

# WOMEN, SOCIAL CHANGE AND POLITICS IN EARLY 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY TELANGANA

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# DECLARATION

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This is to certify that I Rayapolu Swarupa Rani have carried out the research embodied in the present thesis for the full period prescribed under the Ph.D ordinances of the University.

I declare that to the best of my knowledge that no part of this thesis was earlier submitted for the award of the research degree of any university.

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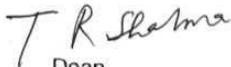
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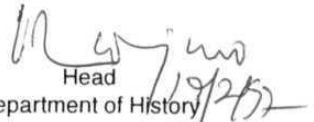


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**To  
My Parents**

## Chapter 1

# INTRODUCTION

Since childhood I have heard from my parents stories of the exciting times of the 1940's in Hyderabad. Family members used to discuss problems of some children being given in Jeetam (Bondage), and the various ways women needed to be protected in a feudal society. These stories of oppression as well as the struggles of liberation, excited me. What started as a general curiosity about Telangana gradually grew into an interest to understand women's lives in the Telangana region.

The stories I heard or read were essentially of the participation of women in the Telangana Armed struggle. The question which interested me was the context or history which brought women in such large numbers into an Armed struggle. As there are already some prominent writings on Telangana Armed struggles, I decided to focus on the prior decades, and try and understand the various

processes that led to participation of women in the Armed struggle.

I have focussed on the conditions of women's life then, their attempts at organizing themselves to overcome their social and economic infirmities, and the vain attempts made by some of them to tread new grounds, the various fields they had chosen to work and serve in, and finally the numerous aspects of life they could not touch due to the handicaps they had to suffer under an unhelpful administration and an equally backward social life they had to lead.

In this study an attempt is made to examine the nature of women's participation in a changing social and political environment, in Hyderabad state in the early part of the 20th century. The early 20th century in the Nizam's state of Hyderabad is a rich period for study. During this period, society here underwent rapid change and in about four decades posed a powerful challenge to the feudal power of the Nizam. This was a gradual process, with initial demands for linguistic and cultural freedom. Over a period of time this formalized into organizations with specific political agenda.

It is within this context that this study focuses on women's role and participation, its nature and the way this process was impacted by the larger socio-political trends is also examined.<sup>1</sup>

There could be several questions on what constituted 'politics' in this early period. Usually the term politics conjures up an image of an organization with specific ideology and objectives and an attempt to realize these through the capture and exercise of power, of representation and elections. In this study we are using the term 'politics' in a broader sense. Given the feudal nature of the Nizam's state the very act of questioning and demanding freedom of expression and mobility is certainly to be seen as a political act. The initial questioning against the feudal state was articulated by newly emerging intelligentsia, urban and upper caste in character and in its interest. This manifested itself initially through cultural and literary activities, which gradually developed into a formal political stand. This process changed in time, in its location, its social composition and in its long term objectives.<sup>2</sup>

Our understanding therefore is that any questioning whether

to successfully alter the situation or not is a political activity. In terms of women our interest is to understand the junctures within which opportunities and social spaces were created for women. We would like to emphasise that women are not treated as an undifferentiated and homogeneous group. The study examines women's participation in terms of social composition, male and female perceptions of women's role and participation. To reconstruct women's role and participation, at the same time an attempt is made to understand the nature of women's participation and gain an insight into the linkages between a particular political movement and the social composition of women it drew out.<sup>3</sup>

In any attempt to reconstruct women's participation in historical processes, several problems are often encountered, paucity of literature being the main one. A variety of sources have been used in this endeavour. In almost all such studies for the period there are bounded to be references to women. It is however in the studies done on the Telangana Armed struggle that a greater attention has been paid to the participation of women in a radical mass move-

ment. For the earlier period references and information are scattered and sketchy.

The works of prominent social leaders like Madapati Hanumantha Rao's *Telangana Andhrodyama Charitra*, Vol. 1 and Veldurti Manik Rao's *Hyderabad Swatanrodyama Charitra*, Ravi Narayana Reddy's *Veera Telangana Anubhavalu*, Gnapakalu and, Naa Jeevana Padhamloo, M. Narsing Rao's *50 Years of Hyderabad*, Illendula Saraswathi Devi's *Tejomurthulu*, give us a vivid picture of the socio-economic and political situations and development of the period under study. These studies are of particular interest because these writers were active participants and were key players in various movements.

The diary written during 1925-35 by Yellapragada Sita Kumari, a prominent social workers of the 1930's, gives us an insight into the understanding of the social conditions of women in Telangana, through the eyes of contemporary women, and the reasons why she was moved to play an active public role to change the situation. Perhaps

the most important sources used in this study is the Proceedings of the Andhra Mahasabha and Mahilasabha for the first seven conferences for the period 1930 to 1939. In these proceedings the emerging perspective on women can be seen.

Contemporary publications like Golconda Patrika (1924 to 1947), Hyderabad Information, (1940's), Hyderabad Affairs, Hyderabad Today (1940's) Reddy Rani Journal (1924-28), Bhagyanagar Patrika (1925 to 1933) are prominent sources, among many others which have helped in reconstructing social and political events of the time.

The history of women's associations has been reconstructed based on souvenirs of various associations and contemporary journals. In addition, Dharmendra Prasad's Social and Cultural Geography of Hyderabad City, (1985) deals with various recreational and social clubs for women.

In addition to this various Government publications and documents belonging to the Home department, Education department,

Industries and Commerce departments, Court of Wards, confidential records of Andhra Pradesh State Archives in Tarnaka and also at Secretariat office of Government of Andhra Pradesh have also been used.

During the course of this study I was fortunate to have been able to interview some prominent women leaders like. Burgula Anantha Lakshmi, Pramila Mahendra, Illendula Saraswathi Devi, Smt. Satyavathi, Smt. Brij Rani Gour, Jamalunnisa Begum and Saraswathi Rao daughter of Yellapragada Sita Kumari. These interviews helped in getting a flavour of the times.

There have been some prominent studies like Pro. Sarojini Regani's '*Highlights of Freedom Struggle in Andhra Pradesh*', which describes the nationalist movement in Hyderabad State vividly. The same author's '*Who is who*' of Andhra Pradesh Volume one and two which deal with women activists in various movements. Prof. Vaikuntam's '*Education and Social Change in South India, Andhra. (1880-1920)*', gives us a vivid picture of women and their educational

status in Nizam's State and efforts to change it.

Sheela Raj's *'Medievalism to Modernism Socio-economic and Cultural history of Hyderabad 1869-1911'*, has helped to understand the social conditions in Hyderabad State.

There have been many works on the Telangana Armed Struggle, for instance P. Sundaraiah's *Telangana People's Struggle and its Lessons*, (1972), in which mention was made about the women participants. He devoted one chapter to women participants. This struggle has also been studied under peasants uprising in Dhanagare's *'Peasant Movement in India 1920-1950'*. In Ravi Narayana Reddy's *'Naa Jeevana Padhamlo'*, also dealt with Telangana armed struggle. Barry Pavier's (1981) *The Telangana Movement 1944-51'* is an excellent work which gives us a vivid picture of Telangana socio-economic conditions and Telangana movement. Renu Chakravarthy's *'Communists in Indian Women's Movement 1940-50'*.

One of the significant works on Telangana women in recent

times was carried out by a women's group, Stree Shakti Sanghatan. Their work *We were making History (1985)*, reconstructs history of woman's participation, through oral narratives of women who were active in the Armed struggle. This work is unusual in that it attempts to capture women's perception of their participation in their own words.

As already indicated, the focus in this study is primarily on the period prior to the Telangana Armed struggle to examine and reconstruct the growing participation of women in public affairs.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The brief introduction chapter focuses on the significance of the theme under study, the questions that are sought to be examined, and locates these details in other works on the Telangana region.

Chapter two deals with the slow and steady awakening in the province, which led to the formation of strong social organizations focusing on minority concerns, literary pursuits and political aspira-

tions. The chapter also deals with the varied organizations through which the demand and hopes of the different social groups were articulated. In this process women's problems, women's issues were taken up.

Chapter three deals with the literary and cultural renaissance and the increasing political activity. This process is sought to be seen through the various organizations that came into existence.

Chapter four deals with the social context in which women's associations emerged. The earlier caste and community associations, the library movement and the growing political articulation in the Nizam's dominion, created a space for women to organize. Women's problems and women's education which were core concerns of these varied trends, created an environment in which women started organizing. In this chapter a detailed history of women's organizations, their establishment and goals are studied.

Chapter Five deals with the Andhra Mahila Mahasabha confer-

ences held in Telangana region simultaneously with Andhra Mahasabha and other, Women's conferences held in Nizam's dominion. The speeches and the political participation of women through their own organizations is examined in great detail.

Chapter six focuses on the radical phase of women's participation i.e. Telangana Armed Struggle. Here the study deals with demands for freedom of social expression and organization, which were essentially concerns of the urban middle class of Hyderabad. The focus in the phase is on the structures of oppression, questioning the feudal nature of the state and compelling a shift of activity from the urban and semi-urban areas to the rural areas is examined thoroughly.

Chapter seven deals with the major conclusions of the study. Biographical sketches of prominent women who have participated in various social movements in Telangana have been included as an annexure.

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## Chapter 2

# THE SOCIAL CONTEXT AND PROCESS OF CHANGE : EMERGENCE OF COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

In this chapter an attempt has been made to deal with the slow and steady awakening in the province, which led to the formation of strong social organizations focusing on minority concerns, literary pursuits and political aspirations. It was through these varied organizations that the demands and hopes of the different social groups were articulated. In this process women's problems, the need for women's education became central concerns for many of these organizations.

The contradictions between a Muslim minority supported by feudal rulers and heterogeneous plural populace began to sharpen from the end of the 19th century.

The grievances against the state were many. Lack of civil liberties, lack of access to education because of the insistence that Urdu be medium of instruction, low representation in the political

and administrative set up, lack of economic, commercial and industrial development. And finally all powerful oppressive and feudal agrarian administrative structure whose very existence ensured deprivation of human rights.

Forty percent of the territory was under big feudal estates. Some of them had civil and criminal powers with functioning courts and jails of their own. There was inhuman feudal exploitation in the rest of the sixty percent of the Hyderabad state. The peasants were supposed to be directly under the Nizam's government and no feudal exploitation should have taken place here, but in actual practice, there were a category of feudal exploiters like Deshmukhs and Deshpandes between the state and the peasants for the collection of land tax.<sup>1</sup> They collected exorbitant rent from the peasants to whom they rented out part of the land.

Exorbitant rates of interest on loans (varying from 24% to 50%) and the accumulated arrears, frequent visitation of drought and other vagaries of climate affecting crop prospects, extravagant expenditure on marriages, domestic expenses, litigations, consequences of world economic depression etc. increased the indebtedness and misery of the people. In these circumstances land rapidly passed

on from the possession of agriculturists into the hands of non-agriculturists and money lenders. Thus, economic development programmes were generally neglected in the state and woefully neglected in the Jagirdari areas since they had to manage everything within their own limited resources. To ameliorate the situation, the department of industry and commerce, which came into existence by 1920, took up the promotion of textiles, cement, cigar, tea, button making and other industries. But these infant industries could not cope with the economic fluctuations and depressions. The industrial progress in British India was conspicuously more advanced than in the Nizam's Dominion.<sup>2</sup> People were aware of this disparity. The Nizam's government monopolized certain industries and promoted the interests of the Muslim capitalists. The government policies with regard to agriculture put the entire Muslim community under the 'protected class'. Therefore, the amelioration of the unhappy conditions of the people was practically insignificant, in spite of periodic superficial tampering with the economic system.<sup>3</sup>

The other forms of exploitation that obtained were bonded labour and cheap labour, harassment by the jagirdars etc. Harassment of the merchants and trading community by the officials was also quite common. In addition to it, the moneylenders, who were

mostly Arabs, Rohillas and Marwadi merchants not only collected high rate of interest but used coercive methods in the recovery of loans, which adversely affected the state of economy. There was no regular system of banking and related facilities and money transactions were in the hands of private agencies who squeezed the money not only from the common man but also from the state.<sup>4</sup> Communication system in the state was poor. In 1921, there was only 870.14 miles of railway line in which the Government was financially interested. Though the Government felt that the construction and improvement of rail lines and roads would go a long way to improve economic and social life of the people, by 1940 it had only 1360 miles of rail line and 5911 miles of roads. The progress was slow. It was quite inadequate to cater to the needs of people, particularly in developing contacts between the rural and urban areas for trade and commerce.<sup>5</sup>

There was no civil liberty in the state. There was no public platform to voice protest. However, the adjoining British provinces supplied certain clues and methods to start a struggle for emancipation and in that connection in 1921 the Hyderabad State Reforms Association was started and its sessions were carried outside Hyderabad, since there was a prohibition on it in the state. The

work of representing peoples grievances on economic issues was systematically taken up. Several practising lawyers, connected with the movement took interest in this kind of work and the socio-economic problems formed the base for their struggle. Up to this period there was not a single elected democratic institution in the state even on the basis of a limited franchise. Students' activities were completely restricted. They could not join any organization whether political, social or cultural. Though the Indian National Congress was formed in 1885, it was not until 1918 that the first Congress Committee was formed by Vaman Naik in Hyderabad. This was the social condition of Hyderabad state under the Nizams government.<sup>6</sup>

The issues like Maggapu Pannu or handloom tax, Begari (Free Labour) system were bitterly criticized during this period.<sup>7</sup> The other problem was Nazarana (compulsory system of making presents to people in authority), which exploited and touched the pockets of all classes from the noblemen to the common man in the streets. To ameliorate the conditions of the peasants, bonded labourers, and other types of the exploited, the Government did take a number of measures. It passed acts like Hyderabad Agricultural Marketing Act in 1930. The Record of Rights Act in 1936-37, The Money Lenders Act in 1939, the Land Mortgage Act, and Land Alienation Act in 1940,

and the Debt Conciliation Act in 1940. It also instituted enquiries into the economic and agrarian problems of the local people, resulting in the publication of reports of economic investigations in 1929-30 by S. Kesava Iyyengar, agricultural indebtedness in the Dominions in 1936-37 by S.M. Bharucha etc. These measures were taken by the Government partly to counter the increasing pressure of the various organizations. However, these measures had only a marginal impact and could not provide real relief to the people. These conditions ultimately provided scope for later political organization like the Andhra Mahasabha and the Communist Party to project the economic problem and suffering of the people more vigorously in the subsequent periods.<sup>8</sup>

The economic factor was a predominant psycho-cultural motivation in the growth of nationalism. It may be stated that the economic issues of the people formed the quintessence of the struggle, and was carried on by political organizations in a big way. Different communities from North and South India had come to Hyderabad and settled. These communities played an important role in the social economic, political and cultural field. The contact of different communities with each other helped in the process of cultural assimilation and led to the synthesis of culture, which resulted in a new

culture called "Dhakani Culture".<sup>9</sup>

The reform measures introduced by the Nizam and the policies adopted by the state from the later half of the 19th century did not satisfy the people. The unsatisfactory feeling and the socio-political development in the neighbouring presidencies left a remarkable impact on Hyderabad's affairs.

English education, western ideas and rationalism brought about a great change in the social setup. Middle class rose to prominence and caste associations were started to bring about reforms. Industrialisation, urbanisation and improved communications brought cross sections of society together. The main reason which prompted the starting of caste associations was the feeling that caste solidarity and collective effort would facilitate the introduction of reforms in society. Education was prompted by these caste associations in order to solicit the support of their caste people for improving their role in the society. The formation of association by some castes to bring about reforms in their caste was emulated by many other castes and the caste leaders and social leaders felt caste association would be more efficient instrument in introducing reforms.<sup>10</sup>

The modus operandi of western educated people working through lawful associations was a new phenomenon. As the competition for the betterment and domination grew sharper between castes and communities, many of these groups took to this new technique of forming caste-associations. They revealed a new tendency among the Hindus introduction of co-operative schemes of amelioration, comprising of all members of the caste, to manifest their solidarity.<sup>11</sup>

The caste associations were not without criticism. They argued that it was retrograde tendency, leading to the development of a spirit of exclusiveness rather than broadmindedness which was anxious to demolish the barriers placed between caste and caste, sect and sect, community and community and weld the various classes of society into a harmonious whole. Caste had thus become the centre of the individuals altruistic impulse and philanthropic activities. These activities leading to sectarianism and become obvious of the large communal good and also develop caste patriotism and have beneficial Influence in society. These associations cause horizontal mobilization, but did not represent the aspirations of a large number of their caste people.<sup>12</sup>

Communities which have come to Hyderabad, worked for their

own uplift and indirectly helped the social structural change. Their women used to come out to carry on their duties and it was an eye opener to the locals and it was taken advantage of by enthusiastic women and they started taking part in social activities. When women themselves saw the situation they not only developed themselves but felt the need to help their sisters and thus awareness of women increased.<sup>13</sup>

As in British India, political activities in Telangana were preceded by a literary and cultural renaissance. Initially we see literary and cultural associations of minority groups as well as caste based associations being established to forward the interests of a particular caste or a linguistic group. These associations often undertook the establishment of educational institutions to teach in their own mother tongue like Telugu, Marathi, Kannada, Gujarathi etc. They were initial forms of cultural activity. These associations were to gradually become politically active during the 1920's.<sup>14</sup>

Some of the earlier forms of such organizations were caste associations. There were major caste based associations, belonging mainly to the Reddys and also to Adi-Hindus (Harijans), to begin with.

The role of caste associations in Indian society and politics has been the subject of exhaustive discussion. The Rudolphs interpreted caste associations as agents of 'modernity', the means by which the social entities of traditional Indian society was being reforged as democratic pressure groups. The idea was elaborated by Hardgrave in his investigations that the caste associations were central to the process of social elevation and to the accumulation of political influence by caste leaders. Social Anthropologists like Bailey and M.N. Srinivas have also noted the birth and proliferation of caste associations as a modern adaptation of traditional caste forms.<sup>15</sup> Washbrook saw caste associations as the creation of a few individuals eager to promote their own interest by using caste appeals for the organizers of the associations.<sup>16</sup>

Hyderabad's heterogeneous society, with its diverse ethnic racial and religious groups began to organize itself initially around caste, minority and religious identities. These community organizations then became the vehicles to take forward the educational and political interest of the groups.

Between 1910 to 1921 onwards these communities known as "Adi Hindus" made great strides and organized themselves on an All

India basis. The Adi-Hindu Social Service League, Hyderabad made a representation to the effect that the Adi-Hindu or Harijan Community should be treated separately and not included under "Aryan-Hindu" fold.<sup>17</sup>

They are the lower end of the complicated scale of castes. The castes which come under the category of Harijans or Depressed Classes are Malas, Madigas, Mahars, Mehtars, Chamars, Mochis and few others, as given in the 1931 census report. They have no economic independence in most regions. Most of them are farm labourers, paid primarily in kind. The wage level of the unskilled labourers is generally low and it is when the demand for labour is at a low ebb, during the non-agricultural season, that one realizes the plight of these landless classes. To escape starvation they negated themselves, whole families, under large land-holders, for any service from generation to generation. The labourers themselves choose to serve their masters under such conditions rather than go out into the world and starve.<sup>18</sup> The landlord accommodated them and secured the service of their families from generation to generation. The depressed classes, who invariably formed an integral part of the village community, had been in the enjoyment of lands as a "Service Grant", here and there but the land was often inadequate to

sustain them more particularly as the yields devindled year by year. In return for this grant they performed services pertaining to the public needs of the village as a whole.<sup>19</sup>

As in other parts of India, the education of children of depressed classes has been a difficult problem here. Although all public schools were open, in principle, to the children of these classes yet they did not in the beginning avail themselves of the opportunities offered to them owing to the old social customs like untouchability, tinged with religion. But the constant tackling of this question had at least been the focus of producing some change in the outlook of the people and gradually the children of these castes were admitted to many secondary schools although their seats had to be arranged separately. They were admitted to some primary schools also, but they were seated separately. Owing to these obstacles the department started special schools for them. The number of such schools by 1931 was 97 with 4005 pupils. A scheme for a more rapid expansion of education among the depressed classes on a very wide scale was submitted to government. As far as possible the recruiting of teachers for schools for the depressed classes was made from the community itself. But when they were not available Muslims, Christians and sometimes Caste Hindus were selected for this work.<sup>20</sup>

The problem of the social and economic progress of the depressed classes was largely dependent upon educational opportunities. It was only in rare cases where members of these classes had come up through education and in the economic scale that they have succeeded in surmounting to a large extent the social barriers which custom has raised against them. The Adi-Dravida Educational League, Hyderabad, by 1931 had forty co-educational schools with a strength of 2045 pupils. Girls up to ten years of age were admitted. The Adi-Hindu Social Service League and the Arundhati Mahasabha had done laudable work in the direction of promoting literacy among these people. The value of the work done among the depressed and backward classes by the Christian missions for three or four generations cannot be under estimated.<sup>21</sup>

It is to the credit of the Adi-Hindu Social Service League, as also to the efforts of Temperance Societies in towns and cities that the use of liquor and other intoxicants was gradually decreased in the community. The Adi-Hindu Independent Youth League, an offshoot of the Social Service League started work for the abolition of the liquor habit by establishing Bhajan Mandirs in different localities and preaching through them.<sup>22</sup>

In another experiment, with the consent and knowledge of a labour employer, certain volunteers of the Adi-Hindu Social Service League projected themselves before the labourers every evening and begged for the two annas which they would have spent on liquor. The amounts thus collected were saved and after a period returned to the persons concerned in the shape of gold. Women in full force helped the scheme to succeed. The men appreciated the labour of the volunteers and the value of gold, and gave up drinking intoxicants.<sup>23</sup>

Private schools as a matter of principle, were given every possible encouragement, Such schools were visited by the inspecting officers and if found working properly, they were given grants-in-aid in the beginning and afterwards converted into Local Fund schools. The number of such schools as were able to keep themselves up to the standard of public schools was 1,052 with 31,570 pupils by 1931.<sup>24</sup>

A leading figure in the movement to organize the Adi-Hindus (Harijans) during the early 20th century was Madari Bhagya Reddy Varma. Great men who were dynamic and led revolutionary movements have had some ultimate goal to reach in their life and

they strove their utmost to achieve their objective by righteous means. The methods adopted by these great personalities were different as per their temperament and tendencies.<sup>25</sup> The times and circumstances they were placed in, experience and sufferings in their personal life were also factors which moulded their approach to the problem of untouchables and plan of action to work for their elevation.<sup>26</sup>

Sri Madari Bhagyareddy Varma was born in May 22, 1888. He was the second child of Madari Venkaiah and Rangamamba. In November 1888 their family Guru visited their house and named the child Bhagyareddy instead of Bhagyaiah as the parents called him on the day of namakaranam.<sup>27</sup>

At the early age of 18 years, he was married to Lakshmi Devi. He had a tutor and no formal schooling. Barrister Dos Santos provided him with food and shelter but entrusted the whole household management to him with six servants under him. This arrangement continued till May 1912. Bhagyareddy then joined Crompton and Company Electrical Engineers. His former master the Barrister helped him to continue studies. Ravichettu Ranga Rao a Jagirdar took personal interest in his studies and presented him with the requisite books.<sup>28</sup>

The first phase of his social activity among the untouchables was patterned as far back as 1906, when he founded the Jagan Mitra Mandali, which was subsequently named as Manya Sangam. It did yeoman service to enlighten masses through lectures, Harikatha Kalakshepam and publication of literature in the shape of tracts and booklets in Telugu, most of them written by Bhagyareddy himself.

They worked to remove the evil custom like dedication of girls as "Devadasis" to deities. This Murli or Jogin system as it was known was abolished by law by Bhagyareddy's efforts in the H.E.H. The Nizam's Dominions and also such other customs as public dancing by woman.<sup>29</sup>

### **THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MANYA SANGAM**

**WERE:** 1. To impart education to the children of the untouchables. 2. To discourage child marriage. 3. To dissuade people from eating non-vegetarian food and from consuming intoxicants particularly in marriage and other auspicious functions. 4. To abolish "Devadasi" system known as "Jogin" or "Murali", a pernicious custom prevalent in the community.

Jakkula S. Muttaiah Joint Secretary of the Manya Sangam edited

and published an English monthly "The Panchama" from Hyderabad in 1918 to propagate these views. A Telugu fortnightly "Bhagyanagar Patrika" devoted to the uplift of untouchables was also edited, printed and published by Sri. Bhagyareddy Verma.<sup>30</sup>

In the field of education, Bhagya Reddy started a primary school. In those days private schools were not permitted to operate and even if there were some, untouchability was in operation. With great difficulty he could secure permission to start schools.

In 1910 a lower primary school was opened at Esamia Bazar and subsequently such schools were started at Lingampally and Bogulkunta. Later five more schools were started at Chanchalguda, Sultan Shahi, Dhoolpet, Gunfoundry and Secunderabad. This number grew to 21 and about 2,500 (untouchable children) were the beneficiaries. In 1933 the Government came with a proposal to take over these schools. All these primary schools were handed over to Government in November 1934. The Nizam's Government did keep its promise and multiplied the number of these schools and ran them under the designation of special primary schools. In 1929 during his Andhra tour Mahatma Gandhi visited Adi-Hindu primary schools and advised Bhagyareddy to arrange for teaching of Hindi language also in the schools.<sup>31</sup> In 1912 Bhagya Reddy organized a band of Swasthi

Dal volunteers to serve the people particularly the weaker sections and untouchables. It worked on the lines of the Red Cross Society. During the epidemic days when plague, influenza and cholera broke out in Hyderabad, these volunteers rendered meritorious service at great personal risk. In 1925 when plague broke out, the epidemic was taking a heavy toll of people in Hyderabad, the volunteers served the sick and disposed off dead bodies.<sup>32</sup>

In 1911 a branch of Brahma Samaj was founded in Hyderabad. Sarojini Naidu who was an admirer of Bhagyareddy introduced him to educationist Prof. N.G. Wallinker who was the first president of the Deccan Brahma Samaj. The first meeting of the Samaj was held at Y.M.C.A. Hall, 11 families were converted to Brahma faith by Prof. N.G. Wellinker Bhagyareddy was attracted to Brahma faith as it reflected the authority of no religious book. Secondly it dissuaded the wearing of "Yagnopaveeth".<sup>33</sup>

Many families from untouchable community were initiated into Brahma faith by Bhagyareddy. He held the belief that spiritual elevation could be achieved by any one without even going to a Mandir, Mosque, Church or Samaj.<sup>34</sup>

The "Jeeva Raksha Gyan Pracharak Mandali" was founded with, Dewan Bahadur S.R. Malani as president, Seth Lalji Meghji as secretary and Bhagyareddy as the organizing secretary of the mandal.<sup>35</sup>

The ancient Panchayat system was systematized and established on sound basis to settle all disputes among the members of "untouchable" community. It was so well organized by the Adi Hindu Panchayat Shaka that orders or decisions of the Panchayat established in different "Mohallas" were given effect to without the least ado. This arrangement had considerably reduced litigations among Adi-Hindus and complaints to the police.<sup>36</sup> The decision taken at the Panchayats had the moral support of Kotwal Raja Bahadur Venkatrama Reddy, the then commissioner of police, who would refer the Adi-Hindu complaints to get their disputes settled amicably to their panchayat. The commissioner had a great regard for Bhagyareddy and his sense of social justice. By the authority of this Panchayat several evil customs among untouchables were abolished. Representatives of the Servants of Indian Society, Rev. Babu Ramachandra Sarkar of Calcutta and Srimati Sarala Devi Choudari (Mrs. Rambhuja Dutt) greatly appreciated the system of settling disputes through these Panchayats. In course of time

certain jealous elements instigated a few members to resort to litigation on a certain decision of the "panchayat" wherein the leader Bhagyareddy was charged with an attempt to run a parallel government in the state.<sup>37</sup>

Bhagya Reddy's interaction ranged from social justice to the fine arts. He organized exhibitions of handicrafts, paintings, sketches, sculptural works and other artistic novelties prepared by the Adi-Hindu community in 1925. One religious Guru was invited to visit the exhibition, which he had responded to. He went round the exhibition and appreciated the workmanship of the untouchables and gave away the prizes and certificates to the winners. The idea behind this exhibition by the Adi-Hindus was to impress upon the Savarna (caste) Hindus that these depressed communities are in no way less skillful in fine arts and crafts and that they would not lag behind if only opportunities were not denied.<sup>38</sup>

In 1917 Bhagya Reddy presided over the first Andhra Desa Panchama conference held at Bezawada. 18 resolutions were adopted urging the Government and society to allow use of public wells, schools and choultries by the Adi-Andhras, to give Banjar lands freely to Adi-Andhras, to nominate Adi-Andhras to legislative council, Mu-

nicipalities, District and Taluk Boards and to open free schools for Adi-Andhra children. Bhagyareddy extensively toured and presided over a number of conferences in the Andhra area of erstwhile Madras presidency. It was due to his efforts and adoption of the same resolutions, among others, in all the Adi-Andhra conferences held in Andhra, urging to call the untouchables as Adi - Andhras or Adi-Dravidas as per the preference of the regions that the Madras government accepted it and issued the G.O. No. 817 dated 25.3.1922. In the state of Hyderabad also the term Adi-Hindu was accepted by H.E.H. The Nizam's government and henceforth all the untouchables were enumerated as Adi-Hindus in 1931 census report.<sup>39</sup>

It is a matter of significance that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar too insisted on a change in the name of the untouchables and that they should be called "non-caste Hindus" or protestant Hindus or Non-conformist Hindus, instead of depressed classes, in his memorandum submitted to the Minorities Sub-Committee dated 28.9.1931, at the Round Table conference at London after its first session in 1930.<sup>40</sup>

The first All Indian Adi-Hindu Social Conference was organized by Bhagyareddy in Hyderabad at Prem theatre in 1922. The conference was held for 3 days. In this conference the Manyasa Sangam established in 1911 was renamed as the Central Adi-Hindu

Social Service League to serve the cause of the Adi-Hindus of the Southern region. Sri. Kusuma Venkata Ramaiah and Sri. Kusuma Dharmanna Kavi sang songs denouncing the rule of the black authorities (Nalladoratanam) which is as bad as Telladoratanamu or white domination i.e. (British).<sup>41</sup>

In 1931 Nizam Rastra Adi-Hindu Political Conference was held at Bolarum because the Nizam government would not permit any conference or meeting of political nature in its dominions. Hence this political conference was organized at Bolarum, the British administered area. The conference decided that native states should support Dr. Ambedkar's amendment moved at the Minorities Sub-Committee at London, recognized him as the true and sole representative of the Adi-Hindu communities in British and native India. Other resolutions adopted were:

1. Abolition of forced Labour in Nizam's state
2. Recruitment of Adi-Hindus in Military and Police.<sup>42</sup>

At the Adi-Andhra conference held at Ananthapur division on 17th and 18th October 1925, the following resolutions were passed:

Condemnation of the practice of suffixing names of untouchables with Gadu etc., uninhibited entry into schools, colleges, freedom to take water from public wells, call to the community to give up evil habits. Appeals were made to government not to assess the poramboke (Banjar) lands given for the benefit of the depressed classes till they yield satisfactorily for 3 years continuously. They demanded the education for Adi-Hindu children and hostel facility. They condemned the custom of dedication of women in the name of god as Devadasis, Matangis and Jogins.<sup>43</sup> The All India Adi-Hindu conferences were mostly held at Delhi, Allahabad, Lucknow and Nagpur. Bhagya Reddy attended these conferences as a delegate from Hyderabad state and Andhra representing the Southern region.<sup>44</sup> At the annual function of the Arya Samaj in 1913 Maadari Bhayareddy was honoured with the title "Varma" in recognition of his laudable social service to the Hindu society.<sup>45</sup> At a special public meeting of caste Hindus and Adi-Hindus, Dharma Veer Vaman Naik Jagirdar conferred the title "Sivasresty". In Andhra at Eluru where Adi-Andhra conference was held in 1921, he was honoured with the title "Sanghamanya". Harijan women were greatly influenced by him. In 1938 he was operated upon for tumor. In 1939 the disease took a serious turn and he was shifted to Quarantine where he breathed his last in the early hours of Shivaratri day on 18th February 1939.<sup>46</sup>

A rare personality who at a very early age took to public activity and laboured for the cause of the downtrodden, died at the early age of fifty one years.<sup>47</sup>

The Reddy Rani Patrika published from 1925 sought to bring together Reddies of various provinces into a common platform.

