

History of Dalit Protest Literature in Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

The proposed paper intended to deal with social reform movements in Andhra Pradesh in general and Dalit reform or protest literature in particular. In the process of dealing with the subject of social reformation one has to examine the social evils that society needs to bring out for the discussion. They are caste system, sati, child marriages, widow remarriages are prominent in Andhra Pradesh context. The prominent leadership who took initiative of social reformation work are Vemana, Pothuluri Veerabrahmam, Veeresalingam, Gurajada Apparao, Christian Missionaries, and Dalit leadership such as Kusuma Dharmanna, Gurram Jashuva, Boyi Bheemanna, Katti Padma Rao, etc., are some of the prominent literary persons involved in social reformation project. The paper is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the social reformation project in general that exposed social customs from caste Hindu critique from upper and middle classes belonging to the three varna structures of the Hindu social order. The second part of the paper deals with the social reformation project from Dalit perspective which is a critique in both varna structure and caste biased hierarchy.

Keywords: Social Reformation, Caste Hindu Reformation, Dalit Protest Literature, Social Change

I. Introduction

The social reforms were mainly initiated and led by western educated intellectuals belonging to upper and middle classes. They belonged mostly to higher castes in the ritualistic hierarchy. Their upper caste bias could be seen in the nature of causes they espoused. The emancipation of women in all its facts education, widow-remarriage, superstitions, rituals, idolatry, marriage expenses, restriction on sea-voyage and purification of public life were some of the issues they included in their programme. The social reform endeavors in Andhra were a part of the all-India efforts in this direction. They were largely influenced in their origin and growth by similar attempts witnessed earlier in Bengal and Maharashtra. This work covers the Andhra reign of the present day. Andhra Pradesh which was a part of the erstwhile composite Madras Presidency and the area which was governed directly by them it seeks to study various reform activities undertaken by the Andhra reformers from the period of Vemana, Pothuluri Veerabrahmendra Swamy, Kandukuri Veeresalingam, Gurajada, Raghupathi Venkataratnam, Unnava Lakshminarayana, Desiraju Peda Bapaiah played a significant role in social reform movements as his associates and younger partners. Significantly, the movements showed signs of definite decline by 1907 and almost ceased to be movements worth that name by the time Veeresalingam died in 1919. So, for the sake of convenience and to give a chronological unity to the movements, Pothuluri Vemana, Veeresalingam, Gurajada, time is chosen for the first part of the paper.

Reform trends in Andhra:

When Hindu society came into close contact with Islam after the 12th century A.D., Hindu Advaita influenced Islam as much as Sufism influenced Hinduism. By then both “feudalism from above” and “feudalism from within” to borrow D.D. Kosambi’s expressions had suffered a rude shock as the result of an unsuccessful military collision with Islamic hordes from Arabia, Afghanistan and central Asia. The consequent disarray in the feudal set up of Hindu society was reflected in its religious life; it was this factor which more than any other, probably led to the rise of many movements of religious protests among the Hindus.

The existence of a number of heterodox sects in the Indian society, before the 19th century, professing principles of reform, was a general phenomenon. They emerged in different parts of India including Andhra. They were founded by non-Brahmins, especially those belonging to low castes. These sects, without any exception, denounced the evils associated with the Brahmanical Hinduism, such as polytheism, idolatry and even caste observances. Another distinctive feature common to all these sects was ‘Guru worship’. To them the guru was

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something more than a spiritual guide; he was a divinity incarnate. These sects figured prominently in Uttar Pradesh, viz., Satnamis, Sivanarayan's and Apapanthis. The founder of the Satyavatis was dulandas and the sect was popular with the Rajput's at Varanasi and the Apapanthis in Oudh.

Coming to the Andhra region, the bhakti cult was predominant during the Middle Ages, that is much before the 12th century A.D. it became militant in course of time and assumed the forms of Veerasaivism and Srivashnavism (also known as Veera Vaishnavism), Basaveswara (popularly known as Basava), of the Karnataka region, was the founder of Verasaivism. Basaveswara denounced the caste system, the Vedic rites of animal sacrifices, the inferior status of women compared to men and the ritual concept of purity and pollution. In the social sphere he opposed child marriages, allowed widow remarriages and pleaded for individual freedom in matrimonial matters.

