



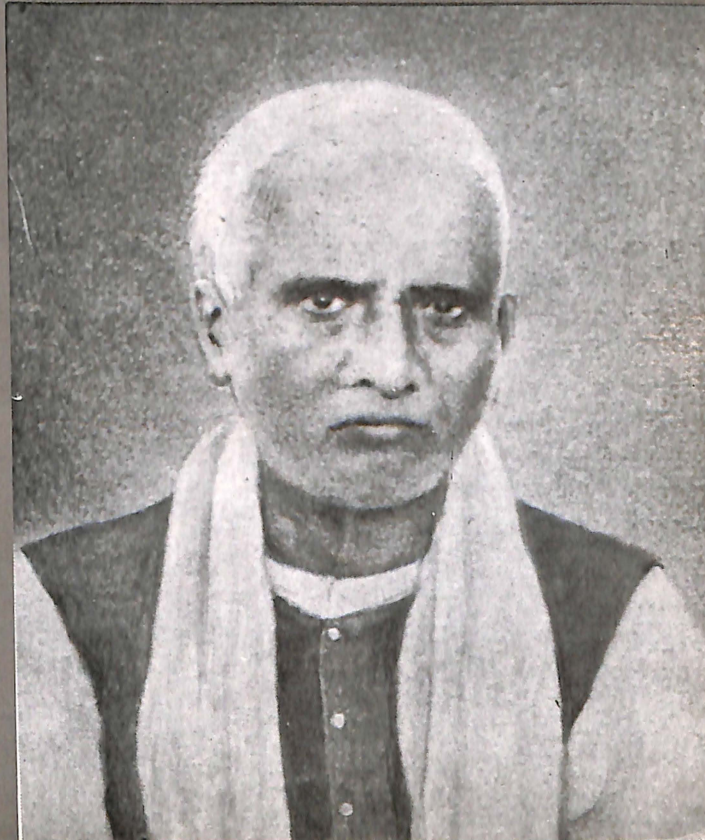
SURAVARAM PRATAPA REDDY

S. Laxmana Murthy

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*Makers of
Indian
Literature*

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SURAVARAM PRATAPA REDDY

The sculpture reproduced on the endpaper depicts a scene where three sooth sayers are interpreting to King Suddhodana the dream of Queen Maya, mother of Lord Buddha. Below them is seated a scribe recording the interpretation. This is perhaps the earliest available pictorial record of the art of writing in India.

From : Nagarjunakonda, 2nd century A.D.

Courtesy : National Museum, New Delhi.

Makers of Indian Literature

SURAVARAM PRATAPA REDDY

S. LAXMANA MURTHY



Sahitya Akademi

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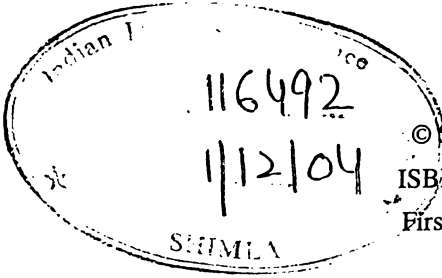
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PREFACE

As a result of the Police action in 1948 the State of Hyderabad ruled by the Nizam merged with the Indian Union. It set the people free from the shackles of feudal misrule. The three decades preceeding the Police action were marked by intense political activity and cultural reawakening in the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh. Together three distinguished personalities created the right political, cultural and intellectual climate in the region. They were Raja Bahadur Venkata Rama Reddy, Madapati Hanumantha Rao and Suravaram Pratapa Reddy.

Pratapa Reddy actively took part in the social reform and freedom movement. He was a fearless editor who staked everything to champion the cause of freedom. A linguist, poet, short story writer, playwright and critic, his service to Telugu language and culture was manifold.

A modest attempt is made in this monograph to introduce his unique personality. While writing this monograph, Professor Elluri Siva Reddy's *Suravaram Pratapa Reddy: His Life and Work* which won for him the Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akademi prize was of immense help to me. Professor Reddy's judicious evaluation has been specially useful to me. For further details, I have referred to another Akademi prize winning book on Pratapa Reddy by Muddasani Rami Reddy. I am deeply grateful to both these authors.

I am also thankful to Sri B.N. Sastry, Professor R.Srihari, Professor K.Suprasannacharya and Dr. Sree Rangacharya for their generous help and co-operation.

S. Laxmana Murthy

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Suravaram Pratapa Reddy has given yeoman service to the Telugu language, literature and culture by his scholarly contribution and direct participation in the popular movements launched to awaken the moral conscience and the political consciousness of the people in the Telangana region of the Nizam State. The Nizam State comprised of three regions - Telangana, Marathwada and Karnataka. The Telangana region consisted of eight Telugu speaking districts - Atraf Balda, Medak, Nizamabad, Adilabad, Karimnagar, Warangal, Nalgonda and Mahabubnagar. The Marathwada region had five Marathi speaking districts - Aurangabad, Bheed, Parbhani, Nanded and Osmanabad; the Karnataka region had three Kannada speaking districts - Gulbarga, Raichur and Bidar. Urdu was the official language of the State as also the medium of instruction. Telugu, Marathi and Kannada languished without any patronage or support. The deplorable position of Telugu in spite of it and being the language of majority, moved leaders like Pratapa Reddy to initiate a programme of action to win for Telugu its rightful place. Educational institutions in the Nizam State were few in number and the State administration was under the influence of feudalism.

Movements like *Andhra Mahasabha* and *Granthalaya Udyamam* (Library Movement) were aimed at creating political and cultural awareness among the masses. They synchronised with similar movements in the other feudal states which were under the influence of the Mahatma and the Indian Congress. Between 1945 and 1948 the State was rocked by the Razakar violence under the leadership of Kasim Razvi who unleashed a reign of terror with the acquiescence of the Nizam. The Nizam State merged with the Indian Union after the Police action in September 1948. Pratapa Reddy and the other leaders had to wage a war against illiteracy, ignorance and feudal oppression in the twenties and the thirties, and against the Razakar terrorism in the late forties. Those who took it upon themselves to fight for human rights and a decent life for people in the State went through very trying days. The significant role played by Pratapa Reddy falls into the right perspective viewed against this social and political background in the Nizam State. Pratapa Reddy was guided and supported by Madapati Hanumantha Rao and he worked with Burugula Rama Krishna Rao, Swami Ramananda Tirtha, G.S. Melkote, Konda Venkata Ranga Reddy, Adiraju Veerabhadra Rao, Devulapalli Ramanuja Rao and Gadiyaram Ramakrishna Sarma. The services rendered by this group of intellectuals and scholars merit an important chapter in the cultural history of Andhra Pradesh.

Chapter II

SURAVARAM PRATAPA REDDY : FAMILY BACKGROUND

Suravaram Pratapa Reddy was born in Itikalapadu, a hamlet near Alampur in the district of Mahabubnagar, Andhra Pradesh. Itikalpadu suffered from perennial water scarcity and hence the unenviable epithet in Telugu *nellu leni* (sans water) prefixed to it. But the village was close to Alampur which is often referred to as the Kashi of the South since the holy town is studded with numerous temples commended for their sanctity and architectural beauty in the Puranas. A large number of inscriptions at Alampur provide historical information about the kings of Andhra and their patronage to art and architecture. Alampur is reckoned among the 18 Shakti peethas, and has remained over the centuries a centre of learning.

‘Suravaram’, the family name of Pratapa Reddy, was probably derived from Shorapur where his ancestors originally flourished and later migrated to Itikalapadu. Shorapur is in the district of Gulbarga. It was also called Bhendar Shorapur as it was ruled by the Chiefs of the Boya Community.

It is said that Atchanna, hailing from the Surapuram family, left Kyathur where they had lived for years and settled in Itikalapadu. Gradually the family acquired wealth, and in

course of time, Atchanna's grandson Ella Reddy became the Patel of the village. Ella Reddy's grandson Papi Reddy was interested in Telugu Literature. He was an engaging conversationalist as well. The impoverished Boya chiefs of Chandur sold away their *Jagir* to Suravaram Papi Reddy. Papi Reddy had four sons - Venkata Reddy, Narayana Reddy, Vengala Reddy and Ramakrishna Reddy.

Narayana Reddy married Rangamma of Boravalli village. Pratapa Reddy was their first son. He had two younger brothers. Narayana Reddy lived for some time at Boravalli and acquired substantial property. He returned to Itikalapadu after his father's death, at the request of his brothers. Narayana Reddy had an abiding interest in Sanskrit and Telugu Literatures. Highly disciplined in personal life, he always contributed his mite to the cause of spreading education among the rural masses. Narayana Reddy died when his son Pratapa Reddy was in his early teens. Within two years, his brother Venkata Reddy also died. Ramakrishna Reddy, the youngest of the Suravaram brothers, established a Sanskrit Pathasala at Kurnool and supported it financially by paying salaries regularly to the Pundits and providing free board and lodging to the students. He gave away most of his earnings in charity. When Gandhiji visited Kurnool, Ramakrishna Reddy met the Mahatma and presented a silver charkha to him. He revelled in the company of Sanskrit scholars and poets. As his brothers died, he supported their families and looked after their children as his own with great love and affection. Pratapa Reddy shaped himself under the loving supervision of his uncle. Pratapa Reddy often reminisced his affection and greatfully referred to his large heartedness purity of conduct, passion for learning and mastery of Sanskrit and Telugu. Pratapa Reddy declared that he would not have gone to school but for the persistent efforts and loving concern of his generous uncle.

In the Telangana Reddy community of those days, the Suravaram family was perhaps next to the family of the Rajah of Wanaparthy to opt for English education. Pratapa Reddy was born in such a family having this unique background.

EARLY LIFE

Pratapa Reddy was born on 28 May 1896 at Boravalli, the home of his maternal grandparents. His parents named him Papi Reddy. However, soon he came to be known as Pratapa Reddy. Pratapa Reddy lived in the village till the age of seven. His early schooling was traditional and old-fashioned. He was subjected to the routine of getting by rote the arithmetic tables. These dry mechanical exercises in the village school did not inspire any interest in him. Subsequently, a tutor was engaged to teach him English at Boravalli in a week. This continued even after the family went to live at Itikalapadu. A year later in 1904 young Pratap was admitted to the A B Missionary Elementary School at Kurnool. Although he was taken into Standard IV directly, he could not cope with the prescribed syllabus. He gradually became indifferent to studies and failed in Mathematics and hence remained in Standard IV. Later he joined Coles Memorial School. Here he found the atmosphere a little more congenial. Persuaded to study Sanskrit as a second language, he made rapid progress and continued to study the language until matriculation. In about two years he was able to complete the study of *Raghuvamsa* and *Kumara Sambhava* of Kalidasa along with *Kirataarjuniya* of Bharavi. He appeared for matriculation in 1912 and quite expectedly failed in Mathematics. A second attempt saw him scraping through matriculation. However, English, Sanskrit and History fetched him good marks. When he left school, the Headmaster proudly certified that Pratap was “honest, straightforward, intelligent but not industrious”.