The Reddys of Telangana region also organized themselves into an association drawing inspiration from their counterparts in Andhra areas. The first Reddy Mahajana Sabha of Northern circar Districts was held at Visakhapatnam on 28,29,30th of December 1925. The welcome address was given by Sri. M. Pattabhi Rama Reddy. In his speech he advocated the necessity of the caste associations, and their importance in the society. Making a strong case for caste formation he said :

"There is a weak argument that the prosperity of the community will be hampered if caste associations develop. Different forces did not form as an association all of a sudden. These different forces gradually grew first and formed into families, then as associations and afterwards as castes". In a country as vast as India, he argued, associations of castes were necessary to develop and

move forward.<sup>48</sup>

Citing the adage "Sariramadyam Khalu Dharma Sadhanam" he said all faiths are dependents on the body". Pattabhi Rama Reddy urged the development of physical and mental strength as necessity for the development of society. "Every person should learn physical exercises, gymnastics from his or her childhood and improve the strength of the body. For the Reddis who lead a civilized life, physical exercise is a necessity. If the members of the society are weak the society deteriorates.<sup>49</sup> I hope all these people would take up these physical exercises to prevent physical deterioration". He added and also stated that.

"Education is very important for women. Women should be educated and get such honour as men get by getting educated. If girls are educated they become very wise and acquire name and fame for their parental house and their in-law's house, both wife and husband are the two eyes of the body, the family. How ugly the body would be if one of the eyes gets blind! If both wife and husband get educated and become wise, they will make their children wise. The mother is the first preceptor of the children. The seed sown by the mother in childhood gives fruits in future. So education is

more important to the mother than to the father. The outstanding valour and strength of Sivaji Maharaj, the jewel of Maharashtra are ideals which are extolled in our historical accounts. The men of wisdom certainly know that his valour is due to the education, his mother taught him during his childhood. There were many famous lady warriors in olden days and that should teach us the value of educating women.<sup>50</sup>

This conference approved prohibition of child marriage i.e. Smt. Hara Vilas Sarada's bill. This resolution was proposed by the president and passed unanimously.

The members of the conference then consented to establish an All India Reddy Jan Sangham. More than 300 women attended this conference. They had actively participated in proceedings and shown interest in the proposals for the prosperity of this community.<sup>51</sup>

Mahasabha of Reddys of Bombay was held at Yaragathi village, Belgum district on 15-5-1926. The presidential address was given by Rao Shabeb H.Chennayya. While talking about the education for women he expressed that; "it is an immediate necessity of the society and also very urgent need for Reddy community to encourage

women's education."

Citing examples from Indian mythology he said, Lord Iswara was keeping his consort on his head, Vishnu was keeping his better-half in his heart, Brahma was having his wife in his brain. By this we can easily understand that men and women were equal. Lord Iswara gave half of his body to his consort Parvati. That was why a wife was called as 'Ardhangi'.<sup>52</sup>

Kumari Lakshamma had spoken as the representative of Reddy Women thus: "As Hindu women we must be proud that our old traditions are still in vogue and we must be glad that the women all around the world are attracted towards change and development. But we have become very backward. It is not our fault. There are various reasons for this. If our nation is to progress we should be not only good, we should be eligible too. If we lack wisdom we will be weak. If we have wisdom we grow strong. If we can unite we will be achieving the country's greatness to a large extent".<sup>53</sup>

The Fourth Annual Conference of Reddy Maha Jana Sangam was held in Ganjam District under the presidentship of Sri.Buggu Venkat Reddy. Nearly 2000 Reddy's attended the conference. The

more important resolutions passed in this conference were subscription of not less than four annas [25 paise] to be collected from each family in every village, every member of this Reddy community should establish cottage Industries according to new methods, spin charka and market the product, all must strive to encourage co-operative movement in every village and finally "every Reddy boy and girl between 5 and 12 years of age should go to school".<sup>54</sup> In Reddy Rani Patrika of August 1927, an appeal to the Reddys was made by Sri. Seshadri Ramana Kavulu that; "The Reddy community in Nizam's state is in a good status. There are several poets, educationists, scholars advocates, philanthropists. Due to the sacrifices of these people, we know that Reddy students hostel was established and Golkonda Patrika is published on behalf of the Reddy Sangham . Now a library building is under construction. All the literature regarding community will be preserved in the library. If every community can secure such material pertaining to their community a comprehensive history of Andhra country can be compiled".<sup>55</sup>

The eighth Reddy Maha Jana Sabha was held at Madras in December 1925. In this Sabha some social aspects were discussed and resolutions were passed.<sup>56</sup>

The conference of Reddys of Bombay was held on 15th May 1926 at Vegattu Town in Belgaum district. Along with this conference, they held a Reddys Women's conference on 16th May. More than 500 women participated. Unlike those who were observing gosha, they had come out to attend this conference.<sup>57</sup>

Second Conference of Reddy Women of Bombay Region was held. Smt. Lakshmi spoke about requisite qualifications of women and exhorted women to educate their young daughters. "They will be able to grasp whatever you teach even after their tender age and at the age of twelve." She had given more emphasis to women's education and training and to equip them with the intelligence needed in the fast changing society. She also stated that "If you look into the history of any nation you will understand that giving training to girls is more important than giving training to boys."<sup>58</sup>

One will achieve social change in the community by encouraging various things which were not earlier encouraged. The remarriage of chi. Sow. Radhabai, sister of Sri Sattisai Reddy, resident of Jammikunta, Huzurabad Taluk with Maharaja Sri.Velama Reddi.son of late Sri.Kisara Venkata Ramanarasayya was successfully performed by the elders in May 1927.<sup>59</sup> This type of widow remarriage shows

the progressive sign in the community.

In Telangana some of the associations which left a significant mark on its socio-cultural and economic development were the Brahma Kshatriyas. They came to Hyderabad from Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh. Jagat Narayan, a great social reformer of the community had started many constructive programmes for the uplift of the community. He first opened a press through which he brought to light some evils prevalent in the community. The first reform he brought about in the community was prohibition and the other was the propagation of education. With the co-operation of Rai Tej Rai he founded a girl's school which developed into full fledged high school. The establishment of the Mufeed-ul-Enam high school and the girls schools resulted in the achievement of remarkable increase in the percentage of literacy in the community.<sup>60</sup> For minimizing the economic differences, he with the help of other members limited the scope for dowry and payment of cash by the bride's parents. Even the wealthiest person was not allowed to give more than 25 utensils. In 1919 the Brahma Khatriya Co-operative Society was established by Shri. Brij Mohan Lai which did yeomen service to the community by advancing loans at a nominal rate of interest. A few years later two more co-operative societies were founded viz. the educational

loan society in 1926, which sanctioned loans to poor and needy students, for pursuing higher studies and the other was "widow fund" from which subsidies were given to the widows who had no source of income.<sup>61</sup> A Mahila Mandal was also formed under the supervision of Shrimathi Daya Devi Waghay and Urmila Waghay for promoting educational, cultural and sports activities among the young women of the community. Ganesh Narayan, son of Jagat Narayan, was also a reformist and great social worker who worked for the consolidation of this community.<sup>62</sup> Raja Bahadur Bisweshwar Nath Waghay, the Chief Justice of the High court in the Nizams state, was a staunch Aryasamajist and a silent philanthropist. His brother Dr. K.N. Waghay was a distinguished physician and he was one of the founders of the Sarojini Devi Hospital and Niloufer Hospital.<sup>63</sup>

IRANIS : Iranis were a part of the cultural world of Hyderabad ever since the founding of the city in 1591. This was natural because the ruling dynasty of the Qutub Shahis came from Iran and the most important positions in the administration of the kingdom were held by the nobility from Iran. This factor had a tremendous impact on the art, architecture, literature and culture of Hyderabad for nearly two hundred years after its foundation and the influences are clearly visible.<sup>64</sup>

The majority of Iranis living in Hyderabad belong to the business community. The Iranis have their own associations called Durbar-e-Hussini near Purani Haveli for congregations, for prayers and religious discourses.

**THE KAYASTHA** : Community is a literate sub-caste among the high caste Hindus. They started coming to the Deccan from the early eighteenth century.<sup>65</sup> In 1871, Raja Shiv Raj established the Kayastha Pathasala where free education was given in English, Persian, Urdu and Sanskrit up to Matriculation. Another school Dharmaprajarakshak Pathasala was opened by him where the vedas, astrology and the Shastras were taught under his patronage. He also ran other schools in his private estate.<sup>66</sup> The Raja Shiv Raja's younger brother, was greatly concerned about the welfare of the Kayasthas. In 1855, he established a Mathur Sabha and his eldest son Raja Inder Karan Bahadur started a society called Kayastha Young Men's Improvement Society. He presided over many literary associations and was a member of the city municipality and the Poor House Scheme Society. In December 1897, the Raja presided over the 11th Annual Kayastha conference representing more than 2.5 million Kayasthas of the country which testified to his substantial position and merit.<sup>67</sup>

**KHATRIS** : Among the prominent Khattris, who contributed significantly to the enrichment of the city's social and cultural life, were Shri Magan Chand Vedi, a great advocate of prohibition and widow remarriage.<sup>68</sup> The Marwadis are said to have migrated to Hyderabad from Rajasthan. This community has been doing yeomen service in twin cities not only to its community but also to the society at large. They established numerous Dharamshalas (charity homes) and charitable hospitals such as Motilal Hospitals in Mozzam Jahi Market, Hari Prasad Memorial Hospital, Pattargatti and Mahaveer Hospital and educational institutions, both schools and colleges, the Marwadi Hindi Vidyalaya, Rajasthan Hindi Vidyalaya, Agarwal Boys High school and Badruka College of Arts and commerce, Nanakram Bhagwan Das Science College and Sankarlal Dhanraj Singodia College of Arts and Commerce. In October 1920, the Rajasthan community formed an association in Hyderabad to bring all the members of the community on one platform known as Marwadi Navayuvaka Mandali which later was transformed into Marwadi Mandali which looked after their total interest.<sup>69</sup> Seth Ram Gopalji another philanthropist, he built public halls and Dharmashalas. His greatest contribution was in the sphere of economic and industrial development by establishing Ram Gopal Spinning and Weaving Mills in Secunderabad (DBR Mills) which constituted a landmark

in the industrial development of Hyderabad. It was a major industrial unit of the city providing employment to a large number of unemployed workers.<sup>70</sup> The most popular figure of this community was L.N. Gupta who had founded many cultural, literary and social institutions and he was well known in twin cities. He was an institution by himself.<sup>71</sup>

**THE PARSIS :** The Parsis came to Hyderabad with the purpose of doing business and flourished as traders in cotton and as contractors. They established two fire temples, one at Secunderabad and the other at Hyderabad where their community people gathered for prayers. They also constructed a Dukma (tower of silence) in 1915, at Musheerabad. One of the outstanding feature of Zoroastrians was the establishment of the Piroj Bai Hall and Jamshed Hall in Secunderabad. In these halls competitions were held in cooking, flower making, embroidery, music, dance and literature. In this way they encouraged their women to improve themselves and helped the persons who are in need. The Zoroastrian club situated in James Street, Secunderabad provided library facilities, sports equipment, tennis court for their members. They also founded schools, one at Secunderabad in 1919, and named it after Ratan Bai and Jahangirji Chenoy. Another, a private Montessori School in the name of Miss. Khursheed Taraporewala, was opened at Nampally station road.<sup>72</sup>

**TAMILIANS** : The early Tamilians were pioneers in education and they established a large number of educational institutions. The Mahboob college was started in 1861, by Soma Sundaram Mudaliar, and the Soma Sundaram Library and Reading room were established in 1872. In the earlier part of this century, the Tamilians maintained their own cultural identity by forming religious associations to have discourses on Hindu Philosophy and various other subjects.<sup>73</sup>

**CHRISTIAN** : Christian missions began to make steady inroads from the turn of the century. The largest increase in their number had occurred in Medak, where the Christian community added 4.500 persons to its strength by 1921 census. Next to this in the order to their gain, are Nizambad, Karimnagar and Mahabubnagar and 672 in Nalgonda. It may be noted that the Wesleyan Methodist and the Baptist missions worked chiefly in the Telangana districts, the former being more prominent in Karimnagar, Adilabad, Medak and Nizamabad and the latter in Mahabubnagar and Nalgonda. Roman Catholics are more in evidence in the city and in the district of Nalgonda.<sup>74</sup>

Hindus, Musalmans, Animists and Christians together form about 99 percent of the total population. Thus the followers of other

religions found in the state are numerically very insignificant. They are more or less confined to city alone.<sup>75</sup>

83 percent of the Christian population are concentrated in Telangana districts in which Warangal claims the largest number followed by Nalgonda, Medak, Hyderabad City, Nizamabad and Karimnagar.<sup>76</sup>

**ROMAN CATHOLICS :** The community of Roman Catholic Christians are scattered all over the state. The exact date of the establishment of the Roman Catholic mission or the actual number belonging to that section is not available. In 1881, they numbered 6436, of whom Indians were 4443. In 1911, the total community was reckoned to be 18,473, of whom 16,322 were Indians, and in 1921, they are returned as 21,259. During the decade this body of Christians have not grown as rapidly as the others. In a letter addressed to the census officer Dr.D.Vismara, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Hyderabad said they had no active propaganda during the decade and that the increase of 6,125 since 1921 is due to the natural multiplication and the immigration of some Reddys and Togatas.<sup>77</sup>

**PROTESTANTS** : The term 'others' refer to Protestants of the Anglican community, Baptist, American Methodist, Wesleyan Methodist, Presbyterian and other Churches number altogether 1,30,106 or 86 percent as against 73 percent in 1921, of the total Christian community. The phenomenal rise in the number of Protestant Christians during the decade from 45,843 to 130,106 is due to the activities of the Domakal Mission of the Anglican communion and the English Wesleyan with their headquarters at Medak. The Dornakal mission is operating in Warangal and Nalgonda districts among Malas and Madigas of the Adi-Hindu community and also among Kammas, Reddys, Dommaras, Vaddars and Erukalas. The number of converts from these sources during the decade is reported to be 8,415. The English Wesleyan Methodists have during the decade made immense strides, extending their sphere of work to many new areas in Telangana.<sup>78</sup>

Christian missionaries contributed to the cultural, educational, social change in the Telangana. They established schools, institution, where they taught embroidery, tailoring, interior decoration, lace making etc. The first public school in Hyderabad was founded in 1834. and was followed shortly after by another school opened by the Roman Catholic missionaries. Since then the latter mission

has gradually progressed with the result that several schools and convents were established in various parts of the state. The American Baptist Telugu mission commenced work at Secunderabad in 1875 and since then branches have been opened. The work of this mission was chiefly among the Telugu population.<sup>79</sup> Another social organization which was established in 1926 at Secunderabad was started as a movement to propagate the mission of love and mercy in and around the city of Secunderabad and Hyderabad. An association was duly started which had been styled as Manava Seva Samithi with a creed, constitution and a strong representative executive. The aims and objectives were to appeal to the authorities as well as to the people to discontinue cruel practices and ceremonies, spread the mission of peace, love and mercy, to take up non political questions of human welfare, to consider and take steps to improve art and literature, to uplift the depressed and poor to purge out the evils in the Hindu society and to be a pillar of support and strength to the helpless and the needy Hindus.<sup>80</sup> They opened night schools for depressed class people. One social organization was established in 1881 July and meetings held every Sunday at 5 a.m. at All Saints institution of Hyderabad. This organization helped widows, the crippled and the blind. 17 women received temporary help according to a report of Home department.<sup>81</sup> Free passes were frequently granted

to help persons to travel in search of employment.<sup>82</sup>

These trends of organizing on linguistic , caste, ethnic or religious basis soon gave way to broader movements and social formations which addressed themselves to the issues of linguistic freedom, educational opportunities especially for women and greater political expression and representation.

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72. Jaya Rao P.A.S., History of the Church Missionary Society in Hyderabad 1983. pp.295-302.
73. Report of Home Department, Bundle no.2, 1926, p.2.
74. 1921 Census of India, Vol.XXI, Part-I, p.92.
75. Ibid. p.74.
76. 1931 Census, p.241.
77. Ibid, p.242.
78. Ibid, p.242.
79. Late Baji Kishan Rao's Taped Conversation Recorded.
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81. V. Manik Rao's Hyderabad Swatanrodyama Charitra p.368.
82. Ramesan N. *Freedom Struggle in Hyderabad*, Vol.3, p.96.

## CHAPTER 3

# SOCIAL AND POLITICAL TRENDS

As mentioned in the earlier chapter the community associations laid the foundation for literary and cultural renaissance and for increased political activity. This process is sought to be seen through the various organizations that continue to come into existence.

The Arya Samaj a religious and social movement, took a political colour in Hyderabad. Its significance in British India never assumed that magnitude as it did in Hyderabad. The political problem in Hyderabad related mainly to the justification of the minority rule over the majority. The minority of the ruler's community aspired to grow in strength through religious means. Proselytizing the members of the majority community was one of the easy means to swell their own numbers. This may be quite justifiable as long as the means are fair and merely persuasive. The majority community had large groups who were exploited for menial social service but generally neglected, ignored and ill-treated. Conversion from among these people was not keenly felt by the majority people. They were never conscious of the double loss that they were sustaining due to this gross callousness they dis-

played towards their own co-religionists. Their numerical strength was being reduced and the strength of the minority was increasing. Numerical strength of social groups played a tremendous significance in representative governments. It is at this point that the religious movements entered imperceptibly into political spheres.<sup>1</sup>

The Arya Samaj was established by Swami Dayanand Saraswathi in 1875. He preached equality of all human beings and supported the struggle for equal opportunities of education and refinement. According to him, the vedic religion was the best and anyone could be converted into vedic faith.<sup>2</sup>

In the year 1892 Swami Girijanand Saraswati from the North visited Hyderabad and delivered a number of lectures exhorting people to join the Arya Samaj. Due to his efforts the Arya Samaj was established in Hyderabad city in 1892. The President was Sri Kanta Persad and the Secretary Mahatma Laxman Dasji. The first annual celebration of Arya Samaj was held at Kandaswami Bagh. Among the eminent persons who attended this function from outside the state were Swami Atmanand, Pandit Khushi Ram, Sri Kishandas and Sri Sevaklal.<sup>3</sup> The Sanatana Dharma Maha Mandal was established at about the same time to counteract the activities of the Arya Samaj.<sup>4</sup>

The teachings of Arya Samaj had penetrated the Hyderabad state long before the dawn of the twentieth century. Pandit Keshava Rao Koratkar, a great patriot and a lawyer who was raised to the bench of the Hyderabad High Court was elected the president of the Arya Samaj in Hyderabad and continued to be so at the helm of Arya Samaj affairs till 1932.<sup>5</sup>

Pandit Keshav Rao introduced a bill relating to the widows in the Legislative Council in 1930 but when a few conservatives among the Hindus expressed a dislike and resentment towards this bill, the Muslims supported this orthodox section of the Hindus. But later Pandit Vinayak Rao Vidyalkar, got it passed in the legislature. This had become law. The legal position of the Hindu widows was also strengthened.<sup>6</sup>

The Arya Samaj improved its organization in 1930 under the guidance of Mahatma Narayanaswamy. The Arya Pratinidhi Sabha was established as central body of the Samaj in Hyderabad and the district branches were placed under its control. Pandit Keshav Rao was elected President of the Pratinidhi Sabha and Sri Chandu Lai, Secretary while Pandit Vinayak Rao was chosen as treasurer. It was at this time that the Samaj attracted two great enthusiasts

Bansilal and Shamlal. They established Samaj branches, schools and libraries. They devoted themselves to instill a spirit of fearlessness and courage in the minds of the Hindus. They had to endure all sorts of hardships. The Arya Samaj began to incur the displeasure of the Nizam's government. Restrictions were being clamped in various forms on the Arya Samaj. The attitude of the police towards the Samaj had stiffened.<sup>7</sup> The Samaj could not celebrate any functions or hold meetings on the death and birth dates of great personalities, religious ceremonies, fairs, Nagar Kirtans, literary activities, conduct schools, Havan Kunds or unfurl 'om' flags. After an intensified endeavour the Samaj was permitted to start the Urdu weekly Vedic Adarsh in 1934. But its fearless and frank tone displeased the government and its publication was stopped by a government order in 1935.<sup>8</sup>

After 1940, the Arya Samaj started constructive activities, in commemoration of late Pandit Keshav Rao, an educational institution called the Keshav Memorial school was started on 20th of July, 1940 and the foundation stone for the present magnificent building was laid on the 20th of September in the same year by Ghanshyam Singh Gupta, Speaker of Central Provinces. The organizers decided to have Hindi as the medium of instruction in the High school, but

they could not achieve their objective till 1948. The condition of the Arya Samajists between 1942 to 1948 was similar to outlaws, but their religious fervour never damped. The distresses, the difficulties and damages they were exposed to were limitless. They had always to depend on their own personal endeavours for defence. Antagonism to the Arya Samaj was given wide publicity in Urdu papers, while they were not permitted to have their own papers. If information was published in papers from British India, they were not allowed to enter the state.<sup>9</sup>

First Aryan Conference was held at Udgir in 1942 under the presidentship of Pandit Vinayak Rao Vidyalkar. In 1943, the Arya Samaj could celebrate its second Aryan conference at Nizamabad. Sri Ganapat Kashinath Sastry was elected to preside. One very significant resolution related to the establishment of one hundred pathshalas (educational institutions) and a 25000 strong volunteer corps.<sup>10</sup>

The third Annual conference of the Samaj was held at Narayanpet. Rai Sarat Ghandjee presided over the deliberations. This year the Muslim League had persuaded the government to put a ban on the Satyartha Prakash, the philosophy of the Samaj. An all India

agitation protested against the ban. State Arya Samaj fully supported the protest. In 1945, a training centre called Upadeshak Vidyalaya was started at Nalgonda. The trainees received coaching for carrying on the preaching work.<sup>11</sup>

The Fourth Aryan conference took place at Gulbarga in 1945 under the presidentship of Raja Narayan Lala Pitti. The Fifth Aryan conference was held at Warangal in 1946. Pandit Vinayak Rao presided. But a liberal Sir Mirja Ismail had become the Prime Minister of Hyderabad and permission was granted to the Samaj to start a weekly called 'Aryabhan'.<sup>12</sup>

After the 15th of August, 1947 when India attained independence, Hyderabad rulers were trying to assert their independence. The Arya Samaj knew fully well that this was impossible.<sup>13</sup>

The sixth Annual conference of the Arya Samaj took place at Jalna under the presidentship of Govindlal Pitti. This conference passed a resolution that the Nizam should integrate the dominions with the Indian union and immediately agree to the establishment of responsible government. During the period from 15th August 1947 to 17th

September, 1948 thousands of Hindus had left their homes and crossed into the Indian territory due to the Razakar menace. Arya Samaj had set up camps for refugees.<sup>14</sup>

The Arya Samaj of Hyderabad produced great revolutionaries like Shri. Narayana Pawar, Gandaiah, Jagdish and Narayana Swamy. Pawar had thrown a hand grenade on the motor car of the Nizam. They were sentenced to twenty years of rigorous imprisonment. Vinay Kumar, Satyanarayana Sinha and Madanmohan had rendered wonderful service in supplying secret information to Pandit Vinayak Rao, who was also the president of the Lawyers Protest Committee. He collected authentic information about the Razakar atrocities and sent a report to New Delhi and therefore he was arrested.<sup>15</sup>

Vandematharam Ramachandra Rao his brother Veerabhadra Rao and Narasimha Rao at the risk of their lives secured information relating to the activities of the Nizam.<sup>16</sup> The Arya Samaj in Hyderabad state made its own contribution for the attainment of independence.

Though the Arya Samajist according to their reports never allowed women in many forward roles in their programmes or rituals,

women were never treated as inferior. Their prominence was not curbed. Infact, they were encouraged to participate with an understanding in Arya Samaj programmes. All other political parties had come into existence only in the wake of Arya Samaj activities.<sup>17</sup> Despite the propaganda advantage enjoyed by the various political parties it was mainly the Arya Samajists who created a thorough social consciousness among women by making them equal and discerning partners in vedic education and rituals and in social functions. It is an article of faith with the Arya Samajist that all castes and women should have access to vedic lore and they never recognised caste distinctions. They translated scriptures into local languages with a view to make them accessible to the literates in all castes. They enjoined their members to study and recite the vedas and women were also declared as being entitled to participate in all vedic rights.<sup>18</sup> It should not be overlooked that it was the Arya Samajists who pioneered the opposition to the Nizam's government. In the final liberation struggle of Hyderabad they joined hands with the Congress and Socialist parties.<sup>19</sup>

The public life in Hyderabad was slowly becoming active and effective and expressing itself in various fields. A class of pleaders had come into existence since the examinations for leadership

were started for the first time in 1883. Legal talent was also attracted from outside the state and we hear the names of Ramachandra Pillay and Barrister Rudra, who started practising in the courts of Hyderabad and Secunderabad at this time. A number of societies and clubs had been started and were contributing to the shaping of public opinion. The Young Men's Improvement Society was established on 26th February, 1879 in Chaderghat. It maintained a reading room and a library and used to arrange lectures by prominent people.<sup>20</sup>

The Theosophical Society was established on 26th December, 1882 by Ramaswamy Iyer in Chaderghat. It secured the patronage of officers like Pestonji and Jahangirji. The society hall was constructed and declared open on 7th January, 1906 by Mrs. Anne Besent. This society was a centre of discussions on religious and cultural matters and attracted the elite of the city.<sup>21</sup>

The Albert Reading room, Secunderabad, the Malwala Sabha in Hyderabad city and the Hindoo Social Club, Chaderghat, were also beginning to take part in public affairs. Due to men like Dr. Aghornath Chattopadhyaya, Barrister Rudra and Ramachandra Pillay, interest in public matters was kindled. Criticism of the administration

began to be public both in the press and from the platform. This criticism was resented by the official world who attributed these activities to outsiders.<sup>22</sup>

Coming to the educational field, Salar Jung, the important reformer administrator of Hyderabad, lent his support to liberal education, including female education. He encouraged the founding of a medical school and was interested in promoting cultural activities but he did not play a positive and dynamic role in bringing about a radical transformation in the society. He hoped to develop a climate of values favourable to change in society. He did not wish to force the pace of reform. Learning was not completely absent in the Nizam's Dominions, but was confined to a few of the upper classes who kept tutors to instruct their children at home.<sup>23</sup> Salar Jung combined contradictory elements of tradition and modernity. The percentage of literacy in the entire state was only 3.3 literacy among the non-Urdu speaking population of the state was abysmally low. The state government's policy of making Urdu the medium of instruction in the Middle and High school stage was greatly responsible for the backwardness in education of the non-urdu speaking section of the population. But, programmes were started to remedy this defect.<sup>24</sup> During the second half of the 19th century, particular

emphasis was given to education. Every effort was made to lay the foundations of a proper educational system in Hyderabad which up to that time was completely neglected. The very first step taken towards the formation of a state educational system was the establishment of Dar-ul-ulum or oriental college. In order to encourage youth and for further progress in education, prizes and generous scholarships were awarded together with promises of employment in Government Services.<sup>25</sup>

The reform measures introduced by the Nizam and the policies adopted by the state from the later half of the 19th century did not satisfy the people. This unsatisfactory feeling and the socio-political developments in the neighbouring presidencies left a remarkable impact on Hyderabad's affairs.

The Nizam state's Social Reforms Conference was held in Hyderabad on 11th and 12th November, 1921. This Conference was presided over by Maharshi Karve. The proceedings of the Conference for the most part were conducted in English, Urdu and Marathi. As a greater number of the social and political leaders in Hyderabad up to this period happened to be Maharashtrians they were speaking in their languages or languages known to them. But

one of the delegates at the Conference, Alampalli Venkatarama Rao wanted to move a resolution in Telugu. His attempt to move the resolution in Telugu was hooted down by the audience and more vociferously so, by the Maharashtrian section. This attitude in the very capital of the Telugu people was taken as a great affront by those Telugu members who happened to be present at the Conference. That very night they formed an association called the "Andhra Jana Sangh", and with Tekmala Rangarao was its secretary.<sup>26</sup>

Subsequently the name of the Andhra Jana Sangh was changed to that of the 'Nizam Rashtra Andhra Jana Sangh' and Madapati Hanumantha Rao was chosen as the secretary. From then on Madapati Hanumantha Rao proved to be the guiding spirit of the movement for the social and cultural uplift of the Telangana people. This was the beginning of the Andhra Movement in the Hyderabad State.<sup>27</sup>

The opening of Hyderabad Godavari Railway in October 1900 had an important effect in stimulating trade and industry in the district through which it passed, namely Medak and Nizamabad. There was not much progress in respect of roads during the decade. Spread of communication facilities awakens people.<sup>28</sup> With the spread of

education though meagre and through newspapers, political consciousness was generated among Telangana people. The association called "Nizam Rashtra Andhra Jana Sangham" had become active.