The spread of Veera Saivism in Andhra was mainly due to a scholarly trio, namely, Mallikarjuna Pandita, Sripati Pandita and Manchanna Pandita. It was, however less militant in Andhra compared to Karnataka because of difference between Basava and Mallikarjuna Pandita. Mallikarjuna pandita did not discard the caste system but sought to reconcile it with bhakti. But the movement of Basava left a deep impression on Andhra society. Veera Shaivism in Andhra contributed largely to the growth of Telugu literature. Sri Vaishnavism developed in Andhra simultaneously with Veera Saivism.

The Brahma Naidu of Palnadu (of the Racharla family of the Velama caste) was a Vaishnavite by faith and introduced certain reforms in social matters. Brahma Naidu created a new caste, 'Padma Nayaka kula' the caste of heroes. The collision of Veerasivism and Sri Vaishnavism, during this period (the last quarter of the 12th century A.D) appeared to be an ideological reflection of the clash of the interests of rival feudal factions. Outwardly, it took the form of a conflict between are forming Sri Vaishnava sect led by Brahma Naidu and the orthodox sect of Veera Saivism (which upheld the caste system and opposed inter-dining and social status accorded to untouchables) led by Nagamma (also known as Nayakuralu) resulting in bloody war causing enormous destruction of life and property.

The Role of Christian Missionaries in Dalit Consciousness:

The role of Christian missionaries in generating the Dalits in Andhra. The social reformists, however, like Vemana and Pothuluri, Veeresalingam, Gurajada have done some contribution for the lower castes people in the name of social reforms, they could not do as much as Christian missionaries did for the Dalits in coastal Andhra. In this regard, missionary influence, in the south in general and Andhra in particular, was important as the missionaries were the pioneers of education in modern India. The first signs of missionary activity go back to the year 1597 when two Jesuit fathers and a brother were at the court of Venkataraju in Chandragiri now in Chittoor district. Where they stayed till 1615. Punganur became the cradle of the Telugu Christians from where Christianity gradually spread to Venkata Giri (Nellore district which became a big Christian settlement later and to Krishna Puram), Hindupur (in Anantapur district), and China Ballapuram (Bellary district). Firstly, they have started educational institutions which give equal status for the Dalits. While they were promoting education to the Dalits, they made Dalits convert into Christianity. Pertaining to the conversion of Dalits into Christianity Charles Grant, the high priest of Evangelism, expressed the view in no uncertain terms when he remarked that Indian society was in a depraved condition due to ignorance and want of a proper religion. Therefore, Indians should be educated first and then converted to Christianity.

The American Baptist mission society started its work in Guntur district establishing centers at Guntur, Gurajala in the Palanadu area where they established two elementary schools. The American Baptist missionaries at Ongole, which was established in 1866, especially Rev.J. Everett Clough converted large numbers of untouchables during the famine of 1876.clough obtained sole responsibility for the construction of the Buckingham canal (in Ongole area) for three and a half miles as a famine work and worked on it for six months. The colliers, mostly from the Mala and Madiga communities, were drawn towards Christianity in these times of economic distress. The missionary activities embraced the whole of the Andhra region. education was their main interest, although they were also running orphanages, medical centers and industrial establishments. Along with the establishment of Anglo vernacular schools through which they desired to convert the higher castes, the missionaries established several elementary schools that were mainly catered to the Brahmins and a few non-Brahmins. stirred by the teachings of the teaching's missionaries, the Mala's and Madiga's began to request for more schools in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The motives of untouchables in falling under the influence of missionaries were firstly to gain a status in society which was denied to them by caste Hindus down the ages and to win the favors of the government through the intercession of the missionaries. The schools provided them with an opportunity to teach people about their religion and places of social intercourse and religious worship. And to provide better living conditions and a suitable career for the converts they had to open some technical and vocational schools and also to provide general education to them as all the converts could not be admitted into the existing schools. It is true that the educational

endeavors of the missionaries, even though religiously motivated, did spread enlightenment among certain sections and made them feel equal and self-respectful in society.

