

Kandukuri Veeresalingam – Pioneer Of Modern Andhra

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ABSTRACT : *As a result a uniform system of administration and western thought of the English education system in India introduced by the British, created a new class of intelligentsia. This new school of intelligentsia appeared first in Bengal with Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who started the 'Brahmo Samaj' for purification of the sordid Hindu society. Kandukuri Veeresalingam was another reformist from Andhra. Veeresalingam who first brought the Renaissance in Andhra, and considered as prophet of Modern Andhra. In spite of his poverty, he finished Matriculation in 1869 and worked as a teacher in Korangi Town. Veeresalingam Pantulu fought against untruth, and championed the cause of progress with vigor. He fought for education for women, and remarriage of widows. Veeresalingam Pantulu strongly believed that the existence of castes in the Hindu society degraded the social infrastructure and he launched the anti-caste movement. Veeresalingam Pantulu Fought for education for women. He wrote 'Rajasekhara Chari tam' was the first Telugu novel. He established an organization called 'Hitakarini Samajam' to improve the society.*

KEYWORDS: *Brahmo Samaj, Nautch System, Prophet, Remarriage for Widows, Renaissance, Western thought of the English education,*

I. INRODUCTION

In pre-British India the entire life of an individual was organized within the concept of caste and tradition. The British introduced a uniform system of administration and western thought of the English education system in India. As a result of these created a new class of intelligentsia who imbibed the liberal teaching and the spirit of the western philosophers. This new school of intelligentsia appeared first in Bengal with Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who started the 'Brahmo Samaj' for purification of the sordid Hindu society. Kandukuri Veeresalingam was another reformist from Andhra, who gave great moral courage and showed the way to the Andhra society. Kandukuri Veeresalingam was a social reformer of Andhra. He is the man who first brought the Renaissance in Andhra, and considered as prophet of Modern Andhra. Veeresalingam Pantulu awakened Andhra out of their suffocating medieval orthodox customs and superstitions. Pantulu was born in a poor Brahmin family on 16th April 1848 at Rajahmundry. His father was Subbarayudu and mother was Purnamma. He lost his father at the age of four. In spite of poverty, his mother sent him to the Government School. He finished Matriculation in 1869 and worked as a teacher in Korangi Town. At age of 14 years Veeresalingam got married with Rajyalakshmi (Bapamma).

Veeresalingam Pantulu was deeply influenced by the ideals and activities of 'Brahma Samaj' and particularly those of Atmuri Lakshmi Narasimham. He was moved by the filthy social customs like child marriage, caste-system, prostitution, and the plight of young widows who were denied remarriage by the society. He advocated through his writings, speeches, and spread education among the illiteracy especially to the women. Veeresalingam Pantulu fought against untruth, and championed the cause of progress with vigor. He fought for education for women, and remarriage of widows. On 3rd August 1879 he created a sensation throughout Andhra, when he addressed his first lecture on widow's re-marriage. Even our old Dharma sutras also not prohibited widow's re-marriage once he quoted. In spite of strong opposition from orthodoxy people, he arranged the first widow remarriage between widower Gogulapati Sreeramulu, and Widow Gowramma in Andhra on December 11, 1881, Pyda Ramakrishnaiah who supported financially to the marriage. The orthodox people who encouraged the rowdies to attack Pantulu, but he was saved by his students. And more than 30 families were ex-communicated by the orthodox, who took part in the celebration. Because of these reformist activities Veeresalingam Pantulu became famous even abroad. Veeresalingam started a building for widows, for those who were not re-married and neglected by the parents. The news of Pantulu activities spread to the different parts of the country, and he was highly appreciated by the great social reformers like M.G.Ranade, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and D.K.Karve. Pantulu fame spread abroad. The Government, in appreciation of his work, conferred on him the title of "Rao Bahadur" in 1893. And Veeresalingam was acclaimed as 'Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar of south' by the famous reformer M.G.Ranade at meeting in 1898.

Veeresalingam Pantulu also fought against the system of concubines called 'nautch system'. Keeping concubines was regarded as a status symbol. Most of these concubines were from Devadasi tribe/caste. Usually in the houses of these Davadasis, the corrupt officials made illegal deals. So, it became a common practice to use these concubines to get favors from the officials. Veeresalingam Pantulu strongly believed that the existence of castes in the Hindu society degraded the social infrastructure and he launched the anti-caste movement. Veeresalingam Pantulu was the founder of the 'Brahma Samaj' in Andhra (a reformed form of Hinduism). Sri Veeresalingam criticized and opposed the itching palms and bribery among the Government employees and was responsible in getting some of those parasites prosecuted and punished. A District Munisiff committed suicide when Pantulu exposed his corruption. He also opposed prostitution. Veeresalingam Pantulu Fought for education for women. He established a school only for girls at Dawaleswaram in 1874, to encourage women's education. In 1884, he established another school for girls at Innispeta in Rajahmundry. He had also educated his wife Rajyalakshmi .Besides he started schools for harijans, and night schools for working classes. Pantulu started a journal 'Vivekavardhini' for women in 1874 at Rajahmundry. Veeresalingam Pantulu is popularly called Gadya Tikkana. His literary activities were varied. He criticized misconceptions, religious disbeliefs, and orthodoxy in his writings. Veeresalingam wrote 'Rajasekhara Chari tam' was the first Telugu novel. Pantulu was the first to write in prose for women. He established an organization called 'Hitakarini Samajam' on 2nd may 1908, and donated all his property for the social activities to improve the society. He died on 27th May 1919. His contributions to social reform, specifically to causes such as widow remarriage, are well-remembered in Andhra Pradesh.

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