The aims and the objects of the association were to work for the progress of the Andhras. This objective was to be achieved by forming branch associations, helping the existing one and by convening public meetings and other allied activities. Every Andhra of the state whose age was not less than eighteen and who could read and write could become a member of this association.<sup>29</sup>

Membership began with one hundred. A regular managing committee of 15 members with Raja Rajagopala Reddy, Barrister as President and Shri Madapati Hanumantha Rao as the Secretary was elected. As an allied wing of this body a research society called 'Andhra Itihasa Parishodhak Mandali' was also established.<sup>30</sup>

With the establishment of these institutions, other sister associations also began to spring up all over Telangana and therefore the necessity of getting them federated with a central body was keenly felt and the Andhra Jana Kendra Sangham was formed. The first meeting of the central body was held at Hanumakonda on

the 1st of April 1924 and it was largely attended by representatives from Hyderabad, Secunderabad and Warangal. This committee was authorized to frame a constitution which was adopted on the 27th of April 1924 at Hyderabad.<sup>31</sup> The aims and objectives of the committee were further expanded:

To establish Libraries and Reading Rooms.

To help and encourage students.

To honour scholars.

To collect manuscripts and to conduct research.

To spread knowledge through hand-bills, booklets,  
and public speeches.

To propagate Telugu.

To encourage fine arts and physical culture.

To help the helpless.

During the course of about twelve years, the Andhra Kendra Jana Sangham had to face several impediments placed in its course by Government.<sup>32</sup>

The Andhra Jana Sangh decided to achieve its aim of promoting the social, economic and cultural awareness among of

the people of Telangana by adopting measures that would bring about a general enlightenment among the people through Telugu libraries, Reading Rooms, and private schools, secondly by encouraging Telugu scholars and by collecting epigraphical inscriptions and books of historical values that would throw light on the ancient history of the Andhra people, thirdly by publishing tracts and pamphlets on burning issues of the day and lastly by appointing workers to spread these objectives among the people.<sup>33</sup>

The merchants of Telangana formed an association known as the Merchants Association to protect themselves from being exploited by the bureaucracy and thereby indirectly joined hands with the Andhra Jana Sangh in its fight against the autocracy of the Government. The Andhra Jana Sangh also carried on a campaign against vetti chakiri (bonded labour) and for the emancipation of the Balutadars (free service).<sup>34</sup>

**MERCHANTS PROTEST** : The Andhra Jana Kendra Sangham organized the traders and merchants in the Telangana region. These merchants had always to cater to the requirements of the government officials on tour either by selling commodities at concession rates or giving them freely. They sought the help of the Sangham to take

up their cause in an organized manner. Such a demonstration was first made in Suryapet by the merchants in December 1922. Merchants had to bear the consequences of such a protest in the earlier stages but with the help of the Andhra Jana Kendra Sangham, they could assert their freedom. A booklet entitled Freedom of Merchants was published in Telugu and circulated to all the merchants. The workers of the Sangham continued their efforts to create awakening in the Telangana region. Twelve Telugu booklets written in easy simple style, intelligible to an ordinary villager and priced at one anna each, were sold for prices which were within the reach of all. The Andhra Jana Kendra Sangham never enjoyed the goodwill of the Government which repeatedly denied permission for holding even purely educational and library meetings and conferences. In the initial stages, the Sangham did not have any political bias but the repressive policy of the government generated a spirit of resistance among them.<sup>35</sup>

Andhra Jana Sangh from 1928 onwards took up the cause of women's education. Due to its efforts the Andhra Balika High School was founded in 1928 and the first batch of girls studying in the Telugu medium were made to appear at the matriculation examination in 1934. In the beginning the Osmania University refused to recognize the Andhra Balika High School saying that the policy

of the Osmania University was no doubt to encourage the pursuit of education in the mother tongue, but according to their statute, mother tongue meant Urdu. However, Maharshi Karve came to the rescue of the Andhra Jana Sangh and the first batch of girl students in the Telugu medium appeared for their examination in the Karve institute.<sup>36</sup>

By 1930 the movement started by the Andhra Jana Sangh spread rapidly gaining in strength day by day. So in 1930 at the Jogipet conference in Medak the Andhra Jana Sangh converted itself into the Andhra Maha Sabha.

One of the special features of the first Andhra Mahasabha was that a women's conference called as the Andhra Mahila Sabha was also held along with the Andhra Mahasabha. This feature of holding the Andhra Mahila Sabha conference side by side with the Andhra Maha Sabha conference was continued up to the year 1942, when during the 9th conference at Dharmavaram the women members felt strong and confident enough to have their own separate conference.

Andhra Maha Sabha passed resolutions having a wider

importance on social and cultural matters such as the protection of the ryots in the Jagir lands, women's education, abolition of prostitution, Harijan uplift, abolition of Purdah system, introduction of elections in local committees, introduction of primary education, promotion of private schools, advocating Telugu as the medium of instruction in girls schools, revival of Ayurveda, demarcation of Telangana borders and introduction of co-operatives etc. The people responded with great enthusiasm to the Andhra Maha Sabha conferences, much to the annoyance of the Government which began to look with apprehension at its growing popularity.

Newspapers, periodicals and Magazines play a very important role in the spread of literacy in the country and maybe considered as the pulse of literacy. The greater their number, the more the tendency towards literacy. If literacy begins from the schools and similar institutions then it is primarily through the newspapers, periodical and magazines that literacy owes its preservation and advancement among the adults, many of whom might otherwise lapse into illiteracy. Also it is the newspapers, periodicals and magazines that contribute very liberally towards the cultural progress of a country.<sup>37</sup>

As against 34 and 169 respectively in the two previous decades

(i.e. 1911) there were 933 books issued. 883 of them were in Urdu and were published during the last three years of the decade. Arabic claimed the next largest number of publications, namely 25 and Telugu came third with the books, 6 books in Parsi, 2 each in English and in Marathi and one in Kannada.<sup>38</sup>

A system of circulating libraries was introduced in Hyderabad and liberal grants had been given.<sup>39</sup>

The importance of newspapers during the struggle for independence is well known. Newspapers and journals serve as life breath of freedom struggle. If there is no contact between one person and the other, they will have to live in dreadful solitude. It is a known fact that prison life is intolerable and in a prison, if a person is condemned to a solitary cell it is dreadful. Sociology says that a man does what he can do. If a particular people had rebelled against a government successfully, it only means that the rebellion of any people can similarly be crowned with success. If people of one country can pull down a dictatorship, it only follows that people of any other country can do the same. That presumes that what the people of a particular country had successfully done, should be known to the people of another country placed in similar circum-

stances. How can they know? Through the newspapers. The understanding that news gives should be enriched with an intimate knowledge of local conditions.<sup>40</sup>

Newspapers and journals are known to have disturbed violently the peaceful pools of static thoughts and we all know that journals are the main instruments to whip up political upheavals and revolutions and also make the people realize the unsatisfactory manner in which administration is being managed.

Platform is a good mate of the press. But all that happens on the platform, all the speeches and the rallies that proceed towards it and from it, will have to be written about in the press. Some of the successful leaders who conducted rebellions, led revolutions and brought changes in the society, were effective writers and good journalists.<sup>41</sup>

In the Hyderabad state the number of people who know Urdu was less than 10% but there were 20 Urdu newspapers. Not so was the number of newspaper in the other three important languages.

The first Telugu journal called 'Hitabodhini' was started in 1912

by Srinivas Sharma from Mahaboobnagar district. For the purpose of printing the journal, he also started a printing press called "Sarojini Vilas". It was a great achievement. In spite of the widespread illiteracy, the paper had nearly 500 subscribers. It dealt mostly with social, economic and agricultural problems, underlying which there was a current of nationalist thought. Srinivas Sharma was a great Sanskrit scholar and an eminent Ayurvedic doctor. He, therefore brought to bear his learning on all articles that appeared in the paper. It is said that because of the paper and the press, he sustained a great loss which he tried to make good by starting an amateur drama club called "Veeraloka Nataka Mandali". Despite all these efforts, the paper had to be closed down within a period of **two** years.<sup>42</sup>

P. N. Sharma was editing Sujatha a literary monthly to encourage writers and artists. It too did not enjoy a long life. Narsimhacharyulu of Waddepalli, Medak district was publishing Deshabandhu a literary monthly for about two decades. Chidirematham Veerabhadra Sharma was editing for a long time Vibhuthi a cultural, religious and literary monthly journal. Chidirematham was able to earn the goodwill of the reading public with his multi-faceted scholarship and genius. Vibhuthi was informative and instructive. Sabnavis

Venkatarama Narasimharao occupies a special pedestal in the history of Telugu journalism.<sup>43</sup>

1922 to 1927 can be described as almost a golden age in the History of Telugu journalism in Telangana. Scholars and poets from all over Andhra considered it an honour to be patronised by the Udayaraju brothers (Telugu Patrika), to be fraternised by the Nilagiri editor and to be honoured in the Sri Krishna Devaraya Andhra Bhasha Nilayam (Hyderabad).<sup>44</sup>

Rayyat, a Urdu weekly dedicated to the peoples' welfare and edited by the well known patriot Mandumula Narsing Rao was a red rag to the Nizams government for about four decades. Like the editorials of Krishna Patrika (Telugu weekly from Machilipatnam) the editorials of Rayyat used to be long, lively and logical. Rayyat had changed the thinking pattern of the Urdu educated in the old Nizam's state. The then police were constantly observing the activities of the subscribers to Rayyat. Some of the editorials describing in detail the partial cruel and unreasonable conduct of the Muslim Majlis, the communal organisation patronised and pampered by the government, at the expense of peace and prosperity of innocent people, were classics and were points of discussion among the educated.<sup>45</sup>

In those days there used to be a news agency "Deccan News" catering to the communal propensities of the government and its allies but there were also Muslims who braved the anger of the government and its allies, by exposing the nefarious propaganda being done by Deccan News and its like. Mustafa Khadri was running a news agency known as 'Vatan News' to propagate patriotism. He was also the editor of an Urdu Weekly "Muhebe Watan". Yet another journalist with courage was Ganapat Rao Ekhelikar, the editor of Modern News which was as vehemently patriotic as Watan News.<sup>46</sup>

Governments which were always anti-people made attempts to pit one caste against another caste. But there were some patriots who resisted this attempt. Prem Kumar, the vice-president of state Scheduled Caste Federation published 'Manavat' (human equality), an Urdu weekly, quite for sometime creating waves of instructive thinking among the people.<sup>47</sup>

Shoebullah a graduate, belonged to the privileged section of the populace. But he had his training in journalism in 'Rayyat' of Narsing Rao. Shoeb was independent and never yielded to the temptation of profitable employment in the government. After some years,

he had started his own Urdu journal "The Imroze" a patriotic venture which was loathed by the communal Muslims. But there is no cure for communalism. Kasim Razvi leader of the Muslim Majlis incited his followers to cut off that hand which was writing against communalism. That night, goondas of the Majlis raided the office of Imrose, cut the hand of Shoebullah and also cut his head to present it to Razvi.<sup>48</sup>

Rayyat produced a number of writers and leaders. Of them Digambar Rao Bindu and Pandit Narendraji had become front rank leaders of freedom movement. Jalaluddin ran a journal '*Samaj*' for a long time. B.S. Rao was running a journal '*Rahnuma*' for sometime. Katam Lakshmi Narayana was editing a journal '*Janata*'.<sup>TM</sup>

C. Gopala Krishna reporter of the Associated Press of India and L.D. Natarajan reporter of Hindustan times were deported from the state for their anti-communal writings. The people cannot afford to forget the services rendered by C.S. Naidu, Mangu Seshagiri Rao and V.H. Desai. B.R. Chari was yet another journalist whose thought provoking articles in the daily Hyderabad Bulletin were avidly read by the people.<sup>50</sup>

The journalistic services rendered to the people of Hyderabad state by Siddavanahalli Krishna Sharma stand out as special class and classics by themselves. He was a born writer. He was also deported from the Hyderabad state.<sup>51</sup>

Veldurti Manik Rao was a class by himself like Krishna Sharma. He was also feeding a number of journals with his news letters for a long time. Nobody knew that he was writing. Prajamitra of Madras edited by Gudavalli Ramabrahmam were carrying his news letters for a long time, much to the pleasure and edification of its readers.<sup>52</sup>

*'Mushir-e-Deccari* a Urdu daily of Hyderabad, started by Baji Rao. His son Vasudeva Rao Aurangabadkar continued it for a long time. He was having Madapati Hanumantha Rao among its editorial writers. Madapati Hanumantha Rao was adept in writing subdued but effective and informative editorials. In those days the Urdu daily *'Rahbar-e-Deccan'* a communal Urdu daily had all its writings contradicted by the Urdu daily *'Payam'* edited by Khazi Abdul Ghafar a great nationalist. *Rahbar-e-Deccan* changed its colour overnight after police action and *Payam* went under due to economic reasons. The speciality of *Payam* was its simple and satirical style

which went straight to the hearts of people.<sup>53</sup>

YD. Joshi a Hindu Mahasabhite and a freedom lover was editing a Marathi weekly. Whatever he wrote was likened by his friends he was like a sleeping volcano. These were some of the newspapers and journals whose writings the Government had never taken to kindly. Press freedom was a myth. There used to be a number of patriotic reporters representing newspapers published from the neighbouring states.<sup>54</sup>

'*Saradhi*' a Telugu weekly an organ of the State Congress was published from Bezawada with Talluri Ramanuja Swami and D. Ramalingam as editors. It was managed by T. Hayagrivachari and Bommakanti Satyanarayana. Literally it was smuggled into the state and read avidly by people for information pertaining to the struggle for emancipation of Hyderabad state "Hyderabad" was another Telugu weekly published by Dr. M Chenna Reddy from Bezawada. A third Telugu weekly which was published from Bezawada was Telugu Desam run by V.B. Raju and Rajyalakshmi Devi.<sup>55</sup>

There was yet another addition to the journals of the struggle days, edited by the popular poet Adluri Ayodhya Ramaiah which com-

bined patriotism and literature.<sup>57</sup> B.N. Sharma was the editor of a Telugu weekly '*Andhra Vani*' which was also published from Bezwada. During the struggle days he was very effectively highlighting social, political and cultural aspirations of the Telangana people. People liked reading it. But the Nizam's police used to confiscate the copies of *Andhra Vani* as a daily routine.<sup>57</sup>

In 1917, Swami Venkata Rao of the Divine Life Society started a monthly journal called '*Andhra Matha*' from Secunderabad. The journal was mostly devoted to the propagation of Divine Life Society ideals. It included features which were semi-political and made comments on the policies of the government. The journal could not survive beyond eight months.<sup>58</sup>

In 1920, Vaddiraju Sitaramachander Rao and his brother Raghava Ranga Rao started a Telugu Weekly called '*Telugu Patrika*' from Inugurthi village in the Warangal district. These brothers were eminent scholars of Sanskrit and Telugu. This weekly also had 500 subscribers. It could not survive beyond five years. In these five years, it rendered valuable service in cultural and social fields.<sup>59</sup>

In 1920, a political worker Sahnavis Venkatarama Narasimha

Rao started a weekly called '*Neelagiri*' from Nalgonda. He was not like Srinivas Sharma or the Vaddiraju brothers, a great scholar, but he seems to have had enough political knowledge and a better enough command over Telugu and Urdu languages. From a purely political point of view, *Neelagiri* was the first paper that raised its voice of protest against the autocratic rule of the then government and demanded more freedom of speech and association. The government did not take any action against the paper but there were reasons to believe that the editor himself was subtly subjected to harassment for his political opinions. Narasimha Rao continued the paper for five years. In 1920, another paper called '*Andhrabyudayam*' started publication and after three years, closed down. A monthly journal called '*Deshbandhu*' had come out for three years and closed down.<sup>60</sup>

In December 1923, a monthly journal called "Saiva Pracharini" was started from Warangal. Mudigonda Veeresalinga Sastri was the editor. It was founded by the eminent exponent of the Siva cult Sri Kandimila Rajalingaraya. Though it was essentially a magazine of Shaiva religion, it opposed the restrictions imposed by the government on freedom of religious practices. It continued as a monthly journal for four years and then was converted into a fortnightly, before

its closure.

The eminent scholar Shri Bucchiah Linga Shastri started a monthly magazine called '*Saivamani*' from Secunderabad which was printed in its own press called Panchakshari Press.<sup>61</sup>

In 1925, Sri Khaskar started a bi-weekly from Secunderabad called '*Nedu*'. It was a bi-lingual published in English and Telugu. It brought to bear a pronounced nationalist outlook on the politics of Hyderabad. After a couple of years it ceased publication.

In 1925 itself the eminent leader Bhagya Reddy started a fortnightly called the '*Bhagyanagar Patrika*' which in the first instance, continued for two years when Bhagya Reddy had to go to Mysore for reasons of health it was closed for some time. After a couple of years, he returned from Mysore, and revived the paper as a weekly under a different name. He called it the '*Adi Hindu Patrika*'. His health was so bad that he could not bear the strain of journalism and the paper had to be closed after six months. Both the papers edited by Bhagya Reddy were clearly political in as much as he himself took a prominent part in the political activities of the state along with eminent leaders like Vaman Naik and Keshav Rao.<sup>62</sup>

1925 marks the beginning of a new era in the political life of Telangana, as it was in that year that the Andhra Mahasabha came into existence and also in the same year the '*Golconda Patrika*' was started by Suravaram Pratapa Reddy as a bi-weekly. The birth of the Golconda Patrika also saw the end of the Telugu Patrika and Neelagiri. The services of Golconda Patrika are too well known and significant in the history of Telangana. Its editor Suravaram Pratapa Reddy was one of the pioneers of the political movement in the state who braved all storms for the cause which he had heartily espoused.<sup>63</sup>

In 1934, Dattatreya Sharma started a monthly from Secunderabad called the '*Deccan Kesari*' which was bi-lingual i.e. Telugu and English. In 1936 Srimathi Rachamalla Satyavathi Devi started another monthly from Secunderabad called the '*Telugu Talli*', which came out for a year and then closed.<sup>64</sup>

In 1937, Chivukula Appaiah Sastry who was a Sanatanist started a weekly called '*Divyavani*'. It was essentially anti-progressive in political matters. Devulapalli Ramanuja Rao started a monthly called the '*Shobha*' from Warangal which played quite a prominent role, but for reasons of finance, it had to be closed down

within one year.

The only paper with a clear political outlook and which supported Congress activities was the Golconda Patrika. From 1938 to 1945, we do not find any new Telugu paper, political or otherwise, being published. In 1945, after a great deal of difficulty, permission was granted to bring out a Telugu monthly '*Tarani*'. During this period, the Government was a little favourable to the Communists and permission was granted to the Communists to start a Telugu weekly called the '*Andhra Kesari*'.<sup>65</sup>

Qazi Abdul Gaffar, the eminent man of letters and the editor of the Payam started a Telugu daily called '*Sandeshamu*' in 1945 but it had hardly a life of six months.

1945 also saw the birth of two Telugu Dailies namely the '*Telangana*' and the '*Meezan*'. The Telangana was financed by Rajagopal Mudaliar and Meezan by Gulam Mohammad Calcuttawala. The Telangana was edited by a very talented journalist, B.R. Chari and Meezan by a well-known man of letters, Adavi Bapi Raju.<sup>66</sup>

The Telangana tried to support the nationalist movement but had

to close down within a couple of years. The Meezan was essentially a daily of feudal outlook and supported the activities of the Government. Shri Adavi Bapi Raju had to quit Meezam before the police action in 1948.

Syed Asadullah, the younger brother of Dr. Syed Abdul Latif of the Osmania University, had sailed a paper the New Era from Hyderabad but it was suppressed by the order of the executive. Later, he started a weekly paper called the '*Hyderabad Herald*'. Its first issue was published on the August 10, 1931.<sup>67</sup>

The '*Nizam Vjyay*' was founded in December 1920 under the joint patronage of Vaman Naik and Keshav Rao. Laxman Rao was its editor and proprietor. Laxman Rao Phatak was member of the Hindu Political Association, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Social Service League. The editorials were based on news items supplied from districts and supported by imagination. The paper was suspended in August 1929 but the editor secured permission for two other papers '*Lokasikshan*' and the '*Nagarik*'. The director of Public Instruction found fault with the *Nagarik* and it was stopped.<sup>68</sup>

The Golconda Patrika was in the hands of persons like Madapati

Hanumantha Rao and Suravaram Pratap Reddy, Mandamula Narsing Rao and Burgula Ramakrishna Rao. These politicians were well known. The Patrika was an organ of the Andhra Mahasabha and pro-Congress. It had successfully achieved its object of spreading the Andhra movement in the Telangana districts. It generally dealt with matters related to agricultural and social betterment and educational advancement. It also condemned the activities of the Urdu papers. They showed that the religious policy of the Hyderabad Government was harmful to the Hindus. It gave a wide publicity to the Satyagraha of the students when they were disallowed to conduct Ganapati procession.<sup>69</sup>

The Nizam Vijay praised the Nizam when he was going to construct Shadikhana out of municipal funds but suggested that there should be two such places one for the Hindus and the other for Muslims.<sup>70</sup>

*The 'Nizam Gazette'*, as its name indicates, was a semi-government paper. It maintained a very high standard and was generally above communalism. Even during the days when nothing but fanaticism was voiced through papers, the Nizam Gazette did not allow its policy to be contaminated by any communal

virus.

This paper unfurled its standard of revolt when the Nizam's state Railway was purchased prematurely. It also criticised cases of unfair dealings in the PWD and some misdeeds of officers. But the Government was watching its activities very carefully. It was stopped for its severe criticism regarding the Railway affair but was again permitted to continue in accordance with a Firman dated April 20, 1933.

There were many other Urdu papers like *Waqt*, *'Paisa'*, *'Akbar'* and *Sahifa* which supported the policy of the Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen, the rapid communal organization. But the Modern News Agency did yeoman service in furnishing authentic information and was very much favoured even by outside papers.<sup>71</sup>

The English papers like the *'Hyderabad Bulletin'*. The *'Deccan Chronicle'* and the *'Daily News'* had an appeal to the educated community and therefore they were uniformly subdued in their views. The policy of the Nizam's Government was such that the local papers were allowed to criticise the affairs relating to the Government of India. But anything written against a Hyderabad official or the head of the department, was interpreted as either communal

or political.

The story of the '*Marathwada*', a weekly published from Aurangabad by Anand Rao Waghre, was very unique. The paper was always virulent and aggressive in criticising the policies of the Hyderabad Government. Later it shifted to Sholapur in the Bombay state. It was published every Thursday. Its articles were always unpalatable to the Government. Friday was a weekly holiday in the state and the paper would achieve its object of injecting critical ideas into the minds of the readers by sending it into the state on Friday. The Government would only take a decision either on Saturday or Sunday, to ban the entry of the paper into the state. But the editor was clever enough to secure permission of the Bombay government immediately for publishing another issue on next Thursday and get it circulated in Hyderabad under a different name. This trick continued and some dozen names were changed by the author, when the political department and the Press Commissioner of the Hyderabad Government became fully aware of it and issued a list of papers in all languages which alone were allowed to enter the state.<sup>72</sup>

**LIBRARY MOVEMENT** : The leaders of Andhra Maha Sabha considered Library movement as a good hand maid of the programme

to interest people in their basic rights. In fact library movement had started nearly 20 years earlier than Andhra Maha Sabha as a harbinger of a wider movement and it had taken considerable roots in most of the villages. A number of young men and women took missionary interest in the library movement. Their interest in fact had created misgivings among some loyal officials that it was all a political movement. Some officials in authority were visiting some of these libraries, ostensibly with a view to encourage the organizers but in reality to find out if any political activity was associated with this movement. One senior official questioned the librarian of Suryapet Library if Government had permitted them to start this library. When the librarian replied in the negative, instructions were given by the senior official that the library should be closed immediately.<sup>73</sup>

The news of the closure was immediately conveyed to the Home secretary by a lawyer (Madapati Hanumantha Rao) of Hyderabad. The home secretary after making few enquiries ordered the immediate opening of the library.

There was yet another incident in which the village Police Patel of Madikonda village had ordered the immediate closure of the library since it had not obtained the permission of the Government. But

the secretary of the library replied requesting the Police Patel to produce evidence to the effect that Government permission was necessary to start a library. The police Patel could not show any such evidence but insisted that a library should secure the permission of the Government. The secretary of the library petitioned the district law authorities. He was asked to keep the library closed until relevant instructions were given.<sup>74</sup>

The reason adduced for the order closing the library make an interesting reading. The reasons were:

"People are coming to the library everyday. The library has been getting Andhra Patrika, Krishna Patrika and Musheer-e-Deccan. They have secured permission from a proper authority to conduct such activities in the library premises. All sorts of news about religious frictions have been getting publicity in newspapers which exciting people and often leading to danger to human life". The secretary of the library addressed a letter to the home secretary to allow the opening of the library. And also made it clear that Government order was not necessary to start a library. There was no reply from the home secretary. Some how the officials wrote permitting the library to operate but with a stipulation that people should not

gather there!

It had become almost a disgusting routine for the police to warn the people against patronizing libraries on the plea that libraries are inimical to the Government. Many a library secretary was harassed by the police with regard to the legality of the establishment and at a number of places police demanded the list of the subscribers to the libraries and list of books.<sup>75</sup>

One day the superintendent of police of Nalgonda and some of his subordinates swooped on Andhra Vignana Prakashini Library of Suryapet, took possession of the subscribers list., of books, and accounts books. Mercifully an acknowledgement for all the records confiscated was given. In due course the records were sent to inspector general of police. The top brass of the police had reacted differently this time. With a warning to the superintendent that he should desist from bringing Government into disrepute, all the records were returned to the library. In fact a circle inspector of police brought them to return to the library and for once this police official adopted a friendly attitude towards the librarian. The inspector also promised to help the library people if and when a necessity arose.<sup>76</sup>

The Library movement despite the fact that it became a red

rag to the Government, had humble beginnings which continued for more than 20 long years. According to the organizers of the Andhra Mahasabha there would be no libraries in more than a hundred villages. And in the whole of Telangana no library occupied more than one almira. A couple of journals were subscribed to normally.<sup>77</sup>

Imagine such a small library commanding the respect and interest of the people and inviting an unhelpful attitude from the officialdom !

The library in a village however small and insignificant, it was always a live organization attracting people who were conscious that their natural rights were trampled upon by a Government and its loyalists.

It was not uncommon for libraries to change their places of existence depending on the address of the library secretary. If the secretary has shifted from one village to another, the library also went along with him.<sup>78</sup>

However small the libraries and reading rooms, they were

sources of interest, anxiety and also fun at times. Often the social divisions reflected their idiosyncrasies in the functioning of these libraries. Imagine a poor fellow serving the people with the library in his capacity as a volunteer. Another person with some social status would not hesitate to remove the library to a premises of his choice so that the library would be saved from the care of a socially lower person ! <sup>79</sup>

In another case a social bigwig had taken away the books from library to just show off his greatness.

The Andhra leaders had organized a series of conferences and meetings and undertook tours to maintain the existing libraries properly and to start new libraries. With this objective in view the leaders organized the first library conference in 1924 at Madira and it had become an annual feature in Telangana.<sup>80</sup>

Nizam's government had never helped the founding of a Telugu library in the state. Libraries were founded by people though most of them were small. Telangana can boast of some big libraries also whose establishment synchronised with the advent of twentieth century. It will be relevant to list them out here.

1. Sri Krishna Deva Raya Andhra Bhasha Nilayam - Hyderabad.
2. Sri Raja Raja Narendra Andhra Bhasha Nilayam - Hanumakonda.
3. Andhra Samvardhini - Secunderabad.
4. Samskrita Kala Samvardhini - Secunderabad.
5. Mahaboobia Andhra Bhasha Nilayam - Yerrupalem.
6. Sri Siddi Malleswara Grandhalayam - Remedicherla.
7. Sri Andhra Vignana Prakashini Grandha Nilayamu, Suryapeta.
8. Sri Andhra Saraswathi Grandha Nilayamu - Nalgonda.
9. Sri Sabdanasasana Andhra Bhasa Mandiramu - Warangal.
10. Sri Maduri Raghavulu Bhasha Kalpavalli - Secunderabad.

The Andhras of the old Nizam state are eternally indebted to Nayani Venkata Ranga Rao, Kommaraju Venkata Lakshman Rau, **Ravichettu Ranga** Rao, Adipudi Somanatha Rao, Mailavaram Narasimha Sastry and Voddiraju Brothers to name a few who were responsible for the establishment of these libraries.<sup>81</sup>

**ANDHRA MAHASABHA** : The year 1930 brought in a great upsurge. The first Andhra Mahasabha took place in the first week of March 1930 at Jogipet under the presidentship of Suravaram Pratap Reddy, popular editor of the Golconda Patrika.