However, the economic position of the lower classes despite large numbers of them becoming Christians, did not permit them to reap the benefits of education. Several writers have attributed the rise of modern social reform movements to a response to the ethical challenges of Christian doctrine. However, this was not true when one looks at the motives behind the missionary activities which were freely allowed in India after 1813. It was a fact that they have collected information regarding social evils and forcefully presented them to the British public and the government. Nevertheless, it should also be noted that their attitudes, writings and conclusions regarding Indian religion and social life were in most cases, hostile, exaggerated and ill informed. That their efforts could not have contributed to the regeneration of India might be seen in their failure both to organize any scheme for national education and to introduce a second scientific and technological curriculum.¹

Dalit Protest Literature in Telugu:

Dalit protest can be perceived in two ways: first as an ideological effort to counter the hegemony of the caste Hindus often led by Brahmins, who continue to wield the political control, reinforce economic domination and exercise cultural hegemony over the original inhabitants through the caste system. In this process Dalits rebelled against the exploitative character of Hinduism and the institution of caste and expressed their ideological protest through literature, in the form of poems, dramas and novels. Second, their refusal to perform traditional duties. The disobedience assumed two forms, one an organized planned and overt protest and the other an unplanned, unorganized and court protest.

The medieval Bhakti tradition raised certain terms and issues regarding the miseries and sufferings of those at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. By and large the themes of the Bhakti tradition reappear in the Dalit literary tradition during the colonial period. The Bhakti movement led to the groups of literary traditions among non-Brahmin scholars such as Vemana and Pothuluri Veerabrahmam. Vemana was one of the earliest saint-poet to question societal exploitation in the guise of religion and caste with his unconventional philosophy.² In the Telugu literature of the modern times, issues relating to caste and caste oppression are addressed by a wide range of writers from the nationalists and liberal scholars drawn from the upper castes.

The literature that was generated during the social reform movement centered on various evils that had loomed large in Andhra society. The Brahmanical social reforms, significantly Gurajada Appa Rao (1862-1915) and Veeresalingam (1848-1919) broadened the base and scope of literature. Thus, Telugu literature. Thus, Telugu literature transformed the traditional character and became redundant on it being cast as a modern tool of communication. In contrast to the earlier conservative elitist literary tradition, modern writers like Appa Rao and Gidugu Rama Murthy (1863-1940) favored and popularized the use of spoken language in literary creation. Gurajada condemning untouchability argued that:

I see only two castes among men,
The good and bad:
If good is termed as untouchable
I choose to be an untouchable.³

The Gurajada and Veeresalingam acclaimed as the founders of new epoch in modern Telugu literature affected the shift that was inevitable. They mainly focused on the themes of child marriage bride price and widow Reammriage, those problems concerning caste Hindu women, especially of the upper caste and primary Brahmins. Neither of these writers addressed the basic fundamental problem of caste oppression and the alienation of Dalit masses from the mainstream society. They could not grapple with the ideological and institutional framework of Brahmanical Hinduism and the reading of classical texts and scriptures aimed at reforming certain aspects of the Hindu society while not eventually questioning or striking at the Varna system itself.

The nationalist literature that emerged as the Bhavakavita movement often reflected the problems centered on Dalits more in poetic than in prose form. This literature was deployed to serve a social and political purpose. The Gandhian movement inspired many writers in Andhra to build a united and coherent anti colonial movement simultaneously creating a space for untouchability as a subject in their literature. Gandhian framework in talking with the problem of untouchability was based on the premise of internal reform and self-purification. It aimed at arousing the latent good will of the caste Hindu public opinion by taking up issues like opening schools for Harijans.

¹ Ramakrishna.V. Social Reforms in Andhra Pradesh (1848-1919) Pub: vikas pvt Ltd., Pp 26-33, Delhi.,1983.

² Ramesh Babu, P. "Cultural Construction of Identity and Politics in Coastal Andhra 1906-56," South Indian History Congress, ISSN 2229-3671 with UGC Listed Journals, 08-10 February 2019, Pp-738-743

³ A. satyanarayana. "Dalit Protest Literature in Telugu". Economic and Political Weekly January 21, 1995.

A few enlightened Dalits were inspired by the Gandhian mode of reform and politics. Most importantly Gurram Jashua, a Dalit poet was a Gandhian, the just political war against social degradation and poverty.

He wrote in his Prabhodam:

Adi Andhras! Think for a while
Did you have clothes to wear? Food to eat?
Why can't you stand with Gandhi?
Who is sympathetic to your conditions in the just war!

