Culture and Ideology of Post-colonial Telugu Cinema: Representation of Women, Family and Patriarchy, 1947-1962

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By

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June 2017

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **"Culture and Ideology of Post-colonial Telugu Cinema: Representation of Women, Family and Patriarchy, 1947-1962"** submitted by **P. Parameswarudu** bearing registration number **09SHPH07** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Social Sciences is a bonafide work carried out by him under my guidance.

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I, **P. Parameswarudu** hereby declare that this thesis entitled "**Culture and Ideology of Post-colonial Telugu Cinema: Representation of Women, Family and Patriarchy, 1947-1962**" submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of Prof**. Atlury Murali** is a bonafide research work and is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this university or any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.

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Chapter I

1. Introduction

Film is as important to a modern historian as what a temple art and architecture is to an ancient and medieval historian. The contemporary historian of film deals with a new cultural product that is movie. The movie is the most effective medium that reaches almost every member of the society. It is uniquely equipped to record and reveal physical reality, such a feature having its own far reaching implications in the form of revealing gestures and circumstances with an intricate subtlety that needs to be appreciated to make meaningful progress in understanding a society.

In modern times, it is important to note that movie as a tool of studying contemporary societies, equips the researcher with a grasp of 'meaning' and 'understanding' the reality, which other survey methods, might not. In the case of highlighting the difference between the study that he seeks to undertake and traditional methodology of constructing past, Scott Gordon, remarks: "The historian must go beyond the specific empirical evidence revealed through examination of documents and statistics; he must study the general culture of the time and place, its literature, art, language etc. in order to arrive at an understanding of what life was like, how people thought, their hopes and fears, their conception of themselves, their society, and the world".[1] Further he also notes, "In order to study a culture that differs from one's own, it is necessary to enter into the communal life of its people, study their art and language and ways of thinking, do more than know what they do, understand them as social

[1]Scott Gordon. *The History and Philosophy of Social Science.* London: Routledge, 1991. p. 404.

beings. The historian even when he studies the past of his own society must make such efforts, since culture changes overtime."[2]

At the outset, to study the validity and limits of such a methodology and to examine its relevance is one of the ambitions of the research project. Further, the thesis shall be constructed on conceptual foundations of ideology and culture, the words used with a specific reference and sense in this context. The relation between the reality and how one perceives reality can be a premature definition of ideology. However, such a definition helps us understand the ideology that went into the production of an art form. It further informs us about the discourse in dominant ideology. One of the tasks of our thesis shall be to examine the validity of the argument that art in a specific epoch of history reflects the dominant ideology of its time. While production of art is one side of the story, the appreciation of it is another side. The appreciation of art, in other words is the concurrence of art form with a collective ideology of people, reflecting the culture of the society. While this distinction is being made between the production and appreciation of art, it does not mean that they function mutually exclusive from each other. In fact, both these sides form a duality. This research thesis shall examine the nature of this duality (or the dialectic between them). This research endeavor hence helps us map the ontological position of the ideology of the production as against the culture of appreciation. In other words, it shall examine the supremacy of ideology of production as against the culture of appreciation. It shall be meaningful to argue that the answer perhaps lies in the grey area; however, that does not undermine the relevance of looking for relations between the ideology of art and appreciation.

It is a historical need to look into cultural and ideological dimensions of post-colonial Telugu society and movie because there had been nationalist hangover that carried legacy of

[2]Ibid. p. 406.

nationalism until 1960s. The movie and its technology enhanced in such a way that society and these cannot be separable. Therefore, in this era, movie became one of the major sources for scholars to construct history. There is a saying "*cinema is the only book that even an illiterate can read*".

The movie includes everything related to the society, viz., arts, socio-economic and political aspects, humanism, violence, romance, etc. Moreover, movies cannot go beyond the ideology and culture of the society. So, movies can be best used for constructing history.