Several resolutions gave expression to the genuine inconveniences and reasonable aspirations of the people were passed at this conference. Many leaders like Vaman Naik, Madapati Hanumantha Rao, Shridhar Naik and Swami Yoganand had participated in the conference and made speeches supporting several resolutions adopted by the conference.<sup>82</sup>

Resolutions relating to the conditions of farmers who were not rendered adequate assistance by the agricultural department of the state, either in the form of Takkavi loans as in Marathwada or timely advice to better the conditions of the crops were passed. A resolution very strongly voiced, the need of several villages for proper supply of drinking water. Some of the resolutions pertained to the demand for exemption of customs duty on the export of hand-spun yarn and hand-spun cloth. Support to Ayurvedic doctors as in the case of Unani Hakims, introduction of elected element in municipalities to instill wider and deeper political awakening in the minds of the people were the subjects of other resolutions. Appeal was made to the people in general that they should try to make use of the old Panchayats for minimising litigation. A resolution to encourage women's education and the elimination of the Purdah system bears eloquent testimony to the desire for social reforms along with political

ones. The conference was keenly conscious of the necessity of rewriting the history of Telangana and the people in general were requested to give every possible help to researchers when they approach them.<sup>83</sup>

The second session was held at Devarakonda under the presidentship of Burgula Ramakrishna Rao in 1931. The conference had committed itself not to introduce politics in its deliberations, yet a sagacious president like Ramakrishna Rao could not exclude politics from his presidential address and this aspect of the presidential speech did not escape the notice of the Government who insisted on claiming a security of Rs. 2000 which would be forfeited in case politics were talked about. This repressive attitude of the Government was resented by the organisers of the conference who did not hold the third conference till 1934, when Pulijala Venkataranga Rao was elected to preside at this conference to held at Madhira in Warangal district. But a written undertaking had to be given that the conference would exclude all politics. The Sanatana Dharmists among the members did not like that even social problems should be discussed by the conference. The district Talukdar (collector) championed the cause of the Sanatanists and social problems were not discussed at the conference.<sup>84</sup>

As in the previous sessions many persons from Hyderabad had congregated to participate in the deliberations. Pandit Keshav Rao and Srinivas Rao Sharma, had along with others gone to attend the conference. They moved resolutions, reiterated all the resolutions that were not taken notice of by the Government though they were humbly submitted to Governments notice a year before. The atmosphere that pervaded was very healthy and progressive. Elimination of Urdu as the medium of instruction for Hindu girls was very strongly recommended.<sup>85</sup> People were also anxious to see that Government encouraged technological and agricultural education among the masses. Strong appeals were made for wearing hand-spun and hand-woven khaddar and use of home-made goods. It was an admitted fact that the cultural level in the Sarf-i-khas, (Nizam's Jagirs) Paigahs (Jagirs of Nizam's relatives), Samsthans and the Mukhtas was generally low. The conference urged upon the Government the necessity to create the same facilities and standards as were prevalent in the Diwani Khalsa (non-jagirs) area in the above Jagir areas also. In a revision of revenue rates the settlement department had enhanced the taxes which hit hard the farmers. An appeal was made to the Government that they should reconsider the whole matter and relieve the burden of taxes from the shoulders of the agriculturists. The resolution was adopted unanimously that

the library movement as it was prevalent in a state like Baroda should be introduced in the whole state so that the miserable percentage of literacy would be improved. The conference took notice of the backward conditions of the Adivasis and the Harijans and requested the well-to-do people to make contributions for starting a fund to bring about an uplift in their conditions. The forced labour (Begar System) extracted from the villagers (against the orders of the Government) should be stopped and such officers as were forcing people to do so should be punished properly, a resolution requested the Government.

The Devadasi system that obtained in certain temples encouraged prostitution and therefore the Andhra Mahasabha expressed its deep concern and appealed to the people that such women should be married and rehabilitated as members of well-settled families.<sup>86</sup>

The Andhra Mahasabha held its session in 1934 at Khammam the resolutions passed were ; Government was requested to grant remissions of taxes to cultivators in areas of drought, introduce Telugu as the language in the Munsif court and registration offices as in British India. A resolution was unanimously adopted recommending the uti-

lization of the religious cess collected by the merchants and traders, towards the cause of education.<sup>87</sup>

In the Andhra Mahasabha session in 1935 at Sirsilla Madapati Hanumantha Rao, presiding, notice of the impending silver jubilee of His Exalted Highness the Nizam was taken and a one year plan was worked out for introducing libraries, disseminating education both for adults and children and methods of ensuring health and freedom from disease to the people were passed. They passed a resolution requesting that the two Telugu speaking taluks, Alampur and Kodangal, should be annexed to the Telugu-speaking district of Mahaboobnagar. This resolution had anticipated the proposal of the states reorganization committee.<sup>88</sup> A resolution urging the Government to include Telugu-knowing officers in higher administrative posts was also adopted. A request was made to start more trains to pass through Telangana area. Further, it was requested that there should be vigorous arrangements for maintaining cleanliness in the third class compartments equipping them with more exits and entrances.<sup>89</sup>

The fifth session of the Andhra Mahasabha took place at Shadnagar under the presidentship of K. Venkata Ranga Reddy in 1936. Due to the assurance given to the Government, the reso-

lutions passed in this conference were entirely free from politics. The same old resolutions were reiterated and attention of the Government was invited towards the implementation. One of the resolution entreated the Government to conduct an economic survey of Telangana and enlist the services of public representatives for the purpose. The proposal to increase cattle wealth of the regions also had a special mention.<sup>90</sup>

The sixth session of the Andhra Mahasabha took place at Nizamabad under the presidentship of M.Narsing Rao in 1937. The most outstanding feature of session was the demand for responsible Government and the expression of dissatisfaction with the impending reforms. One resolution requested the Government to devise ways and means for lightening the existing burden of agricultural indebtedness and it was suggested that the tax the farmers had to pay for receiving irrigated water from the Nizam sagar, should be calculated separately on the basis of the water actually received by the farmers, the complaint being that though there was no adequate supply of water the cess they had to pay was heavy. There was also a strong proposal for enhancing number of post offices in the Telangana area.<sup>91</sup>

The year 1938 had a special significance in the political struggle for the attainment of democracy in the Hyderabad state. The state Congress before its birth was condemned by the Government as a communal body, started under "foreign" influence of the Indian National Congress. The state Congress therefore had determined to actively protest against the Government order and start Satyagraha. The Arya Samaj and the Civil Liberties Union became alert and under three different banners the people began to express their resentment against the repressive policy of the Government by starting Satyagraha. Jails were being filled. Many of the enthusiastic workers of the Andhra Maha Sabha had participated in the Satyagraha. Prominent among them were Ravi Narayana Reddy, M. Ramachandra Rao and N. K. Rao. It was but natural that the constitutional activities of the Andhra Mahasabha have received a setback when their activists joined the Satyagraha. Differences began to appear and re-appear between nationalist leaders like M. Ramachandra Rao and Ravi Narayana Reddy. It is known that the Communists looked upon the second world war as the people's war and struck a note different from the Congress. These differences, though very mild at the beginning, created a split between the two groups. There was already a third group of liberal Nationalist, elderly persons who always liked to follow a 'go-slow' policy. Some workers from all the groups

were endeavoring to create a compromise among all the three groups.<sup>92</sup> They succeeded in electing M. Ramachandra Rao president for the seventh session of the Andhra Mahasabha at Malkapur. Deliberations focussed on the merits and demerits of the reforms announced by the Government and they were found to be quite unsatisfactory. The differences between the two groups kept on corroding unity. And the misunderstandings between elderly and educated workers and enthusiastic youngsters became pronounced. Ravi Narayana Reddy was elected president for the 8th session held at Chilkur in 1941. The tussle between the two groups grew wider and began to appear more basic and fundamental.<sup>91</sup> Narayana Reddy secured Ramakoteswara Rao of Warangal as president for the 9th session held at Malkapur, Warangal district. But it was Narayana Reddy who controlled all the activities and the Congress minded nationalists could not influence anything. The non-communist group was attracted to the Quit India Policy of the Indian National Congress, while the Communists were openly helping the war effort. The Hyderabad Government patronized the Communist workers and enlisted their services for war effort. At the tenth session held in 1943, the presidential elections showed great bitterness. The young party set up B. Yella Reddy for the presidentship while the nationalist group had elected Konda Venkata Ranga Reddy. But this did not mean

smooth sailing in any form. The activities of the young group were antagonistic to the interests of the Zamindars and therefore the differences continued. The non-communists became anti-communists in the long run. This anti-communist group consisted of Congress minded youths. The eleventh and twelfth annual conferences were held at Bhuvanagiri and Khammam under the presidentship of Narayana Reddy alone. Ideological differences compelled non-Communist sections to hold a separate conference at Madikonda in 1945. After the conclusion of the second world war, the attitude of the Government of Hyderabad underwent a slight transformation. The Government did not give permission to the Communists to hold their session in 1946. The nationalist members of the Andhra Maha Sabha held their session at Kandi under the presidentship of Jamalapuram Keshav Rao.<sup>94</sup> The history of all these activities of the Andhras in the Telugu districts of Hyderabad state clearly reveals the fact that the Government did not contribute to the fullest prosperity and progress of the people.<sup>95</sup> The dissatisfied but politically conscious elements organised themselves, each group in its own way, to rebel against the government.

These political bickering resulted in the women getting more enlightened politically.

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## CHAPTER 4

# EARLY WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

The foregoing chapter is focused on the social context in which women's collective activities were born. The earlier caste associations, the library movement and the growing political articulation in the Nizams dominion, created opportunities and necessities for women to organise themselves and list out their problems. Women's education which was the core concern of these varied trends created an environment in which middle class and upper strata women began to organise either as recreational groups or with an explicit welfare agenda. Gradually, the sphere of women's participation expanded into the more open public and political organisations which began taking centre stage from the 1930's onwards.

The earlier organizations promoted the cause of women by introducing educational institutions and self employment schemes. They also established libraries and their meetings were carried on in their own mother tongue. The communal based organizations were started because the women felt that this would be the best way to help their community directly. The women who participated in the welfare ac-

tivities in the earlier days were those whose husbands, fathers and brothers were in high and important positions in the social and political fields. These women utilised every opportunity advantageously for the establishment and development of women's associations.

Among the earliest formal women's associations was the Bharatha Mahila Sangham established in 1907 by Smt. Seeta Bai, wife of Ballari Gopal Rao. In 1907 they established this association at the house of Smt. Ravichettu Lakshmi Narasamma. However the association worked only for an year. The Hyderabad women's association was founded in 1916. Among its founder members were Smt. Sarojini Devi, Amina Hydari and Mrs. Rustomji. This association was initiated by Maragaret Cousins, who had come from Madanapalli. This association attracted the elite women of Telangana. It was later to become Telangana branch of the All India Women's Conference.<sup>1</sup>

It was in 1922 that another association came into existence. It was the Andhra Sodari Samajam. Initially this association used to meet at Prem Theatre. Six months later the Sri Krishna Devaraya Bhasha Nilayam allowed them to hold weekly and periodic meetings in its premises. Among the active members of this Samajam

Besides the various recreational and social associations organised by women, there were several other organisations organised by minority groups in Hyderabad. As mentioned earlier the minority groups started organising themselves at the turn of the century, particularly to provide educational facilities for their respective social groups.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Muslim women also started associations for the uplift of women. Initially the associations were established, patronised and pioneered by the princesses and elite women. Some of them were primarily to enable social get together among the elite and purdah women. Later, they were to take a fairly active interest in education of Muslim girls of the less privileged sections. Several of them were closely associated with the All India Women's Conference.

Moheb Hussain who initiated the movement for the education of women in Northern India had come to Hyderabad in 1877, and started a women's journal called '*Moleem-e-Niswari*' in 1892. When he raised his voice in 1883 against Purdah, he had to face lot of opposition which resulted in the closure of this magazine.<sup>5</sup>

This beginning though not very successful led to a number

of reforms during the rule of the last Nizam, for the welfare of women. The Department of Education started taking interest in the education of women. The women, on the other hand, started their activities on a larger scale. Once again magazines were published for women projecting their socio-cultural problems. The cultural and religious problems against which these women associations worked can be summed up as, discarding harmful and outdated traditions, social simplicity, freedom from superstitions, discarding Purdah system, ban on early marriages, permission for the remarriage of widows and reform in the laws of marriages and divorce. Though there was no congenial atmosphere for the publication of such writings in Hyderabad, a number of subdued articles on these were written by the Hyderabad women.<sup>6</sup> The prominent writers of the period were Afzal Unnisa Begum, Kismat Unnisa Begum, Tayyaba Begum, Sabara Humayun Mirza, Sarojini Naidu, Begum Ameer Hussain, Kaisari Begum, Jamal Sakina Begum, Juhabana Naqvi, Nuvenr Kansji, Dr. Rafia Sultana, Dr. Zenath Segara etc.<sup>7</sup>

Anjuman-Khawateen -e-Deccan established in 1895 was intended to be open for women of all religions. Its primary objective was to train and help poor women and widows to earn their living by some trade. They also tried to encourage marriages by avoiding unnec-

essary rituals. Among its objectives was the creation of friendship between women of different religions. In 1913, Begum Khader Jung established Anjuman-e-Khawateen. Its exclusive aim was to provide education to the children of the poor. An Urdu medium school was started, where Telugu and English were also taught. They also started a girls school called Madarasa Niswan-Mohadeya, situated at Shankar Gunj. The association went on working until 1932.<sup>8</sup>

An interesting feature of this process of women associating, was the recognition of leisure and recreational activities as a need of the upper and middle class women of Hyderabad. The 'recreational class' gave a legitimate opportunity for Muslim women to meet outside the home.

A number of women's recreational clubs came into existence. The Hyderabad Ladies Social Club was established under the presidentship of Lady Hydari and the Zenana Recreation Club was established by Rani Sham Raj. Saura-Maun-Mirja established Ladies Association in 1919 and became its president, while Mohmadi Begum became the secretary. The Association published its objectives which were 13 in number. They included, the demands for 'reforms and opportunities' for the women in Hyderabad.

In 1913 even before the establishment of this association, Tayyaba Begum established an association. "Idara-e-Adabeyat-e-Urdu" was established by Moyaddin-Khadri-Zora and a women's wing was also appended to it. The journal published by the Idara published a number of articles by Hyderabad women, discussing their problems. The women's wing published a pamphlet concerning the articles of the women writers in Hyderabad.<sup>9</sup> Two more associations came up, one was Bazweniswa and the other the Anjuman-e-Serajul-Khawateen, with the same objectives. Hyderabad women did not lag behind even in journalism. A number of journals were started for women. The popular journals were '*Ismat*', '*Tahzeeb*' and '*Nisa*'. *Nisa* was edited by Sohra Humayun Mirza. When she went to Europe it was closed and was published from Lahore. In 1931, another magazine, called '*Hamjoli*' was started by Sayyada Bagum, the wife of a superintendent in Osmania University. It was followed by '*Safena Niswan*' started by Siddique Qureshee. In 1944, '*Khayaban-e-Deccan*' was published. The last magazine which is still being published was '*Sher-e-Niswan*' by the Anjuman-e-Bazwamswa. In addition to this some women were associated with other papers and assisted their husbands in their work. Besides journals and magazines, women of Hyderabad wrote many books.<sup>10</sup>

Besides these associations with definite reform goals, there were several recreational clubs which were open for elite women. These clubs later developed to undertake welfare activities. The most prominent of them was Lady Hydari Club, which was originally known as the Hyderabad Ladies Association Club. It was started in 1901 through the combined efforts of Lady Hydari, Begum Khadi Jung and Lady Glancy. The purpose of the Club was to enable English and Indian ladies to come together in a friendly manner with equality and with mutual cultural respect and affection." The sole idea of the establishment of the Club was to allow the purdah observing ladies to mix freely with other ladies and to have social contact with them. The building of the Club was so designed and constructed as to function like a screen in order to make sufficient allowance for privacy. In its early stages the Club flourished largely due to the interest evinced in its development by such distinguished ladies like Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Lady Tasker, Lady Gideon, Miss. Amina Pope, Miss. Linell and Princess Durre-Shahwar.<sup>12</sup> While it did not serve the function of encouraging social contacts among ladies, its more important role was to set into motion a process of modernisation among the elitist sections of the local women. The Club succeeded in inculcating a modern outlook among them which sustained the Club and its activities in the post independence period. The Club organised diversified

activities for its members, besides providing indoor games such as table tennis, cards, tennis and shuttle badminton. It also introduced tailoring and cookery training programmes. It participated actively in running welfare programmes for lepers and destitutes. It was financially an affluent club and donated liberally to welfare activities. Membership was not restricted and any lady belonging to any caste or creed or strata of society could register herself as a member of this Club.<sup>13</sup>

In 1904, the Marathi speaking people of Hyderabad city held meetings to discuss the question of establishing an educational institution in Hyderabad. In 1906 prominent Maharashtrian leaders of Hyderabad like Pandit Keshav Rao Koratkar, Vaman Ramachandra Naik and Ganpat Rao Hardikar established Viveka Vardhini Pathasala, which later on developed into a leading educational Society in the state known as the Viveka Vardhini Educational Society.<sup>14</sup> In 1907, Vithal Rao Duglankar, Keshav Rao Karatkar and Garuda Rao started the Nutan Vidyalaya High School in Gulbarga. They also had Vivek Vardhini Sabha. Its programme was to hold weekly debates and discuss different subjects, political social and cultural and to organise a reading room and a library.<sup>15</sup> Prior to the starting of the Viveka Vardhini Educational Society in 1904 itself,

classes in mother tongue i.e. in Marathi were started by Sri Dattopant Dingre and Sri Karmarkar, private classes were started from first to fourth standard with Marathi as medium of instruction. But as Urdu was the medium in Government primary schools, these classes were held for some time in the Bhagwan Das Building in Sultan Bazar.<sup>16</sup> These classes received full support of the Marathi speaking population of Hyderabad and a large number of students joined them. They conducted classes for some time and afterwards formed their own association or society.

On 25th October 1907, the Viveka Vardhini Pathasala was established. The aims and objectives were to create awakening among the people and to infuse a spirit of self-confidence and love for Swarajya and Swadeshi.<sup>17</sup> In 1916, they started pre-matriculation classes with a view to train students for the matriculation examinations of the University of Bombay. This decision was taken because students could not appear for the examination conducted by the Board of Secondary Education of the Nizam's Government. From 1940 to 1947 the school had to pass through a period of tribulation.<sup>18</sup> Till 1915, girls continued to receive co-education with the consent of their guardians but their objective was to start a separate school for girls. From 1916 the girls school began to have its in-

dependent existence. This separate arrangement of girls education resulted in attracting more girls. On the request of the guardians of girls, English also continued to be taught in fourth and fifth standards. From 1927 onwards Sri.D.V. Tilak and Mrs. Saraswathi Bai Nakhe, a Marathi trained assistant, managed the school efficiently.<sup>19</sup> The Society started higher classes and by 1932 the strength of the school increased by 150. The strength started increasing so steadily that a few classes had to be held in the house of Shri. Narayana Rao. The matriculation classes with Marathi as the medium of instruction were opened in 1936. Nagpur University allowed the students to appear at the examinations as private candidates. The silver jubilee of the girls school was celebrated in the year 1940. It was presided over by Bharat Ratna Dr.D.K. Karve, the founder of the Women's University in Maharashtra.

The extra curricular activities in the Viveka Vardhini Girls School were many. One extra period after the school hours was made compulsory for the games and general reading in which the students were required to take part. Students and teachers of Kanyashala offered shramadan to construct servants quarters. Thus the Kanyashala which began in 1907 with her sister institutions, the V.V. Primary School, had been very efficiently and sincerely serving

the Marathi speaking people of Hyderabad and the credit goes to the sincere and painstaking organisers and teachers of the institution. Music was introduced as one of the subjects in the primary school as early as 1925. This subject continued to be taught in the boys and girls primary schools. Prof. G.P. Patwardhan, the first superintendent of the society's school, opened the tailoring school in 1944.<sup>20</sup> Sri. G.D. Dhoble was appointed as a tailoring instructor with only one machine. He gave all his energies to the development of this school. Boys and Girls took advantage of this facility. Later these classes constituted the tailoring school. Women who had been rendered helpless, found these classes a boon to support themselves.<sup>21</sup>

A significant feature of the Vivek Vardhini Society was that it tried to inculcate nationalist consciousness through its various institutions and many of the students and also the teachers of this society participated in the national movement. Most of the prominent personalities of this society were Aryasamajis and staunch believers in nationalism. A number of students participated in the bonfire of foreign clothes and started wearing Khadi. People from outside were very much impressed with the work of this Society. Mahatma Gandhi also visited this Society.<sup>22</sup>

Besides formal education, the society encouraged physical education of girls and boys. A sound mind in a sound body was the popular saying. Gymnasiums and Akhadas were established.<sup>23</sup> The young patriots decided to concentrate their energies on physical education. They thought that, if the new generation wanted to do some creditable work, they must be strong physically. Vyayamshalas were established and they had become the objects of admiration and subjects of praise. Physical training was given to the girls in schools. In Hyderabad, every community had its own school, and every school had its own physical education center and sometimes physical education centres and sometimes physical education periods were conducted in the schools. Establishment of Vyayamshalas was a unique feature of the Viveka Vardhini Society.<sup>24</sup> Tutors from other provinces were invited to guide the students.

The main aim of the akhadas was to give mass training to women in order to defend themselves in times of need and help the men when necessary. The ostensible object of these classes or akhadas was to teach self-defence. One had to obtain the permission from the city police for holding any function, and a similar permission was necessary for starting akhadas. It was also expected

that a detailed report would be given to the Government regarding the akhada's scope, activities and the number of employees attached to it. In case the organizers failed to comply with these conditions, a fine not exceeding Rs.500 or three months of simple imprisonment was to be borne by the manager of the akhada.<sup>25</sup> Still one finds that there were very many number of akhadas not only for men but also for women. One was at the Maharashtra Ladies Club situated at Kruparam Bagh, Sultan Bazar and was started by Mrs. Uma Bai Aurangabadkar and the trainer was Miss. Parlikar, a student of Viveka Vardhini School. There were 25 students between the age group of 9 and 11 years. Most of the members were Maharastrians. Here training was given in dum-bells, swords and lathies. Mrs. Kasinath Rao Vaidya and Mrs. Jutkur were prominent members. Another was the Hanuman Kanya Vyayamshala, situated at Tahmulla Building, Sultan Bazar. The founder members were Mrs. Sushila Bai Phatak and Mrs. Laila Lakshmi Bai, the trainer was Miss. Kalavathi, daughter of G.R. Aurangabadkar. Here, in this akhada there were 50 students between the age group of 9 to 16 years.

Most of the members were Maharastrians, and training was given in dum-bell, swords and lathies. Mrs. Laila Laxmi was the president.<sup>26</sup> Another akhada was started by the Navjivan Mandali and

was located in the Tahmulla Building, Sultan bazar. The trainer was Miss. Vimala Karmankar to whom Rs.8 was paid per month. There were 50 members in it between the age group of 9 to 13 years. In this akhada there were more Aryasamajists, and also some Kannada girls. The president was Mrs. Laila Laxmi Bai. The Gujarathi Girls School situated at the back of Tahmulla Building, Sultan bazar, also started the akhada which was looked after by the school management. It was started in 1939, the trainer was Miss. Vimala Karmarkar to whom Rs.7 was paid every month. There were 40 members, mainly Gujaraties in the age group of 9 to 12 years. The president was Mrs. Laila Laxmi Bai. The Viveka Vardhini Kanya Pathasala situated at Gowliguda, started an akhada in 1940. The trainer was Mrs. Apte and Kunti Anandi Bai, teacher of the school who had been trained at a Poona Vyayamshala. In this akhada there were 200 students between the age group of 9 to 22 years. Most of the girls were Maharastrians. The akhada was managed by the school committee. The Karnataka Girls School at Sultan bazar started an akhada in 1940. The trainer was Mr. Karmarkar to whom Rs.8 was paid every month. There were 100 students in the age group between 9 to 11 years and most of the students were from the Kannada speaking community. The secretary was Krishna Chari Vakil. The Andhra Girls School situated at Narayanaguda also started an akhada in 1939.

The trainer was Miss.Vimala Karmarkar to whom Rs.7 was paid per month. In this, there were 50 students between 11 and 17 years, most of the girls were Telugu speaking.<sup>27</sup>

There were other activities around which women were organized, like the Girl Guides Movement. In the first instance, it was started with 50 students, but the strength increased rapidly. In the Hyderabad state there were eight permanent branches. After sometime this institution also worked for promotion of the women's education.<sup>28</sup>

In 1925, an enterprising couple Mr. and Mrs. Padma Rao started an open house for social, cultural and sports activities for women and children in Secunderabad. What was started as a drawing room get together, soon expanded into a large club, the Lady Barton Recreation club through the untiring efforts of Mrs. Lilly Sanet, the founder member, and the honorary Treasure was Mrs. N.B. Chenoy. The lady Barton club expanded rapidly with a large membership. The vast grounds were utilised for Girl Guide activities, camps, fetes and fairs.<sup>29</sup>

The Zemana Recreation Club had a cosmopolitan membership and included women of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Parsi religions. Rani

Sham Raj, Begum Mohammed Nawaz Jung were its major patrons.<sup>30</sup> Again in 1924, she started a branch of the Delhi (Women's) Council. During these years there were distinct bodies known as the Women's India Association, of which the Adayar Branch was the most well known and the National Council of Women, of which the Delhi and Bombay branches were the better known.<sup>31</sup>

At the first All India Women's Conference held at Poona in 1922, Mrs. Rustomji was elected to the committee of management on behalf of Hyderabad. Hyderabad state was officially represented by Mrs. M.K. Pillai, Miss. Amina Pope and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu. In 1934, the All India women's conference elected her as president, an occasion on which Mrs. Sarojini Naidu called Mrs. Rustomji as "one of the pioneers of the All India Women's Conference".<sup>32</sup> Various associations were represented with one representative from each organisation on the local committee rendering help whenever called for. The aims and objectives of the association were to promote the education of women and children at all stages in the Hyderabad dominion and to deal with all questions affecting the welfare of women and children.<sup>33</sup> Sub branches were started in Karimnagar, Mahaboobnagar and Warangal. The important women's organization, which continues to this day is the Andhra Yuvathi Mandali estab-

lished in 1935. The founder members of this institution were Illendula Sarswathi and Yellapragada Sita Kumari. The first president was Dr. Lakshmi Narasamma, the Vice-president was Channapragada Saraswathi. Sita Kumari was the secretary and Sarswathi was the assistant secretary. Sita Kumari apparently was already interested in National Politics and participated in the Khaddar movement. As Smt. Sarswathi Devi stated in her interview, there was a general dissatisfaction with the other associations like the Lady Hydari Club which was catering essentially to the royal families and elite Muslim women. She also said that they felt that the Hyderabad branch of the All India Womens Conference was also elitist and hence the Yuvathi Mandali was started<sup>34</sup>. Burgula Anantha Lakshmi also voiced similar sentiments. As she put it "Here in Hyderabad Hindu women also used to follow the Purdah system. We used to attend the Lady Hydari Club meetings. There the attitude which Muslim women showed towards us was not very satisfactory. So we felt the need for our own association, for Hindu women".

"I think the treatment the Lady Hydary Club members gave us made us think about ourselves and in a way helped us to establish our own Association".<sup>35</sup> The initial membership fee was 25 paise per month.

Sarswathi Devi also mentioned about the discussion they had on the choices of a name. Since it was the Nizam state, it was felt that the use of the word Telugu in the title would create problems. Sita Kumari then suggested the name Andhra Yuvathi Mandali indicating that it could include other language women of the city. When asked what inspired her to organize such an association, Sarswathi Devi said that she used to attend meetings of the All India Women's Conferences which were attended by many members of the elite families and Illendula Sarswathi Devi and her like did not socialize with these elite women. But she too, however, felt the need for a separate organization for Telugu women. Illendula Saraswathi Devi later became an active participant of the Andhra Mahila Sabha.

The Mandali used to hold weekly meetings. Initially they had to get the permission of the Government for holding a meeting but soon this too was not required of them, as Saraswathi Devi put it, "they used to consider us purely as an association of women who did not give much trouble".<sup>36</sup> The major aims of the Mandali were to conduct lectures and discussions on national affairs, social problems and Indian National Movement and to work for the physical, educational, social and intellectual development of women. Initially, they started a small library — cum — reading room with books donated

by Sita Kumari and Saraswathi Devi. They also used to give training in tailoring and music and in later years started a Sisuvihar and a women's hostel.

The Mandali used to maintain minutes of all their meetings which were with Sita Kumari, but these were lost during the Razakar movement. Several members of this Mandali were actively associated with the Andhra Mahasabha and the Andhra Mahila Sabha. Unlike the Navjivan Mandali, this Association had no links with the growing left movement of the 1940's and when the Mahasabha split, they supported the non-Communist wing. Yellapragada Sitakumari was active in Congress politics and when Visalandhra was formed she was elected as MLA from Banswada.<sup>37</sup>

One of the prominent affiliates of the All India Women's Conference of Hyderabad was the Mahila Navajivan Mandali which was started in 1935.<sup>38</sup> Its founder members were Smt. Mankumari Chauradia, Jadav Bahan, Geeta Devi Dammani, Leela Devi Dangoria, Yashoda Devi, Smt. Premlatha Gupta, Pushpavathi and Radha. At its peak, the Mandali had more than 2000 members from the Hindi speaking communities, the Marathis, Gujarathi and Marwaris. It had membership which included elite, Congress women, non-political

women and Communist women.<sup>39</sup>

The Navjivan Mandali from its inception evinced a greater political consciousness than the other associations. Mrs. Pramila Tai who joined the organisation in 1942, and was an active member of the Mandali, in her talks used to extol the spirit of the organisation. Thus, "the main feeling was that we were serving women and that we were serving the national cause".<sup>40</sup> The Mandali established Navjivan Girls High school, Mahila Navjivan Seva Sadan, a library and a club. The Seva Sadan was established in 1939, by Smt. Rani Padmavathi Ganeriwala. Its main aim was to give shelter to destitute women, education in Hindi and to encourage domestic industry. At the Sadan they taught sewing, machine stitching, embroidery etc. The Mandali fought against social evils, promoted the education of women and was active in the propagation of Khadi and the celebration of national and social festivals. Khadi propaganda started in 1935 itself. Since education was a primary objective from 1935 itself, the Mandali representative Smt. Mankumari Chouradia and Smt. Geeta Devi Dammani and others started a girls school on 23rd January 1935. It was started with fifteen students. Attention was paid both to physical and mental development of girls and a great deal of attention was paid to extra curricular activities like games for the

development of dynamism and a greater social consciousness. Meetings were held every 15 days to discuss social problems and political evils. Discussions were held on issues like polygamy and others. For instance Pramila Tai used to give lectures at the Mahila Navajivan Mandali on women in other parts of India and of different countries of the world.<sup>41</sup>

The Mandali played an active role in Hyderabad, collecting relief funds for use in natural calamities and mention must be made of the collection of funds for Calcutta famine relief. In 1944 the Mandali volunteers participated in the Food Relief activities of the women's volunteer core started by the Princess of Berar. As mentioned earlier the Mandali included in its members several women activists who were to play a prominent role in the developing political movement in Telengana especially in Hyderabad and state were to play a significant role in Andhra Mahasabha and its affiliated Andhra Mahila Mahasabha and later in Communist movement too.<sup>42</sup>

In 1939 when the world war had begun the women of Hyderabad started one women's organization to help the people who were preparing for war. The vice-president of the association, Princess of Berar gave a message through radio. She said that the as-

sociation had adopted a 5 point programme which included savings in domestic affairs, preparation of goods which would be useful in war, organizing to help people to participated in war, first aid facilities, nursing and helping in Red Cross Society. She also urged women to take part in such activities because they were exposed to higher education. Women should come out freely to help the persons who are in need. In her statement the Princes remarked that this type of association or helping hand was not possible earlier because there was no proper organization through which women could work.<sup>43</sup>

Now the position of women had improved not only in family but also in society. She also said that now women were capable enough to stand on their own principles and work effectively.<sup>44</sup> Hyderabad women collected funds for the National War Fund, Begum Shanawaz was in-charge of this organization.<sup>45</sup> She delivered a lecture in one of the meetings conducted in Lady Hydari Club. The meeting was presided over by the Princess of Berar. Begum Shanawaz, who condemned the low position accorded to women by the ancient thinkers called on women to come out and work for the future generations, to become healthier and stronger. She urged women to give up their prejudices on social and religious norms and to develop broader perspectives of things. Here in these meetings

Begum Shanawaz compared the women of China and Turkey with those of Indian women and said that as women of other countries were projecting themselves into the society and were in responsible positions, even Indian women had to think in terms of change. She also explained the situation in America and stressed that women played an equal role with men in America.<sup>46</sup> These type of meetings and association gatherings were used to mobilize and organize women.