While still at school Pratapa Reddy resolved to study Telugu language and literature and also make an impressive mark as a scholar and poet. In those days students were encouraged to learn English and hardly any one cared for Telugu. Realising that he would not get any help in his efforts to master Telugu, he decided to go it alone. He acquired the works of Chilakamarthi Lakshmi Narasimham and Kandukuri Veeresa Lingam, the two great writers of modern Telugu literature and studied them with intense care. He proceeded to study the Telugu poetical classics with a critical outlook. He wrote to the publishers, obtained by mail the books of his choice in Telugu and made a detailed study of them alone with the help of a dictionary. He mastered Telugu grammar and prosody. He acquired flawless scholarship in Telugu by unremitting labour. In order to train himself to become a writer, he started, hardly nineteen years of age to translate a novel from English.

EDUCATION

Pratapa Reddy was busy preparing for matriculation, when his father passed away. The sudden tragedy unsettled him. Yet he managed to get through the examination in 1913. He was not particularly keen on pursuing his higher studies. Compounding this were the family circumstances which were not very encouraging. He felt that he and his family would be better off if he stayed at home and took to farming. His uncle had his own reasons to persuade him to go for higher studies. He may have believed that it would be unjust to deny the boy the advantage of higher education. He was also bound by the moral obligation to keep the boy free from want and not deny him all that his father would have given him had he been alive. Soon after, his uncle took him to Hyderabad. It was his first visit to the city. He felt himself out of place in

the totally strange environment. He knew little or no Urdu, which then was the official language of the State and medium of instruction in educational institutions all over the Nizam's dominion. Wrongly informed about no provision of admission at the Nizam College which was then affiliated to Madras University, the young boy and his uncle proceeded to Madras. Much to their dismay they reached Madras too late for admission. Finally Pratap Reddy was admitted to Nizam College as a student of intermediate and passed the examination in the second attempt in 1917. His two-year stay at Hyderabad helped him to get acquainted with Raja Bahadur Venkata Rama Reddy who was the most distinguished personality of his times. He was prominent in the aristocratic circles, as he was the Kotwal (City Police Commissioner) in the service of the Nizam. The patronage of the Kotwal Saheb proved a turning point in his life.

After passing the intermediate examination, Pratapa Reddy left for Madras to pursue B.A. at the prestigious Presidency College. He chose Sanskrit as second language, and this brought him in contact with renowned scholars like Vellala Sadasiva Sastry and Vedam Venkataraya Sastry. His study of Sanskrit during the early school days stood him in good stead. He obtained his B.A. in 1921. While in Madras Pratapa Reddy devoted most of his time to the study of Telugu classics. His love of Telugu literature was very deep. He had developed a keen sense of analysis and made extensive notes on rites, rituals, customs and taboos prevailing in various communities. Very early in life he cultivated the habit of writing down his impressions, in brief, of every book that he had read.

The most important event in his student life was his encounter with Manavalli Ramakrishna Kavi. Kavi was an eminent scholar of Sanskrit and Telugu. He was the editor

for Bharata's *Natya Sastra* of Gaikwad Oriental Series and compiled *Bharata Kośa* in Sanskrit. For the first time, he also edited and published Telugu *Kumara Sambhava* of Nanne Choda. This was a remarkable contribution to Telugu literature and it is considered an important milestone in the history of Telugu poetry.

Manavalli was then living in Madras. He introduced the socio-historical perspective in evaluating Telugu poetry, and prodded the young scholars to abandon the beaten track and discover the authenticity of literary work as a genuine social document. Pratapa Reddy sought him out to get some of his doubts in Telugu literature clarified. The young Reddy was supremely confident of his own scholarship and he believed that he had already read all the right classics of Telugu. But in the presence of Manavalli, he was quick to realise that his reading was merely peripheral and lacked the needful perspective and direction. He was soon to realise the value of the works which earlier he had dismissed as of no consequence.

Manavalli advised him to read the following Telugu classics among others: *Andhra Mahabharatham*, *Uttara Hari Vamshamu*, *Dasakumara Charitramu*, *Keyura Bahu Charitramu*, *Bhoja Rejeeyamu*, *Suka Saptati*, *Sringara Sakuntalamu*, *Vikramarka Vijayamu*, *Markandeya Puranam*, *Ekadasi Mahatmyamu*.

Pratapa Reddy followed his advice and critically studied these works. He also actively contributed articles to *Matriseva*, *Pinakini* and *Kala*. He had the good fortune of having a close rapport with P.V. Rajamannar and Gadicherla Hari Sravothama Rao his classmates at college. During his stay in Madras, Pratapa Reddy reflected deeply on the plight of Telugu language. While in Nizam's dominion Urdu and Persian

flourished, English dominated in the other Telugu districts which were then under Madras Presidency. He regretted that Telugu was not given due importance and his concern was that Telugu might be neglected totally in course of time. He resolved to work towards generating necessary awareness of its importance and thus motivate the younger generation to love and learn Telugu enough to appreciate its rich literature. Telugu literature claiming all his time, this proved a handicap to him in his study of law. He had to make more than one attempt to obtain a B.L., which he finally did in 1924.

Returning to his native village, Reddy got busy with the study of the Upanishads, *Laws of Manu*, other Hindu codes, Sanskrit grammar, Nyaya philosophy, Mimamsa and Vedanta. He also tried to collect folk songs from the itinerant mendicants and villagers. He got some of them published in newspapers and magazines like *Reddy Rani*.

Chapter III

REDDY HOSTEL

His life at the village was quiet. There was no need to seek employment since the modest means of the family was enough to support his life. Pratapa Reddy had no inclination to practise law. He wanted to live in the village devoting his time to the study and research in Telugu literature. However, his uncle sent him to Hyderabad to help one Basi Reddy who apprehended trouble from a rich Zamindar family. Pratapa Reddy was asked to advise him in legal matters and seek necessary help from Raja Bahadur Venkata Rama Reddy and Pingle Venkata Rama Reddy. They readily agreed to help Basi Reddy, but insisted that Pratapa Reddy should stay back in Hyderabad to be the Warden of the newly established Reddy Hostel. He did not like the assignment for several reasons. The young men who belonged to the aristocratic Reddy families stayed as boarders at the hostel and they flouted all rules. Reports went that most of the inmates of the Hostel were indisciplined and manhandled the office staff refusing to pay up their dues.

Most reluctantly, Pratapa Reddy agreed to accept the assignment, but under certain conditions. He wanted a free

hand in the management of the hostel. The hostellers should abide by the code of conduct prepared by him and approved by the management. Finally, he insisted that he should be allowed to work at the hostel, in an honorary capacity, without any remuneration. Raja Bahadur agreed to these terms. Pratapa Reddy was in charge of Reddy Hostel for almost eight years. During his stewardship, the hostel came to be recognised for its discipline. Its financial position was sound. Most of the boarders passed their examinations with distinction. He extended the hostel library by about twelve thousand volumes. The management of the hostel was a tribute to his administrative ability. Reddy Hostel of Hyderabad owes its progress to Pratapa Reddy. His association with the hostel came to an abrupt end. Somebody made a complaint to the police that Pratapa Reddy had bought for the hostel library a copy of Savarkar's *War of Indian Independence* which had been banned by the Nizam Government. The complaint also referred to his anti-government and nationalist ideas. He was also charged with encouraging the young men to participate in Satyagraha. He was also dubbed a staunch congressman. These charges were considered extremely serious in the twenties and especially during the Nizam's dominion. The hostel managing committee did not support Pratapa Reddy. In sheer despair, he quit the hostel without getting so much as a word of appreciation from the management for the services he had rendered for years without remuneration. Yes, the hostel management paid glowing tributes to his services during its Golden Jubilee Celebrations. Alas! it was too late and posthumous.

Chapter IV

LAW PRACTICE

Although his uncle insisted that Pratapa Reddy should practise law at Hyderabad, he dodged it, and finally left for his village where he spent six months studying Sanskrit and Telugu classics. He had by then gathered enough material to author his first book *Hinduvula pandugalu (Festivals of the Hindus)*. This brought him immediate recognition in scholarly circles. For various reasons he finally decided to set up his law practise at Kurnool. He went to Hyderabad to pack up and leave for Kurnool. But Kotwal Venkata Rama Reddy asked him to practise law at Hyderabad and promised a regular monthly remuneration of Rs.200/-. It is difficult to say as to how long he practised law. He intensely detested the profession because of the way it was practised in the feudal courts of those days in Hyderabad. He felt that the profession did not suit his temperament. He gave it up within a few years. Although the profession was considered very lucrative and prestigious in those days, he had no regrets in quitting it. Instead, he chose to plough the lonely furrow in the field of Telugu literature which offered him no material advantage.

Chapter V

GOLCONDA PATRIKA

Busy with the administration of Reddy Hostel, Pratapa Reddy was however feeling uneasy at Hyderabad because he was unable to reconcile himself with the way of life there. Raja Bahadur Venkata Rama Reddy would not allow him to leave Hyderabad. Pratapa Reddy often suggested to Raja Bahadur that there was need to start a newspaper to support the cause of social reform and render service to the people of the Nizam State. In fact, Pratapa Reddy thought of it while still at Madras as a student. He wanted the newspaper to be an instrument of social reform which in his view should follow social service. He wanted to use plain and simple language to effectively deliver the message. Choosing a name for the newspaper, he thought of *Desa Bandhu* because the word also meant 'harijan'.

Raja Bahadur finally made plans for starting a newspaper. He collected about seven thousand rupees by way of donations and gave the amount to Pratapa Reddy. A printing press was bought and arrangements were made for the publication of a newspaper. After several days of discussion, it was decided to call it *Golconda Patrika*. Raja Bahadur used his influence

to get permission from the British Resident who hesitated for long because “the editor is a *Khaddar man*”. *Golconda Patrika* was thus started a bi-weekly on 10th May 1926. Pratapa Reddy edited it for two years. Then he set up practice as a lawyer because his uncle put enormous pressure on him. While practising law he could not be the editor of the newspaper according to the rules then in force in the Nizam State. Then the Committee met and decided, for official purpose only, to appoint Konda Balakrishna Reddy as the editor while the press was registered in the name of Gaddampalli Krishna Reddy. This arrangement was merely on paper. But Pratapa Reddy did the entire editorial work and published the paper single-handedly working for days virtually round the clock without any monetary gain.