To study cinema is to take part with some of the world's greatest stories. Movies drop us into the midst of diverse lives, carry us to other times and places, and explore far reaches of the human heart.[3] The movie is the most effective medium.[4] Since it is both watchable and simultaneously audible, it is feasible for audience to comprehend what it is communicating.[5] According to Andre Bazen, cinema is, currently, recognized as a thoughtful and significant field of study[6] and it is objectivity in time, a language, an idealistic phenomenon[7] and a functional art[8]. The function of the movie is to reveal, to bring to light certain details that the stage would have left untreated.[9] Film scholars have been studying movies as a business, an art, and a social institution; locating the politics behind production and the history of audience reaction; subjecting individual movies to close analysis and taking a wide-angle view of movies as the myth-makers of our age.[10]

[3]William V. Costanzo. *World Cinema Through Global Genres.* London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014. p. 1.
[4]*Cinema Rangam*, November 1954, p. 22.
[5]Ibid.
[6] Andre Bazin. *What is Cinema?* Vol. 1, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004. p. 7.
[7]Ibid. p. 14- 17.
[8]Ibid. p. 71.
[9]Ibid. p. 91.
[10]William V. Costanzo. *World Cinema through Global Genres.* London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014. p. 1.

Andre Bazen observes that cinema is younger to theater, music and literature, which are as old as history.[11] He also maintains, "The cinema, in fact, has come to the fore as the only popular art at a time when the theatre, the social art *par excellence*, reaches only a privileged cultural or moneyed minority. It may be that the past 20 years of the cinema will be reckoned in its overall history as the equivalent of five centuries in literature".[12]To comprehend the history of cinema itself, how movies have progressed over time since their first arrival in the 1880s, it helps to remember that cinema is an industry as well as an art form, a technological innovation and also a social institution. These four components – aesthetic, economic, technological, and societal – are merged through the tapestry of film history.[13]

Our study reads both text and context. Culture, ideology and patriarchy are important issues for study. Gerda Lerner defines: **"**Patriarchy in its wider definition means the manifestation and institutionalization of male domination over women and children in the family and the extension of male domination over women in society in general".[14] The post-colonial Telugu cinema is a reflection of contemporary patriarchal society. The domination of man over women both in private and public spheres was visible. Superiority of man and inferiority of woman was represented. Patriarchy is a symbolic institution of traditional value system. We witness from Telugu cinema the decision making power within a family is manifested in man in the form of father or brother. Women are portrayed as subordinate citizens within the family. We witness it from all the movies we have selected for our study.

Culture, according to E. B. Tylor, is, "that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a

[11] Andre Bazin. *What is Cinema?* Vol. 1, Berkerley: University of California Press, 2004. p. 56.
[12]Ibid.
[13]William V. Costanzo. *World Cinema through Global Genres.* London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014. p. 1.
[14]Gerda Lerner. *The Creation of Patriarchy.* New York: Oxford UP, 1986. p. 236.

member of society".[15] Simple and common understanding of culture is a way of life. Ideology is a system of ideas that aspires both to explain the world and to change it.[16] Althusser's definition of 'ideology' is relevant for our understanding of the concept. He defines, "An ideology is a system (possessing its own logic and rigour) of representation (images, myths, ideas or concepts, as the case may be) existing and having a historical role within a given society".[17]

Historiography

Considerable work has been done on film study at the All India level. Erik Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy's work *Indian Film*[18] gives a detailed history of Indian cinema along with movie synopsis.The work draws relationship between the State and Cinema. It observes that the colonial State controlled the industry through censorship. The work also talks about the nature of the State in Independent India with regard to the industry.

Satyajit Ray's *Our Films, Their Films*[19] reflects on the cultural ambiguity that surrounded the generation of Ray. He distinguishes between Indian cinema and Western cinema. He clearly sees the difference between his films, which are heavily influenced by western film techniques and aesthetics, versus the mass produced *masala* films. He sees no cultural value or artistic value in *masala* films. This book integrates Bengali culture and its influence on contemporary arts and intellectual life.

Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema written by Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen introduces the entire history of Indian Cinema including all regional industries. It chronicled the important events and organizations related to cinema from 1931 to 1992. Plots of

[15] Edward B. Tylor. *Primitive Culture*. New York: Harper & Row, 1958. (first published in 1871)
[16] *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol. 9, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1973. P. 194.
[17] Louis Althusser (translated by Ben Brewster). *For Marx.* 1969. P. 231.
[18] Eric Barnouw and S. Krishnaswamy. *Indian Film,* 2nd edition. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.
[19]Satyajit Ray. *Our Films, Their Films.* Delhi: Orient Longman, 1976.

selective films from each regional industry were given. Important cinema people from all industries were introduced in this book. [20]

Ravi Vasudevan's *The Melodramatic Public: Film Form and Spectatorship in Indian Cieneam*[21] was scholarly work dealing the relationship between the cinema and audience. The book explains that the audience is the target of the film makers while making film narrative. It sketches the trajectory of Indian cinema and its changing narrative forms since 1950s to globalization era. His edited book *Making Meaning in Indian Cinema*[22] is compilation of articles written by Indian Film scholar and academicians. The book covers the history of Indian cinema till recent period paying attention to socio-political context, narrative analysis and formation and functioning of fan clubs.