The Nagara Samrakshaka Dalam was established by Princess Niloufer on behalf of Princess of Berar in April 1942. The main idea behind establishing this Dalam was to give physical and medical education to ladies and to divert their attention towards social service. Self defence was the basic idea. Whoever joined this Dalams was given a badge consisting of Her Highness the Princess of Berar's insignia. All together there were 80 members in it.

A meeting was held at Lady Hydari Club and was presided by Princess Niloufer. She spoke encouraging women to participate in outdoor activities. Whenever there was a danger and emergency situation, she stressed there arose the need for women to be strong enough to handle any situation. Apart from skill training the Dalam was to give coaching to women in nursing, office management,

ambulance work, first-aid, voluntary work, food preservation etc.<sup>47</sup>

The Princess encouraged Hyderabad women by saying that the "Women of Hyderabad must be in a position to take risk and face unfavorable conditions with confidence as the women of other countries like China, Russia and England".<sup>48</sup> The meeting was attended by students from 17 colleges numbering 1,200. Of these 800 women got badges for their best services. The girls had shown their skills by performing demonstration which consisted of rescuing people from fire accidents, putting down flames and first aid treatment etc.<sup>49</sup> These various activities which were patronized by the Hyderabad elite, were further articulated in the Hyderabad branch of the All India Women's Conference. In the 17th session of All India Women's Conference in 1944, Sahebzadi Nafees-Un-Nissa Begam Saheba, consort of Sahebzada Nawab Basalat Jah Bahadur, surveyed the vicissitudes attending the struggle carried on by Indian women for emancipation from a "man-imposed" bondage. She complained bitterly against women being debarred from taking their legitimate share in the evolution of the new world order.

The Sahabzadi Saheba exhorted women to strive ceaselessly to break out from their present subservient position and to clamour

for an opportunity being given to them "to mould the mind of the masses to a new attitude of life". She felt that there were two important spheres of activity in which women could exert themselves usefully, in the promotion of public health and expansion of industry. Thus the central theme of the address was the new role of women and how to play it with mass uplift work as the focal point. She further stressed that the conference represented communal harmony and unity. Full recognition would be accorded to the civil status of women, their rights and privileges, the resolution of the day said and added that with an early introduction of constitutional reforms, Hyderabad would make a triumphant contribution to the shaping of India's destiny in the dual sphere of internal affairs and international relations.<sup>50</sup>

The awareness among women had developed and the conditions gradually changed. By the 1930's and 1940' there was a very clear picture of women participating in politics. There emerged women's associations and in political field also the women's wing of the organizations emerged. For instance, in Hyderabad state, the emergence of Andhra Mahila Mahasabha along with Andhra Mahasabha was noteworthy.<sup>51</sup>

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## CHAPTER 5

# EXPANDING POLITICAL HORIZON : THE ANDHRA MAHILA MAHASABHA

The 1930's marked a new phase in the nature of women's participation in public affairs. The formation of the Andhra Maha Sabha also led to the formalization of women's political participation with the creation of the Andhra Mahila Mahasabha as a related and yet separate entity from the Andhra Maha Sabha. This has to be seen as an extension of women seeking a forum for themselves, a process that began with the women's organizations dealt with earlier.

With the start of Andhra Maha Sabha in March 1930, the Andhra Mahilasabha was also convened in a neighbouring pandal. For the first meeting arrangements were made for five hundred women participants. The proceedings of 7 conferences of the Andhra Mahasabha and the Andhra Mahilasabha are available in the form of the major speeches and resolutions. While there is little information on the nature of discussions, the speeches enable us to gain an insight into the atmosphere in which the women's issue was being framed by the emerging political leadership. The significance of the Andhra Mahila Mahasabha is in the creation of a public forum

voicing and articulating their concerns, analysing social issues and considering possible solutions. That the Andhra Mahila Mahasabha was seen as a crucial political force is evident from the great care taken in organizing and providing facilities for women to participate.

The first meeting of Andhra Maha Sabha and Andhra Mahila Mahasabha held at Jogipet for three days in March of 1930 was preceded by protracted exchange of letters between the organisers of the Sabha and the Medak Talukdar (collector), for permission to hold the conference. The organisers did not initially get official permission for the meeting since they felt that their conference was not political and did not require any permission to hold it. Gopal Venkat Rao (High Court lawyer) in charge of reception committee reacted sharply to the Nizam's barman that prior permission was required to hold political meetings or meetings in which speeches with a political undertone would be delivered. The organizing committee sought formal permission on the grounds that at the meeting social issues and education would be discussed. The organisers were further pressurised to send in advance the list of speakers, verbatim speeches and resolutions, and any refusal to do so would result in the conference being declared illegal. This issue was taken to the Home

Secretary and finally permission was granted. This whole process took a month and a half. In granting permission the government laid down certain conditions that the president of the conference should not be an outsider but a resident of Nizam's territory; that the sentiments of other religionists should not be hurt, and third, that political issues should not be discussed.<sup>1</sup>

The Jogipet Conference of 1930 was the first in the series of the thirteen such conferences. An analysis of the speeches delivered in these conferences help us to understand the public spaces and roles being defined for women. At the same time it is important to note that what is political was also being defined. In the context of the early 1930's public declarations against the Nizam's state would definitely be characterized as political activities and hence illegal. The focus on culture and women during the course of several conferences enabled an articulation which raised fundamental questions of political participation and freedom.<sup>2</sup> The speakers tried to avoid a direct political critique of the situation in the Nizam's dominion. Access to education, the issues of women and their education became the crucial windows through which an indirect and large critique was articulated. Along with the criticism there were resolutions passed in every conference and these resolutions covered a wide range of

issues, social, economic to political. An appeal was made to the government through these conferences to respond to various issues, and also stressed that the Nizam's Government had a responsibility to do so. At the same time as in reform movements in other parts of India, women their education and development was seen as a central to change that was being sought. These conferences of men and women give us an opportunity to gain an insight into the ways in which the women were interpreting and responding to women's question which was a focal issue in the larger political process.<sup>3</sup>

The following is an analysis of the proceedings of the Andhra Maha Sabha and Andhra Mahila Mahasabha. The two have been looked at together in an attempt to identify echoes of male views on women's issues in the Mahila Mahasabha and to see any divergence in the way women articulated their needs.

T. Venkat Rao, a lawyer and Chairman of the Reception Committee devoted considerable time to highlight the conditions of women and women's education, and thereby set the tone of the conference.<sup>4</sup>

In promoting women's education Venkat Rao, like his contemporaries in other parts of India argued that an educated woman would not only be a better manager of the domestic affairs but also a better mother and a more understanding wife. Citing examples from the past he sought to quell any adverse criticism of women's education.<sup>5</sup>

Giving examples of Gargi and Maitreyi who trounced powerful men in discussion and Jijya Bai who brought up her son Shivaji as a lover of freedom and patriotism, Venkat Rao tried to make a strong case for women's education.

"If women are educated the country would have its cadre of patriots".<sup>6</sup>

He stressed the need for schools for Hindu girls and decried the general indifference of the Government in this regard. He appealed to the participants of the conference to "Free ourselves from dark beliefs and lay the foundations for girls schools... we must establish girls schools with our own money and seek Government help to run them".<sup>7</sup>

Another theme which was to surface repeatedly, raised also in other conferences, was highlighted by Venkat Rao and that was child marriage. He focussed on the misery of young girls forced into early marriage and early motherhood. "The marriages of girls in most cases are being celebrated when the girl is not even 4 to 5 years old. She has no say in the choosing of her husband. He might be a cripple, shapeless fellow, a mad cap. The custom insists on a marriage somehow with the result the girl will have to go through hell of a life for which she never bargained. Maybe she should be cursing her parents for her life which is wasted. Some women end their misery by resorting to suicide. Though child marriages are not approved by the Dharma Sastras, people have been following customs like sheep. People live by following each other and not by following what is sublime. Daughters acquire most of the fruits of this parental "unwisdom" and the result is suicidal to the mature and more suicidal to bear children. We have a number of cases fit for remarriages. But most of the unfortunate women will have to resort to prostitution if they cannot suppress their natural desire and cases of infanticides are common".<sup>8</sup>

It is to change the above conditions that Venkat Rao advocated girls education. The main agenda of the conference was set out by

Suravaram Pratap Reddy the president of the Maha Sabha. In a wide ranging talk which covered issues of untouchability, alcoholism, the need to providing incentives to peasants, Pratap Reddy focused on two major issues one, the need for education in mother tongue, two, the question of child marriage. Regarding education in one's mother tongue, a need which he linked to the absence of freedom obtaining in the Nizam's dominion, where 90% of the population was non-Urdu speaking. He talked of the oppressive use of Urdu as the official language. To achieve unity and redress social evils, he argued, that this Urdu Pichchi (Urdu madness) had to be reduced.<sup>9</sup>

"Physically one can be bound but no China wall can confine one's thoughts", he said.<sup>10</sup>

To dilute the political nature of this demand for Telugu education Pratap Reddy focused considerable attention on the question of child marriage and the need for an act to raise the age of marriage.

Highlighting the growing problem of Kanya Sulkam (Bride Price) and the emergence of dowry Pratap Reddy said "Some persons have been purchasing girls, often from some distant places. Evidently some parents in those distant places have been selling their daugh-

ters for economic reasons. The need for money makes them blind to the greed of the buyer. This is a case of trade in human flesh. We must be able to eradicate this evil of sale of girls. There are some men who continue to be bachelors for the simple reason that nobody has chosen them as sons-in-law or they have no money to buy a girl. The cost of a girl is generally enormous. Some persons have to lose all their property just to purchase a girl. In fact this practice of selling girls which is in vogue in other regions is being adopted slowly and gradually in our state also. It is our duty to nip this inhuman practice in the bud. Some of the rich people can afford to spend money. But some of the poor are trying to copy rich people and landing themselves in insolvency. Many a parent by copying the rich to show off is reduced to poverty or gets irretrievably indebted by offering dowries and costly presents at the time of marriage. This evil is on increase with the spread of English education. Marriage market is being strengthened with its own dowry tariffs. A bridegroom who had passed 'middle' examination should be given a dowry of Rs. 1000. A 'matric', two thousand rupees, an intermediate, four thousand. A 'B.A.', ten thousand. It is needless to enumerate the problems and difficulties faced by parents of female children. We must devise ways of ridding the society of dowry evils".<sup>11</sup>

Pratap Reddy suggested that the progressive law being passed

in British India like Sarada act, to raise the marriageable age of boys and girls, should also be adopted in Nizam's state. He informed the participants that the similar Bill was being introduced by Justice Vishveswaranath, in the legislature of Hyderabad.<sup>12</sup>

He criticized the Nizam's government for not taking any interest on this Bill to raise the age of marriage "Ostensibly out of respect for the Dharmasastras".<sup>3</sup> He went on to exhort people not to follow the Dharmasastras and not accede blindly to the laws imposed by the Government. He argued that the Dharmasastras could be amended, and that several versions of the Dharmasastras prove that changes were made very often.

"Please do not misconstrue that I am opposed to the Dharma Sastras. We must be able to understand the historicity embedded in them. If there are any stipulations of perennial and ethical value, we must be able to retain and follow them but we must understand to what extent Dharma Sastras can be followed in the light of changing circumstances. We must be courageous enough to follow whatever contributes to the welfare of the society and should not hesitate to give up whatever is moribund and outdated".<sup>14</sup>

"Among the evils that should be either given up or reformed there

is the Purdah system. Most of the Hindus in British India also and the Andhras outside the Nizam's dominions do not follow this custom. Among the Andhras of the Nizam's state there are numerous families which observe this custom. Some people believe that this custom of hiding women behind purdahs had devolved on us from the time of Mughals. It is not a correct belief. Purdah system is very ancient and it was in vogue in a number of places all over the world. It was in vogue in Assyria, Babylonia and other countries including ancient India. Amara Simha, the author of 'Amarakosha' Sanskrit lexicon, had vividly described the purdah. So, purdah system should not be ascribed to Muslims in the Nizam's dominions. There are families among Velama, Reddy and Golconda Vyapari who observe this purdah system very strictly. Purdah is being discarded gradually in the countries of Turkey, Afghanistan and Egypt where it was in vogue for centuries and observed strictly. It is better our purdah addicts reform their ways as early as possible and show due respect to our women folk". Pratap Reddy adverting to the issue of child marriage went on to speak on the Purdah system and argued that it either be given up or reformed. It should interest the educated to be told that the Purdah system was very ancient.<sup>15</sup>

In the first conference, 32 resolutions were passed seeking rights

of assembly, Telugu education, support for Library movement, agricultural reforms, more civic amenities. Of these 32 resolutions five dealt directly with women. The demands were that a college for women be established with Telugu medium on the lines of the University established by Maharishi Karve, an appeal was made to discourage "the profession of prostitution which has been assailing the position of women ethically". The Purdah system was sought to be discouraged since it has been "sapping women of their mental and physical energies", child marriage was to be abolished since it was impeding mental and physical progress of people. Finally the conference sought to protect the property rights of children from a second marriage.<sup>16</sup>

The speeches of the men were followed by the speeches of two prominent speakers of Andhra Mahila Mahasabha. Smt. Vitto Bai, Chairperson of the Reception Committee said:

"Statistics published by our Government reveal that the number of educated women in this state is not even one percent. There are some girls schools in some places in the state and they are all elementary schools. Parents celebrate the marriages of those girls, in most cases, even before they reach the fourth class. Where

is the chance for higher education? There are Andhra girls who would like to go in for higher education. But where are the academic institutions to help them study? Child marriages have been sapping the people of their life force. Many a woman is reduced to the position of a living corpse due to forced widowhood. Blind beliefs are allowed. This is the general situation. There are the rich who can afford to be happier but they are condemned to purdah life; freedom is a myth, it is a big zero. We are at the peak of misery".<sup>17</sup>

Smt. Nadimpalli Sundaramma in her presidential address took the argument a little further and echoed the dominant view that women are responsible for the well being and progress of the state. "The destiny of men is in her hands and hence she needs education". She described the woman as the heroine who "feeds her children with courage, patriotism and discipline".

She cited several examples from the lives of the great women of the past, who were achievers in literature, science, administration and politics. Besides the normal names of Gargi, Maitreyi and Jhansi Lakshmi Bai, she cited the example of a nautch woman Muddupalani who had written a great Kavya called 'Radhikaswantanamu'. This last reference is particularly interesting

since the publication of the *Kavya* (an erotic treatise) by a woman raised a furore among puritanical reformers like Veeresalingam.<sup>18</sup> These achievements of women being in the past, Sundaramma demanded education and schools for the present day girls, to enable women to contribute productively to the progress of the society.<sup>19</sup>

Decrying the dowry system "which is eating into the vitals of society, which is becoming a money society", Sundaramma exhorted the women to prevent such evils. She vehemently criticized conservatives for a misplaced sense of responsibility.

"Some conservative persons are celebrating the marriage of their children in cradle to overcome the law prohibiting child marriages and also to **earn** satisfaction that they have discharged an essential responsibility. The responsibility should have been to undertake education of their children and it should not have been limited to marriages".<sup>20</sup>

Not surprisingly Sundaramma, while seeking support to prohibit prostitution which was seen as a matter of shame, underlined the social role and duty of women to their husbands. This she argued, could be fulfilled better by women through education.

"Our country is known for women who are religiously devoted to their husbands. Such a devotion is possible only when women are educated. Education gives women a greater strength of devotion. Devotion to husband is an ornament to a woman. Devotion is a perennial ritual and it is not one of those rituals which should be performed once in a way. A woman should be a duty bound life mate to a man. She must be keeping her body clean, clean it with soulful worship of her God like husband".<sup>21</sup> It would appear that Sundaramma was trying to contain some major opposition by talking of women's principal role in society that of commitment to husband and family. She felt it was the duty of the educated and the duty of women's organization to develop purposeful collective strength to free women from meaningless, cruel and outdated practices. She appealed saying that education meant not hankering after jewels and decoration but striving for the uplift of people.<sup>22</sup>

The second Andhra Maha Sabha and Mahila Mahasabha held exactly an year later at Devarakonda reiterated all the resolutions of the previous meet and made a special appeal for the establishment of district Education and Technical Education Councils. Burugula Ramakrishna Rao, the president regretted the opposition to the introduction of the Bill seeking prohibition of child marriage and

the Bill to permit the offspring of remarried women to share in paternal property. Quoting the aphorism that Gods would be pleased if women were respected, he urged that support be extended to the moves of the Maha Sabha to invest women with rights equal with men.<sup>23</sup> The women speakers focused essentially on the abominable conditions in which women live and joined their voices with the men to seek access to technical education.<sup>24</sup>

The third Andhra Maha Sabha was held at Khammam with Pulijala Venkata Ranga Rao presiding. The reception committee chairman was Aitaraju Rama Rao and Yellapragada Sita Kumari presided over the Women's conference. This conference was very important in the history of the Andhra Mahasabha considering the opposition it had to face and the determination with which it faced the opposition from conservatives (Sanatanists) and conducted the proceedings successfully.<sup>25</sup>

The fact that more than three thousand women attended the conference and displayed all signs of a potential women's movement, roused the ire of the conservatives who took the help of the district collector and also the police officials to threaten the organizers of the conference with dire consequences if the women's session con-

tinued. They were angered that the women participants were offending religious sentiments and hence the session should be stopped. At a particular stage the leaders of the Maha Sabha had to take a rigid stand to dissuade the conservatives from continuing their menacing postures. The opposition of the conservatives to the Maha Sabha stemmed from their opposition to the very participation of women in the conferences which they considered to be purely a male activity and male speciality.<sup>26</sup>

In this conference like the earlier ones the focus continued on the need for state support to educational activities particularly to the establishment of libraries as was done in the Baroda State. In addition, state support was sought for the promotion of indigenous medicine like Ayurveda, which formed an integral part of cultural freedom. The conference though slightly disturbed, had witnessed a degradation which drew men guffaws from all when one conservative offered for the women present Ayurvedic medicine for menstrual problems.<sup>27</sup>

The male speakers of the conference tried to contain the conservative opposition to the presence of women.

The president of the Maha Sabha Pulijala Venkata Ranga Rao

in his concluding remarks had referred to the unfortunate incidents created by the Sanatanists to stall the proceedings. He wondered as to why the Sanatanists should oppose reforms which were necessary for people to live in accordance with the spirit of times. He had known that Khammam had been a strong hold of Sanatanists and also reformers. He argued that there should be no friction between conservation and reform as wisdom required a periodic change. "I hope the Sanatanists will not oppose change; the Sanatanist of yesterday must become reformer of today or tomorrow". I do not think any teacher would brand a student who is trying to clear his doubts through a series of questions as an opponent. The Sanatanists whom we have seen here, evidently want to have their doubts cleared. We cleared them" he added.<sup>28</sup>

In fact Madapati Hanumantha Rao offered to be arrested if law and order agencies insisted on obstructing women from proceeding to the venue of the conference. It was only after this mild rebuke by Madapati Hanumantha Rao that the collector had withdrawn from the scene followed by the conservatives.

Suravaram Pratapa Reddy and Mandumula Ramachandra Rao described the conservatives as absolute minority, bent upon

creating obstructions. They too have a right to express their views but they should have done so without any selfishness and with a pure mind and a sense of democratic-justice. The Andhras of Nizams dominions have yet to go far to call themselves forward. In such a situation the educated elite should act with great understanding of realities, they said.<sup>29</sup>

The opposition to women's participation having been quelled the women speakers like Chatrati Lakshmi Narasamma chairperson of the committee reiterated earlier demands for education and for a change in the lives of women who are "living like frogs in the well". She made an appeal for an opportunity to live in human dignity, a dignity and wisdom that can be acquired through education.

"A woman if educated will serve as a minister to the family. Even if a king is efficient and patriotic, he should have a wise minister, as otherwise statecraft could become defective. How can people then be happy? Our scriptures enjoin on us that a woman is an equal partner to a man. It is not the present day that created this adage. There are numerous families in our country where the man is educated and women is not. That explains the backwardness of many families. By ignoring such divine injunctions to educate women and make

them fit to serve the humanity, our people have been serving from the path of divine living. According to our Vedanta, women should not be treated as inferior. By denying education to women, men are inviting troubles and serious problems. Man who is living god to a woman should live as a living God and not like a lifeless doll indifferent to wisdom. Whatever creates intellectual excellence is education. Such an education should not be denied to women. Education to women leads to creation of women patriots".<sup>30</sup> Lakshmi Narasamma like many men and women of her time found scriptural sanction for reforms which ensured emergence of patriotic citizens in a changing world.

Perhaps the most outstanding women speaker in these conferences was Yellapragada Sita Kumari, President of the third Mahila Conference.

While the speeches of leaders who participated in the earlier conferences were same, may be scholarly but unimpressive, now and then, the speech of Sita Kumari, the president of the third conference was unambiguous in her criticism though not less scholarly. This explains why the conservative people were incensed on hearing her speech. That she spoke the truth was no excuse for those who

had been thriving on social illusions and religious misunderstandings.

The earlier presidents of the Mahila Mahasabha were aged women who hailed from traditional families. Naturally they were afraid of being harsh. But Sita Kumari was young. She was also a recipient of modern education. In addition, she was baptized into politics by her husband Y. Narayana Rao who was a very active Congressman. Suravaram Pratap Reddy, Andhra Pitamaha Madapati Hanumantha Rao, an all round reformer Madari Bhagya Reddy Varma and a host of other well meaning Andhra leaders, were pleased to see her as a co-worker. It is said they used to issue statements on her behalf, issue rejoinders too on her behalf! Well known persons were encouraged to issue rejoinders and also issue explanations on her behalf. This activity terrified her at first but in a few months she became an adept in politics with great self-confidence.<sup>31</sup>

Sita Kumari's speech was wide ranging covering issues of education, the need for economic independence, the need for good health and physical exercise and finally for a perception of the low position of women, which she traced to a lack of identity consciousness. She referred to the very low female literacy level in the Nizams

territory which according to 1931 census was 12 per thousand. Sita Kumari drew attention to the support given to women's education in states like Bombay and Madras. She also expressed her pleasure that "some men had come forward to ensure freedom to women and some women were able to come up educationally and compete with men in various spheres of activities. But this progress was not much as rural women were not influenced by this new realization. The majority of women even now did not realize that they were confined to an inferior status in the society and they needed immediate uplift. How can they come up if they did not know that they should come up?".

"If education spreads among women they would themselves be able to assert their freedom but presently the percentage of education among Andhra women in the Nizams dominion is very low. The number of women who can write and read a letter according to 1931 census is 12 per 1000, in Bengal it is 188, Madras, 110, Bombay, 149, Mysore, 174 and Baroda, 331."

This 12 women literates per thousand is in a downward trend. There are 691 schools in the Nizam's dominions. The total number of women students is 45,560. Ninety nine percent of the women

students stop with primary education. Most of the schools teach in Urdu. A few do so in English. Our Government has not begun yet to teach in Telugu. To our appeals for help to run schools with Telugu teaching facilities, Government is not at all favourable. In states like Bombay and Madras, training is being given to women to teach various crafts. In Hyderabad too there is an institution to teach crafts to men. We appeal to the Government to extend this facility to women. We have a very small number of girls schools but we do not have enough teachers to teach local languages. So an earnest attempt should be made to train teachers in the local languages".<sup>32</sup>

To meet the problem of lack of teachers, Sita Kumari suggested that women organisers have to undertake girls education. She stressed the entitlement of women to educational opportunities.

"If we do not have enough number of schools to teach girls, women's associations can be entrusted with the task of organizing teaching. Such an arrangement would go a long way by attaching even housewives to the schools. This is a good method of extending educational facilities. All this depends on the realization that women need education as much as men and that they are entitled to receive education. Nobody has the authority to ordain that women should be

educated only in certain disciplines. They can have education in whatever discipline they choose. Text books suitable for women's education must be written. If need be, such books should be translated from other languages".<sup>33</sup>

Exhorting women to read serious books and not novels and short stories, Sita Kumari drew the attention of women participants to the problems of widows in society. She underlined the way in which marriage and widowhood has been effecting women.

"To those women who can read and write, may I appeal that it is not enough to read novels and short stories. They must read all social sciences and religious books. All these outdated customs and practices of Hindu society are aimed against women. The freedom of men is not much eroded either due to marriage or due to the death of the spouse. It is always the woman that is affected. She is the target of all unreasonable traditions and customs. It is the woman that suffers as child mother. As a child mother she would be automatically condemned to bring up an unhealthy child. There are a number of women who do not have the right to remarry because widowhood was forced on them. In most cases widowhood is the

result of mismatched marriages. While men have right to remarry, women are arbitrarily denied this right. Even an 80 year old man can remarry and no law stands in his way of marrying a teenage girl. He only helps increase the number of widows in the state. Our young men generally don't come forward to marry widows. To improve the social conditions of women there must be widow remarriage associations in various places so that the benefits of the widow remarriage act can reach the unfortunate widow. But much remains to be done".<sup>34</sup>

Sita Kumari in discussing the need for economic freedom for women sharply highlighted the subordinate and dependent position of women in society. Her analysis of the problem was far ahead of the times. She recognized that owning and having access to jewelry meant nothing substantial since women have no control over them, no power to dispose off or donate. She also recognized that the dependence on the male was much more among women who are not engaged in productive work.

"Economically women are in a miserable condition now. In this wide world, a woman does not have anything of her own She does not get even a pie either from her parental home or from her husband normally. A liberal husband buys for an obedient wife saree

and jewels but she does not gain anything with such acquisitions. She is at best useful to keep them safe, so that they can be used when needed. The husband alone can sell them ! Women do not have money to buy books and magazines which they like but have no money to become members of women's associations or to spend on any other activities. They have to be totally dependent on husbands. In this creation of God there is no living creature which is so dependent on its male partner as an Indian woman. No other living creature places the burden of life on the male spouse as much as Indian woman does. A working class woman does not depend on her husband for her food. It is only the so called women of upper class and the civilized classes who depend so meanly on their men. That is the reason for most of these women, losing love and respect of their men, their parents dole out huge amounts of money by way of dowry to secure husbands for them. Women who should have been living as the very embodiments of power and courage lost their individuality and are dependent on men, satisfied with being mere shadows of men.<sup>35</sup>

As to why this situation had risen Sita Kumari's explanation was that woman did not enjoy any worthy status of her won."A woman has no caste, religion or Gotra and all these are acquired through

man and not through her own efforts or birth".<sup>36</sup>

"Women need individuality and economic freedom, she needs access to religious books, to knowledge, to understand why restrictions are placed on her conduct".<sup>37</sup>

Recognizing perhaps that the majority of the women participants in the conference were upper class and upper caste. Sita Kumari talked of the need for the middle class Indian women to change.

"The present day women have no need to earn money. So they have become lazy. Most women do not have any direction for their lives. Her life is an example of dependence. It is a case of utter uselessness. Women in Burma are more useful to their families and society than men. Women of Holland are known for their superior participation in farming and they also run their homes more efficiently. A number of woman in the European countries are known to be competing with men in the field of science and technology. The world is changing but Indian woman doesn't change. She lives in her home, a home of a thousand meaningless customs. But the Indian women lives with greater satisfaction than women elsewhere! She is unable to realize her inferiority and pettiness. Let alone

science and technology the Indian women can't serve her society. She cannot prevent the operation of outdated and meaningless customs and practices. She cannot help the poor. She can not educate herself. She can not learn anything, nor forget anything. She cannot shed her laziness. She cannot improve the conditions of health and sanitation and hygiene. In addition to these built in disabilities some women drink and of course there is untouchability which can not be violated! These realities should enable us to realize that we have much to do for ourselves".<sup>38</sup>

Sita Kumari added yet another dimension when she started that "All creatures in creation enjoy light and air except Indian women. Purdah and traditions are two enemies to healthy living".<sup>39</sup>

"With no useful work to do and depending totally on traditional laziness, the Indian women can not maintain her health. Most Indian women are unhealthy, their life span is less than that of men. There are numerous such malpractices assailing the health of women. They repose their confidence in village Deities, Devils, Ghosts, Swamijis and a number of other evils. They become laughing stock in the eyes of civilized people".

Lack of education, economic freedom and good health, Sita Kumari felt, contributed to a general cowardliness among women. Right from childhood women's minds are filled with stories of ghosts and a morbid fear. She felt this fear existed because: "most women are trusted with jewels for the satisfaction of men. It is these jewels that create the fear of thieves. It is advisable to invest this money spent on jewels, wisely and for a better purpose. The third is the fear from men with questionable character. This fear inhibits women to move freely in the society. How can such women give birth to heroes and saints? They must shed fear, suspicion and meaningless customs".<sup>40</sup>

"To become good housewives, they must have health as otherwise they cannot do any useful service. They must remain spinsters atleast until their twentieth year. But our society is very cruel to them and totally opposed to their well-being. Women should realize this". She added,

Besides seeing education as a means to overcome these fears, Sita Kumari like others of her like recommended physical exercise as a prerequisite for developing mentally and for better health. She urged that marriage be post-phoned till the age of twenty. Reacting sharply

to male opposition, she referred to the instances of men evincing interest in the status of women of remote past. She continued "Our elders are suspicious of freedom of women. They believe that the tradition of devotion to husband has earned for our country a great name but what is the use of unhealthy uneducated cowardly women remaining devoted to their husbands. It will be like a prisoner pleading with co-prisoners that he had not committed any crime. A woman must live as an equal to all the other living beings. She must be able to protect herself. Until then there is no point in priding ourselves that there were some heroines and saints in the ancient times. We must strive to keep up that pride".<sup>41</sup>

The Fourth Mahasabha was held at Sirsilla in Karimnagar district in January 1935. Strengthened by the experiences gained from the earlier three conferences, foolproof arrangements were made under the leadership of Avunune Venugopal Rao, chairman, reception committee and Smt. Joginepalli Radha Bai, chairwomen of the reception committee for the Mahila (women) Session. The venue of the conference was named after Vemulavada Bheemakavi, a great Andhra poet of 9th or 10th century.<sup>42</sup>

Arrangements were made specially for women in purdah to be seated. There were separate gates for men and women and sepa-

rate lodgings too. This time even conservatives were invited to participate in the conference. Among the resolutions that were adopted were organizing night schools for both boys and girls to help spread literacy among the working class. They stressed the need for establishing a high school for girls at Warangal to teach in Telugu. The Government was also requested to extend monetary help to a Telugu high school which had been working for the past 8 years in Hyderabad.<sup>43</sup>

On the need for girls school at Warangal, a number of speakers expressed regret that despite the existence of number of rich people, the establishment of a girls school had not materialized. They thanked Rajabahadur Venkata Rama Reddy for starting girls high school in Hyderabad and also thanked Sri Bansilal for his magnificent donation of Rs. 5000 to the high school. Yet another resolution condemned the indifference of the society in allowing the profession of prostitution. The spirit of the resolutions revealed the aversion of members towards the active connivance of men in such a heinous activity. An appeal was made to the people to discourage this profession and encourage youth to marry the children of the prostitutes.