In addition to this, there are a few famous novels which show Hinduist and integrationist tendencies. Mala Palli (Mala's Homlet) was authored by Unnava Lakshminarayana, a Gandhian reformer. The novel centered on the oppressive conditions of the untouchables in relation to the land relations in Andhra. The main story revolves around the basic contradiction between the landless and agricultural laborers, Malas and Madigas and the land lords of the Kamma caste. the social and economic degradation and subordination of untouchables is portrayed in detail arguing that the basic requisite for a change is the complete rearrangement of social relations. he also perceives the social and economic effect of commercialization and the response of Dalits to this phenomenon; the increasing consciousness of laborers of the manipulative potential coercion, the problems of preventing cattle from grazing on private land and beating of Dalits and eviction of poor peasants. The main reason presented for the absence of class consciousness is the hegemony of the Hindu worldview, conditioning the consciousness of the Panchama's that prevents them from revolting. This view is presented through a character that finds several philosophical explanations for their degenerating conditions.

Second novel, Harijana Nayaukudu written by N.G Ranga a Kamma politician another novel mala Pilla written by Gadda Lingaiah. These novels depict the caste contradiction between the untouchables and upper caste. it was not truly a realistic representation of the Dalit question. Therefore, in the writings of non-Dalit scholars the problems of untouchability and caste discrimination were reflected not as serious and fundamental ones.

All the caste Hindu writings, poetry or prose is characteristically sympathetic in nature. In non-Dalit writings, the problems of untouchability and caste discrimination are not reflected as fundamental questions and solutions are exclusively offered within the existing framework of the caste system. Social equality and the dignity of Dalits are not the themes of their writings. In the literary field the anti-colonial struggle produced many influential writers both caste Hindu and out caste writers like Chilakamarti, Duvvuri Rayaprolu and Gurajada on the one hand and Gurram Joshua and Boyi Bheemanna on the other. Joshua's writings especially in poetry on nationalist themes depicting the activities of Netaji and Gandhi created consciousness. If Joshua was a peculiar mixture of Gandhian and semi Ambedkarite. Bhoi Bhimanna wrote several lyrical poems, picking up various nationalist themes. During 1940s he was an activist and an active propagandist for congress. a shift from his earlier ideological influences is evident in his famous play Paleru (a farm boy/ servant) wherein he asserts his Dalit identity.⁴

In Andhra Pradesh the Karamchedu marks a turning point in the growth of the Dalit movement. Dalit movement in Andhra Pradesh launched a radical movement for the emancipation of Dalits from the clutches of caste domination and discrimination. In the process Dalits produce literature evident in the Proliferation of Dalit writings is not only expressive of ideological protest but cultural resistance as well.

The basic thrust of this literature was to critique the ideology of Brahmanical Hinduism and counter the socio-cultural hegemony of upper castes. the counter cultural movement and ideology propagated by the organic Dalit intellectuals well represented in the literary and cultural traditions, particularly in the 1930s and 40s. The first generation of Dalit intellectuals projected the cultural and ideological articulation of Dalit identity and sensibility in literature. The inspiration to this rebellious protest literature was the growing consciousness of Dalits since the early decades of the twentieth century.

The Dalit intellectuals such as Kusuma Dharmanna, Gurram Jashua Bhoi Bhimanna and Jala Ranga Swamy asserted that the so-called untouchables were never part and Parallel of caste Hindu society rather they were the original inhabitants of the country. They criticized the Aryan gods and Hindu scriptures that perpetuated injustice, exploitation and atrocities on Dalits. They suggested a break from Hindu tradition and religion as a prerequisite for putting an end to the plight of Dalit communities as well as to maintain their distinct identity. Consequently, leaders like Bhagya Reddy Varma coined the term Adi Andhra based on Adi ideology, and consciously employed it to foster unity among the Dalits. He vehemently opposed and rejected the derogatory terms like Panchama used by the upper castes. Mahakavi Gurram Jashua even questioned the creation of the Panchama Varna.

We heard that the old Brahma
Born four sons
The wretched lower than the animal!
Who is this fifth caste-person?

⁴ K Purushotham. Evolution of Telugu Dalit Literature. Economic and Political Weekly May 29, 2010

Savitri

As mentioned earlier Bhoi Bhimanna coined and incessantly used the term *Mamalu*, to convey a feeling of unity between two large communities. i.e. Malas and Madigas. This term was employed by him to foster the feeling of unity among the Dalit communities in a situation where the antagonism between the two groups widening with decisive repercussions on the movement. Jashua was critical of sub caste rivalry among them, and held ignorance as the main factor for this phenomenon. However, Dalit intelligentsia also attempted at constructing a common ancestry for all Dalit communities. Broadly speaking, since the 1970s an increasing number of poets and writers drawn from the Dalit communities of the status of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, etc, have been producing literary works such as poems, short stories, novels and dramas representing the themes of caste oppression untouchability, poverty repression and revolution. The writings of Dalit scholars also contain powerful denunciation of and fierce attacks on the caste system and on Brahmanical Hinduism.

