

CHAPTER - THREE
TELUGU PRESS AND PUBLIC AWAKENING

In the two decades since the formation of the Indian National Congress, a gradual consolidation of the forces of nationalism in India had taken place. The growth of the press in India as a force in the political, social and economic life during this period was in a large measure modelled on the traditions of the British Press set in England. The press became a strong force in the emergence of healthy Indian nationhood.¹

While western education and social cultural renaissance were inculcating in the educated new political ideas, the newspapers were silently moulding and shaping public awakening on a much wider spectrum scale through out the nineteenth century.

1. V.C.P. Chaudhary, *Imperial Policy of British in India 1876-1880 : Birth of Indian Nationalism* (Calcutta, 1968), P. 108.

The Telugu press, too played its role in rousing national consciousness among the Telugu people and was also responsible to a great extent for the participation of the Telugu people in India's Freedom struggle. But the Telugu press first concerned itself chiefly with social and reformist issues. It was only later that it began to concern itself more and more with political and nationalist questions. The period from 1885 to 1905 witnessed the successful rise of Telugu journalism. The vernacular press in general tried to make people aware of such social evils as child marriage, sati and the like. Many newspapers voiced the demand for sweeping changes in the social fabric so that the persistent social evils could be eradicated. As noted already the vernacular press first busied itself with rousing the social conscience of the people, as if it were the first step towards achieving national consciousness and national awakening, though at a later stage of its development in the twentieth century political and national issues took precedence over other questions. The Telugu press first busied itself with such urgent social issues as child marriages, widow marriage, untouchability, prohibition of alcoholic drinks etc.

REFORM MOVEMENT

The coming of Kandukuri Veeresalingam Pantulu, the father of the renaissance movement in Andhra and the

champion of modern Telugu language and Telugu Journalism was a trendsetter in the History of nationalist press in Andhra. He was a pioneer in social reform in Andhra. Veeresalingam started a weekly called Vivekavardhini in 1874 from Rajahmundry for advocating the much needed reforms in the social and literary fields. Later on he started Satihitabodhini a periodical specially intended to educate women as well as Hasyavardhini and Satyasamvardhini where in he led a tirade against the prevailing social evils such as child marriages, caste system, the institutionalisation of prostitution, and he also pleaded for the introduction of widow marriages and worship of God on monotheistic principles.²

The Telugu press in Andhra during the period of this study, abundantly contributed to the growth of the social reform movement which to a large extent was a part of the Indian national movement. In India between 1885 and 1920 the nationalism and social reform went hand in hand which also true of the Andhra region. Many nationalistic Telugu newspapers supported the various moves pertaining to social reform.

2. Sarojini Regani, Highlights of the Freedom Movement in Andhra Pradesh (Hyderabad, 1972), P. 18.

Individual outrage against particular customs and religious beliefs has always been a feature of Indian society despite the high value that has always been placed on continuity, order, and the wisdom of social precedent. The major stimulus to social reforms in India during the 19th century came from the work and the ideas of the Christian missionaries, a fact acknowledged by many reform movements in Andhra.

The important social reforms advocated during the period of this study, both by the leaders of the social reform and the Telugu press, were to a large extent moderate measures rather than revolutionary in nature. Abolition of child marriages, Devadasi system and banning of the nautch parties at marriages as well as widow marriages, education of women were the important items of the social reformers in Andhra.

ABOLITION OF CHILD MARRIAGES :

In the social reforms the abolition of child marriages received wide support and publicity from the Telugu press, because in which very young girls were often married to very old men. The evil effects of such marriages were vividly exposed to the public through editorials and articles. Besides leading newspapers like Krishna Patrika and Andhra Patrika, which were always in the forefront of public

awakening, a number of womens journals such as the *Hindusundari*, *Grihalakshmi*, *Vivekavati* and *Strividya* rendered their yeoman service to this reformation. Most of the Telugu journals protested against the practice of child marriages, and tried to rouse people's moral awareness and they pointed out that such a practice did not exist at all in ancient India and it had no support in the sastras.

Hindujanasamskarini from Madras expressed its strong anguish over early marriages. It wrote : "As very young girls are often married to very old men, a wish is expressed that government should interfere and pass an act, to prevent such marriages."³

Krishna Patrika in an article pointed out that *Susruta*, the famous exponent of Ayurvedic medicine and surgery in ancient India, had stated in his treatise that girls below the age of 16 years were not properly developed to bear and bring forth children.⁴ In an article on child marriages, published in the same newspaper of October 26, 1912, the figures of the 1911 census were cited to prove that the number of child marriages had unfortunately increased in Andhra. *Hindusundari* mentioned that there were 40,000 child widows in India as per the 1911 census.⁵ It further gave the

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3. *Hindujanasamskarini*, March 31, 1887.
 4. *Krishna Patrika*, June 16, 1911.
 5. *Hindusundari*, August, 1912.

further gave the statistics of child marriages and concluded that such marriages were the root cause for the staggering number of child widows in the country. Quoting the 1911 census figures, the journal further mentioned that 90 lakh child marriages had taken place in India.⁶

Apart from vehement criticism of child marriages other devices were used by the newspaper to build up public opinion against them. An interesting cartoon was published under the heading, "Wife or grand-daughter" in the Krishna Patrika. The cartoon depicts a fruit-vendor who sees a young girl and an old man in a house and presuming that the old man is the grand-father of the young girl, then the vendor asks him to buy fruits for his grand daughter. The girl replies that she was the wife and not the grand-daughter of the old man. The note under the cartoon said that many such marriages between young girls and old men took place during the marriage season of 1916 and that some of the bridegrooms of those marriages had even supported the Home Rule.⁷

The-post puberty marriages bill was introduced in the Madras legislative council in 1914 by V.S. Srinivasa Sastri. It provided a golden opportunity for the prominent papers

6. Hindusundari, August, 1912.

7. Krishna Patrika, July 1, 1916.

to carry on a tirade against those in the society who supported child marriages. The leading papers acclaimed the bill of Srinivasa Sastri as an important step in the direction of abolition of child marriages and criticised strongly those who opposed it.

In its editorial *Krishna Patrika*, not only supported the bill strongly, but also tried to remove the apprehensions of the orthodox people about the bill. The support of this paper to the move to abolish child marriages was so bold and courageous that it even ridiculed the threats of the "Peetadhipathis" that those who performed post-puberty marriages would be socially ostracized.⁸ In its inspiring and daring editorial of September 8, 1911 issue it remarked: The "Peetadhipathis are lifeless stones like the dead institutions in society. It is foolish to assume that the progress of society is dependent on them".

Andhra Patrika argued that the post-puberty bill was "purely a social matter and should be passed."⁹ The paper urged the government should not adopt a neutral attitude to measures involving social reform, but support to Srinivasa Sastri's Bill.¹⁰

8. *Krishna Patrika*, January 30, 1918.

9. *Andhra Patrika*, December 10, 1914.

10. *Ibid.*, November 24, 1914.

WIDOW-MARRIAGES :

Public awakening was most effectively organised in the early decades of the 20th century by the leading Telugu newspapers in favour of widow marriages. Krishna Patrika, Andhra Patrika, Hindusundari and such journals rendered great service for the cause of widow marriages by way of publishing articles by eminent writers, correspondents and timely editorials in support of such a necessary humanitarian step.

Krishna Patrika in its editorial column supported widow marriages and criticised the opposition of the orthodox marriages which had taken place at Machilipatnam. To mobilise popular sympathy for the cause of widows, the paper published a number of articles on the miserable plight of the Hindu widows.¹¹ Channa Pragada Poornachandra Rao in his article expressed his indignation and stated that the widows were treated inhumanly worse than animals, they were not shown any sympathy.¹²

Andhra Patrika also published such articles and made its contribution to this endeavour of rousing public awareness.

11. Krishna Patrika, May 1, 1905.

12. Ibid., July 15, 1905.

Hindusundari was in the forefront of the movement for widow-marriages. In its October-November issue of 1911, the journal recalled the services of Kandukuri Veeresalingam Pantulu in the cause of widow marriages, and deplored the attempts of orthodox people to mislead the ordinary people by their perverted interpretations of the Sastras. On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar in 1912, Hindusundari reproduced an article from Andhra Patrika. This article, entitled "the miserable plight of the Hindu widows", argues that the celebration of the birth anniversary of Vidyasagar will have no meaning if people do not make efforts to improve the appealing conditions of widows by helping them to remarry, and by giving them a fair deal.¹³

Satyagrahi also supported widow marriages. In its issue of January 28, 1919 a letter on a widow marriage performed at Denduloor was published and in the editorial, the paper expressed its happiness for the spread of social reform to villages. The tragic consequences of not allowing child widows to remarry were brought out effectively by a letter published in Krishna Patrika. The author of the letter told the pathetic and tragic story of a child widow by name

13. Hindusundari, August, 1912.

Kameswari. She became intimate with a bogus swamy and became pregnant, and in a crude attempt to terminate her pregnancy she unhappily ended her life.¹⁴

Papers like Krishna Patrika gave wide publicity to widow marriages that were taking place and commended all such efforts, and exhorted others to follow suit. Owing to the encouragement of Krishna Patrika, many widow homes were opened at Kakinada, Rajahmundry, Narasapur and other places.¹⁵