The conference resolved to request the Government to enforce

an enactment prohibiting marriages of girls below 17 years and boys below 20 years.<sup>44</sup> This was a theme raised in the 1st conference itself. There was an interesting discussion on this resolution in the men's section of the conference.

Suravaram Pratap Reddy argued that the practice of child marriages which resulted in girls of 12 or 13 becoming mothers had been leading to either premature deaths or unhealthy deliveries. Child marriages had been responsible for keeping an average life span of an Indian pegged down to 23 years while it was 55 years in Europe. Pratap Reddy cautioned people not to ascribe religious importance to marriages. It was purely a social problem. Even assuming it was a religious problem it must be tackled as a non-religious one, because the Hindu scriptures never encouraged child marriages. Dharma Shastras which hampered social progress should be given up, he pleaded. He pointed out that Yajurveda prohibited marriages to girls below 16 years and boys below 25 years.<sup>45</sup>

T. Venkata Rama Rao supporting the resolution opined that whatever these Dharma Shastras had said or not said, the people would have to adopt whichever practice was reasonable and beneficial.

The conservatives too had their say in the matter of marriageable age. Chivukula Appaiah Sastry, a leader of the conservative section countered the argument of Pratap Reddy saying that marriage was a totally religious tradition. He reminded the participants that Muslims and Christians also construed it as a religious function.<sup>46</sup>

Yet another conservative Madiraju Ramakoteswar Rao opined that conferences like this should not meddle with religion as the Nizam also did not interfere in this affair because it pertained to religion. He regretted that inexperienced youngsters had been egging on elders to make such resolutions. But this remark drew derisive laughter from most of the members.<sup>47</sup>

The women's section of the conference passed resolutions requesting the Government to clarify through an enactment the rights of inheritance of women in properties, to introduce compulsory elementary education in all districts, to prohibit untouchability, to establish health centres in villages and to start training centres for nurses and midwives. They also appealed to the populace to desist from consuming liquor, to avoid dowry and purdah, to use only products of cottage industries and to help the widows

home at Hyderabad.<sup>48</sup>

A. Venugopala Rao, the chairman of the reception committee condemned the tendency among the people to spend beyond their means at the time of marriage. He wondered whether it was a desirable attitude among people to remain indifferent to the presence of child widows amidst them with some of the widows aged below 5 years! He stated that the number of child widows in the state was 5,365. He asked the members to find out for themselves whether they could do anything to free these unfortunate women from this misery.<sup>49</sup>

Madapati Hanumantha Rao the president of Andhra Mahasabha in his long speech spent considerable time and space to describe the condition of women. Describing education as a panacea for all ills and evils, he said: "Our education department has been spending at the rate of Rs. one crore per annum". In their magnanimity they have been hoping to make every citizen literate and they have been doing so for the last 50 years! Statistics show that their efforts have not been successful. This chart gives its own story.

BUDGET YEAR	LITERATES PER THOUSAND
1881	37
1891	44
1901	34
1911	32
1921	33
1931	50

This chart proves that in our state the increase in literates is one per hundred in every ten years. At this rate it takes 950 years for all the people of the state to become literates".<sup>50</sup>

He appealed for a continued effort in the area of primary education though the Government has not responded to the request over the past 15 years. He saw no point in demanding schools for girls in districts when such facilities were not available in urban and metropolitan areas. He said "In the last 15 years a number of girls whose mother tongue is Urdu had the benefit of higher education and some of them had their education in foreign countries too. But such a fortune has not favoured the Andhra girls. Let us appeal to the Osmania University authorities and Government to extend the same facilities to Andhra girls. We must be prepared to pool our resources and create funds to help educate our young women".<sup>51</sup>

In the women's conference the reception committee chairperson Joginapalli Radha Bai continued with the theme that there were no scriptural sanctions for the present condition of women.

"Some people give respect to women, may be in their dream world. Woman is great in the poetic world. Such a woman who is born to suffer and serve is the object of unreasonable pity. Some men say that a woman's nature is destructive while the truth is only where money is concentrated, these destruction is possible. Even religions which were founded to enforce ethics have become slaves to money".<sup>52</sup>

She quoted Rabindranath Tagore to point out the narrow sphere of a woman's life, "Man having the advantage over woman in a comparative freedom from biological obligations could devote his unhampered leisure in constructing civilization, which naturally followed in a large measure his own temperament and tendencies. And woman for ages was constrained to adjust herself to a narrowness of sphere allowed to her".<sup>53</sup>

Radha Bai deplored the static nature of society. She argued that the traditions Which were binding women were not divinely sanctioned but were made by men. "We still believe in the letter and spirit

of dead scriptures. Do our women believe in them strongly? It is obligatory on the part of the society to change with the times. We are still following practices which are centuries old. All tradition is man made. Tradition does not come from heavens. We must learn to change".<sup>54</sup>

She appealed to the upper castes, the Velamas and the Reddys to abolish prostitution in their Jagirs and help the children of prostitutes to get married. The leadership of the conference both men and women strongly urged marriage as a solution to the problem of prostitution. To the elders who questioned why women needed education and why they wanted to behave like men, Radha Bai poetically answered "Education is a sculpture which sculpts a stone in whatever fashion it could conjure up. I fail to understand how a man can imagine that a cart would proceed properly if one bullock is intelligent and the other, dull. How can a family in which the man is intelligent and the woman is not, progress?"<sup>55</sup>

She drew attention to the world context and to the Russian revolutions, where tremendous changes were brought about in the lives of women and argued that every woman who cooks must learn to rule.<sup>56</sup>

She felt that conferences like the Mahila Mahasabha were meaningless unless people took a vow to work for women's education.

Smt. Madapati Manikyamma wife of Madapati Hanumantha Rao in her presidential address advised women to establish women's associations in every village to improve their knowledge. She urged women to have a meeting at least every week. "Discuss, let those educated read out magazines and books for the benefits of the members and create enough enthusiasm among them". She exhorted.<sup>57</sup>

Manikyamba felt that in the contemporary times a person was respected on the basis of money, Jewels should be treated as women's property and only her daughters should inherit them. This right of daughters, she regretted was being systematically violated by the society. A daughter AADA PILLA or the girl "over there" should be treated as EEDA PILLA, the girl "over here", she pleaded, playing on the Telugu word "Ada" which means there".<sup>58</sup>

In wide ranging talks which continued which appealed for educational facilities, Vernacular education, establishment of women's

university, establishment maternity and child care centres and widow homes.

She also appealed for educational facilities, telugu education, establishment of women's university, establishment of maternity and child care centres and widow homes.

Manikyamma focused on two major issues, one was the system of aadapapas (women slaves) and an act similar to the Sarada Act. With regard to the aadapapa system she said, "In the British India in some places some rules are made to check the freedom of prostitution but in our Nizams dominions the landlords and jagirdars are employing women slaves or AADAPAAPAS to do all sorts of jobs. These girls cannot marry. They can only prostitute. How can respectable people and family women tolerate such profession to exist amidst them? It is dangerous for respectable family women to allow this evil. So I appeal to them to free their adapapas and help them marry".<sup>59</sup>

Manikyamma picked up the theme of education in mother tongue, a contentious political issue and cited the examples of England, Germany and Japan where education in the mother tongue

had shown great results. She urged the women to address themselves to the issues of untouchability saying that "If one part in the body was damaged we will not cut off the part but we try to improve it with proper nursing".<sup>60</sup>

She was followed by several other speakers like T.Varalakshamma, Nadimpalli Sundaramma, Indira Devi, Y. Sita Kumari and Saraswathi among others. This was followed by a play by girls and veena recital by Sundaramma. Radha Bai the chairperson reported the achievements of some of the women present.

Sita Kumari who was president of Third Mahila Sabha was elected as a representative to the All India Women's Conference. She also wrote a monograph on women's property rights. Indira Devi wrote a note on indigenous industries and Lakshmi Bai had written about establishment of village schools.

Radha Bai reiterating the various problem and solutions pertaining to women's life, exhorted the women to change according to times as otherwise they would be crushed by the wheels of time.

The fifth Andhra Mahasabha was held at Shadnagar and Venkatnarayan Reddy was chosen as the chairman of the reception committee. Smt. M.Raghavendra Bai was the Chairwoman of the reception committee for the Mahila Mahasabha session. Cutting across linguistic barriers the reception committee had named the venue of the session as "Deshabhakta Vaman Naik Nagar". Konda Venkat Ranga Reddy was elected as the president of the Mahasabha and Smt. Burgula Ananthaxmi Devi as president of the Mahila Mahasabha.<sup>61</sup>

The first resolution was about the need for physical education to boys and girls. One of the speakers Narsa Reddy felt that a pattern of education and also physical education which was adopted to train boys in the schools was being extended to girl students also. It only meant that wrong training imparted to boys was prescribed for girls too. Whatever weakened the boys was without a thought being prescribed for girls. Instead there must be real useful physical training. He cited the case of a raid by Sadhus on the camp of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya at Kashi when a physically trained person single handed could keep the entire mob of Sadhus at bay. He wondered whether the introduction of physical education at schools would result in real physical health because most of the parents were

unable to provide nutritious meals to their children every day.<sup>62</sup>

Ravi Narayana Reddy echoed the same views but Adipudi Somanatha Rao had a different explanation to give. He opined that whatever food was eaten it must give strength commensurate with its nutritional value and most people do benefit by that nutritional value. He cited the case of a Japanese girl trouncing an American. A hefty American dashed into a group of persons and tried to push down a short Japanese girl. The girl somehow managed to push him down and his hand was fractured. Nobody then understood the physical trick played by that girl. The American filed a case against her in a court that she had pushed him resulting in a fracture. He also claimed considerable monetary compensation. But the Judge wondered as to how such a smallish girl could push down a hefty person so effectively. The girl demonstrated for the benefit of the judge how mere physical strength could not prevail against physical skill. So the judge ordered the hefty American to pay a monetary compensation of three thousand Yen to the girl immediately. Somanath Rao pleaded that even a physical training should be carefully patterned to include intelligence in its operation.

The necessity of introducing compulsory education for women

throughout the state was once again reiterated. Government was also requested to sanction requisite grant for the management of the girls high school started in Hyderabad.<sup>63</sup>

Smt. Yallapragada Sita Kumari introduced a resolution demanding inheritance rights to women in family properties so that women would be spared from the possibility of becoming beggars when the husband passes away. "Our society has been respecting only people with properties. Most women, without properties were being treated as non-entities. An agitation for a similar provision in the law of inheritance had been going on for the last 20 years in British India also. This year notice of such a bill by a private member was accepted in the central legislature". Smt. Sitakumari appealed to the members of the state legislature to give a similar notice.<sup>64</sup>

Pulijala Venkata Ranga Rao asked the members to realize that this resolution was intended to help "mothers and sisters". He warned the members that if they do not extend this property right to women now, the women would in future fight for it and wrench the right from the Government.

The members had a good laugh when he appealed to them to get all the credit instead of the credit going exclusively to women

of future.<sup>65</sup>

Venkata Rajanna Avadhani simplified the purport of the resolution stating that it sought to free women from age old economic slavery, "free our Mothers, Sisters and Wives from slavery", he pleaded.

Batchu Venkateswara Gupta through an amendment sought to convey to the members the fact that any further slicing of landed and other immovable properties of the Hindu family in the name of doing justice to women, would only result in further impoverishment of the families without securing any perceptible or substantial benefit to women. He pleaded for protection to the movable property or stree dhana so that the Hindu family would not lose the property.<sup>66</sup>

Rama Reddy opined that a Hindu woman enjoyed the property along with her husband and when the husband dies she would be the proprietor of the property. So there was no need to give her a share in the property.

Madiraju Ramakoteswara Rao commending the spirit of the

amendment questioned the mover of the resolution whether he would like a women to share the liabilities and responsibilities inherent in property right. He added: "We have been although wishing a women to be happy and be free from liabilities and also hard responsibilities. Why is such a chivalrous attitude given up to saddle the beneficiaries with avoidable responsibilities. The benefactors must be heartless calculators ! The entire Hindu law would have to be rewritten if women and men are equated with each other in matters of property rights, which are steeped in practicality". He felt.<sup>67</sup>

B.S. Devendra Gupta wondered whether the members opposing the resolution had ever bestowed thought over the frequent changes that were taking place in Hindu tradition and practice over the past so many years. Marriage laws were changed. Widows were acquiring the right of remarriage. But with all this, Hindu tradition has been continuing. By merely conferring the right to property on women, Hindu tradition would not collapse. Let us realize, he pleaded, that a a woman would secure an additional social importance both in her parental home and in the home of her in-laws, if only she is vested with property rights.<sup>68</sup>

The well known Shaivite scholar Chidirematham Veerabhadra

Sharma wondered whether the mover of the resolution intended that women should be conferred with double advantage through her own and through her husband's property. Sharma opined that the resolution was wanting in clarity and finality.<sup>69</sup>

A.B. Narsa Reddy questioned the mover of amendment whether he would like to continue the dowry system which ensures the custom of stree dhana to continue. It is undisputed fact that women needed greater freedom and property right would give her freedom he said.

Polkampally Venkat Rama Rao in a hard hitting speech appealed to the members not to lose sight of realities in their anxiety to be religiously sincere. He said he knew the case of a women and her daughters reduced to the position of beggars after the death of her husband when his brothers took over his property as lawful heirs. His property was worth Six lakhs. But still tradition had to operate at the behest of the cruel society. He said he could multiply instance like this and he wanted all to know that the spirit of Hinduism would not be impaired by merely conferring property rights on women.<sup>70</sup>

Pulijala Venkata Ranga Rao winding up asked the opponents

whether Hinduism would be a totally changed faith if these resolutions were accepted. He likened this fear to the paranoid belief that since there were too many train and bus accidents, it would be advisable to walk. The whole fear stems from a misunderstanding of the concepts of Dharma Sastras. Dharma Sastra is a considered belief of the wise elders for the well being of the society. There would be wise people in every generation. Dharma Sastras are bound to change. Sastras cannot be permanent. They change from generation to generation. He asked the opponents to think for themselves what the woman would have thought of this bill if there was no such intervention of men.<sup>71</sup>

He appealed to the members not to assume the role of guardians to women when dealing with a resolution like this.

After considering this resolution the conference had taken up another resolution which was a mere endorsement of a resolution already sent to the Government by the Hyderabad Womens Conference requesting the Government to prohibit child marriages and make a suitable enactment in that regard.

Suravaram Pratapa Reddy opening the discussion on the

resolution reminded the members that Begum Durreshawar, the wife of Prince Azam Jhah and also the president of Women's Conference had condemned the practice of child marriages. And so members should approve the same resolutions of women's conferences with the realization that marriage is not a religious affair. He also reminded them that our ancient Rishis never had a uniform opinion about marriages, Yajurveda did not approve of child marriage - Sushrutha made this point clear, he reminded.<sup>72</sup>

A.B. Narsa Reddy reeled out statistics pertaining to the ages of various married couples and proved that early marriages proved detrimental and fatal to the girls.

Madiraju Ramakoteswara Rao opined marriages should not be considered as profit and loss propositions. They depended on the personal desires and the conveniences of the individuals. The members would not be justified in interfering in the personal freedom of individuals. He brought to the notice of the members the fact that the stipulation of marriageable age was causing numerous problems in British India. Countering the argument that child marriages would lead to widowhood, he questioned whether a legislation could stop widowing. He was strongly of the view that if the Government decided

to interfere in the marriage traditions of the people, it would surely amount to interference in religion.<sup>73</sup>

Bachu Venkateshwara Gupta wondered whether the movers of the resolution had ever realized that the marriages to which they were objecting were not consummations.

Smt. Yellapragada Sita Kumari appealed to the members not to be lost in rhetoric but to consider such proposals with the requisite understanding. It was true that marriage was not consummation. But consummation itself was performed while the girl was still young with the result she would become weak and would beget weak children. Hence the need for fixing the marriageable age.

Pratap Reddy winding up the debate asked the members to realize that law and enforcement of law were necessary only when people did not know law and were not law abiding. While it was a healthy practice for the Government not to interfere with religious affairs it was necessary for Government to interfere when people are demanding. There were occasions when Government interfered. That was when they made a law validating widow marriages. Government banned burning of widow on the pyre of her husband and

nobody could grudge that the Government had interfered in religious freedom. Pratap Reddy expressed regret that Venkateshwara Gupta did not know the obvious practice of performing consummation even before the girl attained maturity. The conference also resolved to request the Government to introduce compulsory elementary education throughout the state. They reminded the Government the need to expedite the consideration of a bill in this regard which was already introduced in the state legislature. They wanted that elementary education should be imparted through mother tongue and Government should encourage establishment of schools for girls.<sup>74</sup>

The conference while reiterating all the resolutions that were passed in the previous conferences added one more. They adopted a resolution which was already passed by the Hyderabad Women's Association appealing to parents of girls not to give their daughters in marriage to men who were already having a wife. They condemned the evils of polygamy which was widely prevalent in the state.<sup>75</sup>

The sixth Andhra Maha Sabha was held at Nizamabad, the editor of the Urdu daily 'Rayyat' Mandumula Narsing Rao presiding. The women's session was presided over by the well known

Telugu story writer Smt. Nandagiri Indira Devi.

The conference considered the same resolutions that were being considered since its inception. The secretaries of the conference were promptly sending the Government such resolutions which needed immediate administrative action or legislative consideration.<sup>76</sup>

It must be noted that there was a vocal but small section of conservatives who were opposed to reforms which most members were demanding. This conservative section was responsible for disturbing the Third Andhra Mahila Mahasabha at Khammam and stalling the proceedings for about seven hours alleging that the women's section of the Mahila Mahasabha was adopting stances opposed to the spirit of Hinduism and religion in general. The Mahasabha thereafter admitted all such people into the conference as members, making way for free discussion on various issues that come up before conference. This generous gesture of the organizers of the conference had prevented the unseemly emergence of opposition to the conference and also the emergence of a democratic method which ensured acceptance of progressive resolutions by majority of the members. No point of view was shut out. All view points

were accommodated.<sup>77</sup>

The main thrust of the conference was on convincing people about the need to change voluntarily, unlike the changes enforced by possible Government regulations.

Communication facilities were not as wide spread as now and resolutions of the conference were taking quite some time to reach the people of various places. The members of the conference had been showing considerable interest in reaching the people to explain the resolution.

It must be realized that the rules and regulation of the Government were very stringent. To obtain the permission of the Government to hold a meeting, the organizers had to approach a number of agencies and 'license' was given only on condition that copy of the proceedings was sent to the law and order departments in Urdu. One can understand easily as to how difficult it must have been to translate the whole proceedings into Urdu.<sup>78</sup>

Funnily the insistence on Urdu being given prominence always yielded to usage of English. If the organizers were thorough with

English and approached an influential officer who knew English, licenses were easily secured.

Expression of loyalty to the ruler was a *sin-quo-non* at every conference.

With all these handicaps the Andhra Mahasabha and the Andhra Mahila Mahasabha could function regularly and they organized dissemination of their views among the populace quicker than the Government agencies.<sup>79</sup>

The seventh conference of Andhra Mahasabha held in 1939 at Malkapuram once again expressed its support to the draft bill introduced in the state legislative Assembly seeking a ban on child marriage. Bachu Venkateshwara Gupta, Chidirematham Veerabhadra Sharma, Madiraju Ramakoteswara Rao, quite in keeping with their beliefs, as expressed in the earlier conferences, opposed the motion.

Smt. Burgula Anantha Laxmi and Smt. Illendula Saraswathi Devi supported the motion. Suravaram Pratapa Reddy the mover of the resolution explained once again the ethical and social importance of the resolution. Except the three members who

opposed the resolution all others supported it.<sup>80</sup>

The conference regretted that despite sufficient funds being allotted under the head "education", the Government had not been evincing interest in the spread and development of elementary education. Additionally Government's insistence on compulsory study of Urdu had been proving a hindrance to the spread of education among women. Government was again requested to arrange for the spread of education among women "through their mother tongue"<sup>81</sup>.

The complicity of women in perpetuating their own subordination was raised by Smt. A Savitramma, chairwoman of the reception committee of the women's conference. She posed a question to the women to realize for themselves as to what extent they are themselves responsible for their backwardness which she described as a continuation of an outdated social belief and practice. She was sure that without the co-operation of women however much men try to improve the facilities for women's education, women would remain blissfully limited to the four walls of the home. She appealed to the few educated women who were taking interest in the Sabha to help spread literacy among women in the neighborhood of their resi-

dance.

Smt. Savitramma exhorted the women to discourage in their homes the use of foreign goods, purdah, child marriages, dowry and many other evil practices whose continuation did not speak well of the attitude of women at home. She also highlighted the troubles and tribulations experienced by the women as a result of polygamy among men. But she was averse to demand right of divorce to women merely to overcome this evil practice. Divorce she felt was not conducive to Indian conditions. So she pleaded that women should support the prohibition of polygamy.<sup>82</sup>

Smt. Savitramma advised women not to rely on mere annual conferences for any effective change in their pattern of living but to propagate these among the not so fortunate women in their areas. Women should remove from their psyche the beliefs that they would not be effective because they are women and that they would not be able to do anything effective, because they are women. "We have individuality. Believe it, we are responsible for half of what all is happening in the country and for what does not happen in the country" she exhorted.<sup>83</sup>

Smt. Yogyashila Devi the president of the Mahila Mahasabha had, in conformity with an "unwritten formality", catalogued the handicaps suffered by women and the efforts made in vein "to remedy them".

"There is no sanitation in villages. There are no dispensaries. Hospital is a great rarity. Midwives are never available. It is difficult to get a doctor. The cumulative effect of all these inconveniences is heightened by our ignorance and indifference and our outdated beliefs. The paradox is our people do not support and encourage a doctor or midwife who volunteers to serve us. It is necessary that the local fund department of Government should undertake to organize medical services and young women should be given training in midwifery" she said.

She wondered as to why people who believe in scriptural stipulations that man and women should live together as friends to get healthy and good natured children and serve the society, should degenerate into adoption of evil practice like child marriages, ill balanced marriages, denial of education to women, denial of freedom to women and practice of male chauvinism.<sup>84</sup>

While marriages for widowed young women were denied, the

society had been taking undue interest in fixing the marriage of a old man with an young girl with whom marriage is an assurance that she would become young widow. Yogyashila Devi informed the members that Deccan Seva Sadan, an institution to train and rehabilitate such helpless women was founded in Secunderabad just two years ago and all those who are magnanimous should start similar institutions. She made it a point to drive home the fact that women belonging to the so-called untouchable community were found to be in no way inferior to the so-called touchable communities and it should be the duty of all women better placed in life to help untouchable women and their children.<sup>85</sup>

The eighth conference was held at Chilkoor in 1941, and it was presided over by Rangamma Obul Reddy. In this conference women demanded economic freedom and equality. In the Mahasabha there was a difference of opinion between the moderates and communists and like wise in the Mahila Mahasabha also some fundamentalists disliked the idea of freedom and economic independence being given to women.

The ninth Mahasabha was held at Dharmavaram in 1942, and it was presided over by Rangamma Obul Reddy.<sup>86</sup>

The Tenth Mahila Mahasabha held at Hyderabad in 1943 was presided over by Yellapragada Sita Kumari. From this conference onwards the women decided to hold their conferences separately totally disassociating themselves from the Mahasabha of men, in order to acquire and preserve their individuality.<sup>87</sup>

The Eleventh conference was held at Bhuvanagari in 1944. In the eleventh conference resolutions were passed to stop the practice of "Adapapalu" and slavery. Sri Raja Venkata Rama Reddy gave a monthly amount of Rs. 100 to start a women's paper. This was a significant contribution. The twelfth conference was held at Madikonda in 1945. The thirteenth conference was held at Kandi in 1946. After conducting 10 Mahasabhas together, women wanted their separate Mahila Mahasabha, so from the eleventh conference onwards women organized their conferences separately.<sup>88</sup> But, the combined sabhas were very useful to men and women. The women who had come forward were encouraged. The participants used to bring their families to the sabhas where an uninhibited and friendly atmosphere prevailed. The interaction between prominent personalities helped to develop the perspective of women and helped in their development. They were aware of national problems, with special reference to women problems. After separating themselves

from men, the Mahila Mahasabha faced some problems and the Mahasabha also lost its charm. In 1939, Ravi Narayana Reddy, an influential young leader, came under the influence of the Communist Party of India and became its member. He was an active member of the Andhra Mahasabha and also took part in the Congress led Satyagraha in 1938. In the seventh annual meeting of the Andhra Mahasabha held in 1939, for the first time, speeches were made on national and international politics and resolutions were passed to boycott the pro-Muslim and pro-landlord political reforms proposed by the Nizam's government. These resolutions which were moved by Ravi Narayana Reddy created a controversy between the elders and youngsters who in a way represented the conservatives and radicals. The eighth meeting of the Andhra Mahasabha was presided over by Ravi Narayana Reddy himself. He talked at the meeting about capitalism and its problems and also the problem of the Muslims and the Ittehad-ul-muslimeen which had never been discussed before. It was soon after this meeting that a section of the Andhra Mahasabha identified itself with Ravi Narayana Reddy and his ideas. They began to visit the villages in the interior parts of Telangana and discuss the economic and political problems of the day.<sup>89</sup>

The same ideological differences occurred in the women's

wing of the Mahila Mahasabha and also in the case of the women who were very seriously involved in the nationalist struggle. This naturally led to a diversion of ideas, towards the Communist movement. The subsequent annual Mahasabha witnessed the emergence of different factional groups and by 1942 the inevitable split had taken place.

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## CHAPTER 6

# WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION : THE RADICAL PHASE

The 1940's mark a new phase in the politics of Hyderabad state. The struggle, issues raised and the ideology that supported this all heralded a new and radical phase. Moving from demands for freedom of social expression and organization, which were essentially concerns of the Urban middle class of Hyderabad, the focus now was on the forms of oppression, the feudal nature of the state and the compulsions necessitating shift of activity from the Urban and Semi-Urban areas to the rural villages.

These trends necessarily affected women's organizations, compelling hard choices. While most of the women leaders and organizations, given their class character, opted out of this radical phase, a few Hyderabad organizations like the Navjivan Mandali made conscious decisions to support the Communists.

By the end of 1940's women's participation in the urban and the rural areas was legitimised by the spaces created for them or the opportunities they created for themselves. Two divergent and

seemingly parallel trends emerged, a legitimate public space for participation for the Urban middle class educated women, a process that was supportive and facilitated by society. And its opposite if one could call it a space in which women held a central position but yet could not publicly articulate grievances since they were and are often considered illegitimate.

Given the feudal nature of society in which women irrespective of religion or caste were in Purdah or had little opportunity for knowledge of the outside world, it is truly significant that in the first half of 20th century that women of Telangana region gradually and yet progressively expanded their sphere of activities and political participation, moving from welfare and recreational activity to active involvement in a radical armed struggle at the other end of the spectrum.

It is also important to note that the nature of women's participation changed at this juncture. During this period the participants were primarily poor agricultural labourers.

It is pertinent here to take a brief look at the feudal nature of agrarian social relations in Telangana region.

The basic feature that dominated the socio-economic life of the people of Hyderabad and especially in Telangana was the unbridled feudal exploitation that persisted till, the beginning of the Telangana armed peasant struggle.

Out of the 53,000,000 acres in the whole of Hyderabad state about 30,000,000 acres i.e. about 60 percent were under Governmental land revenue system called Diwani or Khasla area, about 15,000,000 acres i.e. about 30 percent were under the Jagirdari system, and about 10 percent as the Nizam's own direct estate i.e. sarf-e-khas system.

The income or loot from the peasantry from the sarf khas area, amounting to Rs. 20,000,000 annually was entirely used to meet the expenditure of the Nizam's family and its retinue. The whole area was treated as his private estate. He was not bound to spend any amount for economic and social benefit or development of people's livelihood in that area.

The peasants in these areas were nothing but bonded - slaves or total serfs under the Nizam. Even whatever little rights existed in the diwani area were denied to them.<sup>1</sup>

The Jagir areas constituted 30 percent of the total states. In these areas, Paigas, Samasthanams, Jagirdars, Ijavadars, Banjardars, Muktedars, Inamdars, or Aghaharams were the various kinds of feudal complexes. Some of these used to have their own revenue officers to collect the taxes they used to impose. Some of them used to pay a small portion to the state while some others were not required to pay anything. In these areas various kinds of illegal exactions and forced labour were the normal feature. Some of these Jagirs, paigas and samsthanams. especially the biggest ones had their own separate police, revenue, civil and criminal systems. They were subfeudatory states, under the Nizam's state of Hyderabad which was itself a strong native state under the British in India.<sup>2</sup>

The Paigas estates were granted to Muslims feudal, especially the Nizam's relatives, for recruiting and maintaining armed personnel to help the Nizam in his wars. The Jagirs and samsthanams were those given to reward officers, who distinguished themselves in serving the Nizam. Maktas, Banjars, Aghaharams and Inams were given for various services, and these owners were entitled to fleece the peasantry and take as much as they could extract. These used to be Deshmukhs and Deshpandes who were earlier the tax collectors for the Government. Later on under the chief-ministership

of Salar Jung when direct tax collection by the state apparatus was introduced, these Deshmukhs and Deshpandes were granted vatans or mash (annuities) based on percentage of the past collections, in perpetuity. These Deshmukhs and Deshpandes as collectors of taxes, grabbed thousands of acres of the best fertile cultivated land and made it their own property. The peasants cultivating these lands were reduced to the position of tenants at will.<sup>3</sup>

The feudal landlords had occupied or acquired these lands by all foul means from the ordinary people. The major portion of the lands cultivated by the peasants came to be occupied by the land lords during the first survey settlement. These people who had power in their hands got lands registered in their names without the knowledge of the peasants who were cultivating them and the peasants came to know of it only afterwards when it was too late to do anything. Thus, these feudal lords got possession of unlimited vast lands and made them their legal possession.