One had to face innumerable difficulties in running a newspaper during those days in the Nizam State. There was very little regard for Telugu language. Even the Telugu people spoke, read and wrote Urdu only. Urdu newspapers were popular. There was hardly any scope for a Telugu paper to survive. In addition, the government surveillance proved inconvenient and there was little or no freedom to publish news and express views. There were frequent raids on the newspaper office and a heavy penalty was often imposed on mere suspicion. Pratapa Reddy was further handicapped because he had no experience required for the publication of newspaper. He had no assistants at office to help him. He was editor, clerk and attender all rolled into one. There were two other papers published in the Nizam State in Telugu. One was *Nilagiri* published from Nalgonda and the other was *Telugu Patrika* published from Inugurthi, a small village in Warrangal district. But they survived for about five years and ceased publication because of heavy losses. *Golconda Patrika* had to struggle hard for survival. But Pratapa Reddy worked

with dedication and was able to write at the end of five years:

“Right from the start we have kept two objectives in our view - to serve the cause of Telugu language and to work for the welfare of Telugu speaking people of all classes without any bias We have not tried to hide unpleasant truth. We have never resorted to falsehood out of spite. Honest to God, we have done our duty in accordance with time, place and propriety”.

Pratapa Reddy felt that it was his duty to inspire the Telugu speaking people of the Nizam State, to realise the sanctity of freedom and self-respect. Within ten years *Golconda Patrika* established itself as a fearless crusader for freedom. Pratapa Reddy wrote in one of the editorials:

“We have worked hard to make these dumb people speak out. We are happy that our efforts have begun to bear fruit”

Golconda Patrika faced another handicap. There were not many writers in Telugu, and there were no news correspondents. Pratapa Reddy often went out of his way to encourage the young and budding writers. He also trained quite a few young men as correspondents to support the paper. He was very much ahead of his times in opening a column as early as 1930 in his paper to discuss exclusively the rights of women and their welfare. He deliberately provoked women to respond by publishing views of certain male chauvanists. He always conducted the discussion with dignity and decorum. He was happy when women expressed their views about their rights. He would meet them personally, encourage them to write and fight for freedom. A large number of writers who subsequently rose to fame had made their debut in *Golconda Patrika*. *Patrika* became in course of time financially viable. As explained earlier, Konda Balakrishna Reddy was named

the editor of the *Patrika* to get over certain official hurdles. He insisted that he should be paid a monthly salary of Rs.40/-. He also wanted to control the finances of the *Patrika*, and demanded that the mail should be delivered to him. He threatened that he would order the closure of the *Patrika* if these demands were not met. Then the management realised its error and persuaded Pratapa Reddy to take over the editorship officially. All these years he had been struggling hard, editing the paper without official recognition. His name appeared as the editor of the *Patrika* for the first time on August 31, 1939. He continued as its editor till 1947. As editor of the *Patrika* he had to his credit about 2000 essays besides poems, short stories, editorials, skits and literary criticism. He published under several pseudonyms like 'Chitrugupta', 'Sangrama Simha', 'Yugapathi' and 'Srisakumar'. Pratapa Reddy nursed the *Patrika* with great love and devotion. It remained a bi-weekly till 1947 under his editorship.

In 1947 the management of the *Patrika* decided to convert the bi-weekly into a daily newspaper. There was a big change in the composition of the Board of Management. While converting the *Patrika* into a daily, the management also put forth several conditions to which Pratapa Reddy did not agree. He felt that those conditions would infringe on his freedom. He expressed his inability to serve as its editor. Thus ended his long association with *Golconda Patrika* which in fact came into existence at his instance. However, he felt happy that he had the opportunity to promote Telugu and serve the Telugu speaking community in the Nizam State. He edited *Praja Vani* for a short time. He wanted to shape it into a research journal. But unfortunately it came to be a short-lived venture.

Pratapa Reddy was an intrepid editor who always

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championed the cause of the socially disadvantaged. His contribution to Telugu journalism and his erudition will be remembered for long.

Chapter VI

ANDHRA MAHASABHA

Pratapa Reddy was associated with a number of organisations and institutions. He always guided himself by the principle that an institution or organisation should not be used for promoting individuals. It was his cherished belief that individuals should give up their personal preferences and prejudices in order to strengthen the institution to achieve its objectives for the general good. Whenever he felt that an institution or an organisation was being used for vested interests, he refused to compromise and quit its membership, no matter how unpleasant the consequences were. In fact, there were very few cultural organisations in the Nizam State. Because of illiteracy and poverty under the feudal misrule, the people hardly ever thought of organising themselves to fight for their rights or to work for their own welfare. There was no leadership in the Nizam state. But people who spoke Urdu, Telugu, Marathi and Kannada lived in perfect harmony. However, there was an urge among the different linguistic groups to have separate cultural organisations to promote their literature and arts and to celebrate the festivals of their community. There was a long felt need for a Telugu organisation to initiate cultural renaissance in the Telangana

area. Madapati Hanumantha Rao, a dedicated and selfless leader was then living in Hyderabad.

Pratapa Reddy used to address the students of Reddy hostel on various topics beneficial to them. These speeches were well attended. This was a rare event at Hyderabad under the Nizam's rule. It was not possible to organise a public meeting anywhere in the State. There was no room for criticism of the Government, and its despotic officials. A strict surveillance on the people who wore khadi and sported a Gandhi cap was in practice. A "Khaddar man" was considered a dangerous species in the police circles. It was difficult to get permission for newspapers. In these circumstances, Madapati Hanumantha Rao came to know of Pratapa Reddy and invited him to speak at Sri Krishnadevaraya Andhra Bhasha Nilayamu on "The Telugu People of the Nizam State". Reddy's speech was very well received and praised for its analytical exposition of the plight of the Telugas and their language.

Madapati led Pratapa Reddy gradually into active politics and sought his support for his movement to awaken and unite Andhras. From 1929 onwards Pratapa Reddy was in the forefront of Andhra Mahasabha (Andhra Conference), the only organisation which tried to educate people on the political issues, acting from behind the scenes through Merchant's Associations, Library Conferences and Youth Festivals.

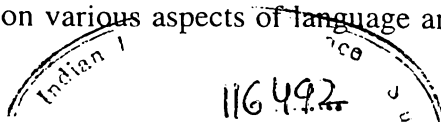
Andhra Mahasabha had its first massive public meeting in 1930 at Jogipet of Medak District under the Presidentship of Pratapa Reddy. Though the State Congress came into being in 1929 under the Presidentship of Swami Ramananda Tirtha, the Nizam Government banned it in 1931. Almost all its leaders were either jailed or externed. There was no trace of it till 1946. Since there was no possibility of survival for a political organisation, Andhra Mahasabha continued to exist

in the garb of a cultural organisation and reached the people of Telangana with the message of political freedom. Pratapa Reddy served as the Secretary of the Andhra Mahasabha from 1931 to 1934. Madapati and Pratapa Reddy toured several districts of the Telangana area, visited some of the villages, addressed the gatherings in Telugu explaining to them the reasons for their backwardness. They urged them to realise the need of literacy and personal hygiene. They exhorted the people to set up a primary school and a small library in every village. Pratapa Reddy addressed the meetings in Telugu adopting the idiom of villagers to explain some of the difficult concepts in a simple manner. The method had good impact on them and it became very popular. The Sabha organised annual conferences at various places in Telangana. These meetings were largely attended. He made inspiring speeches at such conferences held at Judcherla, Manthana, Bhongir, Kandur and Samsabad. Referring to one of his speeches, *The Deccan Star* wrote that “Then Mr. Pratapa Reddy B.A., B.L. delivered a highly illuminating and instructive address which ‘breathes the spirit of nationalism’ and ‘a burning zeal of service to the Public’”.

Chapter VII

LITERARY AND CULTURAL LINKS

Pratapa Reddy's association with the Sabha continued for several years. Gradually political issues gained importance while social and cultural concerns became secondary since the Sabha felt that there was a pressing necessity to agitate against the autocratic rule of the Nizam. As a political organisation, the scope of the Sabha widened, and its character as an exclusive organisation for Telugu cultural renaissance also changed. The change was evident during its sixth conference held at Nizamabad in 1931. Pratapa Reddy had little inclination to participate in political agitations. Convinced that he could render useful service to Telugu language and literature, he withdrew slowly from the political field and confined himself to literary research and Telugu journalism. He worked hard to promote literary and cultural organisations. "Vijnana Vardhini Parishath" was one of them. Pratapa Reddy formed it in 1941. He was its Secretary for the first two years and later its President. The Parishath members would present research papers by turns at the meetings held once in two weeks. Scholarly discussion invariably followed the presentation of papers. The Parishath published many standard works on various aspects of language and culture.



Pratapa Reddy's *Ramayana Viseshamulu* was published by the Parishath. Among its members were renowned scholars like Adiraju Veerabhadra Rao, Kappagantula Laxmana Sastry, Chelamacherla Rangacharyulu, Khandavalli Laxmi Ranjanam and Keshavapanthula Narasimha Sastry. Two years later, "Andhra Saraswatha Parishat" came into existence.

Pratapa Reddy, Madapati Hanumantha Rao, Burgula Ramakrishna Rao and Devulapalli Ramanuja Rao met on May 26, 1943 at the office of *Golconda Patrika* and formed "Andhra Saraswatha Parishat" to serve Telugu literature and culture. Pratapa Reddy strengthened the Parishath by associating himself with it as its President for two terms and continued to extend his support till the end of his life. Andhra Saraswatha Parishath has been doing commendable service to Telugu literature and culture for the last fifty years by publishing books on science, arts and literature and also by conducting examinations in the Telugu language and literature. The Parishath published Pratapa Reddy's *Andhrula Sanghika Charitra* which received Sahitya Akademi award in 1949.

Pratapa Reddy was deeply interested in Ayurveda. He was for a few years the President of the Hyderabad Ayurveda Sanghamu. He authored and published a number of booklets on the importance of Ayurveda. The close friendship with Vedala Ramanuja Swami, the doyen of Ayurvedic Physicians, resulted in his love of Ayurveda intensifying.

He was closely associated with Krishnadevaraya Andhra Bhasha Nilayamu, Laxmana Raya Parishodhaka Mandali, Vemana Granthalayamu and Balasaraswathi Granthalayamu.

His involvement in the library movement was intense and it was close to his heart. Paturi Nagabhushanam and Gandicherla Hari Sarvothama Rao introduced him to the

movement. His Presidential address at the annual Andhra Granthalaya Sabha dealt with the library movement in detail; advised the scholars to preserve the rare vocabulary of the rural masses; to work for the completion of the Telugu encyclopaedia; to train the young men to take up research on scientific lines; and to promote responsible journalism. His address stressed particularly on the need to learn Tamil and Kannada in order to develop comparative linguistic study in Telugu. He wanted the village libraries to evolve into the centres of village development.

Pratapa Reddy served the library movement as the Vice-President of the Andhra Library Society, to the very end. He presided over the 23rd Andhra Desa Library Conference. He worked hard to organise the annual Conferences of the library society in several towns and villages. He wanted these Conferences to arrange exhibits of antique artifacts in order to promote historical knowledge. He encouraged the young scholars to collect and preserve the age-old palm leaf manuscripts. He was among the first to realise the importance of the preservation of manuscripts for the publication of standard editions of the Telugu classics.