Commending the suggestions of Mahatma Gandhi as published in the journal Navajeevan on child marriages and widows Krishna Patrika in its editorial said that while the institution of widowhood in India was one of the causes for the greatness of the country it unfortunately was causing much misery as it was blindly followed as a social duty and not as a means for individual spiritual uplift. The paper accepted the suggestion of Mahatma Gandhi that child widows below the age of 15 years should be allowed to remarry. The glorification of the institution of widow-hood by this newspaper was a later development. It was a consequence of the journal's strong attachment to the ideology of Mahatma

14. Krishna Patrika, April 5, 1913.

15. Ibid., September 15, 1904.

Gandhi. The effort to find solace in the spiritual glory of India in the face of political bondage was another reason for saying something good about the system of widows. While in the early period no such laudatory remarks were made by it the shift in the stand of the journal might have also been due to the priority given to political matters over social questions in the nationalist journals during the later period.¹⁶

Several periodicals of the day carried heart-rending stories of the travails of young and child widows. Sri Sadhana of Anantapur reported the news of conviction of a widow for transportation to life, for burying alive her illegitimate child and also wrote an editorial on the subject. The lady who was convicted to married at the age of 3 years and she became a widow at the age of 7. In later years due to illicit contact she became pregnant. She tried to bury the live child in a field. But cattle grazing boys noticed it and reported the matter to the village elders. The law of the land took its course and she was sentenced to transportation for life. In its editorial the paper justly held to blame the evil customs of society which had transformed the young mother, into murderer of her own

16. Krishna Patrika, January 26, 1920.

child. Further the paper urged people to open their eyes and learn to avoid such social atrocities.¹⁷

The publication of such letters, news, stories and articles besides editorials on the subject of widows, by the leading journals in Andhra roused the conscience of the people and created public opinion in favour of widow-marriages and like reforms. Therefore it is possible to maintain that the gradual improvement in the condition of the widows and increase in the number of widow marriages were the results of not only the sustained efforts of dedicated social reformers but also the consistent and sincere efforts of the newspapers of the day which influenced the educated reading public and moulded their opinions in favour of several good social causes.

SOCIAL REFORM VS SELF GOVERNMENT :

There was a controversy in the early part of this century, over the question whether social reform should precede political reform or political reform should precede social reform. In this debate popular Telugu journals like Krishna Patrika and Andhra Patrika supported the view that social reforms could not succeed without self-government.

17. Sri Sadhana, Augist 31. 1929.



Krishna Patrika vehemently argued that self-government need not be withheld till the removal of the social evils. In its issue it wrote the injurious social customs of the people could not stand in the way of bringing about changes in political matters, for such customs obtained even in countries where people enjoyed independence.¹⁸ Again in 1917 the same paper commented in its editorial columns that the misapprehension that social reform should be achieved first before gaining political independence arose mainly because it was not understood that the constitution was only an instrument for social progress and that the society did not exist for the sake of the constitution.¹⁹

Deshabhimani also asserted that social reforms would not succeed without self-government. It proclaimed that before reforming society, people should try for self-government. Unless the government was in the hands of the people, could not enforce the reforms which were conducive to their (Social) welfare.²⁰

Andhra Patrika believed that social reform should be the foundation for all activities connected with the

18. Krishna Patrika, August 25, 1907.

19. Ibid., November 24, 1917.

20. News Paper Reports of Madras Presidency (N.P.R.), 1908, P. 15.

progress of the country, but it did not support the contention that social evils should be removed before the grant of self-government. In its issue dated July 31, 1917 a lengthy article was published expressing the view that it was "mad to contend that one should not work for political reforms before social reform was effected".

One of the social evils in Andhra which continued to exist during the early part of the twentieth century was the arranging of nautch parties during marriages and such other functions. The dancing girls in the nautch-parties sang obscene songs and exhibited vulgar dances. The educated people disapproved of such vulgar practices. The awakening of the educated elite was reflected in the Telugu press of the day, when the newspapers condemned the continuation of such vulgar entertainment. Krishna Patrika published many letters condemning their evil practice and mobilised public opinion against it. When the Deputy Collector of Guntur, by name, Apanna Subbaiah Chetty arranged a nautch-party on the occasion of his daughter's marriage, a condemning letter was published.²¹ Again Krishna Patrika in its editorial exclaimed its displeasure in the continuation of this practice and deplored the efforts of some people to justify it on economic grounds. Again it on 20th August 1927

21. Krishna Patrika, April 1905.

congratulated the Mysore government for banning nautch parties in temples and asked the government of Madras to do the same in the Madras presidency. The paper said : "Nothing becomes sacred simply because it is ancient." ²²

UNTOUCHABILITY :

During the freedom movement the question of untouchability and the eradication of evils from the Hindu Society, were gained much publicity and support from the Telugu Press. Right from the Vandemataram movement the Telugu press gave much importance to the problem of the depressed classes. In 1907, Swaraj of Gadicharla Hari Sarvotham Rao wrote that the Indian society could be made strong only by improving the lot of the panchamas. It suggested that they should be educated and that their status in society improved. ²³

Andhra Kesari of July 21, 1911 suggested that preference should be given to Panchamas in the grant of lands. ²⁴ Andhra Patrika warned of the great harm that would result to Hinduism itself if a large sections of the people were treated as untouchables. A number of Telugu papers pointed out that the panchamas, once they became

22. Krishna Patrika, August 20, 1927.

23. N.P.R., 1908, P. 15.

24. Ibid., 1911, PP. 1158-59.

converts to another religion, became respectable people, and therefore to treat them in an inhuman way when they were in the Hindu fold would be disastrous to the Hindu society.

Education for the Harijans (Panchamas) was advocated by a number of papers as a means for their uplift in society. Manavaseva of May 1911 wrote that if at least primary education was provided for them, they would be able to improve themselves and also serve the country. Krishna Patrika published a number of articles by eminent men and speeches of leaders which suggested education as the primary means of transforming the position of the low castes in society. In its editorial the paper commended the work done in the Bombay presidency by social reformers in educating the panchamas by starting a number of night schools for them. It wanted a similar effort to be made in Madras and concluded with a warning that the Hindu society would disappear without any trace of its existence if the Hindus did not quickly make proper efforts for their uplift.²⁵ In an article published in the Andhra Patrika it was argued that there was no use in making lengthy speeches on the question of the depressed classes, but the establishment of schools for them would solve their problems.²⁶

25. Krishna Patrika, May 19, 1911.

26. Andhra Patrika, June 18, 1914.

The famous Telugu poet Chilakamarthi Lakshmi Narasimham stressed the need for establishment of schools for raising the status of the Panchamas. In his article published in Krishna Patrika of February 6, 1915 he wrote : "To raise the status of the low caste people is doing service to the Lord. It is devotion to God, it is devotion to the country. It is a religious duty. Do not forget it. To raise those who are in a degrading position, from the status of animals to the status of a men is far more a sacred act than building temples or choultries or performing prayers or making contributions to temples".

Andhra Patrika suggested the grant of full free studentships to the boys of Panchamas in schools. In its issue of June 2, 1920 it suggested that free boarding for them would also quicken their educational advancement. Economic solutions to the problems of the panchamas were also suggested by the Telugu newspapers. Grant of lands to them were often suggested as a means to raise their economic status in society. Andhra Patrika of June 2, 1920 made a similar plea that the government should give lands to them in order to make agriculturalists. Janmabhoomi of Pattabhi Seetaramayya, in its issue expressed its pleasure at the government favouring the policy of granting waste-lands (government lands) to the Panchamas and suggested that the

lands made over to them should be made inalienable for at least 15 years.²⁷

Andhra Patrika commended the government of Mysore for giving financial help to the parents of the panchama boys to make better and the loss suffered by them as a result of sending their children to schools. The paper commended that policy to the Madras government.²⁸ It was suggested that their children should be given not only free education but also food and clothing free of cost. Though the newspapers did not make any radical suggestions for the improvement of the economic conditions of the panchamas, their writings and suggestions indicate that they were well aware that the problem of untouchables was not only a religious, social, and economic one thus it needed an economic solution also.

Even before Mahatma Gandhi made the programme to uplift of Harijans as an integral part of the national movement, Andhra Patrika had declared "The panchama problem is not just a social problem. It is a political problem also. By keeping 1/6 of the nation in darkness it is impossible to attain National progress".²⁹ The papers appealed to the

27. Janmabhoomi, May 13, 1920.

28. Andhra Patrika, June 7, 1920.

29. Ibid., November 6, 1917.

Hindus to change their attitude towards the low caste people. Almost all the papers declared that untouchability did not have the sanction of the sacred works of the Hindus and urged the higher castes to give up their arrogance towards the low caste people.

Krishna Patrika in its editorial entitled "Deenabandhu" blamed the higher castes for the depressing situation of the panchamas and therefore they had to be reformed. The paper in the same issue also declared that until the conviction that no man is an untouchable is developed among the people of higher castes the uplift of the depressed classes would be impossible. This required a radical change in the attitudes of the higher castes.³⁰ The above remarks of Krishna Patrika reveal that the journal carried forthright and far-sighted views.