Even lands which were left out in possession of the peasants in the survey settlement, were occupied by the landlords in the years of the economic crisis of 1920-22 and 1930-33 when the peasants either due to bad harvests or unfair prices for the crops were unable

to pay the taxes. These feudal landlords used to torture the peasants who were unable to pay the taxes and get hold of their lands. Many a time this acquisition used to take place even without the knowledge of the peasants. They used to lend agricultural products like grain, chillies, etc. to the peasants at fantastic usurious rates and later under the pretext of non-repayment of these loans, used to confiscate the lands. This was the system prevalent at the time of the Telangana struggle.<sup>4</sup>

The extent of concentration of lands, can be seen in the case the Jannareddi Pratap Reddy family which had one and a half lakh acres.

These landlords are not only Deshmukhs but also village chiefs, Patel, Patwari, Mali Patel with hereditary rights. Each one used to be given five to ten villages as Vatan.

These vatan villages were controlled through clerks or agents (Seridars) appointed by the Deshmukhs. They enjoyed the rights of an officer. These Seridars used to collect the products from the peasants by force, and do all other jobs including supplying all information about the village. If there are any quarrels or friction

amongst the villagers, it could not be settled without the knowledge of the landlord.<sup>5</sup> Depending upon the nature of the quarrel, the Deshmukhs used to decide whether it should be settled in his house (gadi) or outside in the village centre or elsewhere. If it was a small matter, the Deshmukh's agent would be entrusted with it, but if it was a big affair, then it was settled in the presence of the Deshmukh in his house. To this category of rich land lords belonged people like the Babasahebpetta landlord, Visnoor Ramachandra Reddy.

Pingali Venkatrama Reddy (Waddepalli Deshmukh) got excise contracts for the whole of Telangana all for himself. In those days excise (Akbari) contract meant full control over the village.

If this was the state of exploitation by the feudal lords in ryotwari areas, one can imagine what it must have been in Jagirdari areas. These Jagirdars and Deshmukhs had licenses for rifles and guns, had cavalry squads and armed forces as well.<sup>6</sup>

The Vetti System (forced labour) is generally taken to be confined to tribal areas or some of the most backward social communities in other areas. But in Telangana vetti system was an all pervasive social phenomenon affecting all classes of people in vary-

ing degrees. Each Harijan family had to send one man from the family to do vetti. In a small hamlet (Palle) each house will send one man. Their daily job consisted of household work in the house of the Patel, Patwari, Mali Patel or Deshmukh, to carry reports to police stations, taluk office (Tehsil) keep watch on the village Chavadi and the poundage. Besides these, there used to be more work for them whenever an officer came to the village Chavadi. In village Chilkur, daily 16 Harijans used to do vetti. They used to collect wood for fuel from the forests and carry post also. For carrying post or supplies they were supposed to get an anna for two and half miles, which was of course never honoured in practice. This system was known as "Kosuku Veesam" in Telugu (i.e. 1/16th of the rupee for a distance of 2 1/2 miles).<sup>7</sup>

The worst of feudal excretion was the prevalence of keeping girls as 'slaves' in landlords houses. When landlords gave their daughters in marriage they presented these slave girls and sent them along with their married daughters, to serve them in their new homes. These slave girls were used by the landlords as concubines.

The vetti system had made the life of the Telangana people to utter degradation and abject serfdom.<sup>8</sup>

Some of the notorious feudal Deshmukhs who owned tens of thousands of acres, against whom bitter battles were fought, during 1940 were.

1. Visunur Deshmukh, - land lord over 40 villages in Jangon taluk, Nalgonda district with 40,000 acres.
2. Suryapet Deshmukh with 20,000 acres.
3. Babasahebpet Deshmukh with 10,000 acres, Miryalagudem taluk.
4. Kalluru Deshmukh with 100,000 acres, Madhira Taluk, Khammam district.
5. Jannareddy Pratap Reddy with 150,000 acres in, Suryapeta Taluk.<sup>9</sup>

Visnur Ramachandra Reddy, the notorious Deshmukh in Janagoan tehsil of Nalgonda district, used to forcibly seize the lands from the tenant and the peasants. He used to force the peasants in his ares, of about 40 villages to do forced labour in his fields all through the year, pay nazarana (presents in kind or cash) on the birth day of a child in the family. On occasion of marriage or death in Visnur family every handicraftsman, artisan or merchant had to pay a certain portion of his produce or fixed amountes in cash .. cobbler should present shoes and harness, shepherds should present Kamblies

and also supply sheep and goats for the feast and free milk too ! .. and peasants, grain, vegetables etc. He built a house costing Rs. 200,000 in the thirties and forties, out of which nearly half the cost was collected in cash from the forced labour for various construction jobs. A young mother who had delivered a child only three days earlier, was made to do forced labor in his fields, leaving the infant with nobody to look after and the child died because of lack of feed and care. He was so notorious that peasants hesitated to give their daughters in marriage to persons living in those villages. It was against such forced labour and illegal exaction and eviction that the Andhra Mahasabha, rebelled. The beginnings of the Telangana armed struggle were against, the atrocities of this very same Visnur Deshmukh in 1946, when his goondas attacked and murdered Doddi Komarayya, the local Andhra Mahasabha worker in Kadivendi village on July 4. <sup>10</sup>

The Bhagela system was yet another form of oppression. The origin of a bhagela was typically that of a landless members of one of the lower castes, often from untouchable caste, who would be obliged to offer her or his labour as security for debts and work for the creditor until the debt was repaid. For instance it often happened that when a man married, involving considerable expense, he would become

a Bhagela, while his wife would work as an agricultural labourer (when she could) and support them both. The wages for this work would be deducted as repayments for the loan. But wages were so low and interest so high (usually never less than 25%) that the debt remained perpetually unpaid. When Bhagela died the debt was inherited by his heir, so there were generations of agricultural labourers giving totally unpaid labour to the Deshmukhs, which enabled them to cultivate their large holdings paying the most minimal amount in wages.<sup>11</sup>

In 1936 the state Government made a gesture towards reform through the Hyderabad Bhagela Agreement Regulation. As its name implies, the intention was to set out conditions for agreements between Bhagelas and their employers. The main provisions were that interest was to be fixed at 6% and that the agreement was to be rendered void on the death of the bhagela.<sup>12</sup> This was not a success. Four years later in the report of the labour census it was stated that the measure had not had much effect yet and in fact no agreements had been registered. This was put down to the bhagelas having been under an inferiority complex for generations and so being too timid and backward to complain against their all powerful employers.<sup>13</sup>

The 1949-50 economic survey produced comparative statistics for indebtedness in the 118 villages surveyed. 62 were in Telangana, 56 in Marathwada/Karnataka. The increase in indebtedness between 1930 and 1939 was 63% for the whole state, the regional figures showed a considerable disparity.<sup>14</sup>

In Telangana it was 89%. In at least one village, Chintapalli in Nalgonda district, the percentage of debt more than doubled in the period (actually 126%).<sup>15</sup>

The fall of prices meant that in real terms debts doubled, because the volume of crops that would have to be sold to pay off the debt increased in direct proportion to the fall in prices. The number of people in debt increased and those who were already in debt found themselves hopelessly trapped. Incapable of repaying interest because of their falling income they were the first to lose their lands.<sup>16</sup>

Even if they did not lose their land immediately, the effect of compound interest on the one hand and of having to perform vetti at the crucial periods of the cultivation cycle on the other meant that their own crops were neglected and their own income reduced. On top of all that the usual social expenses remained. For example expenses on a marriage could ruin a family. Although many official

reports moaned that peasants were responsible for their own plight, much of their money being 'frittered away on unproductive objects', but the fact is that they had very little alternative.<sup>17</sup>

The Introduction of the Levy System created more problems. The Hyderabad state Government decided that the purchase of food grains under this system should be on their account and in 1943 formed the Hyderabad Commercial Corporation with Government capital.

One more problem was that the levy price in Hyderabad was lower than that in the surrounding provinces of British India. This had the predictable effect of promoting smuggling which was not inhibited by the rather ineffectual patrolling of the Hyderabad army and police.

A ration system was introduced and ration cards, issued.<sup>18</sup> Ration shops opened in Hyderabad and one of the district towns, Warangal. Unfortunately some of the rural areas and especially Nalgonda district, were food deficit areas. What further compounded the deteriorating position of the peasants was that in some areas notably Nalgonda district, food grains were in deficit. This was partly due to

the bad weather conditions of the mid 1940's and also because of rapacious landlords again particularly in Nalgonda district.<sup>19</sup> The food grain which was not in deficit was rice, but the basic staples in Telangana were Jawar, bajra, and gram. Most people could not afford to eat rice regularly.

The effect of the inflationary crisis of the war was even more severe. The figures for the state as a whole marked an increase of 83% in the period 1939-50.<sup>20</sup>

The Hyderabad state differed from the rest of the Indian princely state in that it retained its original ruling class during the British conquest of India. Particularly all of the rest of the states were British creations or like Mysore, had been re-established with a new pliant dynasty. Hyderabad escaped this fate because of its early adherence to the British cause in India which the Asaf Jahi Dynasty never abandoned despite occasional differences of opinion. In 1857 the Nizam's Government resolutely suppressed anti-British movements in the state, which played a large part in preventing any spread of the mutiny to the Deccan.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless there were substantial number of petty bourgeois

in Telangana. Lawyers, village officials, aspiring rich peasants who could send their sons outside to get an education, and such others soon began to dominate the activities of the Andhra Jana Sangham, even though it had been established by ultra conservative notables who were worried about their social position with the ruling families emphasizing their 'Muslim' nature.<sup>22</sup>

Some democratic minded students of Hyderabad who had gone to England for higher studies came under the influence of Victorian Liberalism and others by the Fabian Movement, started an organization called "Anjuman -e-Taraqqi Hyderabad" in 1928.<sup>23</sup> They were also publishing a magazine from there under the title "The Hyderabad Magazine". Subsequently a branch of the above organization was formed at Hyderabad, with Ali Yavar Khan (the late Nawab Ali Yavar Jung) as its president and Mr. Fazlur Rahman as the General Secretary and other prominent members of this organization were Ataur Rahman, Ali Akbar, M. Narsing Rao, Baquer Ali Mirza, B. Rama Krishna Rao, Dr. Lateef Sayeed, Dilsukh Ram, Miss, Padmaja Naidu, Mohd. Hussain Jaffri and others. This organization of nationalist and progressive minded people stood for responsible Government under the aegis of Nizam, compulsory education and social reforms. The organ of this organization was "Onward" under the

able editorship of Miss Padmaja Naidu.<sup>24</sup>

In 1930 civil disobedience movement was started under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi and under the impact of this movement some nationalist minded people started Swadeshi League in Hyderabad to propagate the boycott of foreign goods and to encourage the use of indigenous material and Khadi. The president of the league was Miss Padmaja Naidu and Mr. Fazlur Ruhman was its secretary, who was then working as a lecturer of economics in city college. A meeting of the league was held at Secunderabad in January, 1931 and Mr. Fazlur Rahman, spoke on the occasion. The Nizam's Government immediately took notice of this "gross violation" of the service rules by a lecturer of the college and suspended him from service. The league became defunct after a year or so. The promoters of the above organization were greatly influenced by the National Liberation Struggle of India and its left orientation.

The lull was again broken by the efforts of a few nationalist minded people, both Hindus and Muslims, who in 1935 formed an organization called "The Nizam's Subject League".<sup>25</sup> According to the initiators this organization was formed to keep alive the enthusiasm created by the Mulki Movement and to utilize it for healthy

and constitutional purposes, and they intended "to promote the cause of Deccani Nationalism" without "distinction of caste, creed or sex all striving for the best interest of the sovereign and the state". It also proposed to "secure and safeguard the fundamental rights and privileges of citizenship in Hyderabad and to strive for the establishment of a constitutional form of Government under the aegis of Asaf Jahi dynasty".<sup>26</sup>

The prominent persons who took initiative for the formation of this organization were Miss. Padmaja Naidu, Abdul Hasan Syed Ali, B. Rama Krishna Rao and S.B. Sharma.

Another group of nationalists led by Mr. Akbar Ali Khan, Bar-at-Law, started a society "Jamaat-e-Ittehad-e-Taraqqi" and important leaders of this organisation were Dr. Lateef Sayeed, Nawab Mir Ahmed Ali Khan, Mir Hassanuddin Zahed Ali Kamal and a few liberal Congressmen of the state. This was no doubt a non-communal organisation with Liberal leadership who were satisfied with some sort of constitutional reforms and ultimately the establishment of representative Government under the aegis of Asaf Jahi dynasty on the end of British paramountcy, which implies more power and greater independence to the Nizam.<sup>27</sup>

In view of the limited scope of these organizations they had no popular appeal and their activities were continued by a section of Hindu and Muslim intelligentsia. Besides, there were Congress minded Muslim families, like the Amir Hasan family, Ghulam Panjatan family and a few others.

There were many individuals with strong nationalist convictions, notable among them were Nawab Ahmed Ali Khan, Dr. Latif Sayyed, Dr. Hasim Amir Ali, Nawab Sardar Ali Khan and Sirajul Hasan Tirmizi who was one of the prominent leaders of the state Congress and was later the president of the State Congress.<sup>28</sup>

In those days progressive books and Marxist literature was a rare commodity in Hyderabad and in the absence of such literature, books written by M.N. Roy which were easily available, were also instrumental in creating the socialist and Marxist consciousness among the young generation.<sup>29</sup> Although the Communist party of India was under ban throughout the country (1934-42) and in Hyderabad city the Unit of the party was not yet formed, but illegally published literature of the party had started trickling in and the Andhra unit of the party was making efforts to contact some of the workers of Andhra Mahasabha and Comrades Association with a view to form an un-

derground unit of the Party in this area.

During this period the left orientation of the national movement, under the leadership of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and above all the victory of socialist revolution in Soviet Russia tremendously enthused the whole country, specially the younger generation.<sup>30</sup>

Radicalising the thinking of the young generation of Hyderabad, gradually led to the formation of Comrades Association in 1939.

Comrades Association was not a political party, but it was a broad forum of all those forces who were anti-imperialist, anti-facist, and anti-Nizam and who stood for Freedom, Democracy, Secularism and Socialism. It served as a common platform for Communist, Socialist, Royist, Congressmen and progressive individuals.

Here it should be emphasized that it was not floated by the upper strata of the society and liberal politicians with an eye to get some petty political concessions and individual benefits from the autocratic regime of the Nizam. This was a radical organisation started by Marxist and progressive minded students and youth to fight against imperialism, facism, communalism and autocratic regime of the

Nizam.<sup>31</sup>

Aims and Objectives of Comrades Association were: 1. to explore grounds of differences among the various communities of the country and to endeavor to find out points of concordance. 2. to remove illiteracy from the masses. 3. to spread the above ideals in

the public through the medium of Indian languages and 4. to propagate these ideas by arranging public speeches, debates and the circulation of news papers and pamphlets.

The aims and objectives of the association were purposely kept very simple and non-controversial as to bring wider section of people into its fold and to ward -off the heavy hand of the Government at the initial stage itself. Comrades Association was mainly a city based middle class organization, though it had contact in some districts of Telangana. The association had also taken up many problems of urban poor and from the very beginning was very keen to organize Trade Unions and always expressed its solidarity and active support to the problem and demands of the working class. This is evident from the resolutions passed in the annual conferences and working committee meetings of the association held from time to time.<sup>32</sup>

The multifarious activities of the Comrades Association included

1. political campaigns and conferences.
2. lectures and talks on political issues.
3. political classes and study circles.
4. publication of books, pamphlets and leaflets.
5. Mobilizing people on food problem and other issues.
6. organizing workers in Trade Unions.<sup>33</sup>

A public meeting to observe Anti - Nazi day was organized on 13.9.1940, which was presided over by Miss. Padmaja Naidu and the prominent persons who spoke on the occasion were Dr. Khalifer Abdul Hakim, B. Rama Krishna Rao, Sirajul Hasan Tirmizi, Kashinath Rao Vaidya and Dr. Lateef Sayeed.<sup>34</sup>

Some time in 1939-40 many leaders of the Comrades Association came in contact with the Communists of Andhra area and they formed an underground unit of the Communist party in Hyderabad city along with the Comrades of the Telangana area i.e. Ravi Narayana Reddy and Baddam Yella Reddy, who were working in and through Andhra Mahasabha.<sup>35</sup> Since then the Nizam state committee and its city unit functioned under the guidance of the Andhra Communist committee which was one of the strongest units of the

Communities. The Communist party in Hyderabad state was able to function as a legal party hardly for four years and again it was declared illegal in November 1946.<sup>36</sup>

The changing political environment and the radical voice began to make itself felt in the Andhra Maha Sabha itself. After the eighth annual conference in 1941 Andhra Maha Sabha had taken the style of a radical nationalist organization at the instigation of the Communists. It attempted to organize campaigns like 'Detenues Day' 'Education Week' 'Anti-Forced Labour Week' etc.<sup>37</sup> The most important and as it turned out to be the crucial issue, was the grain levy campaign. This levy produced a huge uproar. A leaflet was brought out explaining what the levy was and how people were being fleeced by corrupt officials.<sup>38</sup>

The right wing nationalists in the Andhra Mahasabha were not at all happy at this turn of events and tried to win back the presidency of the organization at the 1942 and 1943 conferences. At the time of the 1944 conference at Bhongir, the work the Communists had been doing over the levy and the very fact that they had taken up the problems of forced labour and excessive taxation by Jagirdars was sufficient for them to build up a groundswell of popular support that scared the right wing leadership. Faced with the prospect of

loosing the elections they split from the Mahasabha.<sup>39</sup> Communists members now controlled the entire organization and through it influenced a vast population. It had won the Andhra Mahasabha's great credibility. There was then a regular organization with a standing committee, district and taluk committees and by 1944 village committees, as well. It was possible to build these as by then Communist controlled leadership had instituted mass individual membership. By reducing membership subscriptions to four annas per head they recruited over 1,00,000 members in the rural areas. There were about 10,000 people at the rally at Bhongir.<sup>40</sup>

In Telangana there were specific reasons which both assisted and arrested this process. Many of the Communist members were easily absorbed into the reformist traditions of the Andhra Mahasabha. As we have seen many had previously also been members of the state Congress and Arya Samaj. The political line of the Communists fitted in very well with their own political experience. In some areas, notably in Warangal district, the state had specifically appointed liberal field officers with the result that Communists and Andhra Mahasabha activists were pulled all the more easily into purely reformist legal wranglings.<sup>41</sup>

Devulapalli Venkateswara Rao, who was then Nalgonda district secretary of the CPI and district organizer of the Andhra Mahasabha, has described what happened :

"The comrades representing the revolutionary trend in Nalgonda district had gone to the peasant masses, took up not only issues like forced labour and illegal extortions but also boldly championed the cause of tenants, who were faced with the threat of evictions and were victims of exorbitant rents. Besides this they took up the issues of forcible grain collection from the peasants by Government officials.<sup>42</sup> The revolutionaries relied on mobilizing and organizing masses for which they had to face intense repression in the form of arrests and sentences of imprisonment. Whereas in other districts party units relied on representing the grievances to the authorities, which did neither help to build a militant peasant movement, nor mobilize them for further struggles".<sup>43</sup>

The reason for this strange difference appears to have been almost entirely fortuitous. It happened that party activists in Nalgonda district had almost all come out of the student movement of 1938, and so had not been influenced by Gandhian politics as had the veterans of the 1930-32 campaign who were in the Andhra Mahasabha already.

In most districts the party operations were supervised by high-level bodies, notably by the Andhra provincial committee in Warangal district. In Nalgonda district committee unhampered by these restraints was free in practice to develop its own programme.<sup>44</sup>

In 1944 they held detailed political classes for the training of cadres one in Hyderabad with 100 people attending and other in Warangal with 80-100 people attending.

In addition to these special schools there was a regular system of meeting and report backs to party members after central committee meetings there were a couple of general meetings of members and sympathisers in each taluk to report on what went on. State committee members went to enlarged meetings of the provincial committee as Vijayawada, then to enlarged meetings of the various district committees which then reported to the taluk meetings. The cadres produced by this training were the people who were to fulfil a crucial role in organising the Telangana movement in the succeeding years.<sup>45</sup>

The main impact that the Communists made was in their organisation around agrarian issues. The campaign against forced labour had already caused clashes with landlords. The Communists

and Andhra Mahasabha activities then took up tenancy questions as landlords scared of impending tenancy questions were beginning to evict people. The Communists members decided that since the legal system was rigged in favour of landlords, they should fight cases by the mass mobilisation of peasants to resist attacks.

The famous 'Jangoan Movement' which foreshadowed the general Telangana movement, was one such resistance movement.<sup>46</sup>

Towards the end of the 1945 the Telangana peasants were suffering from rapidly deteriorating conditions. As the economic crisis got worse the landlords stepped up their attacks.

The peasants developed a general resistance to gain collections and forced labour. They came to the local Andhra Mahasabha organizers and asked them to 'form a Sangham' that is to organize a local branch of the Andhra Mahasabha. Many of the cadres responded in such a positive manner to these peasant initiatives that after this time the Andhra Mahasabha was known as the 'Gutpak Sangham' (Baton society) while the earlier movement was called the 'cheetty Sangham'. They organized defence squads and went from village to village gathering forces.

At Palakurthy village in December 1945 the local peasants defeated an attempt by the local landlords to expropriate the crop of the widow Ailamma. However, the landlords returned with greater force, and captured and tortured those responsible for the thwarting of their designs. D. Venkateswara Rao then went to the neighboring village of Davaruppal and held a general meeting of the village. It was decided that each family should provide one young male to go to Palakurthy to defend the village. When the volunteers arrived it had an immediate effect on the morale of the peasants.

At about the same time there were incidents in two villages that had not been touched by the Andhra Mahasabha and Communist movement. At Akunur and Machireddypalli the peasants resisted police and revenue officials who had come to collect the grain levy. The police retaliated with torture, looting and rape. The district committee sent an organizer to Akunur who managed to obtain statements from 36 out of the 70 raped women. After discussing this kind of spontaneous fight, the district committee reconsidered their perspectives.<sup>47</sup>

The fighting at Palakurthy had been against the forces of the hated Deshmukh of Jangoan, Visnur Ramachandra Reddy. Enraged

by being opposed by people whom he considered his right to ravage, he planned to crush resistance by murdering Andhra Mahasabha activists. On 4 July 1946 his hired gang invaded the village of Kadavendi, a couple of miles from Devaruppal, and fired on a demonstration that was on the way to the Deshmukh's house. The local activist Doddi Komarayya a shepherd, was killed. The result was very different from that anticipated by Ramachandra Reddy. A crowd of more than 2,000 people gathered, looted his mango grove and tried to set fire to his house. He was saved by the arrival of 60 armed police, who managed to get the crowd to disperse on the (false) promise that they would arrest Komarayya's murderers.

This killing at Kadavendi is generally taken to be the beginning of the 'Armed Struggle' and it sparked off a mass movement covering about 150 villages in the surrounding area. Shortly after Komarayya's death 200 acres were seized from a landlord in an adjacent village and was distributed under the guidance of local Communist members.<sup>48</sup>

The programme that was set out to implement was the most radical that has ever been carried out in India. It consisted of

1. The abolition of forced labour

2. The abolition of illegal exactions and the repayment of negotiated properties of those which had been extracted in the past.
  
3. The return of 'illegally' seized lands. including seizure for alleged indebtedness and the manipulation of land records. They faced a problem in that, some rich and middle peasant families had also given loans and acquired land. This arose because any peasant family which had a grain surplus used it for lending. At this time it was decided not to re-distribute those lands but to concentrate on the landlords.<sup>49</sup>

The Communist Party was banned in November 1946 and after that most of the organizers in Hyderabad city went across the border to Vijayawada. The defence squads were at a great disadvantage because except for a few 'country guns' (home made muskets) they were only armed with lathis and slings as against the force of the modern arms of the police and the army. By December 1946 a lull fell over Telangana as peasant resistance declined in the face of this repression.

Women played an important role in the Telangana struggle,

They participated actively in the land movement, in agricultural labour wage struggles, in seizure of lands and grain, against the "Briggs Plan" of evacuating the Koya, chenchu and lambadi people from their hamlets in the forest areas, or from their scattered hamlets in the plains. They were with their husbands and brothers fighting the Razakars and Nizam police. They had joined the militant political squads and underwent all the difficulties and joys of the life in the forests and hills and in the fields, in rain and in sun. They acted as couriers, as political agitators, and in new centres as organizers of people's movement and mass organizations.

They were the worst victims of the brutal tortures and atrocities committed by the Razakars and Nizam's and later Indian police and military. They had to face molestation and rape, apart from beatings on a large scale. They had to see their babies and children tortured and killed before their very eyes. They had to see their beloved husbands or brothers hunted and arrested and killed. They had to suffer all this, remaining in their own houses and villages, looking after what was left behind, the very young and the very old when their men folk had to fight to escape the fury of the army and police attacks, or had gone to join the fighters and the guerrillas in far-off secret places.

The story of their heroic and stubborn resistance in defence of their personal dignity, against molestation, torture, and rape, is an inspiring one. Their awakening to new social equality, to a new moral and cultural life, their stubborn fighting quality, gives us a glimpse of that tremendous revolutionary spirit and energy that is smouldering in womenfolk.<sup>50</sup>

It was Chakali Ailamma in Palakurthy village, Jangoan taluk who was the first in bitter fight to retain her land and crop from being seized by the Deshmukh. She inspired her whole family of sons and daughters to be with the Party through thick and thin. Her house had been the centre of Andhra Mahasabha and Communist party activities against the landlords. She fought not only for her personal case -this only symbolized and signaled the beginning of the mighty struggle of the Telangana peasant.

In Miryalagudem taluk, in Mukundapuram village, the Sahukar had got Kummari Mattaya tortured to death because he refused to give up the land he had recovered from this Sahukar. His wife took up the challenge. She stuck to the land and refused to surrender. She was brutally raped by the police but still she refused. She roused the people to support her and succeeded in retaining, the land.

In Vadapalli centre, a lambadi peasant was killed because he too refused to surrender the recovered land to the landlord. But his wife took his place and succeeded in cultivating that piece of land in spite of the police terror.

In Kondrapolu village, another lambadi peasant cultivating a two acre wet land plot, that too, a recovered piece was done to death by landlord Dattudu. Here again his wife came forward and succeeded in defending her right on land.

In Subaramigudem, Golla Muttayya was killed for not surrendering the piece of land he was cultivating, but his wife stepped in and continued the cultivation and did not allow the enemy to seize the land.

In Moddulukunta, a lambadi took possession of a piece of land from landlord Ramakrishnanna who tried to seize it with the help of the police. The lambadi was beaten to pulp and forced to leave his house and farm. But his wife refused and persisted. She cultivated it and succeeded in carrying the harvest to her home.<sup>51</sup>

Veeraram, a lambadi peasant and his wife resisted their land being

sized by the landlord's men and the police. The police trampled on the women who was pregnant and she died.

It was a fact that tens of thousands of women stood along with their men folk in this struggle for land.<sup>52</sup>

A great percentage of agricultural labourers are women. They are in very large numbers, perhaps as many as the men themselves, because they too have to earn if they are to get even one meal for their children and themselves. They cannot rely on their men's earnings. As such it is not surprising that women participated in large numbers in all agricultural labour strikes, or in seizure of grain from landlord's and deshmukhs warehouses and gadis.

In the Kondrapalli centre, and other neighboring centres in a large number of village, agricultural labourers went on strike for increase of their daily wages to four seers from the then existing 2 or 3 seers.

In the demonstrations, women in large numbers participated with flags in their hands. Ultimately to force the landlords to come to a settlement, they had to raid and start seizing grain. The landlords were forced to concede the demands.<sup>53</sup>

There were women who staying in their own villages, defended their homes, fought against the oppressors and the police and suffered immensely, but went on fighting. Many demanded to be taken into the guerrilla squads, to the forest area, maybe partly under the pressure of the enemy attacks as the only method of escape. The party admitted only a few women into the forest areas and even fewer in the guerrilla squads. Yet there were quite a number of women in various jobs, both in the political and militant fields in both the forest and plain regions.<sup>54</sup>

The village women folk aided the guerrilla squads in their raids. They provided the squad members with water and food while the battles raged for hours together. Women went in disguise to gather information about the military camps and passed it on to the squads. They also participated in battles with pots of chilli powder, kept vigil on the routes of the police and killed them. Hundred of such raids occurred all over Telangana.<sup>55</sup>

During the Nizam days in 1946-47 the Nizam police and levy officials raided the villages of Akunur and Machireddypalli in Jangoan taluk. They raped a dozen or more women. This incident was taken up even by Congress leaders as a major, issue, as an insult to the

honour of womenfolk and as a disgrace to national honour. Padmaja Naidu was in the forefront of that agitation and a huge wave of anger swept the whole country.<sup>56</sup>

In Ragipadu (Suryapet taluk) a women who had delivered only three days before, was raped. In Narigudem (Bhuvanagiri taluk) a women who had delivered a day before, was raped. In Tangunta, a women in advanced pregnancy was raped. In Yenapadu, of Bhuvanagiri taluk, and in Pushpapur of Khammam taluk even girls of 10 years were raped.

Reports of women being raped by 5-10 military police men at a time were innumerable. More than 100 women died of brutal raping. In the first year itself reports showed more than a thousand women being raped. It will be no exaggeration to say that in all these three years of the police and military terror regime a few thousand women were raped.

But the women and the people waged a continuous and bitter fight against this barbarous attack on women, beat back the police in many cases, and saved themselves from this torture.<sup>57</sup>

Soldiers from Nawabpet village (Jangaon) camp went in civilian dress to Vaddicherla village unarmed and raped women. The people of the village got wild. Hundreds of people surrounded the house which the soldiers had entered. While two escaped the other two were beaten to death.