Pratapa Reddy felt the need for a school with Telugu as the medium of instruction. Although he managed Excelsior School, an Andhra School, for twelve years as its Secretary, he was keen on starting an independent institution. With the help of Madapati Hanumantha Rao and Redreddy Damodara Reddy he strove for the establishment of Andhra Vidyalaya in 1944. He worked for its progress being its Secretary. The school has now grown in a full-fledged college. He was also instrumental in establishing in Hyderabad the Andhra Girls' School, presently named after its founder, Madapati Hanumantha Rao. Pratapa Reddy was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1952 as a Congress candidate from

Wanaparthi constituency of Mahabubnagar district. But he was soon disillusioned with power politics.

He was in favour of forming a unified Andhra State for the Telugu speaking people who then were divided into Andhra and Telangana regions. He was against the narrow interpretation of 'Andhra'. He never discriminated between Andhra and Telangana. He wrote to defend vigorously the unity of Telugu people and promoted the cause through his editorials in *Golconda Patrika*. He was among the first to initiate the movement for 'Vishala Andhra'. His dream was realised in 1956 with the formation of Andhra Pradesh, three years after his death.

For about thirty years from 1925 he actively participated in every field of activity relating to the literature and culture of Andhras.

Chapter VIII

FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES

Pratapa Reddy considered himself a student of Vedam Venkataraya Sastry who authored an erudite commentary on the poetic work, *Amukta Mālyada* of Sri Krishnadevaraya. Sastry was also a great playwright in Telugu. Madapati Hanumantha Rao with whom Pratapa Reddy worked for several years came to be honoured in later years as “Andhra Pithamaha”. He was also the Chairman of the first Legislative Council of Andhra Pradesh. Among other associates of Pratapa Reddy, Burgula Ramakrishna Rao was the first Chief Minister of Hyderabad State. He also served as the Governor of Uttara Pradesh and Kerala. Konda Venkata Ranga Reddy served Andhra Pradesh as the Deputy Chief Minister. A district in Andhra Pradesh is named after him. Devulapalli Ramanuja Rao who was the Secretary of Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akademi for several years, and Gadiyaram Ramakrishna Sarma a renowned scholar and researcher were closely associated with Pratapa Reddy.

Professor B.Ramaraju, an eminent scholar and researcher, derived inspiration from Pratapa Reddy and devoted himself exclusively to literary research. Dr. Raju is now honoured

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with a National Professorship for his contribution to Telugu literature and culture.

Kappangantula Laxmana Sastry, Kesavapantula Narasimha Sastry and Chelamacherla Ranga Charyulu, all renowned scholars of Sanskrit, were influenced by Pratapa Reddy's passion for methodical research.

Chapter IX

PERSONAL LIFE

Pratapa Reddy married Padmavathamma in 1916. Both of them had frugal habits and managed the family within their modest means.

He could have easily got an enviable position in the Government service in those days in view of his educational qualification and also because he was close to Raja Bahadur Venkata Rama Reddy, the Kotwal of the Nizam State. But it was alien to his nature to seek favours or comforts. Even while editing the popular *Golconda Patrika* he lived in an old tiled house. Simply clad in homespun cloth, he was a confirmed vegetarian by choice. He had a deep aversion for publicity and never sought any office for gain. He was an impressive speaker. But he always made it a principle to speak only after careful study of the subject. He disliked rhetoric and disapproved of playing to the gallery. He was always simple in expression and sincere in his conviction.

Pratapa Reddy divided his time between social activities and creative writing. As the editor of *Golconda Patrika*, he had to write a large number of essays and reviews of scholarly works. Apart from these occasional writings, Pratapa Reddy

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composed poetry, authored dramas, wrote essays, penned quite a few memorable short stories, biographies and finally brought out three monumental works based on original research.

Chapter X

AS A POET

He started publishing poetry very early in *Krishna Patrika*. He did not preserve them as he had felt that they were mere exercises of a youth. Later he wrote two fairly long poems *Champaki Bhrāmara Vishadamu*, a poem in about 250 verses and *Hari Sharma Upakhyanam* with a humorous theme in about a hundred verses. Unfortunately these were lost in the course of time.

We have two poems *Premarpanamu* and *Hamvira Sambhavam* giving us a fairly good idea of his poetic talent.

Premarpanamu celebrates the power of love which transcends the barriers of caste, creed, class and other social distinctions based on the economic situation. The poem narrates the story of a princess who has lost her heart to an ordinary shepherd. She refuses to change her mind in spite of strong disapproval from her father. The king then despatches his soldiers to kill the shepherd. While dying the poor shepherd leaves his herd of sheep to the care of the princess. She takes care of the sheep. Because of her intense grief, within a month she too dies at the same place where her lover was killed. A poet inscribes a poem on the grave of the princess which reads thus:

*Caste or imperial power
Wealth or cruel sword
Can never check the power of pure-hearted love.*

Though the theme is simple, the poetic talent is evident in the delicate imagery and skilful versification. The poem seems evidently influenced by his study of English Romantic poets.

Hamvira Sambhavamu has about twenty five verses in different meters. Its theme is the birth of a Rajput hero named Hamvira. King Arsi of Chittor meets a young peasant girl while chasing a wild boar. She kills the boar with her sickle. Her beauty and her valour captivate the King. On enquiry she tells the King:

*My family
never bowed to the rich,
though poor
never swerved from the right path,
in war
they never turned their backs,
and
they lived in dignity and pride.*

The King goes to her father and seeks her hand in marriage. The child born of the marriage is named Hamvira. The poem provides good evidence of his mastery of versification. He has made the narrative delightful with deft use of Telugu idioms and proverbs.

Pratapa Reddy narrated in verse the story of Gajni Mahmood and Firdausi in about 140 lines. Firdausi was asked to write a poem for which he was promised reward in gold. The King not only failed to keep his promise but also arrogantly slighted the poet. Firdausi left the country. Later the King realised his mistake and in remorse sent the reward as promised to the

poet. But the poet breathed his last just before the King's messengers arrived with the gold. *Firdausi* of Gurram Joshua is justly famous as a superb poetic achievement in Telugu. But the fact remains that Pratapa Reddy's little poem preceeded Joshua's masterpiece by twelve years.

There are also certain minor poems like *Dharmaasanamu*, *Madyapaanamamu* and *Padmini* in Telugu. Pratapa Reddy also wrote a few witty verses in colloquial Telugu of Telangana region. Some of his verses are consciously modelled on those of the Telugu classical poets like Srinatha. They demonstrate his intimate knowledge of Telugu classics.

Chapter XI

AS AN ESSAYIST

While editing *Golconda Patrika* Pratapa Reddy was obliged to write a number of essays on certain local issues of the day. Even among them there were a few essays which could be profitably anthologised because of their perennial interest. Apart from these he contributed close to two hundred essays of scholarly interest based on research in history and culture. Although he wrote occasionally on literature, he was not able to devote much time exclusively for literary criticism.

His essays on *Śuka Saptati* was published in 1912 in *Kala*, edited and published by his friend and collegemate P.V. Rajamannar who in later years became a legal luminary and rose to be the Chief Justice of Madras High Court. He was also a pioneering modern playwright in Telugu.

His essay on untouchability is cited for its incisive comments on this social evil. It was published in 1922. *Sumathi Sataka* is a very popular book of poems in Telugu. It is a century of tiny verses in *Kanda* meter designed to offer wise counsel on social and personal matters. Pratapa Reddy examined the poem and expressed the fact that some of its verses were mere

translations from Sanskrit. There is a well-known verse in the Satakam which reads as follows:

*Riches may come softly and silently
Like water in a coconut
They may also go leaving you a shell
Like a Kapitha fruit swallowed by an elephant.*

The belief is that the elephant swallows the fruit in such a way that it leaves an empty shell perfectly intact. What is inside is taken away silently without anybody noticing it. Similarly, nobody knows how and when water gets into a coconut. In the same way one becomes rich or poor as subtly as that. Pratapa Reddy has shown the incongruity of the elephant in the poem. He has proved beyond doubt that the word 'Kari' in the verse did not mean elephant, but it referred to a worm that got into *Kapitha* and rendered it an empty shell.

His critical appreciation of *Gatha Sapthasathi* is one of the seminal essays in Telugu. Rallapalli Anantha Krishna Sarma selected and translated 395 *Gathas* into Telugu to bring out their beauty. Pratapa Reddy felt that there were fifty more which were equally good for translation in view of their poetic quality.

He has also popularised the study of *Harischandra Upakhyana* of Gowrana in Telugu, by evaluating its poetic merit in a detailed essay. It was for him a rare *Kavya* free from all those defects which beset the Prabandhas. He loved it for its lucid display of Telugu idiom.

He wrote also on Ketana and Tikkana to highlight their unique poetic gifts. Well-versed in Sanskrit and Persian, Pratapa Reddy attempted a comparative study of 33 words to explore the close relationship of these two languages. In fact

he had planned to write a whole book on this aspect of comparative philology.

In one of his essays he suggested the use of a common script for all Indian languages. He discussed the features of Kannada and Telugu scripts separately and pleaded for the adoption of Kannada-Telugu script for this purpose. He said that he had argued for it because of his scientific approach to the problem, and not out of any misplaced love for his language. He has suggested a method to simplify the Telugu alphabet to facilitate easy printing.

The Telugu translation of the Holy Bible was the first book in print in Telugu and it was published in 1801. There have been efforts ever since to reform the Telugu alphabet to suit the needs of printing technology. Telugu alphabet was felt to be cumbersome with 57 letters. There was a persistent need to simplify the alphabet. The first suggestion in this direction came from Sri Sankara Narayana in 1897 in his preface to his own *English - Telugu dictionary*. Pratapa Reddy wanted to reduce the number of letters and also provide in the Telugu alphabet distinct letters for the sounds of F and Z found in Urdu and English. After a careful study of different scripts, Pratapa Reddy suggested an alphabet of 28 letters for Telugu. He argued that the smaller alphabet would usher in a revolution in Telugu printing.

In the late forties itself, Reddy planned for a childrens' Literature. He insisted that a special literature for children was necessary to nurture proper flowering of their innate gifts.

He was convinced that literature always reflected social history. He made a close study of Telugu classics from this point of view. He was content to leave the appreciation of literary excellence of the *Kavyas* to other scholars. His aim

was to unveil the facts relating to life, as it was lived four or five hundred years ago in Telugu province. He made the first attempt in this direction with his essay on *Panduranga Mahatmyamu*, a poem of the 16th century. He brought out many little known facts of social history in his essay. This also served as the base for his monumental work in this area in later years.

His essays on Elephanta Caves and the Fort of Panagallu reveal his skill in narrative prose.

He undertook a long and arduous journey to explore the ancient temples lying close to Kollapur of Mahabubnagar district and appealed to the Government to protect them as historical monuments for posterity.

He prepared a long essay on the need to study history objectively and to make the discipline socially relevant. His address at the sixth annual Conference of Andhra Saraswatha Parishath cogently presented the method to be adopted to promote the study of history and culture eschewing chauvinistic considerations. He was however caustic on those who were of the opinion that Indians had no sense of history. He said that India had given the world its first poem, first treatise on economics, first book on systematic medicine, first painting, first story and first grammar. Therefore, he argued that it was absurd to deny the obvious fact.