The newspapers published the views of prominent leaders like Annie Besant, Mahatma Gandhi and Malaviya on the inhuman practice of untouchability. Andhra Patrika, Krishna Patrika and others also provided wide publicity and prominence to the conferences of the depressed classes in their columns. For instance, a few days before the "Andhra Panchama Conference" was to be held at Vijayawada, Andhra

30. Krishna Patrika, March 23, 1919.

Patrika printed an appeal in bold headlines : "Andhra Panchama Mahasabha will be held at Bezawada on November 4, 1919 mainly for the uplift of Panchamas. Panchamas and their well-wishers are requested to attend it".

The Telugu papers also took note of the developments in the other parts of the country in removing untouchability. Annie Besant's criticism on the humiliating position of the Tiyas in Kerala was published by Krishna Patrika prominently and appeal to all the Hindus was made to remove the blot of untouchability from Hindu society.³¹

Temple entry for the Harijans was another programme which was supported strongly by the Telugu press, from 1925 onwards, as a means to remove untouchability. The papers wrote editorials favouring the movements launched in various places for the entry of Harijans into temples and severely criticised the high caste Hindus for causing obstructions to such a reform.

Satyagrahi appreciated the declaration of the Brahmin, Vysya and other temple trustees of the Bombay Province that "If there is any place where there is no difference between man and man, it is the temple."³² The paper characterised

31. Krishna Patrika, April 28, 1917.

32. Satyagrahi, November 4, 1928.

the statement as an absolute truth and appealed to all temple authorities to follow their example.

Andhra Patrika also appreciated the progress achieved in Bombay Presidency on the question of temple entry of Harijans and appealed to managements of all temples to remove all obstacles to the temple entry of Harijans. It also declared that the Hindu sastras did not support the prohibition of entry of the panchamas into the temples. The struggle of Kelappam to achieve the right of entry for Harijans into the famous Guruvayur temple in Kerala also received the attention of the Telugu press.³³

Writing an editorial on the subject, Krishna Patrika expressed its deep agony on the problem of the Harijans in these words : "In this sacred country where Buddha was born, why have the hearts of people become petrified ?".³⁴

The battle for the uplift of the Harijans was waged by all sections of the press irrespective of the caste party and ideological differences. The issue was raised to the level of a national problem and full support was given for the eradication of untouchability. Justice, the organ of the Justice Party, lent its support to the cause of the Harijans.

33. Andhra Patrika, February 4, 1930.

34. Krishna Patrika, October 1, 1932.

The crusade against untouchability, give the Harijans a place of dignity and honour in society, and the plea to improve their economic condition continued alongside of other struggles.

GREAT SUPPORT FOR PROHIBITION :

Prohibition of intoxicating liquors was another social reform which was advocated and supported with enthusiasm by the Telugu press. On the other issue of social reform was there such a tremendous propogation by the Telugu press than prohibition. As in the case of Harijan uplift the demand for prohibition in the country gained great momentum from Mahatma Gandhi's preachings and programmes. It deserves to be noted that even before Mahatma Gandhi's advent in Indian politics, the Telugu press had highlighted the evils of the drink habit and appealed both to the people and the government to annihilate this ruinous practice. Deshabhimani drew a parallel between the evils of opium eating in China, drinking of intoxicating liquors in India and declared that the Indians could renounce addiction just as the Chinese did theirs. The journal supplicated that the British government should have compassion for the Indians and ban the manufacture and sale of intoxicating liquors.³⁵

35. N.P.R., 1913, P. 376.

Sasilekha, another journal of the early part of the 20th Century, wanted the government to educate children in schools about the evil effects of alcoholic drinks. It wanted publicity against drinking to be given from the village level onwards.³⁶ From 1914 onwards *Andhra Patrika* also wrote a number of editorials on this evil. *Andhra Kesari* had criticised the alcoholic evil as early as in 1908. It said that this evil "ruined the nation's life" and reduced people into mere moving skeletons and damaged their economy.³⁷ *Andhra Prakasika* requested the government and the people to "work hand in hand" to check this menace³⁸. *Krishna Patrika* in an editorial criticised the British government for not taking any interest measures to stop the this evil in India, while it was stopping the export of opium to China.³⁹

In the Gandhian era, the evil of drinking was attacked the newspapers with great vigour and determination. A multipronged attack was made on it by the press. Apart from pointing out that it was a bad habit and ruinous health, its disastrous economic consequences were stressed. *Andhra Patrika* wrote in several editorials that prohibition was

36. N.P.R., 1913, P. 249.

37. N.P.R., 1908, P. 115.

38. *Ibid.*, 1914, P. 115.

39. *Krishna Patrika*, January 10, 1914.

necessary for the improvement of the socio-economic conditions of the people, particularly the rural poor. The papers also pointed out that the drinking habit was not only ruining domestic economy but was draining away the wealth of India to foreign countries.

The government's reluctance to implement prohibition was mainly due to its fear for the loss of revenue. The nationalist press assailed the government in every strong terms for thinking of safe-guarding its revenue, without caring for the well being of the people. Andhra Patrika in an eloquent editorial tried to impress the government that the loss to the government would be more than compensated by the decrease in crime and also in the poverty of the people if prohibition was implemented. It pointed out that certain things had to be done in the interest of the well-being of the people, even if they meant financial loss to the government. It asked the government whether it would stop investigating into the causes for diseases on the ground that it might lead to loss of income to the doctors or whether the government would not try to reduce quarrels and disputes among the people, simply because decrease of litigation would result in loss of revenue to lawyers and courts. These were unanswerable arguments.⁴⁰ The

40. Andhra Patrika, October 12, 1926.

Government's anxiety not to lose its revenue from the sale of liquor did not have any defence from the nationalist papers.

Krishna Patrika of February 12 1927, in its editorial on prohibition wrote, "when even in America and Russia prohibition is implemented, to justify drinking in India, which from immemorial times is considered immoral, is sheer folly" Sri Sadhana in an editorial mentioned the interesting information of banning alcoholic drinks in the factories of Henry Ford, in America. It commented that it was done in the interest of the welfare of the labourers who were the real source of the company's revenue and prosperity. The paper wanted the employers, in India, to emulate the example of Ford. 41

The nationalist newspapers condemned the evil of drinking as worse than gambling and debauchery and questioned why there was no punishment for it while other crimes were severely dealt with. Andhra Patrika deplored that gambling, debauchery and theft were punished where as drinking was not only let off unpunished but also respected.⁴² Equally strong views against drinking were expressed by several other Telugu papers. Sri Sadhana not

41. Sri Sadhana, November 1, 1930.

42. Andhra Patrika, February 2, 1926.

only wrote in favour of prohibition but devoted itself for a whole year (1930) to promote it and invited supporters of the movement to write to the Journal.

Auctions for the sale of toddy were prevented or obstructed by the Congress volunteers during the non-cooperation and civil disobedience movements. Picketing of liquor shops by nationalist volunteers was publicised and supported by the nationalist Telugu press, lauded as a right step in the direction of imposing prohibition. Sri Sadhana strongly deplored that while several men were sacrificing their lives for the sake of the country, some selfish persons were trying to make profit by selling intoxicating liquors.⁴³

The Telugu newspapers expressed their strong displeasure and disappointment that prohibition was not enforced in the country by the government inspite of overwhelming public opinion in its favour, and felt that it was because India was a dependent country. Janmabhoomi of Pattabhi Seetharamayya, referring to overwhelming public opinion in favour of prohibition, wrote "The country is so happily situated that it could be made dry with one stroke of the pen. One stroke of the ministerial pen could have

43. Sri Sadhana, May 31, 1930.

achieved results which would have proved the marvel of world."⁴⁴

PLEA FOR ABOLITION OF DEVADASI SYSTEM :

The Devadasi system, was another social evil on which the Telugu press focussed attention. The Devadasis, once a community of artists, had degenerated, and became virtually prostitutes, popularly known as 'Kalavantulu'. To eliminate this evil from the society, the government came forward with a proposal in 1911 to pass a law to prohibit the adoption of minor girls as dancing girls. This proposal was received with great applause by the journals which favoured the end of the Devadasi system. Krishna Patrika published a signed letter by 38 members of the Devadasi community commending the efforts of the government⁴⁵. The letter also urged the people all over the country to convene meetings and support the government's efforts in the direction of putting an end to the Devadasi system. A similar letter appeared a few weeks later in this paper, written by one of the community in Peddapuram.⁴⁶

44. Janmabhoomi, September 29, 1921.

45. N.P.R., 1911, PP. 1194-95.

46. N.P.R., 1911, P. 1338.

The efforts of Muthulakshmi Reddy to put an end to the practice of dedicating dancing girls to temples met with an enthusiastic response from the press. Satyagrahi of December 9, 1922 in an editorial commended her efforts to root out the Devadasi system by introducing legislation in the Madras Assembly.

Krishna Patrika also applauded the efforts of that great social reforms by publishing resolutions which were passed in various conferences supporting her bill. Sri Sadhana which was strongly opposed to the continuance of the Devadasi system felt that the bill of Muthulakshmi Reddy was only a small measure, and wanted more radical laws for rooting out the evil system.⁴⁷

The reform of the community of dancing girls or 'Kalavantulu', received much attention in the columns of the prominent Telugu papers like Krishna Patrika, Andhra Patrika, Satyagrahi and Sri Sadhana. The papers published the proceedings of the conferences of the community and gave wide coverage to the proposals that were made to reform them. Satyagrahi in its editorial on December 9, 1929 expressed its dissatisfaction with the poor progress of efforts for reform among the dancing girls and emphasised

47. Sri Sadhana, February 9, 1929.

that the uplift of dancing girls was essential both for the girls and the Hindu society.