In Proddutur village the military raided and after beating up villagers, shot dead four local militants . They tried to catch some women, but all the rest of the women of the village surrounded them and got their sisters released.

In Madarugudem, Miryalagudem taluka, the wife of the local organizer, Balakoti was caught hold of by the military. She resisted and fought back, and escaped from their clutches.

In Jalalpuram an armyman tried to rape a pregnant women. She talked to him to get him into room and then bolted it from the outside and gathered a crowd of women.<sup>58</sup>

When the armed police were attacking the villages of Balemula, Patasuryapet, Mallareddygudem, Devarapalle and in a number of other places, women were at the side of their men, handing them

stones for their slings. Along with their men folk they faced brutal lathi-charges and firings. In the Mallareddygudem fight, a women who was supplying stones standing by the side of her husband, was shot dead. Women resisted their men folk being spirited away in lorries and demanded that they should accompany them and face all the consequences. The police could move only when they took the fighting women in the lorries along with their men folk.

In the Kottagudem Koya hamlet, in Gundala area, in September 1950 the men and women of the whole village resisted the military atrocities and in that fight killed a subedar and three of his men and seized their guns. After this when the military came in large force in whole village had to take shelter in the deep forest. That was the heroic way the women lived through the ordeal, not even allowing their children to cry out, will always rouse admiration and be an example of the determination and stubbornness of which women are capable.<sup>59</sup>

In Rajaram centre, a man and woman of a lambadi tanda were taken to the camp, the police suspecting them of helping the guerillas. They were made to stand up for days and nights without food and water. When they fell down, a little water was given and

as soon as they became conscious were again made to stand up. Their legs became swollen, but even after this torture both of them would have rather given up their lives than give any information about the guerrillas. The enemy then let them off.

It was a common feature in the whole fighting area that women took extraordinary precautions to look after the guerrillas and squads, sheltering and billeting them in their houses and in a large number of cases keeping night or day vigil while the guerrillas or leaders were sleeping or resting. The women fed guerrillas and party organisers at any time of the night or day with great care and affection. They took food and supplies to the guerrilla hideouts in the forests on hills and suffered horrible tortures and indignities when they were found out.<sup>60</sup>

In the village of Bendalapadu, a peasant woman Rajamma was caught. She and her husband were tortured with red hot irons, her waist and hands were branded as if wearing ornaments but not a single word did she utter about the squads. The charge was that she was taking food to the squads in the forests.<sup>61</sup>

In this struggle, women had participated equally along with the

men and due to this it became easier for the gram committees, Sangham and party to campaign against the age old ideas prevalent in the society that women were inferior to men. Women were elected to village Panch committees.

As mentioned earlier the Urban Women's Organizations in Hyderabad split on issue of support to the growing radical movement.

In 1945, there were two rival meetings of the Andhra Mahasabha. One was held at Warangal and was attended by non-Communists. The other was held at Khammam and was attended by Communists and their sympathizers. Both the groups discussed the problems of popular Government, representation for different religious groups, problems of peasants and agricultural labourers etc. It must be noted that these were also the last important meetings of the two wings of the Andhra Mahasabha. While the liberals slowly became a part of the state branch of the Indian National Congress, the radicals joined hands with the Communist party. Within the Congress also there were two groups consisting of conservatives and progressive-nationalists. The women who were active in the nationalist movement and also in the welfare and reformative activities gradually

developed into diverse groups because of the influence of the Communist ideology.<sup>62</sup> The organizations like the All India Women's Conference had stopped its relations with the activities of the Andhra Mahasabha saying that the Andhra Mahasabha had links with the Communists. The Navjivan Mandali had links with the Communists and they worked very actively in the war time and at the time of floods and also in the dalams in the freedom struggle. The women from the Andhra Yuvathi Mandali who were very active in nationalist politics were the founder member of the institution Yellapragada Sita Kumari. Burgula Anantha Lakshmi had participated in the Mahasabha conference. Though Anantha Lakshmi participated in the politics earlier, after independence she stopped her activities. She was not keen on involvement in political activity. She was very interested in the Andhra Yuvathi Mandali Activities. Her aim was to see it as an individual self-sufficient institution and it was fulfilled. Even now she continues to visit the institution.<sup>63</sup> Smt. Sita Kumari was very interested in politics. She pioneered the ideas which she propagated and in the process she became the member of the Legislative Assembly. The organized Satyagraha movement launched by the States Peoples, Conference in 1938 was only the beginning of the people's struggle. It was at such time that the Communist party called upon the All India Trade Union Congress, the All Hyderabad Students

Union and the women who were organized in a few towns, to join hands with the Andhra Mahasabha and to come out boldly and protect the life of the people. Men and women prepared themselves to face the Nizam. Women played an important role in the Telangana Armed struggle. They who had suffered and starved under the regime of extortions of the Nizam and the Deshmukhs, now saw the possibility of a new life, and they actively participated in the land movement, in the seizure of the landlords' grain, and in the struggle for higher wages. They fought the Razakars and the Nizam's police and later the Indian Army, standing shoulder to shoulder with their men. Ordinary women in the villages heroically defended their land. It is a well known fact that tens of thousands of women stood along with their men in this struggle for land, women formed a large percentage of the participants in the agricultural labour strikes. In demonstrations, the women with red flags in hand came in large numbers and finally they participated in seizing the grain of landlords who were then forced to concede their demands of four 'seers' of grain as daily wages, raising it from the prevailing rate of two or three 'seers'. Even though the women had hitherto not been drawn politically into the movement or politically trained, they now rose to great heights of heroism and sacrifice in the course of the struggle. Not only did they fight in their villages and their homes, but many

demanded to be taken in the guerrilla squads and fight in the forests. The leaders admitted only a very few women into the forest area and fewer in the guerrilla squads. Mallu Swarajyam who was active even as a young girl in the Andhra Mahasabha, later joined the Communist movement and organized men and women to participate in the Telangana struggle.<sup>64</sup>

The Navjivan Mandali, a composition organization mainly of non-Telugu women of whom there was a large number in the city, did splendid work in the city. Among the most active was a young village girl from Marathwada, named Padma Deshpande. She played an important role in organizing the activities, going from school to school and taking the message of the demonstration to the girl students. Another individual who played a significant role was Sarojini from Dhoolpet, who was a hard working and devoted worker. She was not only in the forefront of the struggle for the introduction of food rationing but also took the responsibility of writing and distributing the ration cards, working day and night through the Mahila Navjivan Mandali. She earned great popularity and she used all her organizational talents to rouse women against the activities and the injustice of the Razakars. She gathered around her a good number of sympathizers who were a big asset to the anti-razakr movement.

N. Sathyavathi working in the Andhra Yuvathi Mandali was interested in working among Telugu speaking women and their organization. Yashodaben was another member of the Navjivan Mandali during the Razakar period. When the people's anger was mounting against their atrocities she played a dominant and inspiring role. She was a leading spirit directing the activities of the Navjivan Mandali. The story of Jamalunissa Begum, fondly called Baji is not only inspiring but also significant because in those days Muslim women never participated in any movement that opposed the Nizam. In 1926-27 she decided to give up the purdah and to boycott foreign clothes. She became a nationalist, and though not actively involved in political activity, she never liked the idea of Pakistan. She invested all the Rs. 10,000 she got from her insurance policy to start an Urdu paper which for all purposes was a paper of the Communist party. This brave Muslim woman carried out her revolutionary mission courageously in a situation where hardly any Muslim woman dared to support the great Telangana Armed struggle or the Communist party which was its spearhead. In this great struggle women showed their courage and fortitude and in the process liberated themselves from the feudal chains that had bound them down for centuries. But, the reason so many women participated in leading the struggle was due to the good work done among women and by the women cadres.

From the beginning of the forties a mass organization of women was built.<sup>65</sup>

In 1943 All India Women's Faction was formed. The question of Communist women's participation in the mass movement was discussed and the unit came to the understanding that whatever possible Communist women should work through the All India Women's Conference which was dominated by Congress leadership. Hyderabad at that time was backward. The struggle against British imperialism in various forms in British India had its echo in Hyderabad and in the women's field too.<sup>66</sup>

In Hyderabad the Navjivan Mandali, was the one organization through which Communists worked very smoothly without any friction. In 1943 they collected cash and material for the Bengal famine through a variety of programmes. Though the Communists were active through Navjivan Mandali and All India Women's Conference, their ideology was very different. For instance, when the Navjivan Mandali collected money and material for the Bengal famine, Communist women wanted to send it to Mahila Atmaraksha Samithi but others wanted to send it to All India Women's Conference.<sup>67</sup>

Communists earned a good name in Hyderabad through their hard work and mass contacts, like when Government decided to introduce rationing suddenly, there was panic in the city. The Communist party came forward to help in the distribution of cards which the Government refused. But, the same Communists when they approached the Government through Navjivan Mandali, they got 8000 cards which they distributed within two days. When there was a sugar and kerosen shortage in the city, the Communists went door to door distributing coupons. Then milk committee formed under the presidentship of Princes Niloufer, had one of the comrades as secretary.<sup>68</sup>

Pramela Mahendra one of the active comrade in Hyderabad, says that the general atmosphere helped the Communist programme. Their programmes were for the entire womenfolk irrespective of caste and creed. There was no friction among members. The way in which Communists worked and the way Navjivan Mandali became popular did bring credit to its members. It helped the Communist party to gain popularity in the city.

Communist women gave a new turn to the women's movement. Most of the organisations of women comprised of the middle and upper-

middle and and their membership was limited in numbers. For the first time peasants, workers, the downtrodden in the bustees in urban areas, the agricultural women, lower middle class women, side by side with lower middle-class intellectuals and activists all converged into a massive stream. The women's organisations became a big mass movement involving town and countryside.

The significance of the movement was the building of a movement which questioned the very basis of the society founded on exploitation, inequality and indignity. It demanded a socio-economic transformation of society.

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# CONCLUSION

The earlier socio cultural movements which were started were not operating in the state because of the non-cooperative nature of the state. The community association which emerged in the late 19th and early 20th century, encouraged respective communities and helped the social and cultural change. Through these organisations women of that particular community started participating in public life. The community association and caste association which merged worked for literary and cultural renaissance, gradually they gained political importance during 1920's.

With the spread of education in the state and awareness created among educated ladies of the Muslim, Hindu, Zoroastrian and Christian communities and their duty to the women of their community. This consciousness has manifested itself into the organisation of recreational clubs and associations where members spend an evening hour or two in social intercourse. They have raised buildings of their own and equipped them for recreational purposes.

They also formed an association for the advancement of education among women which interests itself in other matters relating to women. Safeguarding the interest of Hindu widows in the matter of inheriting property. The question of women's franchise has also gained attention. They participated in the deliberations of the All India Women's Conference. As Teachers, Doctors, Writers, Speakers at zanana gatherings and honorary visitors to women's hospital and child welfare centers.

These organisation held their weekly and monthly meeting and deliberated upon reforms and education. Not all of them advocated that women break down the confining walls of the home, some still talked in terms of exerting their influence best from the home but they all preached the general uplift of women. Relief work undertaken by the Girl Guide Centres and in the 1930's and 1940's particularly for earthquake victims. The Navajeevan Mandali, Andhra Yuvathi Mandali, All India Women's Conference Hyderabad branch relied plans begin consisting of opening milk and rationing centres.

The public life in Telangana was slowly become a active and effective and expressing itself in various fields. One such field was the emergence of women associations and organisations which have tackled women's issues and women's problems. These early women's associations were the stepping stones for future women to participate in politics. Gradually the sphere of women's participation expanded into the more open public and political organisations which began taking the central stage from the 1930's onwards in form of Andhra Mahila Sabha a separate socio cultural wing which encouraged women to participate in politics.

The aim of the Andhra Mahila Sabha was to reform socio-cultural and educational matters as there are other associations to deal with the requirements of other items that vitally affect the needs of women. However, the need to broaden the horizons was soon recognised. Y. Sita Kumari President of third Mahila Sabha in her presidential address stressed the importance of social service along with education. Social evils as poverty, early marriage, purdah were according to her, the external conditions or impediments to the progress of women's

education in Telangana. She also stated that at every stage of education, the spirit of social service should be inculcated.

This period also saw the advent of political awakening among the masses resulting in an all-pervading influence of anti-imperialist ideology affecting every field of activity. While the constitution of the conference declared that its aim was not to engage in party politics and only to deal with all questions affecting the welfare of women. It could not help but attain a political colour. Social reforms of women's rights activities which led to definite legislations being passed eg., child marriage, inheritance of women and other legal rights. Social Service activities which include women and child labour welfare, health and family planning, child and maternity welfare, work for backward classes and campaign against untouchability, anti-bigotry, earthquake, flood and famine relief work undertaken, and other such activities for socially handicapped, training programmes for workers and mothers, women's self employment schemes, protection for the aged, for destitute women and so on.

Andhra Mahila Sabha emphasised the need to provide medical aid to women and children. They suggested that a department of health under a senior women medical officer be instituted in every province to establish hospitals for women where none existed, to staff them, to undertake training of nurses and midwives and advise the surgeon-general on the policy of organising adequate spread the message of elementary principles of sanitation, hygiene and proper care of children, and resolution were passed origin the necessity to limit the family.

The Andhra Mahila Sabha was a premier women's organisation that had attracted the most talented and capable women of this century. They were Yellapragada Sita Kumari, Burgula Anantha Lakshmi, Nadimpalli Sundaramma, Madapati Manikyamba, Rangamma Obel Reddy and many others. In the historical context, the Andhra Mahila Sabha was more significant. It symbolises the transfer of leadership of the women's movement from men to women. It has revealed women's early awareness that the responsibility for women's regeneration belongs to women. In the nineteenth century the movement for women's education and uplift was initiated and led by men. In the twentieth cen-

tury, as women become more educated, they formed their own associations and occupied responsible positions. The Andhra Mahila Sabha has been the premier and pioneer organisation in Telangana. The organization has provided women with opportunities to come out into the world outside the parameters of the house, in order to contribute something to society at large. Most of the members taken initiative and will in carrying out their crucial period the Andhra Mahila Sabha must be given a place of pride Telangana History.

Ilendula Saraswathi Devi and Burgula Anantha Lakshmi opened though some women from elitist, educated families had come forward, for the most part women's meetings were addressed by men and essays and comments in women's magazines and journals were encouraged them to cooperate in the freedom struggle. Most of they women who participated in the movements have told that they received inspiration from the men in their families. Yet with participation came an awareness of themselves as a group and as individuals.

Women had supportive fathers and husbands behind them was a decisive factor in their emergence as leaders of the women's movement in Telangana. The supportive atmosphere of their homes undoubtedly muted the militancy of their participation. Their views were generally moderate and they regarded the opening of education opportunities for women as a cause that should attract the support of all liberal minded persons.

In this category we can place women like Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, who has supportive father, B. Anantha Lakshmi, whose husband was Burgula Ramakrishna Rao, Illendula Saraswati Devi, Yellapragada Sita Kumar Rangamma Reddy and others.

The women educators representatives generally supported national education movements, rapid introduction of universal education, more extensive use of the vernacular, more stress on Indian cultural values and more vocational and practical training. They were of the opinion that the direction in which nationalist educators wished to move the educational system would benefit the cause of female education.

The decision to create the Telangana women's wing in political process was the clear indication that women educators were aware that organizational unity would be required to pressure for reform and expansion of women's education in Telangana. However, it was quickly recognised that the organisation of pressure groups would not be sufficient guarantee of influence, women would have to gain access to the inner councils of political process. This point of view was cogently expedient by they pointed out that conferences and women's journals are not enough, reform will only be forthcoming when women have access to administrative power to put their ideas into effect. The same views were carried out and propagated Sita Kumari, Nandagiri Indira Devi and others.

In Telangana the type of women's movement compared of elite an dedicated women here in this type of representation women demanded equal rights, status, property rights extension of educational opportunities, voting rights etc. In this category elite women and women from aristocrat background have participated. The interests of other

groups of women have not been well represented by these women's movement, very few lower class women have participated in the movement.

The early women's associations were limited in its scope focussed on spreading new ideas and knowledge to women. The lack of effects to reach the masses and expand the narrow social base of the women's movement has limited its effectiveness in promoting social change in the poverty stricken regions of Telangana. Women's organisations in Telangana largely are of upper middle class units composition and its membership. These organisations have not been able to challenge the basic social, economic and cultural constraints that affect the majority of women.

However, the improved status of upper caste and class Telangana women and the equal rights legislation are in large part due to the efforts of the Telangana women's movement and its historical links with the nationalist movement and women movements in other regions. In Telangana women's movement was of urban, middle class

in nature and they did not represent all women. One significant factor in Telangana women's movement that early women's movements are represented by upper caste women. The reasons for lower caste women not to represent is to be studied in detail.

In the later half of 20th century i.e in Telangana Armed Struggle one finds mass mobilization issues like kind, wages, working conditions were taken up. The Arms struggle had given an opportunity to rural women to participate but leadership was again in the hands of upper and middle case and class women.

In the armed struggle women's participation was seen as emergency movement at the time of acute trouble or problem. Afterwards the women went behind the screen and were lull. This type of women's movements create an opportunity to women to lead and at the some time its sustainability in very short. This has been very much prevent with the Telangana armed struggle. After the struggle women are asked to be in their own respective places i.e. family.

The difficulty encountered by women's movements had been their inability to mobilize large members of people. This has diminished the political clout of women's movements. Telangana women's movement was limited and more elite in nature. It enjoyed greater access to political elites and favored the politics of elite representation over the politics of mass mobilization.

# **Annexure -I**

## AKADAS IN HYDERABAD

S.No.	Name of the Akada	Place	Founder Member	Year	Name of the Trainer	No. of Girls Under Training	Age	Community	Training given	Funder Members	Object of the Akada
1	Maharashtra Ladies club	Kruparam Bagh Sultan Bazar	Ms. Una Bai Aurangabad-dkar	1940	Miss. Parlikar	25	9-11 yrs	Maharashtra	Dum-bells Swords Lathies	Ms. Kasinath Rao Vaidya Ms. Jatkar	To gives mass Training to Women in order to defend themselves in times of need and help the men also when necessary
2	Hanuman Kanya Vyam Shala	Thanmulla Building, Sultan Bazar	Ms. Sushila Bai Phatak Ms. Laxmi Bai	1939	Ms. Kalavathi	50	9-16 yrs	Maharashtra	Dum-bells Swords Lathies	Ms. Laxmi Bai	
3.	Hindi Girls School	Thanmulla Building, Sultan Bazar	Navjivan Mandali	1939	Vimala Karmankar	50	9-13 yrs	Arya sama list	Dum-bells Lathies	Ms. Laxmi Bai	
4.	Gujarathi Girls School	Back of Thanmulla Building, Sultan Bazar	Management of the School	1939	Vimala Karmankar	40	9-12 yrs	Gujarathies	Dum-bells Lathies	Ms. Laxmi Bai	
5	Viveka Vardhani Kanya Patashala	Gowliguda	Management of the School	1940	Ms. Apte, Kunti Anandi	200	9-22 yrs	Maharashtra	Dum-bells Swords Lathies	School Committee	
6.	Karnatak Girls School	Thanmulla Building, Sultan Bazar	Management of the School	1940	Ms. Karmankar	100	9-11 yrs	Karnatakas	Dum-bells Swords Lathies	Krishna Chari	
7.	Andhra Girls School	Narayana Guda	Management of the School	1939	Miss. Vimala Karmankar	50	11-17 yrs	Andhras	Dum-bells Lathies	School Committee	

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## **Annexure - II**

# BIOGRAPHY OF WOMEN

## **Smt. ARUTLA KAMALA DEVI**

Smt. Kamala Devi daughter of P. Venkat Ram Reddy was born in June 1920. She was married to Ramachandra Reddy of Hyderabad. She studied up to matriculation. After marriage she associated herself with Andhra Mahila Mahasabhas and Participated in Arayasamaj activities. She was well trained in Gurella warfare and was active in the Telangana Armed Struggle. Kamaladevi, addressed hundreds of public meetings, braving all the hazards and dangers involved during the Razakar days. She collected plenty of arms through her lightning attacks in Nalgonda, Warangal, Karimnagar districts. After police action she remained underground for sometime i.e. upto 1949. Then she was arrested, she was put in the jails of Nalgonda, Warangal and Secunderabad for 2 1/2 years. She undertook fast for improvement of jail conditions. She was released from jail in 1951. Kamala Devi was elected with thumping majority as M.L.A. from Aleru constituency, Nalgonda district for three terms from 1952 to 1971 and she was a member of All India Women's Conference. She propagated constructive work, Harijan uplift etc.

**Smt. AHALYA BAI**

Smt. Ahilya Bai was born in Hyderabad in 1929. She suffered detention in the Hyderabad Central Jail for nearly three months in 1947, due to her involvement in the 'Join Indian Union' movement.

**Smt. BURGULU ANANTA LAKSHMI DEVI**

Smt. Ananta Lakshmi Devi was the wife of Sri Burgula Ramakrishna Rao the famous political leader of Hyderabad state. She presided over Andhra Mahila Sabha held at Shadnager. She was one of the founder members of Andhra Yuvathi Mandali and was associated with it for many years.

**Smt. BRIJ RANI GOUR**

Smt. Brij Rani who was born in July 1921 at Hyderabad and married to Sri. Raj Bahadur Gour the well known Communist leader. She was an active member of Mahila Navjivan Mandali. Along with Shankar Rao of All Hyderabad Students Union she was arrested on the occasion of ceremonial unfurling of the Indian National Flag on 15th August 1948 at Begum Bazar. She offered Satyagraha in the Join

Indian Union Movement, and was arrested. She was imprisoned for six months.

### **BADISHA BEGUM SUFI**

Smt. Badisha Begum Sufi who born in 1900 at Hyderabad. She went to seven European countries on educational tour and studied the educational systems of those countries.

She was an author of many articles and books, she wrote Indian History in Persian language. She served as a member in many educational committees. She served Anjuman-e-Hayat Taliya as its vice president and Majilis Kawateen as its secretary. She opened Arabic classes for Muslim women in Majilis Khawateen. She was a promoter of women's education and social service.

### **BEGUM AMEER HASAN**

Begum Ameer Hasan was born in Hyderabad in 1874. She was an orator and organiser. She was a member of the All India Congress Committee for some time. "Shia-Sunni, Hindu-Muslim Unity" was her slogan. She founded a Girl's school in Banjara Hills in Hyderabad for

the uplift of the Banjara women. She taught tribal women tailoring, embroidery, dying, printing and such other trades.

### **BEGUM WALIYUDDOULA**

She was born in 1904 at Hyderabad. She was the head of the Secunderabad Boats club. She was awarded a silver medal by the British Government for her reform activities.

### **BEGUM KAMAL YAR JUNG**

She attended the All India Muslim Educational conference at Calcutta and presided over the women's wing. She edited and published 'Khyaban-e-Deccan' a monthly. She was vice-president of Muslim-Khawateen-e-Hyderabad for some years.

### **DURRE SHAWER**

Durre Shower known as Durfana Begum was the daughter of Abdul Mazid (the deposed sultan of Turkey and the Caliph). She was married to Azam Jha Bahadur, the eldest son of Nizam VII in 1931. She presided over the 10th conference of Anjuman-e-Khawateen,

Hyderabad in 1936. She participated in the village development schemes. She patronized the following institutions which were formed for the welfare of women.

1. Anjuman Khawateen Baraye Taraqqi Taleem Wa Mashrat. This was a branch of Anjuman-i- Hind Khawateen.

2. Lady Hydri Club.

3. Hyderabad Ladies Recreation Club.

4. Hyderabad Girls Guide Association.

She patronized all the associations which worked for the welfare of women without any discrimination of caste, creed or religion.

### **Smt. GYAN KUMARI HEDA**

Smt. Gyankumari was born in 1918. At the age of twelve years she participated in the Picketing of liquor shops. She was in jail for three months along with her mother. Again in Hyderabad for hoisting National Flag at several places in 1947, she was imprisoned. She was the provincial representative of the Hyderabad state Kasturba Gandhi National memorial trust for eighteen years from 1945 to 1963. She was the member of the Executive Committee of the Hyderabad state Harijan Sevak Sangh from 1946-1947. She and her husband

worked for the welfare of the Telangana people in many ways. They donated all their property to the welfare of the people.

### **LADY MAHDEYAR JUNG**

Lady Mahdeyar Jung, who was daughter of Mirza Musa Khan. She edited and published 'Naheed' a monthly. She attended the Round Table Conference at London along with her husband.

### **Smt. MANKUMARI CHOWRADIA**

Smt. Mankumari born in Hyderabad in 1907. She was the founder member of Navjeevan Mandali. Among the institutions she founded were the Navajeevan Mandali Girls School, Library and Seva Sadan. She founded the Mahila Mandali.

### **Smt. MALLU SWARAJYAM**

She was born in 1931 in Suryapet Taluk, Nalgonda district. She was active in Andhra Mahasabha of Hyderabad state. She worked against the Razakar movement. She led the Koya resistance. She participated in the Telangana Armed Struggle. She was elected to A.P.

assembly. She was one of the prominent leaders of Nalgonda district.

**Smt. MUDIGONDA LALITHA DEVI**

Smt. Lalitha Devi was the wife of M. S. Rajalingam, a veteran freedom fighter of Telangana. She participated in Andhra Mahila Mahasabha. She educated many feudal ladies against the Pardah system and other social evils and enlightened them about constructive programme.

**Smt. NANDAGIRI INDIRA DEVI**

Smt. Indira Devi daughter of Vadlakonda Narsimha Rao married to N. Venkata Rao. Who was imprisoned during the time of Grant civil liberties movement. She presided over the Andhra Mahila Sabha in 1937 at Nizamabad. She worked for the cause of the women in Telangana. As a wife of a freedom fighter, and an active social worker she faced many difficulties during the Razakar movement.

**Mrs. PILLAI**

Mrs. Pillai was awarded a gold medal by Nizam's Government for her social service at the time of epidemics which were troubling

Hyderabad state. She was one of the founders of women's recreation club at Hyderabad which she served as a joint secretary and treasurer. She was also a joint secretary of "Anjuman Tarraqi Taleem wa Tammaddun" for some time. She represented Hyderabad at several women's conferences at various places in India.

**Smt. PRAMEELA MAHENDRA**

Smt. Pramila Mahendra was affectionately known as 'Pramila Tayi' to her close associates. She was a popular Communist worker. Her husband Mahendra was an active Communist. She retired as the headmistress of Bansilal Balika Pathasala. Prameela was attracted towards Communist Party and worked for the downtrodden through different organizations. She devoted her time to propagate Communist ideals and instigated the people to join the Telanga Armed Struggle, and participated in underground work till the time of police action. She was arrested in 1951 and released in 1952 before elections. She represented India in Berlin in 1967 as a Secretary to world women's organization to study the problems of women of Europe after the second world war. She ran cooperative societies for women which provided adult education, and training in various crafts.

### **Miss. PADMAJA NAIDU**

Ms. Padmaja Naidu a native of Hyderabad was one of the eminent women of the state politics for a long time. She was the daughter of Sarojini Naidu and was born on 17 November 1900. She assisted in the collection of Tilak Swaraj Fund at Hyderabad in 1920. She was one of the founders of the Hyderabad branch of Indian National Congress. She was also the founder of Palgue Relief Association in 1929. She extended all her co-operation and support to all political activities in Hyderabad state. She has courted arrested during the Quit India Movement by participating in the Gandhi Jayanthi celebrations on October 2, 1942 at Hyderabad in defiance of the ban by the Nizam's Government. She was the recipient of "Padma Vibhushan" award.

### **RANI SAHEBA RAJA SHAM RAJ**

She belongs to a family of Jagirdars of Poona, and was married to Raja Sham Raj and settled in Hyderabad. She was associated with many womens associations of Hyderabad and was the president of Zanana Recreation club for some years.

**Smt. RAJESHWARI**

Smt. Rajeswari was born in 1927 and was the daughter of Sambayya resident of Madhira. She suffered imprisonment from 9.10.47 to 4.5.48 in the central jail, Warangal and Hyderabad for participating in the Join Indian Union movement.

**Smt. RAVI SITA DEVI**

Smt. Ravi Sita Devi wife of the famous Communist leader Ravi narayana Reddy. She was an active Communist worker. She used to attend the Telangana Andhra Mahila Mahasabha meetings. During the Armed struggle she remained underground. Prior to that as a Congress member she gave all her jewellery to Gandhi. Though she did not go to jail, she actively participated in the Join Indian Union movement.

**RANGAMMA OBUL REDDY**

She was the grand daughter of Raja Bahadur Venkatram Reddy. She was a staunch follower and supporter of congress. She attended and presided over the 8th and 9th Andhra Mahila Mahasabha conferences. She worked for the emancipation of women.

### **Smt. SAROJINI NAIDU**

Smt. Sarojini Naidu born in Hyderabad February 1879. She was a devoted worker and leader of the rights of women. She was honoured by the British Government with the Kaisar-i-Hind (Gold Medal) which she refused in 1914 as a mark of protest against the Government's policy of repression. She was a close associate of Gandhi and took part in Freedom movement. She served the cause of women through various women's organisations. All her activities were at national level. She was a member of Home rule league, she became popular as the First Indian women President of Indian National Congress at Kanpur session in 1925. She was one of the delegates along with Gandhi to the second Round Table Conference held at London in November 1931. She served in various organisations in various capacities. She was sent by the Government of British India in 1932 to South Africa as a member of a delegation. She was the first women governor of Uttar Pradesh in Free India between 1947-49.

### **SUKARA BEGUM HUMAYUN MIRZA**

She was a president of Anjuman Khawateen-e-Deccan and secretary Anjuman-Khawateen-e-Islam for some time. She was an

active worker of Zanana social association and was a member of various women's clubs in Hyderabad.

### **SAHEBZADI NAFIS UNNISA BEGUM**

Nafeesa Begum was born in 1918 was the daughter of Major General Khader Yar Jung. She was educated in Grammer school and Mahboobia Girls School. She established Majlis Muslim Khawateen at Hyderabad under which she started a religious school of ethics in Arabic language. She was a prominent member of Lady Hydery club.

### **SAHEBZADI NILOUFER**

She was the niece of Sultan Abdul Mazid the deposed caliph. She was educated privately. She was married to Mozzamjah in 1931 and settled in Hyderabad. She participated in all the programmes of all the women's clubs of the city. She started Anjuman a committee for first aid in rural areas. She established a Nurses Training centre. She collected fund for second world war. She organised a women's voluntary force with different branches. With the fund she collected, she started medical aid to 'mother and child' the Niloufer hospital was founded.

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