There has been very little academic work undertaken focusing the themes of women, family and patriarchy in Indian films, while there has been a considerable work on the representation of women in Hollywood cinema.

Laura Mulvey's article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"[23] focusing on women's representation investigated and interrogated Hollywood cinema. She observes that women's roles in Hollywood cinema were portrayed as sexual objects to give pleasure to the gazing men. She maintains that women are portrayed as erotic objects for male actors within the cinema narrative and for the spectator in the theatre. Her concentration was more on Hitchcock's movies who portrayed stereotyped roles of women as just sexual objects for male gaze. As she employed psychoanalytical approach, she discusses just the visual narrative but not the social context.

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[20] Ashish Rajadhyaksha and Paul Willemen. *Encyclopedia of Indian Cinema*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995.

[21]Ravi Vasudevan. *The Melodramatic Public: Film Form and Spectatorship in Indian Cinema.* Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010.

[22]Ravi Vasudevan. (ed.) *Making Meaning in Indian Cinema*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000.

[23] Laura Mulvey. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", *Screen.* 16. 3, Autumn. 1975.

Urvashi Butalia in her article, "Women in Indian Cinema"[24] argues that the Indian cinema by 1980s started addressing the issues of women like dowry and family, but still lack producing women centric movies. She observes that the Bollywood portrays women as a sexual object. The women's roles in majority of the movies were submissive in nature and passive in content.

Sangeeta Datta's article "Globalization and Representations of Women in Indian Cinema"[25] observes that the globalization has a large impact on representation of women in India cinema. She maintains that the practice of objectifying of female was intensified due to globalization. She observes that the process of globalization resulted in erasing alternate representations in Bollywood, which carries a revivalist ideology.

Madhava Prasad[26] draws a clear picture of the ideology of cinema industry particularly of technology of cinema. He maintains that the ideology of technology of cinema is of the capitalist. The book refers to Indian democracy as a collection of bourgeoisie class, landlord class and bureaucratic class. Nationalism, nation states and nationalist cinema are mentioned. The work mentions the word formal subsumption, which means the intertwined state of both tradition and ideology.

In several recent works, the South Indian films have drawn the attention of cultural and historical studies. Robert Hardgrave's article, "Politics and the Film in Tamil Nadu: The Stars and the DMK" in *Asian Survey*[27] is a description of links between Cinema and Tamil politics. Theodore Baskaran's contribution to South Indian film study is noteworthy. His

[24]UrvashiButalia, "Women in Indian Cinema." *Feminist Review* 17.1, 1984.

[25]SangeetaDatta, "Globalisation and Representations of Women in Indian Cinema." *Social Scientist*, Vol. 28, Nos. 3-4, Mar- Apr, 2000.

[26]M. Madhava Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction*, Oxford University Press, Delhi 1998.

[27]Robert Hardgraves, "Politics and the Film in Tamilnadu: The Stars and the DMK" published in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 13, no. 3, 1973, pp. 288-305. And published in SelvarajVelayutham (ed.), *Tamil Cinema: The Cultural Politics of India's Other Film industry,* London: Routledge, 2007.

work *The Message Bearers: The Nationalist Politics and the Entertainment Media in South India, 1880- 1945,* published in 1981. A living connection between the tide of nationalism and cinema is well established by him. The book's prime concern was the relationship between cinema, nationalism and politics in colonial Madras. Hence, the book seems to have not attended the social issues and subsequently social reform activity that had been vibrant in Madras Presidency during colonial period.[28] M.S.S. Pandian's *The Image Trap: M.G. Ramachandran in Film and Politics* gives full filmography of M. G. R. It paid little attention to the social issues but politics and stardom have been well discussed. It explains the way the image of M. G. R was raised and the minds of the poor manipulated.[29]