He was among the first to refer to the patronage of the Kutub Shahi dynasty to Telugu literature. He wrote on the origin and development of *Tapals* in India. In the early forties he wrote at length on the problems of education in Hyderabad State. In a few other essays written about the same time, he dwelt on the popular customs in the days of *Gatha Saptasathi*. He pleaded in several of his essays, for the protection and

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promotion of native arts and crafts languishing in the countryside. He repeatedly cautioned that they might eventually disappear for want of patronage.

Chapter XII

AS A PLAYWRIGHT

Pratapa Reddy wrote two plays in Telugu - *Utchala Vishadamu* (1921) and *Bhakta Tukaram* (1924).

The first is based on the story of a royal family of Kashmir. Utchala comes to rule Kashmir after Harsha, and appoints the old officials in responsible positions in the belief that they would serve him with gratitude because of the favour done to them. This proves to be his undoing. The officials loyal to the former King, hatch a conspiracy and incite his younger brother Sussala to invade his territory. Sradhasena, Bhogasena and Chudasena resort to this nefarious design. Utchala defeats his brother, forgives him and again sends him back to rule over the Lohara Province. But the conspirators would not give up their efforts. Utchala's wife, Bijjala, persuaded him not to leave the palace as she had a dream the previous night about impending danger to his life. Utchala disregards her advice and tries to convince her that dreams do not matter. However, the conspirators enter the palace on the sly and kill him. Sussala takes over the kingdom and keeps up his promise to Bijjala to take revenge against the conspirators by killing them.

The play is in five acts with 18 scenes. Obviously it is influenced by Shakespeare's *Julius Ceasar*. Pratapa Reddy has portrayed the characters with rare skill. The character of Bhogasena is a fine study in psychology. He is like Brutus in *Julius Ceasar*. The play is an attempt to blend the native and the English traditions. It has the classical *Nataka* pattern with a large number of verses interspersed in the traditional style. The verses reveal considerable poetic talent.

Bhakta Tukaram is based on the account of Tukaram's life given in *The Life of Tukaram* published by Natesan & Company. He might have also gathered the details from *Bhakta Vijayamu* of Vavilla publishers of Madras.

Tukaram's life is portrayed in five acts. Pratapa Reddy loved simplicity and discipline in life. He had a deep dislike of luxuries. He put forth his reflections on human life through the character of Tukaram.

A great devotee of Vittala, Tukaram gave up his family business and wanted to eke out his life with the meagre wages as a farm hand. This too did not last long as he became totally absorbed in his devotion to Vittala. He had to face a series of trials because of the evil machinations of a tantrik called Maswaji. Tukaram remains pure throughout. Even the woman who is sent to Tukaram to lure him by her charms, realises her folly in the holy presence of Tukaram and renounces the world to spend the rest of her life in devotion. Tukaram forgives Maswaji in spite of all his diabolic activities. He castigated the caste-distinctions and preached against all forms of discriminations. Pratapa Reddy introduced a variety of characters to make it dramatic. He has also made a few changes in the story of Tukaram to suit the character of the saint. He portrayed Tukaram as a true devotee and kept the character free from the miracles usually associated with saints

since he did not believe in miracles and supernatural powers attributed to holy men. Tukaram comes out in the play as a true human being full of compassion and concern for the poor as the children of God.

Pratapa Reddy planned to write a social drama. He completed the first two acts of it before he gave it up finally. The theme is the familiar conflict between love and parental considerations of money and status. He felt probably that it was far too commonplace to worry about, and wisely decided to abandon it.

Chapter XIII

AS A NOVELIST AND SHORT STORY WRITER

He subsequently made attempts to write novels. But his success was modest. He wanted to write a historical novel on the heroes of *Are* clan. *Are Veerulu* has remained incomplete. He planned to model a novel in Telugu on the popular *Romance of a Zenana*. This has remained unpublished. He felt that there was not much scope for originality in following a given model. The novel is narrated in classical Telugu prose.

Pratapa Reddy tried his hand at short story as well. His deep concern for Telugu literature prompted him to introduce all possible new trends in order to widen the horizon. Short story was relatively a new form in Telugu when he attempted it in the thirties. He was committed to social reform. His stories were often based on social problems and ills that afflict society. Yet he was fairly acquainted with the variety of themes present in English in short fiction. Some of the characters in his short stories are unforgettable. Kumari of “Nirikshana” (waiting) is one such. Pratapa Reddy based this story on the legend of Kanya Kumari. It is said that the marriage of Lord Siva and Kanya Kumari was fixed. A day before the marriage,

Lord Siva went southwards promising that he would return soon. He never did. The rice kept ready for the marriage changed into sand and Kanya Kumari still looks southwards waiting for Lord Siva. Pratapa Reddy turned the myth into a realistic story with a young fisherwoman Kumari waiting for Sankaran her betrothed to return from his fishing expedition on the sea. Sankaran does not return. She waits for him eternally like Kanya Kumari. She is Kanya Kumari as it were. The story celebrates the innocent love of the young maiden in the rural backdrop. This story has been translated into Hindi, Persian, Kannada and Marathi. There are other stories on women who are ruthlessly exploited and unjustly ostracised. Hussain Bee, Mehdi Begum, Ram Kumari, Gohar Jhan are some of the moving characters and helpless victims of monstrous cruelty perpetrated by man against woman in society.

In a few other stories he brought out the tyranny of the petty officers, meanness of duplicitous lawyers and inhuman behavior of policemen of his days. He directed his satire against those who stupidly aped the west in social conventions.

His stories reveal the village life of the Telangana region. He made use of plenty of Urdu words while narrating the stories in Telugu, to evoke the way it is spoken in Telangana. He was convinced that this alone would give the real feel of the context. There were voices of dissent about its propriety. But Pratapa Reddy was firm in his view that all regional expressions were equally good, and he was never apologetic about the style he had employed in his stories. He took care to present even the most minute details in portraying characters in their authentic social background. He often adopted the method of revealing the inner conflict of characters by casual and colloquial expressions. He was an adept in acquainting the reader with social context in its totality.

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Pratapa Reddy also published a few delightful stories on the follies of feudal gentry so as to ridicule their outmoded life. He also made fun of superstitions which are unscrupulous in the society and used as a means to cheat the gullible. These stories were published as *Mogalayi Kathalu*.

The short stories of Pratapa Reddy help us to trace the evolution of short story as a literary form in Telugu.

Chapter XIV

AS A BIOGRAPHER

Pratapa Reddy wrote a short account of the Suravaram family to which he belonged. He intended it to be a record of some significance to the future generations of his family. He felt that his generation was disadvantaged by the near absence of historical records concerning the earlier generations, and this should not prove a handicap in future. However, he wanted it to be an objective account for use in the Suravaram family. It has therefore remained unpublished. He also wrote in simple Telugu two short text-books on Indian history for school students. He gently commented on the distortions that the British historians had perpetrated in Indian history to further their ends.

Pratapa Reddy wrote a biography of Raja Bahadur Venkata Rama Reddy to commemorate his 69th birthday. Raja Bahadur was a multifaceted personality. The biography brings out the sterling qualities of Raja Bahadur. Sir C.R. Reddy was impressed by the style of the biography and commented that there was no need to review the excellent narrative and commended Pratapa Reddy as an accomplished writer in

Telugu prose. In a brief prefatory note to the biography, Pratapa Reddy wrote:

Biographies of great men are manifold. They are always instructive. We have no tradition of biographies. We have got it from the West. The achievements of the great ones, properly recorded, would serve as an inspiring model for future generations.

The biography of Raja Bahadur is noted for its objectivity and clarity. Although Pratapa Reddy was intimately associated with Raja Bahadur (This fact was considered a unique privilege in those days) he did not refer to the fact even once in the biography.

There was also a collection of sixteen inspiring lives which he published under the title *Haindava Dharma Veerulu*. The lives included among others are those of Dhārma Paili, Amara Simha Rathod, Guru Gobind Singh, Abdul Razack, Somanadri and Sadasiva Reddy. In his introduction to the book, Mallampalli Somasekhara Sarma, the doyen of Andhra historians wrote:

Sri Suravaram Pratapa Reddy is a well-known writer. He has been rendering invaluable service to Telangana. He has many works to his credit. By publishing this volume, Sri Reddy has presented the Telugu readers with a priceless jewel as it were. It is marked with a simple style of great clarity. Although intended for the young, the old also richly benefit by reading it. It is a piece of charcoal burning bright.

The booklet has been justly popular because of its appeal to the young and old.

Chapter XV

IN THE CAUSE OF SOCIAL SERVICE

Pratapa Reddy was deeply committed to social reform. He felt that it was his duty as a writer to educate the people on the evils that afflict society. He wrote a number of essays to carry the message of the much needed social reform. A collection of his essays, seventeen in number, was published under the title *Sanghoddharanam* (upliftment of society). The first essay deals with English education. He did not agree with the view that English would lead to intellectual slavery. He felt that there is a need to promote the right attitude to English. Superficial learning and mindless imitation of sartorial fashions should not be blamed on English. Real learning would always enrich the mind. He argued that English was the source of many novel literary forms which strengthened native literature and he also emphasised the fact that English had given us the gift of scientific thinking and research. He advised the people to welcome change and be ready to receive whatever enriched life no matter from where it has come from. Only the weak-minded, he said, would succumb to the glitter. In four long essays, he castigated the evil of untouchability as monstrously inhuman. Love of man is the only test of religion.

All other forms are simply irrelevant. He also wrote to plead for Khadi, Swadeshi and Hindi. He called upon the young scholars to translate extensively from Hindi and English in order to widen the frontiers of Telugu language and literature and thus promote cross cultural dialogue. He also stressed the need of modern agriculture and wanted the government to bring the scientific knowledge to the farmer at his doorstep. He was deeply moved by the pathetic plight of women in society. He expressed his anguish in several essays. He was critical of the British for their role in stifling all native skills and enterprises in India.

Realising the need to educate the villagers about sanitation and other essential things concerning village life, he wrote and published a booklet, *Gramajana Darpanamu* which explained the simple facts relating to village economy, health, education, childcare, common diseases, panchayat system, intoxicants, drugs and their pernicious effects.

Pratapa Reddy shed a balanced critical light on the rule of Nizam in his *Nizam Rashtra Paripalanamu*. He wrote another booklet on the library movement and its progress. He traced the history of library right from the early days and provided in his booklet a detailed scheme to maintain a library on scientific lines.

He was also among the first to realise the importance of adult education. He authored *Yuvajana Vijnanam* (1951), a veritable text book to serve the cause of adult education. He introduced in simple Telugu the most essential topics like Geography, Languages, Festivals, Health Care, Scientific facts, Political awareness, Village problems and Religions of the world. His aim was to give the root facts necessary for a healthy and happy life in a village.