As far as Andhra Pradesh is concerned, it can be said that both the radical left movement and the Dalit Mahasabha have thrown up a new generation of Dalit scholars, intellectuals and philosophers whose writings sharply reflect the changing perceptions and consciousness of the Dalit masses.

Gurajada and Veeresalingam are acclaimed as the founders of a new epoch in modern Telugu literature whose writings focused mainly on themes and problems such as bride née, widow remarriage, etc, related to women of upper castes, mainly Brahmins. Neither Kanyasulkam (bride price) nor Raja Sekhara Charitram written by Appa Rao and Veeresalingam respectively addressed the basic, fundamental problem of caste oppression and alienation of Dalit masses from the mainstream society. This does not mean that their contribution to social reform is negligible, yet strangely problems central to the Varna system escaped their attention. While they sought to reform certain evils of the Hindu social system they failed to grapple with the ideological and institutional framework of Brahmanical Hinduism. Their reading of classical texts and scriptures was only aimed at reforming some aspects of Hindu society, but not to question and negate the Varna system itself. In this sense the modern social reformers failed to generate and build up a popular cultural and ideological movement against the caste system.

Kusuma Dharmanna:

The most forceful attack on upper caste Hindus, who are said to be responsible for the perpetuation of caste discrimination and excommunication of the Dalit masses, was launched by Kusuma Dharmanna. He was a bitter critic of Brahmanical Hinduism. In his long poem we do not want the rule of black landlords he portrayed the miserable and pathetic living conditions of the Dalit masses.

He wrote:

(We have) only small huts outside the village
 We do not have big houses
 Air. Light do not trifle
 (we have) no delicious food, curry
 To wear (we have) no saree. Loin cloth
 (we have) no tail, ornaments
 (we have) no land to plough, eat food
 (you have) no sympathy for our poverty.

He portrayed the miserable condition of the Dalit masses. He lamented the caste Hindus.

Degraded us as lesser than a dog or a fox,
 They (caste Hindu) go to brothers (they)
 Sit next to are leprosy patient(they)
 Love the cats and birds, crows can touch water (but)
 We are not allowed to reach them (and if we reach)
 We are scolded!

In particular Kusuma Dharmanna in his writings and speeches inaugural addressed to the Dalit Mahasabha conference, Vizianagaram, (1936) exposed the false, hypocritical and cunning nature of Hinduism and ridiculed the Brahmanical double standards. He freely quoted verses from the works of the medieval saint poets/scholars such as Vemana and Veeresalingam to denounce the unequal and inhuman Hindu social order. He appealed to the Dalit masses to unite and fight for socialism. He felt that it was through achieving social equality alone that the masses could hope for a decent living and self-respect. By socialism he meant a society where there

will be no distinctions based on caste religion, rich and poor. A society in which there will be no place for discrimination and internal rivalry⁵.

Jashua: The great poet Joshua was born in 1895 in the Vinukonda village of Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh. His parents are linga mamba who belonged to Madiga community, Veeraiah who belonged to a Golla community (shepherd). The urge for dignified living, self-respect and social equality is powerfully presented in the works of Joshua. A great creative poet and literary genius of the modern times, was humiliated and subjected to intense mental agony by the inhuman caste system as well as by arrogant and casteist scholars. He was treated as a literary out caste by the scholarly world which was dominated by the upper castes, mainly the Brahmins. His creative genius, merit and literary talent were not recognized and encouraged because of his low birth and Dalit background. But he was not a coward. He resisted and exposed the cruelty of caste oppression through his pen. He said, "Life taught me many lessons. I have two teachers (gurus)- poverty and caste/ religious discrimination. If one taught me patience, the other one increased my power to resist. But did not convert me as a slave. I intended to pierce through caste distinction, poverty and prove that am a human being. I wield a sword. my sword is my poverty. It has no haired against the society as such. But hatred on its policy.