It was Sara Dickey, who deviated from the political perspective in South Indian writings on films. Her work *Cinema and the Urban Poor in South India* gives analytical picture of Tamil cinema and describes why cinema is so important to its urban viewers. Dickey analyses, how viewers and filmmakers together negotiate the content and meaning of cinema. This work revolves around Madurai, a major southern city in Tamil Nadu. Dickey asserts that cinema and urban poor are two inseparable aspects of film industry. For her, the cinema, as a mass entertainment performed the task of providing much needed relief to the poor from their day-to-day problems and pressures of life. *Amman Koovil Kizhakkaalee* (The East Side of Amman Temple), *Pitkkaaravan* (Illiterate Fellow) and *Sindhu Bharavi* are the three Tamil films that are closely examined by Sara Dickey.[30]

[28] S. Theodore Baskaran. *The Message Bearers: The Nationalist Politics and the Entertainment Media in South India, 1880- 1945.* Madras: Cre- A, 1981.
[29] M. S. S. Pandian. *The Image Trap: M.G. Ramachandran in Film and Politics.* New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2015.
[30] Sara Dickey. *Cinema and the Urban Poor in South India.* Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1993. p. 71.

Another important book on Tamil cinema is *Tamil Cinema: The Cultural Politics of India's Other Film Industry*[31] edited by Selvaraj Velayutham. Theodore Baskaran, Sara Dickey and other academician and scholars contributed articles to the book. The book covers wide range of articles cinema, politics, society and stardom. C. S. Laxmi's "A good woman, a very good woman: Tamil Cinema's Women" interrogates the Tamil cinema narrative with regard to the representation of women. The article observes that the Tamil cinema represented women as both good and bad. Good is always related to the mythological and cultural figures whereas the bad were opposite to the good.

There has been a little academic work done on Telugu cinema. Very few academicians, like S. V. Srinivas and Akkina Mareswara Rao, have paid attention to historical context and film narratives in Telugu cinema. There have been a good number of books in Telugu but most of them paid attention only to film narrative.

Bapu and Ramana in their book *Bapuramaneeyam*[32]reviewed twenty-four Telugu movies released in the period between 1955 and 1959. It is not an academic work. Further, only plots have been presented and the narratives are not interpreted. However, the movies are reviewed.

Sri Sista Anjaneya Sastry in his book *Nenu Naa Samakaleena Bharateeya Chalana Chitrakala*,[33] discusses both similarities and differences between theatre (drama) and cinema. He sees cinema as an art, as an industry and as a commercial piece. He also analyzes the relationship between cinema and government. Though he discusses about woman and woman's representation in Indian cinema, he does not discuss it elaborately, but gives an

[31] Selvaraj Velayutham (ed). *Tamil Cinema: The Cultural Politics of India's Other Film Industry.* New York: Routledge, 2008.
[32]Bapu and Ramana. *Bapuramaneeyam*, Navodaya Publishers, Vijayawada, 1990.
[33]Sree Sista AnjaneyaSastry. *Nenu Naa Samakaleena Bharateeya ChalanaChitrakala*, Visweswara Publications, Vijayawada, 1975.

attempt under a small sub-heading *Chalanachitramu-Prekshakudu.* (pp.38-52). In the chapter *Bharateeya Chalanachitra Kala-Daanicharitra,* important contributors of the cinema industry are introduced briefly.

M. B. S. Prasad in his books, *Cine Ramaneeyam-1* and *Cine Ramaneeyam-2*[34] reviews Telugu movies made by Bapu and Ramana. The reviewed cinemas in *Cine Ramaneeyam-1* are, *Bala Nagamma, Bhagya Rekha, Krishna Lelalu, Shabhash Ramudu, Rechukka-Pagatichukka, Appu Chesi Pappu Koodu, Attaa Okinti Kodale* and *Chintamani.* The reviewed cinemas in *Cine Ramaneeyam-2* are, *Suvarnasundari, Jayabheri, Illarikam, Pellisandadi, Thodikodallu, Chenchu Lakshmi, Veera Pandya Kattabommana.*