He spoke of the evil of bonded labour with anguish and exhorted the people to fight for their rights without fear. He commended the efforts in the West by voluntary organisations to protect human rights. He deplored the fact that freedom of man was always in peril in the world. He wanted the people to be vigilant and fight for freedom at all costs.

His was a pioneering effort in promoting Adult Education especially among the villagers. It was his belief that if the villagers were informed of their rights, they would cherish freedom and guard it zealously. He wanted to serve the poor in the days of widespread illiteracy and ignorance in villages. He felt that the only way to educate the villagers was through useful booklets. If they were written in simple Telugu, any person fairly literate could read them out to the villagers and thus initiate in them an awareness of the various topics. *Prajadhikaramulu* (1950) was a book in this direction. Pratapa Reddy published it in 1938. He gave a detailed summary of political theory putting emphasis on individual rights and individual freedom. He discussed the nature of freedom and its indispensability providing examples from model democracies.

He procured quite a few valuable manuscripts in Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit, Persian and Urdu with deploying considerable personal expense and labour. Among them were *Kurnool Rajula Vamsavali*, *Rati Rahasyamu* (a Telugu rendering of Harihara's Sanskrit work), *Gangapura Mahatmyamu* and *Krishnarjuna Samvadamu*. He collected a large number of palm leaf manuscripts, often travelling on foot to remote villages difficult of access. He was anxious to save them before they perished because the owners of the manuscripts did not realise their value, and they had neither love nor means to preserve them. He donated 50 palm leaf

manuscripts in 1929 to the Reddy Hostel Library at Hyderabad when he was its joint Secretary. He got some of the manuscripts published through Vijnana Vardhini Parishath.

He wanted a comprehensive dictionary of the Telugu language to be prepared on scientific lines as was done in the West. He was critical of the way the dictionaries evaded the task of explaining the meaning of a given word. Very often the dictionary would simply state, 'a kind of bird', 'a kind of plant', 'a kind of flower'. This did not make anybody wiser. He wanted the items to be illustrated with specific attributes of a place, plant or thing in detail so that the full implication of the word used in a particular context is grasped. He worked hard to supplement the dictionaries and wrote notes in the margins as well as on separate sheets in his personal copy of *Śabda Ratnākaramu*, a popular Telugu dictionary.

Pratapa Reddy used classical Telugu in some of his works. His two plays were written in the classical style. But he later realised that the style was artificial and hardly suited to deliver the message to the common man. When he came to prepare a second edition of his play *Tukaram*, he changed the earlier style and adopted the spoken idiom. He concluded that language as spoken by people in their day-to-day life was the proper medium of expression. He made it a point to write in popular style intending to reach the people through the editorials in *Golconda Patrika*. The booklets that he authored subsequently were also written in simple Telugu to popularise scientific knowledge. Though he pleaded for popular style, he never criticised classical scholarship. He was also a trained classical scholar himself.

Chapter XVI

RESEARCH WORK

Pratapa Reddy has left behind three works based on his original and painstaking research.. They are *Hinduvula Pandugalu* (the festivals of the Hindus), *Ramayana Visēsamulu* (the distinctive features of the Ramayana), and *Andhrula Sānghika Charithramu* (the social history of the Andhras).

Hinduvula Pandugalu

It was published in 1931. Dr.S.Radhakrishnan wrote a brief introduction to it. It has gone through several editions because of its popularity. Pratapa Reddy wanted to examine the facts relating to numerous festivals that the Hindus celebrate. Every festival has several stories and legends associated with it. He wanted to find out the origin and authenticity of these, and record his findings for further research. People have been celebrating the festivals without being aware of their significance. Dr. Radhakrishnan commended the work as it was likely to correct the indifferent attitude of the educated people to the festivals. He felt that the festivals were a device

to bring relief to the care-worn people in the community. He was impressed by the simple style and scholarly documentation of the work.

Pratapa Reddy wrote in his Preface:

There are festivals in every religion. They are celebrated for various reasons. There are many Hindu festivals. Perhaps no other religion has so many festivals. Yet many among the Hindus do not know why they celebrate a particular festival. Even the scholars fail to provide the actual reason for celebrating the most popular festivals like Vijaya Dasami and Deepavali. They too are content with what is traditionally handed down; and they do not take the trouble to examine whether the reasons given are right or wrong. This is one reason for writing this book.

He also referred in his preface that he had to write the book at the instance of Raja Bahadur Venkata Rama Reddy. This was the first book on festivals in Telugu. There were a couple of books in English on Hindu festivals. But, none were quite satisfactory. He discussed in the book not only 'Pandugas' (festivals) but also *Jayanthis*, *Vrathas* and *Utsavams*. Since the word 'Panduga' was popular, he chose to call the book *Hinduvula Pandugalu*.

Every festival is briefly introduced with its date, time and significance. The stories and popular legends concerning the festival are then explained in detail. Following this is a critique by scholars. Later the scriptural evidence is quoted and commented upon. Adopting such a method is helpful to research scholars and also to lay persons. In order to provide authentic information regarding each festival, Pratapa Reddy made an exhaustive study of Dharma Sastras, *Smritis* of Manu, Devala and Parasara besides the major puranas, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. In addition, he also made a deep study

of Telugu classics and several other related works in English and Hindi. The book provides a detailed discussion about the concept of Vrata, its definition, its principles and requirements.

He has made an incisive study of the legends associated with Deepavali, also called *Naraka Chaturdasi*. The popular belief is that Sri Krishna and Satyabhama killed the demon, viz. King Narakasura. Therefore, the festival celebrates the victory of Sri Krishna. But nowhere is there a mention of Narakasura in any standard text relating to Vratas and festivals. Pratapa Reddy had interpreted the legend and brought out the real significance of the festival.

Deepavali is celebrated on three days successively: Chaturdasi, Amavasya and Bali Pratipat (Bali Padyami). On Chaturdasi the lamps are lighted to ensure the access of heaven to the manes. Men holding lamps light the way for the manes, and they worship Yama, the God of death. On Chaturdasi a ritual bath before sunrise was a prerequisite freedom from Naraka (hell). Later on 'Naraka' was transformed into 'Narakasura' and a legend came into being.

The festival belonged to the earliest times when the Aryans lived close to the North pole characteristic for its strange climatic conditions. Six months of continuous light followed by six months of total darkness. The dark phase started with 'Tula Samkramana', while the bright phase commenced with 'Mesha Samkramana'. For those who died during the dark phase, funeral rites could not be performed. Thus it was to set them free from the fear of hell, that Yama was worshiped, and lamps were lighted to guide the dead to heaven. Hence, it is clear that Deepavali marked the beginning of the long night of six months for the Aryans who lived close to the North Pole. Later the Aryans migrated to Aryavarttha, but they continued to celebrate Deepavali in the same way. Therefore

the legends of Narakasura, Sri Rama and Vikramarka have nothing to do with Deepavali.

Vijaya Daśami is another popular festival of the Hindus. It is believed that Sri Rama killed Ravana on this day. There is yet another legend that Arjuna defeated the army of Kauravas on this day emerging from the court of King Virata where he had been working in the harem as a dance teacher. But Pratapa Reddy cited convincingly the internal evidence from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* in support of his conclusion that neither Sri Rama nor Arjuna was connected with Vijaya Daśami in any way. He found Vijaya Daśami to be significant for the war-like Kshatriyas because they started out on their armed expeditions on this day. He has also explained the importance of worshipping the Śami tree on Vijaya Dasami.

Hinduvula Pandugalu also presents Sri Krishna in a novel way. Pratapa Reddy did not agree with Raja Ravi Varma's portrait of Krishna. He provided evidence from the *Mahabharata* to prove that Ravi Verma did not properly visualise Krishna's personality. The portrait in his study was painted according to the facts he had gathered from the *Mahabharata*. He also discussed in detail the age of Krishna on the basis of Chandogya Upanishad, other relevant puranas and itihisas, and concluded that Krishna was 116 at the time of his death. While discussing "Bhishma Ekadasi" he has argued that Bhishma died at the age of 170. He has also provided the evidence from the relevant texts to determine the ages of the Pandava brothers.

He has revealed certain unconventional facts concerning Mahalaya Paksha. Pratapa Reddy had great regard for tradition. Yet he never hesitated to criticise boldly if any superstition was justified in the name of tradition. He proved the worship of Tulasi was prescribed only for the medicinal

qualities of the herb. He found no basis for the stories associated with the Tulasi Vratha.

‘Ugadi’ is celebrated in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra. According to him, Ugadi was once celebrated throughout India. Parsis celebrate it as Nau Roj. Ugadi came to be confined to ‘Chandramana’ after the emergence of lunar and solar calendars. In the west, even now, the financial year begins in Chaitra. He has established by his study that ‘Ganapati’ is the same as ‘Brahmanaspati’ of the Vedic times.

He speaks of Parasurama as a social reformer. He has also shed light on the fact that there was not much of time gap between the Age of the *Ramayana* and that of the *Mahabharatha*.

He has traced the origin of ‘Holi’ or ‘Holika’ festival to Greece, Egypt, Rome and Persia. He has raised an interesting question whether ‘Seeshsthan’ could be ‘Seshasthan’, and ‘Khurdistan’ could be ‘Kadrusthan’, because of close relationship between Iran and India. He has offered an original interpretation of *Naga Panchami*.

Commenting on ‘Mahasivaratri’ he has explained the symbolic significance of Shivalinga in the light of scriptural evidence. He has proved that idol worship was already in vogue during the time of Panini. He has also brought to light that the popular Andhra festival ‘Eruvaka Punnama’ is in fact ‘Udvrishtabha Yajna’ mentioned in *Jaiminiya Nyayamala*. Writing of *Sheetala Saptami*, Pratapa Reddy has engagingly surveyed the decline and fall of the prestige of the donkey, which is regarded as the chosen vehicle of Sheetala. He has quoted from *Rigveda* and *Manusmriti* referring to the importance that the poor beast of burden once enjoyed. Ashwins, the twin physicians of gods had donkey as their vehicle. Sheetala is worshiped as the goddess of smallpox.

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Hinduvula Pandugalu provides information on several other matters relating to history and culture of people revealed through festivals and other rituals. He has written in some detail on fifty four festivals in the book.

Chapter XVII

ANDRULA SANGHIKA CHARITRA

Pratapa Reddy has made a distinct contribution to Telugu literature and culture by his original and monumental study *Andhrula Sāṅghika Charitra* (*The Social History of the Andhras*). This is the most important work among his works. It has proved the falsity of the widely held belief that Indians did not have any sense of history and that they failed to preserve the records helpful to the writing of history on scientific principles. Pratapa Reddy has brought to light an impressive number of works in Telugu literature covering a span of nine hundred years and revealed that these works provided a good deal of material for preparing a systematic social history of Andhras. Yet the fact remains that a large number of useful works were destroyed because of natural calamities and also during the foreign invasions. What has survived through the ages, however, serves as a mine of information for the historians.