'In the poverty of Joshua, the anger, agony, disgust, misery and the daily bitter experience of the Dalit masses, communities are most authentically and realistically represented. His famous poetical works, the Bat the 'Orphan' etc., indirectly mirror the bitter experiences and stark realities of his personal life. It is noted that the Bat graphically reflects his growing resistance consciousness and longing for better human values. In it he posed a number of questions. Hindu society religion and culture which is responsible for the perpetration of untouchability. The Bat is the first poetical work in which a Dalit is the hero. The poet speaks through him. It depicts the miserable life and sufferings of the Dalit masses:

When his (Dalits) hands do not work
The green fields hesitate to yield crops
He sweets provides food for the world
But he himself has no food."

The material condition of the Dalit masses who worked as agricultural labor is revealed in such poems. He ridiculed the Brahmins who treat the Dalits as untouchables but use the food grains produced by them as offerings to the gods in the temples. When they (the Dalits) do not produce food, the goods will go hungry.

By swallowing the blood of the wretched (Dalit)
Lives the iron anklet mother
Upon smelling his air hisses with vengeance
The four hood Hindu cobra.

This poem is a reflection of how the poisonous snake called Hinduism perpetuates oppression of Dalits by Savarnas. Jashua wrote his bitter and moving poetry at a time when the Dalit masses were launching struggles for self-respect, independently and outside the framework of both the congress and left parties.

Bhoi Bheemanna: Bhoi Bheemanna was born in 1911 in manidi kuduru village, Rajolu Taluka. His parents Nagamma and Pallaiah. Bhoi Bheemanna pleaded for social equality. He wrote:

A round the neck of the powerful Indian nation
caste, religion are the hangman's ropes.
Destroy the guile of caste and religion
Eradicate human inequalities.

Bhoi Bheemanna captured the intensity and essence of struggles for the Dalits for achieving socio economic and political justice and reflected them in his two plays.

Paleru (Annual servant) and Cooli Raju (The labour king).

Paleru depicts the village life of coastal Andhra, which was characterized by socio economic stratification in which the agricultural laborers were drawn basically from the Dalit communities, while the landlords belonged to the upper castes. The Dalits were economically and educationally the most backward. government efforts and Gandhian programmes played a significant role in their upliftment. Social evils like untouchability and caste discrimination were practiced. Moreover, the caste ideology denied them any access to knowledge and education. the hero of the play, Venkanna, a dalu 'paleru'. Workers for the same landlord who employed his forefathers. He was a victim of hereditary bonded labour which was practiced by the upper caste landlords with the sanction of the caste system and in the name of custom and tradition. In spite of rigid customary sanctions, the hero, with the

⁵ Ramesh Babu P. "Politics, Autonomy, and Dalit Telugu Culture: Ambedkar Perspective", in the Proceedings of the Forty-Fourth Session, Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh History Congress, 2020, ISSN 2320-057X, UGC- Care Listed, Pp 231-246.

help of an upper caste school teacher, was encouraged to go to see the upper caste children of his age going to school, and was also inclined to study. But his landlord would not like Paleru singing songs in the fields. However, with the help of the school teacher and an upper caste girl the Paleru decided to escape from the village and go to Rajahmundry (Nearby Town) and join the school run by Brahma Samaj. One day when the landlord came to know about the intentions of the Paleru, he scolds his father. The dialogue is instructive of the attitude of the upper castes toward the efforts of the Dalit masses to educate themselves and acquire knowledge.

Kuberaiah (landlord): O, son of a buffalo! Did anybody go to school in your family?

Pullaiah (Dalit): Yes sir, Ah Ah is it? No sir no sir no.

K: Is it not a sin for you to read (and write)?

P: Big sin lord. Very big sin indeed. Neither during the time of my grandfather, nor my father, myself, or even son Yenkadu....

K: Stop. It is alright until your time. With your Son Yenkadu the tradition of your family Is destroyed.

P: No my lord. I swear, I pledge my life. My Son is not like that.

K: You son of a donkey. Why does a son of Does a slave need education?

P: To whom my lord? Even if you cut my Stomach, there is not a word in it.

K: Osh! You're Yenkadu.

P: Oh my goodness.

K: He will be of no use,

P: O my God! (Beats chest),

K: He is not doing any work. He always sings And reads books. Stop him from doing Agricultural labor. Educate and make him A collector. Get lost.

