1953)
Children in the lead role	Markandeya (1938)
Technovision Film	Dongala Dopidi (1978)
National Award Winning film (Silver Medal/Rajat Kamal)	Pedda Manushulu (1955)
Telugu Film Weekly	Chitrakala (1937) Ed: Inturi Venkateswara Rao
All India certificate of Merit	Thodu Dongalu 1955
<u>At All India Level</u>	
Best Actress	Sharada (Nimajjanam , 1978)
Best Music Director	K.V. Mahadevan (1980) Sankarabaranam

Best Male Play Back Singer	S.P. Bala Subrahmanyam, Sankarabaranam (1980)
Best Female Play Back Singer	P. Suseela, Siri Siri Muvva (1976)
Best Lyric Writer	Sn Sn. Alluri Seetha Rama Raju (1973)
Best Editing	Siri Siri Muvva (1976)
Best Sound Recording	S. Ramanatham, Bhakta Kannappa (1976)
Andhra Pradesh State Award Golden Nandi Winner	Doctor Chakravarthi (1964)
Silver Nandi	Keelu Bommalu (1964)
Bronze Nandi	Gudigantalu(1964)
Best Cinematographer	Vincent, Adavi Ramudu (1977)
Best Screen Play Writer	B.N. Reddy, Pellikani Pelli (1976)
Golden Nandi for Best Childrens' Film	Ganga Bhavani (1978), Produced by CFS. India, Bombay.
Golden Nandi for Best Documentary Film	Pragati Padam to Bhagyanagara (1968), Produced by M.C.H., Hyderabad.
Silver Nandi for Second Best Documentary Film	Domalapai Dadi (1977), Produced by M.C.H., Hyderabad.

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