Andhrula Sāṅghika Charitra (1949) concerns itself with the life of the common man in a given historical context. While it is fairly easy to write of the kings and their life of luxury, it

would be hard to gather the needful material to reconstruct the past and shed light on the little known aspects of the life of the common man. Pratapa Reddy addressed himself to this difficult task. He was aware that it was not very difficult to write the history of kings and kingdoms. But it is certainly painstaking to write social history mainly due to the paucity of source material. Telugu literary texts, inscriptions, local records, travelogues, sculptures, paintings, coins, proverbs, the references in other literatures, folk songs, folk tales, sporadic verses, antiques and documents relating to the gift of land etc., are to be studied carefully in order to glean the material useful for the purpose. He made a very modest beginning in 1929 by contributing an article to *Sujatha*, a literary journal published from Hyderabad, on the social life of Andhras during the time of Tenali Ramakrishna, a poet of the 16th Century. The article was based on a thorough study of the poet's classic *Panduranga Mahatmyamu*. He was convinced of the suitability of the method he had adopted for the article, and felt that he could enlarge the scope to include the other periods as well, gathering the material from the relevant literary texts and documents. His meticulous research in this line had culminated in *Andhrula Sāṅghika Charitra*.

This was a novel effort in Telugu, because there was no full-length study presenting the social history or the record of life as lived by ordinary men and women in the past. Quite a few scholars felt the need for it and wrote of its importance, outlining the method to be adopted. Chilukuri Veerabhadra Rao, Nelaturi Venkata Ramanayya and Mallampalli Somasekhara Sarma - all three renowned historians - wanted to work in this direction, but unfortunately for some reason or the other it remained a non-starter. They however made detailed suggestions and contributed a few articles of limited scope relating to the social history. Those who read Pratapa

Reddy's article published in *Sujatha* persuaded him to enlarge it into a full-length study. But he was reluctant to venture into this because he felt that it was too vast an assignment for an individual to take up and complete successfully. However his friends prevailed upon him finally to write *Andhrula Sāṅghika Charitra*. There were many hurdles. With the rise of Razakars, communal harmony of Hyderabad was disturbed. He also gave up by then the editorship of *Golconda Patrika* because of certain differences with the management, and went back to his native village which offered no facilities for the kind of research needed for writing the proposed social history. He went to Kurnool, a nearby town to look for books. It was of no avail. He then decided to make a beginning with the help of the notes which he had prepared over the years, the Telugu classics and the few texts of Andhra history in his possession. His insightful study of these few sources enabled him to prepare the volume during his sojourn in the village. He was aware of its limitations as it came out in print in 1949 as the fourth in the series of publications launched by the newly established Andhra Saraswatha Parishath of Hyderabad. He revised it for the second edition. Since then it has been reprinted four times.

In the literary classics, there is very little that is directly helpful to social history. A large number of words used in some of the texts, documents and inscriptions have become obscure and unintelligible. Local records or legends are not always reliable. The travelogues are often prejudiced. Scriptures and paintings have been ruined to a great extent. Therefore, the social historian finds himself in an unenviable position. He has to take the best advantage of what little he can get, by making a judicious and insightful study of it. This is what Pratapa Reddy did in *Andhrula Sāṅghika Charitra*. He found that there was a wide variety of social life on the

Indian subcontinent. There are certain unique features in matters of dress and food among the people living in different regions. In the same way, they have their own dance forms, music and games, native to the soil. Kerala offers Kathakali, Gujarat has Garbha, Assam is proud of Manipuri. Likewise, Andhra has to its credit the Kuchipudi dance form. When the social history of a particular region is written, it is certainly not an exercise in regional chauvanism, but an attempt to reveal the contribution of a particular region to Indian culture. We cherish unity in diversity. But it is also essential to realise that diversity has its own importance - it renders life richer and promotes beauty in variety. Pratapa Reddy wanted to present in detail the life of Telugas across the centuries unfolding their way of life in an effort to introduce their contribution to Indian culture. He has explained:

Social history is the history of man. It is infact our own story. It brings to light the life of men and women in the centuries gone by. That is the life of our forefathers. It will reveal to us their homesteads, dress, food, games, sports and songs, their joys, their sorrows, and finally the good and the bad they bequeathed to us.

The English wrote their social history two hundred years ago. To this day, they have been contributing a lot in this area. They have published detailed maps and needful illustrations to reveal the social life of five hundred years. They have written not only of their own country but also other countries in the world. They have written about the Chenchus (a nomadic tribe) of Andhra, the Nagas of Assam, the Kafirs of Africa, the nomads of Sahara, the Cannibals of the Pacific Islands and the Eskimos of the North Pole. We are indebted to the the English for their extensive studies in social history.

Pratapa Reddy has stressed the need to present the facts of history without any bias. He hated distortions of history taught

in schools. He called it “the poisoned milk”. He has also made it clear that social history differs from the studies published earlier of the caste and tribes in India. Social history deals with the life of human beings in society in all aspects. It makes a detailed study of the people, their languages, beliefs, ideas, rites, rituals, festivals and other manifestations of culture like music, painting and sculpture.

Pratapa Reddy realised while writing history that the texts known for their literary excellence had very little information about society. On the contrary, the poems which were regarded as of no significance from a literary point of view proved of immense help since they reflected society from its grassroot level. These texts are in fact the very storehouse of rare vocabulary concerning the rites and rituals of village life. These words are lost because the ‘standard’ dictionaries have ignored these texts in their passion to preserve the purity of diction. In most dictionaries the words are not explained effectively to reveal their use and significance. The vague synonyms provided in them are of no help to a keen student of social history. Therefore, Pratapa Reddy has remarked that the regional words should also be carefully gathered and preserved because they provide clues and codes for the study of culture. He suggested that a list of these once popular and currently obscure words should be prepared. The list should be periodically published in the leading literary Journals seeking explanation from the scholars. This will certainly enrich the language and help its systematic study. It may also bring out some of the most beautiful expression buried under the debris of time. He has cautioned that the dictionaries would remain incomplete and imperfect as long as they shied away from recording the popular rural and regional words used by the common people in their daily life.

The history of a country is divided into several parts arranged as per chronology of the kings who have ruled over it. The rise, decline and fall of the rulers affect the life of the people and their fortune. Pratapa Reddy planned the social history in eight chapters. The first five chapters deal with the periods named after the dynasties of the kings who ruled the Telugu province from the beginning of the tenth century to the early decades of the seventeenth century. The other three chapters cover three centuries from the seventeenth century closing it with the year 1907.

The first chapter deals with the Eastern Chalukyan period. The history of Telugu language and literature begins with Nannaya, the poet who translated into Telugu the first two Parvas and half of the Sanskrit *Mahabharata*. Nannaya was also the chief priest of the royal family. Pratapa Reddy presented the social context of the period on the basis of Nannaya's Telugu translation of the *Mahabharata* and Chalukya Someswara's *Abhilashitārtha Chintamani*. He has traced the decline of Buddhism and the rise of Śaivism under the patronage of the Chalukyan kings. Along with Śaivism, the *Kaula* practices also entered the Telugu province. Telugu literature of the period also came to be two-fold with *desi* and *marga* styles. These two styles influenced the music and dance forms as well. During this period there was a well-known centre of learning called Nagavapi near Wadi (Wadi which was formerly in Hyderabad State is now in Maharashtra). Nagavapi of the Chalukyan period was as popular and far famed as the Universities of Takshshila and Nalanda. The place of Nagavapi is now in ruins. It is now called Nagai. Pratapa Reddy had brought out the popular Telugu customs and rituals which Nannaya introduced in his translation of the Sanskrit epic. He has also explained the trade practices of those times. Nannaya referred to dance forms which were in vogue during

his time and which are not found in Bharata's *Natya Sastra*. Pratapa Reddy has provided a detailed account of the past times of the people, their beliefs (they believed in *Rasavada* i.e., transmutation of base metals into gold) and also the Panchayat system which was explained at length in *Abhilashitārtha Chintamani*. Pratapa Reddy records:

This is the most ancient Indian practice. This is the real democratic institution. There is nothing equal to this system in the world polity.

He has quoted extensively from Someshwara to prove that the Panchayat was planned with meticulous care and based on sound principles of judiciary. He has also explained the principles of taxation in the tenth century. He has argued that Someshwara's treatise on painting is superior to the account given to painting in *Viṣṇudharmottara*. He has given the details of the weapons used in war and also the principles governing the warfare in those days. He has brought to light the fact that the textile industry was fully developed and the trade of textiles was promoted with China, Ceylon and Multan. The chapter on the Eastern Chalukyas provides information about their food habits and their culinary art too.

The second chapter deals with the period of the Kakatiya empire. The Kakatiyas ruled the Telugu province from 1050 A.D. to 1350 A.D. The chapter outlines the social life, education, arts, painting, handicrafts, trade, popular pastimes, ornaments of women and a few other aspects relating to the period. Pratapa Reddy has based his study on the literary texts of the period like *Kridabhiramamu*, *Panditaradhya Charitra*, *Basava Puranam*, *Palanati Veeracharitra* and *Prataparudra Charitra*. He has evinced special care in gathering the details relating to indoor games and sports of that age. He also explained a game called 'netham' and provided necessary

illustrations on the basis of his research. He has quoted from numerous texts to explain the obscure terms used while playing the game. Much to his surprise, he observed in a particular literary text, about 200 words which were not recorded in the voluminous dictionaries compiled by scholars. He wanted the scholars to examine these rare and obscure words, and he has also urged them to explain with illustrations the games and sports which were dying fast in rural India because of rapid social changes and urban migration.

The third chapter of the book examines the era of the Reddy kingdoms. The period covers 1324 A.D. to 1434 A.D. Pratapa Reddy has gathered relevant facts to explain the social history of the period through several Telugu literary works like *Simhāsana Dwātrimsika*, *Bhōja Rajeeyamu* and *Keyūrābāhu Charitramu*. The research scholars like Mallampalli Somasekhara Sarma and Chilukuri Veerabhadra Rao has helped him. The next two chapters reveal the social history of the Vijayanagar Empire which lasted almost three hundred years from 1339 A.D. to 1630 A.D. An in-depth study was undertaken by him of Sri Krishnadevaraya's *Amukta Mālyada* and Ganga Devi's *Madhurā Vijayam* besides many other Telugu and Sanskrit classics. He has also made use of Salatore's two volume study of the Vijayanagar Empire. He has referred to *Śuka Saptati* of Kadaripathi as of special significance in the study of the social life during the last few decades of the empire.

The last three chapters study the social life of the Andhras during the period 1600 to 1907. The sad decline of the kingdoms, insecurity, poverty and exploitation of the poor have been discussed in detail. He has also surveyed the life in the Nizam's dominions between 1757 and 1857. He has vividly brought out, with authentic documentation, the anarchy and

the helpless predicament of the people, especially in the region of Telangana, during that period. The last chapter deals with the British rule and its impact on the life of the people. The advent of science and technology and also the social changes brought about by the railways, telegraph facilities and the newspapers, have been discussed at length. The account in *Andhrula Sāṅghika Charitra* stops at the year 1907 when the people began to articulate their deep aspiration for freedom. The rest is contemporary history.