M. V. Ramana Reddy also reviews a few movies in his book, *Telugu Cinema Swarnayugam.*[35] The reviewed movies are, *Swarnayugam, Malleswari, Jayabheri, Donga Ramudu, Devadasu, Bangaru Papa, Patalabhairavi, Mayabazar, Vipranarayana*. He calls the period between 1950 and 1965 the golden era of Telugu cinema. He reviewed mostly the mythological and the historical movies. M. R. Kondal Reddy in his book, *Telugu Cinema Katha, Kathana Silpam and 'Show' Cinema Screenplay and Visleshana*[36] concentrates on the entry and history of cinema in India, on South Indian cinema and Telugu cinema narratives. He discusses the Telugu cinema narrative and story line. He divides Telugu cinema into three parts: early stage, golden period and commercial era. He makes an elaborate analysis of the screenplay of the movie, *Show.*

[34] M. B. S. Prasad. *Cine Ramaneeyam-1 & 2,* Vishalandhra Publishing House, Hyderabad, 2004.
[35]M. V. Ramana Reddy. *Telugu Cinema Swarnayugam,* M. V. Ramana Reddy, Proddutur, 2004.
[36]M. R. Kondal Reddy. *Telugu Cinema Katha, Kathana Silpam and 'Show' Cinema Screenplay and Visleshana,* Hyderabad: AanaPublicaations, 2010.

Bulemoni Venkateswarlu's work *Telugu Cinema Charitra: A Collection of Movie Memories*[37] sketches a brief history of Telugu Cinema. He discusses Telugu cinema from every angle like cinema songs, literature, reformist cinema, artistic cinema and cine industry. The work contains reviews of twenty movies. Namala Visweswara Rao's (edited) *Telugu Cinema*[38] deals with Telugu cinema history, technology, industry, commerce, future of Telugu cinema, cinema journalism. The book contains three articles on Raghupathy Venkayya, N. T. R. and Akkineni. One of the articles talks about the representation of women in Telugu cinema, how woman's status in cinema has been degrading, how her role is becoming unimportant in the narratives. It is a brief discussion. Srikaramurthy's article in the book *Telugulo Vaastavika Cinema* reviews around 10 movies, which can be called socials. Though the movies reviewed are social reality visual narratives, they were all released only after 1977.

Ramesh Babu's two edited volumes under the title of *Tolinati Cinema Patala Pustakalu*[39] is a relevant source material for the scholars who are working on Telugu cinema as it has printed the original songs, some of which contain cinema summaries of the story. Seeta Ratnam in her work, *Pramukha Telugu Cinemalalo Streela Jeevithachitrana*,[40] while covering the period between 1931 and 2006, observes that the Telugu cinema resented the various means and forms of subjugating women. She notes that suspicion over chastity, rape, domestic violence, the issue of dowry, gender discrimination, faction culture and sexual harassment are issues reflected in the movies. She maintains that the Telugu cinema despite its unpractical solutions is appreciable for throwing light on the contemporary women's issues.

[37]Bulemoni Venkateswarlu. *Telugu Cinema Charitra: A Collection of Movie Memories.* Hyderabad: Next Step Publications, 1997.
[38] Namala VisweswaraRao. (ed) *Telugu Cinema,* Hyderabad: Progressive Communications, 1997.
[39]H. Ramesh Babu. (ed.) *Tolinati Cinema Patala Pustakalu, Vol. 1(1933-37)* & *Volume 2 (1937-40).* Nagarkurnool: Chinni Publications, 2011.
[40]Seeta Ratnam. *Pramukha Telugu Cinemalalo Streela Jeevitha Chitrana.* Hyderabad, 2009.

Akkina Mareswara Rao's PhD thesis, *Cultural and Ideological Mediation of Telugu Cinema in Colonial Andhra, 1931-1947,* is a noteworthy and scholarly work contributing to the historiography of film studies. His attempt, no doubt, is a different one from the earlier works, as the emphasis was on cultural and ideological dimensions of Telugu cinema. This work analyses the role of cinema as a medium in society. Ideological mediation of cinema and its socio-political and cultural impact were studied and analyzed. Relation between film and ideology, culture and society are broadly discussed. The work has given much importance to changes in social life including cultural and ideological struggles of urban middle class and the rural peasant families. Seventeen cinemas[41] were studied in detail. The work finds that the Telugu movies of the colonial period was under the impact of colonial modernity. The work also analyzes that it represented diverse themes like progressive (social reform) movies, feminist movies, nationalist movies and movies on Gandhian philosophy. It concludes that the Telugu cinema of colonial period had represented feudal value system on one hand and colonial cultural values on the other. There has been a huge cultural and ideological change that took place in society and cinema in the context of early decades of independent India, which becomes a focus of this study.