Prostitution was also attacked by the press advocating social reform. In 1910, Krishna Patrika published an appeal by A. Narayana Rao to all "Vesyas" (prostitutes) to meet at a place to discuss relating matters to the reform of their community.⁴⁸ Again in 1911 this paper wrote an editorial appealing to the educated people and members of the community of "Vesyas" to cooperate with the government in checking up the evil of prostitution.⁴⁹ An incident of the sale of a girl by her mother to a prostitute provoked Krishna Patrika to express its indignation and resentment at the indifference of the people towards social problems.⁵⁰ Andhra Patrika suggested the appointment of women in the police force to curb prostitution. In 1930, commenting on the act intended to abolish brothels, Andhra Patrika of February 4, emphasised the need for educated men to take up effective steps to control prostitution.⁵¹

48. Krishna Patrika, March 25, 1910.

49. Ibid., July 7, 1911.

50. Ibid., June 7, 1913.

51. Andhra Patrika, February 4, 1930.

CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES :

In the foregoing pages the role of Telugu papers in stirring the social conscience of the public on social abuses, and rousing people to reformatory action has been described. In the following pages an attempt is made to describe how the Telugu press sensitively responded to public issues of the day. The administrative system introduced by the British in India was manned by a bureaucracy with a strong centre. It had serious defects. The administrative framework was wooden, impersonal and unresponsive to the needs of the people. The good that flowed from it was due to the personal qualities of some of the administrators rather than to the system itself. Further there was a disinclination on appointing Indians to important posts. This was a serious defect because the British as foreigners, inspite of their best intentions, could not understand the real needs of the people, as the natives could.⁵²

The administration of the country by a foreign government provided ample opportunities to the nationalistic

52. A. Jagannadham, "Public Opinion as reflected in the Vernacular press in Andhra during the period 1885 to 1905" *Itihas*, Vol. II, No. 1, July-December 1979 (Hyderabad), PP. 59-60.

Telugu press to criticise the government for its lapses. The criticism of the various aspects of the administration of the country in Telugu press was in general conformity with the anti- government stand of the nationalistic press in general. Throughout the period covered by the present study, various aspects of the general administration of the British government came under severe attack from the Telugu press.

Criticism of the policies of the British government in the vernacular press started in the beginning of 20th century. Gautami, for example, referring to an advertisement which wanted a Mussalman clerk for temporary post in the Headquarters an Inspector General of Police, Madras, took the government to task. It argued that such an advertisement was unbecoming of the government whose duty was to remove all racial differences. It alleged that the government was only creating prejudices between one race and another by asking for candidates of a particular religion.⁵³

Vrittantachintamani commenting on an article in the "New Age", remarked thus : "The people of India can never get what they want from the government unless they unite together and make known their wants. In the European

countries the people are in fact, their own rulers, and their representatives keep a watch over state expenditure. Whenever the executive officers of the government go wrong they are called upon to account for by the representatives of the people."⁵⁴ The "New Age" pointed out that it was all due to the apathy of the people themselves. However it warned the government that if it did not take early steps to ameliorate the condition of the people, they would become discontented and would be a source of danger to the state. It reminded the people that without a doubt that want of unity among them was the cause for their lot.⁵⁵ Suryodaya Prakasika referring to the paper read by Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji in England on the "Poverty of India" observed that under the British rule, India was becoming poorer and poorer day by day. The fault lay not with any individual official but with the principles of the administration itself. If India had been ruled in accordance with the principles of equality and with the promises made in the proclamation of the Queen nobody would have found fault with the administration.⁵⁶

54. N.P.R., 1901, P. 173.

55. Ibid.

56. Suryodaya Prakasika, 11-5-1904.

Land revenue was the most important item of revenue of the British government in India, yielding maximum income and involving numerous issues. In the ten years ending 1887, the total gross income of the Government of India amounted to more than 218.5 million rupees. In the next ten years ending 1897 it rose to more than 244 millions.⁵⁷ In other words the landholders of India found their burden increased to the tune of twenty six crores of rupees within a brief period of ten years and that it ultimately had its impact on the economic conditions of the peasantry.⁵⁸ Sasilekha which played a notable part in the early years of the Andhra movement severely criticised the procedure adopted for the collection of land revenue by the British.

It was reported that in the Nellore district cattle were either sold or attached to clear off outstanding dues of land revenue. Failure of payment of the revenue at the assessed rates resulted in the eviction of the ryots from their land. These factors discouraged the ryots to bring under cultivation new land or fertilise the one already assigned to them and threw several cultivators into the arms of unscrupulous money lenders who charged exorbitant rates of interest. The ryots were crushed under the huge unredeemable

57. A. Jagannadham, Op. Cit., P. 61.

58. M.M. Ahluwalia, Freedom struggle in India 1858-1909, (Delhi, 1965), P. 38.

debt.⁵⁹ The same paper also took issue with the government over the expenditure to be incurred on entertaining the Indian Princes at India's expense during the coronation ceremony of 1902.⁶⁰

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION :

Racial discrimination practised by the government was another issue on which the Telugu press frequently and boldly attacked the British government. Discrimination of the Indians against the Europeans was found glaringly in different fields during British rule in India. Wherever it was found it was opposed and condemned in strong language by the Telugu press.

Racial discrimination practised in the law courts was frequently published by the Telugu papers. They resented over award of light and nominal punishments to European offenders for their grave offences. The papers also gave wide publicity to assault of Indians by Europeans. Even the moderate sections of the Telugu press did not hesitate to point out to the government that its brazen policy of racial discrimination would result in much harm to the British government itself. When in 1908 Ali, a cartman died in

59. N.P.R., 1897.

60. N.P.R., 1902, P. 268.

Madras following an assault by a European planter, Krishna Patrika indignantly remarked : "How can our lives be safe if wicked persons who commit murders boldly are let off with light punishments?".⁶¹ Natives were punished severely for much smaller and even trivial offences. Jackson, the Joint Magistrate of Chingleput convicted a boy for having cried Salaam Andhra Patrika criticised the magistrate for it.⁶² In blatant contrast, the European superintendent of a plantation was made to pay a fine of Rs. 25/- only for kicking an Indian who died subsequently.⁶³ Such acts of gross injustice inhumanity and discrimination became the target of attack of the Telugu newspapers which took note of all instances of racial discrimination in courts, to prove that British administration in India was not based on equality and fair play. Such incidents of assaults on Indians by Europeans and discrimination between Indians and Europeans in various fields were used very well by the newspapers to drive home to the people that people would have to suffer such insults under political slavery and that the only way to free themselves from such humiliations was Swaraj.

61. Krishna Patrika, May 27, 1908.

62. Andhra Patrika, January 20, 1912.

63. N.P.R., 1914, P. 1865.

Glaring discrimination in appointments in government service, appointment of only Europeans to key positions, payment of discriminatory salaries to Indians, and severe punishment to Indian officials on flimsy grounds were some of the other instances of racial discrimination which attracted adverse criticism in Telugu papers.

In 1907, Swaraj of G. Harisarvothama Rao, pointed out that for 33 crores of Indians there were only 10 or 12 Indian judges, and only about 100 collectors of Indian nationality. Ridiculing the government for the huge gulf that existed in between the Indians and the Europeans in service, Andhra Patrika wrote, "There are two kinds of officers in every department of Government of India. The first is intended for the servants coming from the British Isles and the second for the Indians. European Officers enjoyed high salaries, power and real administrative influence. Indian officials salaries, emoluments and influence were negligible.⁶⁴ Krishna Patrika too questioned the propriety of paying huge salaries to Europeans in a country of frequent famines.

In its issue Lokopakari of Madras deplored in strong terms that the claims of one Tulsiram of North Western

64. N.P.R., 1926, P. 177.

Province Railway to promotion had been superseded in spite of his very long service and a European with little service had been promoted, as a result of which Tulsiram resigned his post.⁶⁵

The view expressed in the editorial of Andhra Patrika is representative of the views generally expressed in Telugu papers on racial discrimination in courts. The editor wrote : "Even though justice is done in disputes between Indians, daily happenings make it clear that justice is ignored where Indians and Europeans are involved. It is common knowledge that when Indians are shot dead by Europeans, they are either let off as not guilty or punished with a fine of a ten rupees."⁶⁶

Even a pro-British paper The Nyayadipika could not help finding fault with the British government for appointing many Europeans to higher posts on huge salaries.⁶⁷ Satyagrahi described the huge expenditure on the salaries of the foreign officials as "day-light decoity."⁶⁸ It also observed : "To raise the salaries of officials of lower

65. Lokopakari, May 22, 1916.

66. Andhra Patrika, July 21, 1921.

67. N.P.R., 1921, P. 177.

68. Satyagrahi, August 22, 1927.

ranks even so slightly, commissions and inquiries are instituted. But a mere stroke of the pen of the British Minister is enough to raise the salaries, pension and allowances of the European officers."⁶⁹

Commenting on the abusive language used by European against Indian officers, *Andhra Prakasika*, which was moderate paper, found it necessary to suggest to the government that it should lay down guidelines for the European officers in dealing with their Indian subordinates.⁷⁰ It also pointed out that the pride and arrogance of European officers in dealing with Indians would make it impossible for the ruled to trust the rulers. Extremist papers like *Congress* and *Satyagrahi*, argued that the independence of the country alone would free Indians of the inhuman behaviour of the foreigners towards them.