The publication of *Andhrula Sāṅghika Charitra* was greeted with great delight and enthusiasm. *Andhra Prabha*, a largely circulated Telugu daily, then under the editorship of Narla Venkateswara Rao, a renowned Telugu writer and critic, published a special editorial commending the painstaking research and meticulous scholarship of the work. The editorial commented:

This history is the end result of a life-time of research. Mr. Pratapa Reddy richly deserves all praise for this accomplishment in spite of several hurdles like the scarcity of useful texts, pitifully little help from the inscriptions and finally the irrelevance of dictionaries which have failed to explain the regional and technical terms.

This unique book not only reveals the past history of the Andhras but provides an insight into what factors contributed to their progress and also what brought about their fall. It has a message for their future.

Rallapalli Ananthakrishna Sarma, a great scholar read this work and wrote a detailed letter to Pratapa Reddy. He said:

I could not put down the book till I finished reading it. In recent years this is the only book which has made me read from start to finish without a break.

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You have done a great job of it. The material which you have gathered and explained is invaluable. This is possible only by deep study and hard work of many long years. I believe that this is the most significant book published in Telugu after independence.

Andhrula Sāṅghika Charitra has inspired an impressive body of research in social history in Telugu during the last forty years. Pratapa Reddy was given the Sahitya Akademi award posthumously for *Andhrula Sāṅghika Charitra* in 1955 (the first award for Telugu literature). The Akademi sponsored its Hindi translation (*Andhra Ka Sāmājīk Itihās*) by R. Venkata Rao.

Chapter XVIII

RAMAYANA VISĒSHAMULU

Ramayana Visēshamulu is a critical study of Valmiki's *Ramayana*. Pratapa Reddy was fond of Valmiki's poetry and he read the *Ramayana* with care and devotion. While reading the text in Sanskrit, he noticed a few facts which were contrary to those cherished in popular belief. He made copious notes on the basis of his close reading, and then prepared an article which he read out at a meeting of Vijnāna Vardhini Parishat. There was, among others at the Parishath meeting, Sri Chidirematham Veerabhadra Sharma the editor of *Vibhuti*, a journal devoted to scholarly research. He urged Pratapa Reddy to continue his research and expand it further. Later he began to publish the series of articles on the *Ramayana* in his *Vibhuti*. The series continued for two years. They were subsequently gathered and published in a book form. The publication of these essays on the *Ramayana* in *Vibhuti* did not go without its share of criticism. A few readers wrote to the editor that he had begun to publish these articles on the *Ramayana* in a bid to denigrate the epic. When the essays were published in 1943 under the title *Ramayana Visēshamulu* the editor of *Vibhuti* wrote by way of a foreword :

I have no concern for praise or blame in publishing these essays. My love of scholarly criticism has prompted me to publish them in Vibhuti..... The writer does not swear by infallibility of his views. Vibhuti will be glad to publish the articles which counter his views.

One would realise that Sri Reddy has worked hard and read widely to prepare these essays. There is no other critique of the Ramayana in Telugu as detailed as this. The scholars may make use of it and prepare another standard work. That is surely the value of this slender volume.....

Pratapa Reddy felt that there was scope to study the Ramayana in two different ways. One was from the spiritual point of view and the other was based on a historical approach. The former would regard Rama as the incarnation of God while the other would consider him an ideal human being. There are also those who believe that the story of the *Ramayana* is pure fiction. Pratapa Reddy did not subscribe to this view. However, he felt that there was very little criticism of the *Ramayana* done based on historical principles. He wanted to offer his mite to this by a series of essays on the *Ramayana*. He wrote:

I have written about a few things which I have noticed while reading the Ramayana of Valmiki. This is historical criticism. I am aware that the orthodox would not relish this kind of criticism. It may have angered some of them. But there is no room for fear or favour in the historical school of criticism. It is not wrong if some should state with emphasis what they consider the truth. The Ramayana has been discussed in Sanskrit and also in the regional languages in the light of Vedanta and on the basis of the Vaishnava School of philosophy. I have not come across any work of historical criticism of the Ramayana in Telugu.

There may be a good many errors in my discussion of the epic and also in my views. Who is free from errors? Scholars, critics and researchers are welcome to refute them with valid arguments. I will gratefully correct my errors, and learn new things if they teach me.

In conclusion, I submit in all humility that I have deep love and devotion for the *Ramayana* and cherish its poetry as the best.

Pratapa Reddy examined the story of the *Ramayana* with internal evidence. Quite a few scholars earlier worked on the epic and proved conclusively a large number of verses in the text to be latter day interpolations. Pratapa Reddy also revealed a few more verses as interpolated on the basis of his research. He has made a balanced evaluation of the arguments advanced in favour of the view that Homer's *Iliad* might have been the source of the *Ramayana*. He has very clearly established that the story of the *Ramayana* reached the distant lands like Greece about a thousand years before the Christian era. Hence, it is probable, he argued, that *Iliad* might have been influenced by the *Ramayana*.

He wanted to identify the core story of the *Ramayana* comparing it with the Jain and Buddhist versions of the epic. He has made a deep study of the other *Ramayanas* in Sanskrit. He has analysed Hemachandra's *Trishasti Salaka Purusha Charitha* to bring into focus certain episodes of Valmiki's *Ramayana*. He has also argued that Valmiki's *Ramayana* was in existence as far back as 2500 B.C. He has based his arguments on the close examination of the Sanskrit text. He has brought to light certain contradictory statements made in the text, and held the view that they were the result of interpolations. He has written in detail about the social context of the *Ramayana* with reference to the position of women,

caste system, human sacrifice, women's right to study the Vedas and to perform the Vedic sacrifices.

Pratapa Reddy has made a thorough study of commentaries in Sanskrit on the *Ramayana*. He has explained the meaning of some words which the commentators have either left out or explained wrongly. He has argued that the study of *Ramayana* requires the knowledge of other ancient cultures and also ancient geography. He has offered a detailed account of geography as revealed in the *Ramayana*. He has shed light on Yakshas, Rakshas, Kinnaras, Vanaras and Vidyadharas mentioned in the *Ramayana* as the races which inhabited Iran, Afghansistan, Tibet, Java, Ssyria, Chaldea, Armenia and Hittite. He has attempted a detailed discussion of the characters in the epic.

Chapter XIX

GOLCONDA KAVULA SANCHIKA

Pratapa Reddy published *Golconda Kavula Sanchika* in 1934. There was a surely comment made by a writer in his essay which was published in *Golconda Patrika*. The comment related to the supposed non-existence of Telugu poets in the Telangana area. The writer confidently remarked that there were no poets in Telangana. The uncharitable remark hurt Pratapa Reddy deeply, and he wanted to prove the fact that there were a large number of poets in Telangana, writing in Telugu, in spite of the adverse circumstances not conducive to creative writing. Pratapa Reddy held discussions with Madapati Hanumantha Rao and Adiraju Veerabhadra Rao to finalise the plan to publish Telugu poems by the poets of the Nizam State. He had to travel on foot to reach the remote villages to gather the poems from the poets who lived there in crucial poverty. These poets were great scholars as well. The *Sanchika* (anthology) published the poems of 354 poets. There were 237 verses in Sanskrit. Telugu poems were 1181. There were seven women among the writers and also three Christians and three Muslims who wrote poetry in flawless Telugu. The

Sanchika took care to write a brief biographical note on each poet represented in the anthology. In addition to this, Seshadri Ramana Kavulu contributed a detailed account of 114 earlier poets of Telangana. This is now rated as one of the best additions to the history of Telugu poetry. *Golconda Kavula Sanchika* published rare photographs of poets old, as well as contemporary. The brief introductory note regarding each of 354 poets serves as a precious document for posterity, as it has preserved the information about the poet, his scholarship and contribution to literature. But for the publication of *Sanchika*, the poets would have lapsed into oblivion. It should also be noted that *Golconda Kavula Sanchika* was the first anthology of Telugu poetry.

Pratapa Reddy wrote in his introduction to the *Sanchika* that great poets like Potana and Vidyanatha and great commentators like Mallinatha Suri belonged to Telangana. There were poets and scholars unknown in obscure villages. This fact was not known to the people living outside the region. Therefore they believed that there were no poets or scholars in Telangana. Such comments came from those who were not aware of the facts. They were not unfriendly. He wrote:

Even now there are great scholar-poets of Sanskrit and Telugu in this region..... They are living in small and remote villages. Newspapers do not reach them. Their literary pursuits are a labour of love. They are oblivious of the modern means of publicity. Then how do others come to know of them? It is no surprise that people conclude that there are no scholars or poets in Telangana.

He was happy that through *Golconda Kavula Sanchika* he was able to bring to light the literary contribution of these great scholars living in obscurity.

Chapter XX

THE END

Pratapa Reddy worked hard and never cared for physical comforts. His physique was not too strong. There were certain worries which caused him considerable anguish. After giving up the editorship of *Golconda Patrika*, he left for his village and lived there for a few months to look after his share of farming as the family got divided. While his brothers lived in Itikalapadu and Kanchukota, he had to set up his family at Chandur, a tiny hamlet, following the division of landed property. He began to realise that the poor state of his health would not permit him to continue his research. He wrote to a friend from the village:

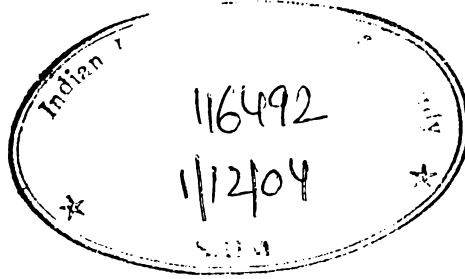
I am not writing anything new. The old ones have become outdated. There are still two or three works unpublished. There is no use of writing now. I have felt that writing is useless. I am putting down my pen. Maybe, in a few days I may go down myself - I should get ready for that! I say this not in anguish but in detachment.

Within a few months he was taken seriously ill. A mild heart ailment rendered him physically weak. This led to

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complications as he did not care to take treatment on time. He passed away at Kyathur on August 25, 1953 due to cardiac arrest. His wife was at his bedside, and the end was peaceful.

Telugu people will cherish his yeomen service to the Telugu language and literature.



Suravaram Pratapa Reddy, (1896-1953) a poet, playwright, critic, fearless editor and crusader for social reforming, was one of the pioneers who had given a modern orientation to Telugu Literature and literary research. He is remembered for his yeoman service and multifaceted contribution to Telugu language. His *Andhrula Sanghika Charitramu* is considered a classic in the field of social history. He was awarded with the Sahitya Akademi Award for that work in 1995.

Dr. S. Laxmana Murthy (60) retired as Professor of English from Kakatiya University, Warangal, Andhra Pradesh. He has published widely in Telugu, English and Sanskrit.