S. V. Srinivas through his recent works contributed to the History and narrative analysis of Telugu cinema. His work *Megastar: Chiranjeevi and Telugu Cinema after N. T. Rama Rao*[42] deals with the relationship between movie star and fans. The work sketches how Chiranjeevi during the course of acting emerged as a film star and earned the biggest fan support not only in undivided Andhra Pradesh but also in the neighboring states. It is more a hero centric work. His other work, *Politics as Performance: A Social History of the Telugu*

[41]Akkina Mareswara Rao. *Cultural and Ideological Mediation of Telugu Cinema in Colonial Andhra, 1931-1947.* An unpublished doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Hyderabad, 1997. p. 14.
[42] S. V. Srinivas. *Megastar: Chiranjeevi and Telugu Cinema after N. T. Rama Rao*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Cinema[43] outlines the origin and trajectory of Telugu movie till 2013. The book observes that the Telugu movie had peasant origins and had expanded market after 1956 as Telangana and Andhra were merged together to form Andhra Pradesh. S. V. Srinivas maintains that the creation of popular image for NTR through cinema was not an accident but a calculative and deliberate attempt especially from 1970s, when he was screened as the representative of the masses.

Objectives

An attempt has been made to reconstruct the social history of Andhra of both the colonial and postcolonial periods. The focus of our study is to find what was the ideology of post-colonial Telugu cinema. There developed two discourses, reformist and revivalist, in colonial Andhra. One of our objectives is to explore, if the post-colonial Telugu movie took the course of any of these two discourses, while communicating with the audience. It may have walked along neither of the discourses. In this case, the post-colonial Telugu movie might have come up with alternative discourse, which does not just take only one of the colonial discourses, but might have taken both the discourses simultaneously. Finding the alternative discourse, if it exists, would be another objective of our study. If at all any alternative discourse was adopted by the post-colonial Telugu cinema – exploring causation would be another objective of this work. In this regard, this work would critically analyze the historical context of the period in which socio-political and economic developments would be our focus. The study endeavors to answer the questions, "Did the Telugu cinema mirror contemporary women's issues?", "If so, what exactly did the issues represent?" and "Did it propagate to eradicate them or expressed an indifferent attitude?" Another objective of our work is to find the stand of post-colonial Telugu cinema over the issue of dowry, which is

[43] S. V. Srinivas. *Politics as Performance: A Social History of the Telugu Cinema.* Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2013.

considered a product of colonial modernity. A critical analysis of the post-colonial Telugu movies, representing the theme of dowry is required to fulfill this objective. The colonial modernity resulted in disintegration of Hindu traditional joint family. Finding out the ideological stand of post-colonial Telugu cinema over the issue of joint family would be another objective of our study. Whatever might be the stand that the movie took, our another objective is to study the causation. As a whole, the prime concern of our study is to explore the ideology of Telugu cinema, causation for taking certain ideological positions and the impact of cinema in bringing social change.

Methodology

The method of archival and narrative analysis is adopted for our study. Both primary and secondary sources were analyzed. The question of women's issues, patriarchy and the changing nature and form of Hindu family will be investigated. Archival sources like contemporary Telugu journals, contemporary cinema magazines, dailies, cinema songs booklets and autobiographies of social reformers, cinema directors and actors are extensively used. Original song booklets, in many cases, used for publishing summaries of stories, have been taken up and were helpful for our study to investigate the theme of a particular movie. Almost all movies and booklets were collected. The stories were read and analyzed. The movies in particular are, *Peedamanushulu* (1954), *Kanyasulkam* (1955), *Mangalyabalam* (1959), *Pelli Chesi Choodu* (1952), *Atta Okinti Kodale* (1958), *Varakatnam* (1968), *Kutumbagauravam* (1957) and *Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu* (1961). The movie reviews written in newspapers were taken into consideration.

The Autobiographies of social reformers and contemporary literature were used for sketching the chapter *Traditional Ideology and Culture: Its Critique and Transformation under Colonial Modernity.* The Contemporary cinema journals *Chalanachitra, Chitra,*

Chitrakala, Chitraseema, Cinejagath, Cineerama, Cineerani, Cinema, Cinemarangam, Filmalaya, Film Star, Kineema, Kinema, Merupu, Picture Field, Roopavani, Screenplay, Sitara and *Telugu Chitra* were collected from various libraries of Andhra Pradesh. Original cinema songbooks were also mobilized. These contemporary journals and original cinema songbooks along with autobiographies of social reformers and cinema people were used as textual source material for rest of the chapters.