NATIONAL EDUCATION :

The vernacular press rightly and forcefully brought to the notice of the government the necessity for the promotion of education. The Telugu journals encouraged the spread of literacy among the natives. By 1905 four out of every five villages were without a school and seven children out of

69. *Satyagrahi*, June 29, 1925.

70. N.P.R., 1912, P. 1534.

every eight were growing up in ignorance and darkness and with all the moral and material helplessness that followed.⁷¹ As if to make matters worse the British government had raised the school fees. Rasikollasini deplored the system of school fees and term fee and criticised the recommendation of the finance committee to reduce grants-in-aid to private schools.⁷² As early as 1880 Sanmargadarsini by observing the low educational standards had suggested to the sub-committee of the Public Service Commission to reform the entire education system, and wanted the government to appoint competent school masters. It also pleaded for setting up of model schools, one for the Ganjam and Vizagapatam districts, another for the Godavari and Krishna districts, and a third for Nellore.⁷³ The Telugu press also brought to the notice of the government the pathetic conditions of the school teachers. That the teachers in the schools of Madras Presidency were not paid even as much as coolies were paid was the telling comment of Sasilekha.⁷⁴

71. M. Jagannadham, *Op. Cit.*, P. 66.

72. Government of Madras Public (Confd.) Government order No. 248-249, dated March 12, 1889.

73. Sanmargadarsini, September 1888.

During the period under review the British government showed an extremely partisan attitude towards Europeans in providing employment opportunities, and was sternly indifferent to the employment of educated Indians. Typical of this attitude was the opinion of Sir John Strachy, who said: "It will be the beginning of the end of our empire when we forget this elementary fact, entrust the greater executive powers to the hands of the natives, on the assumption that they will always be faithful and strong supporters of the government."⁷⁵

Swaraj, observed : "The government had determined that education which can conduce to our welfare ought not to be imparted to us. The suffering Indians themselves have to decide whether the Anglo-Indians are to be called ungrateful people or monsters that eat our salt and yet to think of doing us evil, intentionally denying us good education."⁷⁶

Commenting on the education of women the same journal wrote : "Some of our men argue that female education leads to perversion. The government also demands fees for educating girls, probably to check female education under

75. M.M. Ahluwalia, Op. Cit., P. 141.

76. Swaraj, November 25, 1907.

the impression that the infants in the womb of educated women would imbibe patriotism. They are glad enough to spend the money collected from taxes imposed on salt, water, liquor, land, and roads, on military charges, travelling allowances and state dinners, but they feel uncomfortable when the people require free education for the Indians so as to better their condition.⁷⁷

Andhra Prakasika referred to the apathy of government regarding the education of the masses, and wondered why primary education had not been begun in towns and then extended to the villages. The paper pointed out that the systems of compulsory education, which had progressed apace in Baroda, would surely spread in British India also, if the officers concerned were earnest about promoting primary education.⁷⁸

The educational policies of the government were attacked by the Telugu press mainly on three grounds : (1) lack of progress in the field of education, (2) the foreign nature of the system and (3) failure to develop native languages. The press felt that the progress achieved in education by the government was tardy and inadequate. It also criticised government for its manner of allotment of

77. Swaraj, August 10, 1907.

78. Andhra Prakasika, August 18, 1905.

funds to education in the central and state budgets. The nationalist Telugu papers laid stress on national education, which became one of their important themes.

The idea of national education which spread during the VandeMataram movement was fostered and propagated assiduously by the nationalist Telugu press. Krishna Patrika, and Andhra Patrika were great champions of it. They played a significant role in the propagation and implementation of the programme of national education, during the Home Rule Movement. Most of the nationalist Telugu papers considered national education as a panacea for all the ills of the country.

Andhra Kesari which was influential during the VandeMataram movement, wrote : If national education were disseminated among the 30 crores of people in our country, there would be no famines and sufferings. Would not then India become heaven on earth the paper affirmatively hoped."⁷⁹ The Telugu papers also appealed to the public to contribute liberally to the cause of national educational institutions established in the Andhra region.

In the early phase of the national movement the news papers had maintained the view that national education would

79. N.P.R., 1908, P. 501.

lead to Swaraj. But from the non-cooperation movement onwards they argued that Swaraj was the prerequisite for the success of national education. Janmabhoomi in an editorial on national education expressed its dilemma regarding national education visa-vis Swaraj. The paper wrote "We are in a truly unhappy and unenviable state in which without Swaraj true national education cannot be organised but without national education itself Swaraj may never be hoped for."⁸⁰ Andhra Patrika of December 24, 1928 however, clearly stated its position that "National education cannot be established properly, till political freedom is attained". Writing on the effect of English education in India Sri Sadhana wrote, "We have become slaves because of the present system of education. It has made us cowards. It is weakening our country."⁸¹

The nationalist Telugu press of that period wanted the government and the people to help the growth of the vernacular. The importance of the study of mother tongue was stressed for rousing national consciousness among the people. Andhra Patrika in an editorial entitled "Love of one's own country and the mother tongue expressed the view that the mother tongue was the seed for the love of the

80. Janmabhoomi, September 16, 1926.

81. Sri Sadhana, May 26, 1928.

mother country" and advised Andhras to develop a love for Telugu."⁸² A couple of years earlier, commenting on the adverse effects of English education, the same paper had said in an editorial "Educated people praise English, think in English and live in English. For lighting the candle of knowledge in every house and for creating national consciousness, only the mother tongue can be an instrument and not the language studied in schools for the sake of livelihood."⁸³

A study of the contents of the Telugu press during the period under study, reveals that the Telugu press exposed the imperialist nature of the British administration. The nationalist press tried to mould public awareness against the alien government and in favour of Swaraj. By trying to safeguard the interest of the Indians in all fields of administration, the nationalist Telugu press acted as the watch-dog of the interests of Indians and as permanent opposition to the imperialist regime in India.

POLICE ADMINISTRATION :

The police administration of the alien government was vigorously attacked by the Telugu press. The police in all

82. Andhra Patrika, September 2, 1919.

83. Ibid., January 8, 1917.

In June 1907, a punitive police force was stationed at Kakinada to punish the people of that town for their retaliation against a European medical officer, Dr Kemp, who assaulted a boy for shouting 'Vandemataram' at him. The stationing of the punitive police at Kakinada was vehemently condemned by all the nationalist Telugu papers. Andhra Kesari of June 14, 1907 characterised it as a high handed measure, improper, unjust and illegal.⁸⁶ Krishna Patrika also strongly reacted and commented that the policy of the government was provocative and would make Andhra a second Bengal or Punjab.⁸⁷

The use of force by the police against peaceful demonstrations and the application of obnoxious sections of the criminal procedure code to deal with popular national leaders, were also vehemently opposed by the nationalist press.

During the non-cooperation movement, when repressive measures were adopted by the police to put down the national movement the Telugu papers which supported the non-cooperation movement strongly condemned the repressive measures of the police. Krishna Patrika was outspoken in

86. N.P.R., 1907, P. 233.

87. Krishna Patrika, June 11, 1907.

condemning such repression. In an editorial entitled "Andhra Region" the paper narrated the incidents of repression in various Andhra districts and asked the people not to lose their patience and warned the government that it could never put down a popular movement.⁸⁸

The following extract from the Congress is a representative of the writing of the patriotic press which reacted sharply to the disrespectful treatment of national leaders by the police. The journal commented. "An ordinary police sub-inspector arrested a sage like Mr. Sambamurthy without warrant. Mr. Konda Venkatappaya was arrested under section 151 which is applied in the case of robbers and decoits. Now the Mahatma, the greatest of men has been arrested under a section relating to committing nuisance. All these prove that the police officers are reigning supreme."⁸⁹

Swarajya commenting on the arrest of the Andhra leader Bulusu Sambamurthy in 1929 without warrant under section 108, said that to deprive Mr. Sambamurthy of his freedom was a disgrace to any civilised government.⁹⁰

88. Krishna Patrika, November 26, 1921.

89. N.P.R., 1929, P. 440.

90. Swarajya, March 11, 1929.

House search by the police and cruel treatment of the detenues in police custody also came in for sharp criticism in the newspapers. It was alleged that methods of torture were adopted to extract confessions or information from the detenues. The various repulse methods adopted by the police to deal with the nationalists were strongly condemned by the Telugu press which was only ventilating the grievances of the public.