P: We are your slaves my lord. Save us my Lord. I will kick that son of a donkey. I will Bury him. What stops you my lord? You Should have broken his bones.

K: Well, I did something. If you can teach him good manners and behavior keep him Here or else look for some other way.

As you have been dependent on me since your childhood I am just thinking.

The father goes home and beats his son. Later the boy runs away from the village, pursues his studies and secures a BA degree. After that he becomes deputy collector. He also marries the upper caste girl, his childhood friend. The center theme of this play is an urge for social equality and the acquisition of knowledge and education by the Dalit masses for a decent living as well as for a respectable place in the society. In it there is a suggestion that through education and inter caste marriage social mobility is possible.⁶

Kolakaluri Inak:

He was born on 1939 in Vejendla village, Guntur district. He got his education in Andhra Christian College, one of the top most colleges in Guntur town and joined as lecturer in the same. And he went on to Sri Krishna Devaraya university, Anantapur. He had contributed extensively to the Telugu literature as a poet, critique, story writer and scholar. He has written more than thirty writings importantly he concerned about Building the Dalit consciousness. He became a mentor to so many young writers and scholars in Telugu Dalit literature. He got so many awards and the great prestigious Kendra and Rashtra Sahitya academy awards. Most of his writings are pertaining to the Dalit emancipation. Amongst those Oora baavi (1983), Munivahanudu (1984), Abhyudayam (1985), Kulam Dhanam (1985). In these writings Kolakaluri Inak challenged the caste discrimination, inequality in Indian society. He emphasized the rights of Dalits regarding temple entry. Accessibility of water and public places. Through these writings he questioned the authority of religion, caste and Hindu scriptures and Brahmanical ideology and showed away to the Dalits and lower caste in India get emancipation. He depicted in song namely "kulam dhanam" (Caste and Money) unequal social status:

⁶ A. satyanarayana. "Dalit Protest Literature in Telugu". Economic and Political Weekly January 21, 1995.

Caste is the major address
To those who does not have the native.
Caste is the major property
To the grasshoppers.
Caste is the major path
Which can give and take life.
Caste helps to escape
To Prostitutes, Thieves.
You can't escape from the caste In India.

Kathi Padma Rao: He is great poet, writer and activist. He left his job for the Dalit movement. He stood for victims of Karamchedu when six Dalits were brutally attacked by the upper caste. He scattered the Dalit Mahasabha with the help of Bojja Tarakam who is a well-known advocate of high court in Andhra Pradesh. He played a crucial role in Dalit movement. While he was working for the Dalits, he was sent to the prison which made Kathi as poet of Dalit philosophy. He wrote poetry namely Jailu Ghantalu (bell rings) was written in 1988 in which he describes the massacre of Karamchedu which took place in July 17th, 1985. Desam dairy (1989) is a collective poetry. There are thirty-one poems in this poem. He depicts the upper caste pride over the Dalits, discrimination towards the Dalits in this poetry.

Rakta Kshetram (1991) in this poetry he describes about Chundur massacre where five Malas were brutally attacked by upper caste goondas.

Nalla Kaluva (1996) There are twenty-five poems in this poetry denoting how Dalits are discriminated against by the mainstream society.

Neeli keka (1998) There are sixty-eight poems in this poem. He describes Dalit plight in mainstream society.

The main characteristic feature of Dalit literature was its contemporaneity and realistic presentation. The Savarna scholars who depicted the Dalit problems in their writings were guided neither by the philosophical and ideological tradition of the bhakti saint poets nor by the liberation ideology and philosophy of Phule and Ambedkar. The Dalit scholars critiqued the Brahmanical social order and Hindu ideology based on the philosophy and ideology of both the bhakti saint poets as well as Phule and Ambedkar. In this sense it can be said that the Dalit and the Dalit intellectuals of the pre independence period were the forerunners to the contemporary Dalit literary and cultural movements in the state.⁷

II. Conclusion

Society in Andhra during the periods was based on the hierarchical ordering of innumerable castes and sub-castes. A number of sub-castes had branched off from the original Varna system in course of time due to a variety of reasons. The most important of them were geographical expansion and growth of new crafts. In this respect it may be noted that certain sub-castes among the Brahmins in Andhra bear names denoting particular area inhabited by them in the past. The caste system, which was more rigid than in the north, divided the entire population into three social groups namely, the privileged, the under- privileged, and the untouchables.

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