Chapterisation

Our work will confine to the study of Telugu cinemas produced during 1947 and 1962. The study looks into the ideology and culture practices in post-colonial Telugu movies, since the movies of this period represent the contemporary cultures and interrogate the complexity of ideology terrain of post-independent India. Hence, movies, as a modern form of source can be collaborated with the traditional form of source like literary documents in reconstructing contemporary cultural history. This study, based on the visual documents, archival sources and secondary literature explores the question, whether the films transformed the society, if so, to what extent; or how far the social concerns and struggles reflect in the movies, the new mechanical ar form.

The study would attempt to read and analyze the Telugu cinema of early decades of India's independence in order to explore the reflection of culture and ideology of Andhra society. The Telugu cinema of this period represent certain cultural and ideological transformations, in response to post-colonial reconstruction of Indian society. It was a common phenomenon all over the world that the newly emerged countries, which had achieved independence from colonial rule, initiated the decolonization process. As part of it, the cultural developments that occurred during the colonial rule were seen as alien. These alien developments were seen as evil by the indigenous cultures. We would attempt to

explore, if Telugu movie of the period between 1947 and 1962 had any such ideological engagement? We would further explore and see the nature of interrogation of social reform activity of colonial Andhra under the impact of colonial modernity and its continuity into post-colonial India. In this regard, we would study both the text and context for a better understanding of society during the early decades of India's independence.

The present work is divided into six chapters. The first chapter introduces significance of the study. Cinema and its role in the society are discussed. Concepts related to the work are defined in brief. The second chapter presents the culture and ideology of Telugu society during the British rule. The social structure, social evils and attitude towards women are discussed. The impact of the British on the Indian society and response of the English educated middle class intellectuals of colonial Andhra and the social reform movement in Andhra, initiated and led by the men in 19th century are discussed in detail. The women in the 20th century took up women's issues and propagated radical ideas and put forth gender specific demands, as part of their struggles. The causation and process of social reform movement in colonial Andhra are explained. We have also seen how the social reform movement continued into Andhra even after India's independence.

The third chapter deals with the Telugu cinema of early decades of India's independence. The representation of social evils like bride price, child marriage, enforced widowhood and the issue of *devadasi* system as esented in in Telugu cinema is discussed. The contemporary society and culture are reflected in the cinema. While representing these issues the Telugu cinema of the period was very much under the influence of patriarchal ideology. In other words, we try analyse what kind of ideology was communicated to the public in the movies. The three movies, *Peddamanushulu, Kanyasulkam* and *Mangalyabalam* are taken as case studies and are interrogated, analyzed in order to find if they represented traditional women's issues and if so, in what way. Did they support the Indian tradition or

colonial modernity? If the movies have represented progressive ideology, 'how progressive' was it, would be the focus of our study. We attempt to explore the ideological stand point of the Telugu cinema between traditional value system and colonial modernity while addressing women's position in society.

The fourth chapter tries to explore the way dowry, a patriarchal element, was represented in Telugu cinema of early decades in post-colonial India. The dowry, which had become a demand in first half of the twentieth century due to colonial modernity became an evil cultural practice by the second half of twentieth century. We attempt to analyze how the Telugu cinema during our period handled the issue of dowry and its ramifications. We have taken three movies for our case study: *Pelli Chesi Choodu, Atta Okinti Kodale* and *Varakatnam.*

The fifth chapter deals with how the Telugu cinema during the period of our study, reflected the contemporary society, especially with regard to ongoing process of disintegration of the Hindu traditional joint family, in colonial Andhra. The Hindu traditional joint family had been disturbed due to colonial modernity. The introduction of English education, employment and increasing urbanization led to the disintegration of traditional joint family in the first half of the twentieth century. This was seen as a threat to the peaceful existence of the traditional joint family system during the early decades of post-colonial India. We provide a detailed narrative of the story line of each movie, to bring out the complexity of the story line handled by the creative directors. The Telugu cinema also reflects on the rural and urban divide that was emerging in the post-colonial India. The ideological standpoint of the cinema is our focus. The movies *Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu* and *Kutumba Gauravam* depicted the theme of joint family. These movies have been selected as they have directly addressed the issue of disintegration. Both the movies reflect causes of

disintegration of joint family in contemporary society. They go deep into both economic and ideological or cultural reasons for disintegration.