The nationalist press in Telugu, like its counterparts in the rest of the country expressed the view that Lala Lajapati Rai's death in 1928 was the result of police brutality. The confidential fortnightly report of the Madras government for the second fortnight of November 1928, reported "The general Indian press view is that Lajapat Rai's death resulted from police brutality". Swarajya as usual is unbridled in its condemnation and in its language.⁹¹

The police became very vigorous and used uncivilised measures in dealing with the Salt Satyagraha and the Civil Disobedience Movements from 1930 to 1932. Two police

90. Swarajya, March 11, 1929.

91. Fortnightly Report of the Madras Presidency to the Government of India (F.N.R.), December 3, 1928.

officers Musthafa Alikhan the Deputy Superintendent of Police at Rajahmundry and B. Subba Rao Naidu, the sub-inspector at Kakinada, became notorious for using brutal methods against the public and the political leaders. Without any regard for the popular leaders, they used to beat them violently and even kick them with their shoes. Some were even stripped of their clothes in public for wearing khaddar clothes. The excesses of Musthafa Ali were so indefensible that strictures were passed against him by the Madras High court, which also imposed a fine on him.⁹² The terrorist methods of the police to crush the popular movements resulted in proportionately strong condemnation of the police by the nationalist Telugu press.

Among the Telugu journals Congress, Satyagrahi, were in the forefront of the newspaper war against the police. Congress spared no abusive epithet to condemn the police atrocities against the nationalists, which reminded one of the actions of "Rakshasas". The paper warned that the British government was digging its own grave by making excessive use of the police force to deal with its political opponents. In an editorial Satyagrahi made scathing comments on the police administration and said that achievement of

92. Sarojini Regani, Op. Cit., P. 135.

Indian independence would only be hastened by the aggressive methods of police repression.⁹³

Transportation of political prisoners for life to the Andamans was also denounced by the press. The press had opposed in 1922 the transportation of Moplah prisoners. Again in the 1930's when political prisoners were deported the newspapers unspringly denounced that policy of the government. In 1932 the Telugu press expressed "deep resentment", when there were rumours that women political convicts would be sent to the Andamans.⁹⁴

A wing of the police department, the criminal intelligence department, was also subjected to harsh criticism by the press. The expenditure incurred on the maintenance of its agents was described as a waste of public money. Some papers even suggested the abolition of the criminal investigation department itself. Intelligence agents were severely criticised for being needlessly suspicious.⁹⁵

While the police were accused of excesses, they were also sometimes accused of inefficiency. Their inefficiency

93. Government of Madras, Public (Confid.) G.O. No. 577-78, dated July 12, 1933.

94. N.P.R., 1916, P. 1710.

95. Satyagrahi, January 14, 1929.

was generally attributed to recruitment of the low-ranking police personnel from ill-qualified persons. In dealing with the Rampa rebellion in the agency tract of the Andhra region, led by Alluri Sitharama Raju, the police were charged with inefficiency by newspapers, pro-British as well as nationalist. The Annual Report on the press in 1923, in the Madras Presidency mentioned that "most of the Telugu papers believed that the fact that the police had been unable to arrest the ring-leader Sitarama Raju, only betrayed, their utter inefficiency."⁹⁶ Interestingly Andhra Patrika and Krishna Patrika, the leading Telugu newspapers of the day had nothing in praise of Raju.

ADMINISTRATION OF JAILS :

Jail administration was another target of strong criticism for the nationalist Telugu press. The Telugu papers were mainly concerned with the ill-treatment of political prisoners in the jails of the Madras Presidency. Because some of the political prisoners were treated like criminals and the conditions of living in the jails were horrible. It was natural that the press was exasperated. Hence, virulent criticism was mounted against the government for its cruel attitude towards political prisoners. The

96. Government of Madras, Public (Confid.) G.O. No. 345, dated May 12, 1924.

classification of prisoners into different categories was another irritant in the jail administration of those days. When even prominent leaders were classified as 'B' or 'C' class prisoners, the newspapers protested against such ill-motivated classification. Most of the nationalist Telugu papers expressed the view that nowhere else in the world were political prisoners treated in such a horrible manner as they were in India. The general discrimination between European prisoners and Indian prisoners in the jails was also condemned by the majority of the Telugu journals. Newspapers like Andhra Patrika, Krishna Patrika, Congress, Satyagrahi published the experiences of the political prisoners in jails to rouse the indignation of the native people against the administrators. Trilinga dated April 28, 1930 wrote, that the condition of political prisoners was becoming increasingly miserable. In foreign countries they were merely confined in the jails. Here they were kicked, belaboured and whipped.⁹⁷

Several newspapers pointed out to the government that the political prisoners of that period would be rulers of the country in future and cautioned the government to treat them with respect. Andhra Patrika, remarked : "Those who are suffering in jails today may after sometime come to

97. N.P.R., 1923, P. 537.

power In the interests of dignity of the government they should be treated in a decent manner. Depriving them of the ordinary facilities in prison, not allowing them to read newspapers books is most indecent.⁹⁸ Swarajya, warned the government to realize that "political prisoners were a set of high-minded and high-soul patriots". A number of Telugu papers reported that political leaders were locked up in cells intended for lunatics and that they were abused and beaten up. The papers criticised not only the inhuman treatment given to the political prisoners in jails, but also the food that was given to them while in detention.⁹⁹

Trilinga of June 2, 1930 in its editorial commented : "while all those who have resorted to civil disobedience are educated and highly respected in the society, to provide convenience for some of them and to throw some others along with decoits and thieves is a great blunder. All of them should be treated equally."¹⁰⁰

The ill-treatment of lady prisoners in jail also roused the Telugu press to righteous indignation. It warned the government against indecent behaviour towards lady prisoners. Ananda Bodhini reported that it learnt that the

98. Andhra Patrika, March 20, 1929.

99. N.P.R., 1930, P. 291.

100. Trilinga, June 2, 1930.

bangles of ladies in jails were broken and that the 'kumkuma' mark on their fore-heads was wiped out and that even the sacred 'Tali' round their necks was forcibly taken out. The paper urged the government to enquire into such incidents and punish the guilty.¹⁰¹

The respect shown to the Europeans and the insults hurled at the Indians by the jail officials also formed the subject matter of press comments. The subject of racial discrimination in jails was highlighted in the press when Jatindranath Das, one of the accused in the Lahore conspiracy case, sacrificed his life after fasting for 63 days in the jail, as a protest against racial discrimination in prisons. The remarks of Yugandhara on the occasion of the death of Jatindranath Das are representative of comments made in the nationalist Telugu press. The journal wrote : "the giving up by Mr. Jatin of his life has proclaimed two extraordinary things to the world. It has fully exposed the partiality of the government, its cruel heart and its inhuman nature. This is the first thing. Secondly it has taught that offering of one's self for the well being of others is our only refuge and duty."¹⁰²

101. Ananda Bodhini, December 10, 1930.

102. N.P.R., 1929, P. 1408.

Satyagrahi utilised the martyrdom of Jatindranath Das to eloquently appeal to the people to dedicate themselves for the cause of the emancipation of the country. The paper commented : "Jatindranath Das will shine for ever like the sun and the moon. How long this groping in darkness by the blind ? Shall we not dedicate ourselves to see the divine light of freedom ? Oh Lord : When will the 30 crores of Indians obtain salvation ? when ? How ? How ?"¹⁰³

The worst indictment on Madras jails was made by Satyagrahi. In its editorial columns of the issue dated March 7, 1927 the paper said that there was no other hell than the jails in the Madras presidency. Writing in a hyperbolic tone, it remarked that a poet must have described the hell only after seeing the conditions in the Madras jails. The comments of Swarajya on the occasion of the suicide of an internee in the Alipore Central jail, are worth recalling. The paper wrote : "This is not the first time that an internee has preferred death to living death to which he was consigned under the beneficiaries of Lord Readings' government. Some have gone mad. Some others have died or have fallen a prey to disease, while all alike have nothing to look forward to except on indefinite stay in jail. They are the victims of an unscrupulous system of

103. Satyagrahi, September 23, 1929.

police and a panicking government which is not ashamed of locking up men without trial.¹⁰⁴

CRITICISM OF OFFICIALS :

The Telugu press criticised the government officials either directly or indirectly. Letters from correspondents containing criticism of officials were published. Editorials were also written making adverse comments on erring officials. Krishna Patrika in its editorial made strong comments on the district judge of the Krishna district. It pointed out that the judge always upheld the verdicts of the lower courts. His dozing in the court, late arrival to the court and leaving it early, were also mentioned and the question was asked, "why should a poor country like ours pay him Rs. 2,500 every month ?"¹⁰⁵

The administration of some of the district collectors was also criticised by the Telugu newspapers. Krishna Patrika criticised the district collector Bridewood for collecting fines from lower officials and for frequent transfers of his subordinates.¹⁰⁶ In 1923, the collector of the Godavari district issued instructions that the water supply to the lands of those who participated in the non co-

104. Swarajya, April 6, 1926.

105. Krishna Patrika, December 2, 1916.

106. Ibid., April 5, 1913.

operation movement would be stopped and that gun licences and other licences issued to persons would be cancelled if they supported the movement. Andhra Patrika published a copy of that order as issued by the Magistrate of Razole and condemned the action of the collector.¹⁰⁷ The indifference and pride of the munsiff magistrate of Gudiwada was satirically ridiculed by 'Nakshatrakudu' in Krishna Patrika of October, 19, 1929. He was criticized because he did not even look up at his visitors. The author of this piece of satire said that by seeing that magistrate one would know why the sculptors depicted the goddess of justice as, blind-folded.

CORRUPTION :

Corruption in government departments was criticised frequently in the columns of the Telugu press. The police, public works and registration departments, according to the Telugu press, were the most corrupt. Krishna Patrika pointed out how the Zamindars noted their account books bribes given to the officials in a code language. The same journal published for some years letters under the heading 'letters from hell' (Yamalokapu jabulu), in which the corruption in different departments including the judiciary was exposed.¹⁰⁸

107. Andhra Patrika, March 22, 1923.

108. Krishna Patrika, November 15, 1913.

Satyagrahi also was a bitter and relentless critic of corruption in the government. It exposed through its columns the prevalence of corruption in different departments. Letters from correspondents bringing to light instances of corruption in government offices were also published. Gifts made to officials at the time of their transfer were also included in the category of bribes, by some papers. Krishna Patrika in a satirical tone criticised the presentation of golden necklace to Moore, Collector of the Krishna district on his transfer. It also made fun of a magistrate who took bribes from both contending parties and helped those who paid him more.¹⁰⁹

The huge expenditure incurred on the office of the Governor was another subject strongly criticized by the papers. The Krishna Patrika in its issue made a blistering attack on the display of pomp and grandeur by the Governor. Travel of Governors by special trains was criticised and it was pointed out that in England even the Prime Minister travelled like an ordinary passenger.¹¹⁰ It was alleged that the governor of Madras Lord Willingdon conducted himself as an emperor and that he lavishly spent money for remodelling

109. Krishna Patrika, April 23, 1921.

110. Ibid., June 14, 1924.

and decorating his residence.¹¹¹ The presentation of addresses to the Governor wherever he went and the servility displayed by all people during his tours came in for severe censure by Krishna Patrika of June 14, 1924. Such an attitude towards the Governor, it pointed out, would only degrade the Indian community morally. The newspapers deplored all wasteful expenditure incurred to entertain a governor or to present an address to him.

PROPAGATION OF NATIONALISM :

While the different social reform movements were bringing about awakening among the people at large, rousing their conscience against their degrading social practices, there was also a growing feeling among at least the educated people that the English had enslaved them so much as to deprive them of their freedom of thought, speech and action. Paradoxically, it was the western system of education introduced by the British which had brought about this awareness among the educated Indians. The network of communications through roadways and railways though essentially meant for the movement of the military, had resulted in quick dissemination of news, of knowledge, of activities and it looked as though the country had shrunk in distance.

111. Krishna Patrika, June 14, 1924.

All these led to the emergence of a spirit of nationalism and political awakening among the intellectuals. In the Andhra area of the Madras Presidency, the period saw the gradual emergence of a new class of intelligentsia vigorously attuned to the national sentiment and active in the Indian National Congress. District Associations, started on the model of the Indian National Congress began to hold annual conferences from 1892 onwards at the district level to discuss the local problems, thus accentuating the political consciousness of the different sections of the people. They organised many meetings to make the government aware of their attitude on matters of public importance and to protest against the oppressive policies of the government.

The Telugu press became a powerful weapon in the hands of the intelligentsia and a most effective exponent of popular grievances during this period. The spread of education and rise of Telugu Journalism together created political awakening among the people. In this line the Andhra Prakasika was the first Telugu Journal devoted to politics.

Another important feature of the effect of the awakening national consciousness was the rise of a number of associations like the Madras Native Association (1852),

started by Gajula Lakshmi Narasu chetti (1806-69), the Madras Mahajana Sabha started by P. Rangalah Naidu who was its President and P. Anandacharyulu its secretary (1884), Coconada (Kakinada) Literary Association. Of these Madras Mahajana Sabha was to give proper direction to the growing national consciousness among the people. The Coconada Literary Association took keen interest in public affairs also. We find that it submitted a memorandum to the secretary of state for India, requesting that the age limit for taking the civil service examination be raised.¹¹²

The Nationalist Telugu press preached patriotism to the people in several ways and appealed to them to take an active part in the National Movement. In trying to inculcate the national spirit among the people the papers glorified India. They urged that it was the primary duty of all the citizens in the country to develop it in themselves. Inspiring editorials were written emphasising the virtues of patriotism. They gave vent to feelings of the people. Their utterances were not mere fulminations but expression of actual grievances. The papers had circulation among a wide audience and even the illiterate could understand the news when read to them. Therefore they were a reliable index of

112. Sarojini Regani, *Op. Cit.*, P. 19.

the mind of the people.¹¹³ This fact was recognised by the powers that be. Mr. Robinson, Secretary to the Government of Madras considered the vernacular press as a "useful barometer of native feeling and excitement". The then Governor of Bengal held the vernacular press "to be useful indication of the under currents which may be running through the masses of Indian population". According to Viscount Graxe Broke, all the most experienced British Indian administrators felt the great difficulty of ascertaining the fact of social condition and political sentiment and the vernacular press was always considered a valuable means of getting at those facts.¹¹⁴

The editors and founders of the vernacular newspapers were really patriotic and broadminded. The journalism they pursued was inspired by noble ideals. In voicing forth their views and in exposing the prevalent social evils and evils of administration, they were fearless and braved in the process the wrath of British Officials.¹¹⁵ However Dr. Baliga has shown that the political agitations started with some vigour in Madras soon after the inception of the Indian

113. V.C.P. Choudary, *Op. Cit.*, P. 2.

114. A.N. Sivaraman, "The vernacular language newspaper" in *Journalism in Modern India*, (Ed.) Rolland Wess Ray.

115. V.C.P. Choudary, *Op. Cit.*, P. 109.

(1885). By this time several newspapers in English as well as the Indian languages had come into existence both in the city of Madras and in the districts and these became no mean instruments in the hands of Nationalists. For example, in 1886 the Telugu press was criticising the salt tax as "the most unjust and cruel of all the taxes imposed on the country". It also criticised the conduct of several officers of the government.¹¹⁶ Dr. B. Keshavanarayana holds similar views and states that towards the end of the century, the press, especially the vernacular press, had begun to pay great attention to political affairs.¹¹⁷

There were numerous Telugu newspapers like Andhra Prakasika, Sasilekha, Krishna Patrika, Suryodaya Prakasika, Vivekavardhini, Rasikollasini, Desabhimani published during the period 1885-1905. Prof. Venkatarangaiah has observed that they all gave expressions to ideas which were popular with the intelligentsia. They boldly and freely criticized the policies of the government and its administrative measures. They exposed the defects in various branches of administration and put forward various suggestions to better the administration. By 1905 their tone became highly

116. B.S. Baliga, **Studies in Madras Administration**, Vol. I, (Madras, 1960), P. 3.

117. B. Kesavanarayana, **Political and Social factors in Andhra, 1900-1956** (Vijayawada, 1976).

militant in several respects. The government attached a great deal of importance to public awakening as manifest in these papers. Further Prof. Venkatarangaiah observes that nothing illustrates better the changed outlook of the people than the trend of the public opinion as expressed by the Telugu newspaper.¹¹⁸

The Third Session of the Indian National Congress held in Madras in the year 1887 passed resolutions to recommending publication of pamphlets and other propaganda material to politically educate the masses. The impact of the Congress propaganda on both the press and public was considerable. The people became more nationalistic and more critical of the British administration.¹¹⁹

The Telugu journalism grew in strength and vitality between 1858-1900 when public awakening was framed for frank criticism of the defects of British rule in India. The popular Telugu paper *Gautami* and *Sasilekha*, highlighted the lapses in the administration, Konda Venkatappaiah, through his *Krishna Patrika* started in 1902, became a strong critic of the government and the paper became very popular.

118. M. Venkatarangaiah, *The Freedom Struggle in Andhra Pradesh* (Andhra) 1800-1885, (Hyderabad, 1965), PP.86-93.

119. *Ibid.*

The Telugu press was largely responsible for the participation of a large number of people in the Indian freedom movement. The leaders adopted newspapers as one of their chief instruments for carrying on the movement. Patriotism became the watchword for the people. The people and the press vigorously supported the various phases of the national movement, converting the fight against the British administration into a heroic struggle of the people for a national cause. Hemendraprasad Ghose observes "In India in bondage it was so to say the mission of the Indian section of the press to preach the gospel of nationalism."¹²⁰ The nationalist Telugu press in Andhra, like its counterparts in the rest of the country, ably performed the mission of preaching the gospel of nationalism.

Krishna Patrika in its editorial on August 11, 1911 wrote that patriotism is the first step towards nation building. In 1914, in one of its most inspiring and eloquent editorials Andhra Patrika urged people to be patriotic in order to repay their debt to the motherland. The paper said "service to the country is the most significant of all the duties of man. To serve the motherland in the same manner as you serve your own mother is national duty of all human

120. Hemendraprasad Ghose, *The Newspaper in India*, (Calcutta, 1952), P. 1.

beings. The relationship between the people and the country is inseparable like the relationship between the mother and the child. The mother country is the mother of all mothers and the father of all fathers. She is the repository of all prosperity and happiness."¹²¹

During the VandeMataram movement Andhra Kesari made most inspiring appeals to the people to become patriotic. In one of its editorials in 1908, it said : "Bradlaugh said that he was born for his country, that he lived for his country and that he would die for his country. This should be our morning and evening prayer. Factories are holy places. Patriots are our preceptors. Patriotism is our protective mantra. We do not want any other thing. Arise, awake and do not give up your purpose till the goal is reached."¹²²

Swaraj of Gadicherla Harisarvothama Rao, was a beacon light to the people during the VandeMataram movement. In its issue dated October 5, 1907, the paper wrote "the power of patriotism is indescribable. Oh brethren, If we become possessed of the mighty strength of patriotism, the arbitrary authority exercised by the rulers over us will prove fruitless. We shall attain Swaraj and independence.

121. Andhra Patrika, April 10, 1914.

122. N.P.R., 1907, P. 378.

The English possess the priceless gem of patriotism we must have that gem and become patriotic like them."¹²³

The papers pointed out that patriotism was a unifying force and that it would unify the people and foster national progress. Andhra Patrika wrote in 1911. "It is patriotism that fosters national progress. It unites all classes of people together."¹²⁴ In another important editorial on January 23, 1917, it said that love, devotion to God, and patriotism were the three essentials for the salvation of human beings and added that patriotism was more important than the other two. Responding with eager enthusiasm to the exhortation of Dadabhai Naoroji to his countrymen "to work with courage and enthusiasm till Swaraj was attained", Andhra Kesari of Rajahmundry on 29th March 1907, made a very forceful and fervent plea to the people to remain united and to strive tirelessly, not minding the sacrifices they might have to make, for freeing the country from slavery to the British and for winning Swaraj. The paper made it clear that their salvation lay in self-help and self-exertion. It also urged them to give up foreign articles and buy those made in their own country.¹²⁵

123. N.P.R., 1907, P. 378.

124. Ibid., 1911, P. 1499.

125. Andhra Kesari, March 29, 1907.

Savitri of Kakinada also made a similar appeal to the patriotic sentiments of the people. In its issue for August 1907, it strongly deplored the tendency of Indians to imitate slavishly the manners, dress and customs of the Europeans totally disregarding their native customs, manners and dress. It wanted its readers realise that Englishmen adhered to their ways even in India. Directing attention on the poverty of the country it pointed out that it was due to the export of all raw material to England from India, imposition of foreign goods on India and suppression of Indian industries. The paper maintained that the only way to free the country from such disabling poverty was to revive native industries and boycott foreign goods.¹²⁶

Religious fervour was introduced into the nationalism preached by the Telugu press, and love for one's own country was presented as a sacred duty of all the citizens. Krishna Patrika in its issue dated August 11, 1907, wrote that patriots were "instruments of God" and that God never used His instruments in vain". It also quoted the views of Aurobindo on the connection between religion and patriotism. Andhra Kesari also preached patriotism with a religious zeal. The paper in its issue dated May 24, 1907, wrote, "We shall regard Bharata khandam as our Goddess and patriotism

126. Savitri, August, 1907.

as our religion and the improvement of our country as a sacrifice."¹²⁷

Krishna Patrika during the non-cooperation movement wrote that every individual should completely surrender himself to the nation's service : "Allow the country to use you as she desires. Your body is not yours. Your life, mind and future are not yours. They are all the property of your mother. Allow her to use them as she likes. The arrow does not ask the bow where it is being shot. This supreme dedication and sacrifice are needed at present for the country".

In preaching patriotism and nationalism some Telugu papers expressed the view that nationalism was not new to India. It was there even in early times and that it was not implanted in the soil of India by the British through their education system or administration. Andhra Patrika of November 16, 1920 wrote : The idea of nationality in India is not the outcome of English education.¹²⁸ Elaborating that point the same paper in its issue dated November 18, 1920 in an editorial under the heading 'vision of the mother' commented that national consciousness was not born in India

127. Andhra Kesari, May 24, 1907.

128. N.P.R., 1920, P. 1385.

recently. It did not start during the British rule. It did not have its birth due to English education. The idea of nationalism has been existing since immemorial times in the minds of the people residing between the Himalayas and Kanyakumari". The view of some critics of India that India was not a nation was totally rejected and effort was made to prove that different languages and religions prevailing in India did not constitute any obstacles to Indian nationalism. Krishna Patrika expressed the view that it was the good fortune of India that people of many languages and religions were living in the country and concluded that they were all Indians.¹²⁹

The same paper maintained that in India a new concept of nationality, was emerging. In its issue the paper said : "It has been so far held by the scholars of western political science that one language, one creed, and one culture is essential condition for producing a nationality. A new ideal has been dawning upon the world to the effect that unity may be maintained despite differences of language, creed and culture and India is going to proclaim the new message to the world."¹³⁰

129. Krishna Patrika, August 11, 1911.

130. Sri Sadhana, May 14, 1927.

The Telugu papers pointed out that nationalism was responsible for the progress of many countries and urged the Indians to cultivate deep attachment to the cause of the country. For example the Japan was frequently cited in the early part of the twentieth century to bring home to the people the advantages of patriotism. *Andhra Patrika* of June 23, 1927, in an editorial on patriotism commenting on Pandit Malaviya's speech substantiated his statement that patriotism was the cause for the progress of Japan, England and other countries and concluded that India also could move forward only with the vehicle of patriotism. In 1927 Sri Sadhana, comparing India with China, wrote that the problems of India would disappear only when the people of the country became patriotic.¹³¹

While the Telugu newspapers preached genuine patriotism, they were opposed to regional and linguistic Chauvinism. *Andhra Patrika* clearly warned its readers against the dangers of fanaticism and jingoism. The paper in its editorial, "Nationalism should not become chauvinism. It should not lead to hatred among nations. The lesson of the war in Europe (World War I) is that nationalism of an extreme type would lead to conflagration. Nationalism in

131. Sri Sadhana, April 21, 1923.

India should be of a spiritual nature and sublime so as to be beneficial to the entire mankind."¹³²

As part of their attempt to inculcate patriotism the Telugu papers advocated the spirit of sacrifice. They extolled sacrifice for the sake of the nation as an ideal and made direct appeals to the people to be ready to make sacrifices for the sake of the country. The following passage from Krishna Patrika is a typical example of such appeals issued in the nationalist press : "Self sacrifice is the key stone of all happiness. It alone will bring about emancipation. The life of every man must be sacrificed for the growth of national life. At every stage of the development of the nation, one's life has to be sacrificed. Mother India now wants the sacrifice of our hearts, our health, and our lives".

Andhra Kesari too emphasised the need for sacrifice. In its issue dated August 23, 1907, it said : "you cannot obtain Swaraj unless many of you pine away in jail, unless many of you leave this country though reluctantly and unless many of you undergo some kind of suffering or other".¹³³

132. Andhra Patrika, July 9, 1917.

133. N.P.R., 1907, P. 1094.

Congress made most inspiring appeals to the people for sacrifices. In one of its appeals, it deprecated the value of conferences and resolutions and remarked "So long as the people hesitate to make sacrifices for the emancipation of the country and are afraid of incurring displeasure, so long will such conferences and resolutions be confined to the waste paper basket."¹³⁴ Writing during the Salt Satyagraha movement, the same paper, in one of its editorials commented "When your country lives what harm is there if you are lost? When your country goes, of what advantage is your existence."¹³⁵

The papers praised freedom in their attempt to prepare the people for the freedom movement in India. Virtues and advantages of individual and national freedom were explained in detail. *Andhra Patrika* in an editorial entitled "The light of freedom" wrote : "for individuals or nations, there is nothing dearer than freedom. Human beings give greater value for freedom than for even life. All obstacles will melt before the sun of freedom."¹³⁶

Satyagrahi wrote that slavery would ruin the people physically and mentally and exhorted the people to work for

134. N.P.R., 1922.

135. Ibid., 1930, P. 897.

136. *Andhra Patrika*, April 16, 1921.

the freedom of the country.¹³⁷ In a scintillating editorial, the same paper wrote : "O Indian wake up The bird which flies in the air has complete freedom. The creatures which crawl on the earth have complete freedom; those which move in the waters also have complete freedom. You are a human being. How long will you lie as a slave ? O Indian, Wake up Wake up".¹³⁸

The importance of freedom was illustrated by referring to the freedom loving nature of all living beings. A verse published in Krishna Patrika under the heading "Parrot and freedom" illustrates how the papers tried to inculcate among the people love for freedom. The gist of the verse is; a parrot which has been brought up by a lady in a cage wants to fly away. The lady calls it ungrateful. The parrot in reply shows its wings and says that God intended her to fly freely in the forests.¹³⁹ The same journal once published "the story of the elephant" to emphasise the value of freedom. In an imaginary argument between the elephant and its custodian, the elephant wants the curbs on her to be removed. He first removes the chain and binds her with a rope. When the elephant wants even that to be removed, the

137. Satyagrahi, May 25, 1925.

138. Ibid., June 22, 1929.

139. Krishna Patrika, November 1, 1919.

custodian says that it would be dangerous if he were to do so as it may be attacked by ferocious animals. The reply of the elephant is that when free it can freely move about in the forest where not only enemies but also friends could be found.¹⁴⁰ Such writings reflected the state of the mind of the British rulers vis a vis the Indians. Indians refused to accept the Raj despite its talk of benevolence. The Telugu press echoed the demand of newspapers elsewhere in the country for freedom from colonial rule. To them nothing is sublime and glorious than independence. Thus the newspapers in Telugu language stood as the Vanguard of freedom struggle.

140. Krishna Patrika, June 22, 1918.