Chapter VI is conclusion of the thesis which provides a brief analysis of context and text. It concludes that the Telugu cinema of early decades of post-colonial India looked at colonial rule from a critical lens and had a motive of restructuring the Andhra society, which had been disturbed by almost a two hundred year of colonial rule. Restoring traditional patriarchal value system by simultaneously accepting the certain feasible colonial modernist ideas was the ideology position of Telugu cinema during the period of our study.

Chapter II

2. Traditional Ideology and Culture: Its Critique and Transformation under Colonial Modernity

This chapter attempts to construct the social history of colonial Andhra which includes brief introduction of social structure, traditional culture and ideology, imposition of colonial rule, introduction of colonial ideas and the response of the middle class. The middle class intellectuals commenced a social reform movement to eradicate the social evils which had been aimed to subjugate women in traditional value system. The social reform movement sprang up with the aim of social change since second half of the nineteenth century. Along with colonial modernity, post-colonial modernity is also discussed.

The traditional social structure in Andhra was transformed under the impact of the colonial modernity. The hierarchical system had four varnas and panchamas (*dalits*). Brahmins and Vaisyas (Komatis) were in privileged position, while the *Shudras* were lower in the system[44]. The *Shudra* group consisted of many sub-castes, numbering in hundreds, consisting of mostly peasants and artisans. The Reddy, Kamma and Kapu castes enjoyed substantial political, economic and administratively controlling positions. The modernization of agriculture privileged these castes in rural areas. The Kammas were prominent in Coastal Andhra, whereas the Reddys were dominant in Rayalaseema. Within the non-Brahmins the Vaisyas enjoyed special position in the rural economy.

The Vaisyas occupied the second highest position after the Brahmins in the social hierarchy. They claimed the *Dwija* (second birth) status same like that of Brahmins. They were involved in trade, money lending and banking. They performed all the rituals, usually

[44]V. Ramakrishna, *Social Reform in Andhra (1848- 1919)*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1983. p. 3.

done by the Brahmins. They imitated the Brahmins in many ways viz., prohibiting widow remarriage, allowing child marriages, etc.[45]

The Brahmins occupied the top most position in the social hierarchy in colonial Andhra Society. Their main occupation was priesthood, performing rituals and other social and religious activities. Under colonialism they cornered most of the administrative positions, apart from the traditional administrative positions like *karanams* (village accountants).[46] With the advent of Western education, land administrative reforms and irrigation, dams and railways, urban renaissance took its roots in the 19th century Andhra[47]. The Brahmin community was the first to access colonial English education, occupy government jobs, move to urban centers and emerge as dominant educated intellectual urban middle class. The bottom of the hierarchical social structure was occupied by the untouchable castes. They were the Malas and Madigas. They were called *Lenka* in medieval period, which means 'serf'. [48] They were economically and socially at the lowest position. They were mostly landless laborers. Ritually they were considered untouchables. The active role played by the government and the missionaries has brought about a gradual social awareness among these castes. The brutal culture of discrimination against untouchable castes could also be seen in relation to women in family and society.

In the 19th century Andhra, women were subjugated under traditional customs, manners, and institution of marriage, *Sati*, child marriage, *kanyasulkam* (bride price), prohibition of widow marriage and nautch were problems that weighted down on women in

[45]*Census of India, 1891*, Vol, XIII. p. 274.
[46]Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Guntur District (1788- 1848): A History of Local Influence and Central Authority of South Inidia,* New York: Oxford U P, 1965, pp. 13-14.
[47]V. Ramakrishna, 'Towards Becoming Andhra Pradesh', in R. S. Rao, V. Hanumantha Rao, N. Venugopal (ed), *Fifty Years of Andhra Pradesh, 1956-2006,* Hyderabad: Centre for Documentation, Research and Communication, 2006. p. 42.
[48]P. Lakshmikantham, et al. ed., *Palnati Veeracharitra* (originally said to have been written by Srinatha during the 16th century), Vijayawada, 1961. pp. 89 &123.

society. Performance of *sati* was reported during the 18th and 19th centuries in Andhra. Vennelacunty Soobrow notes: "I visited the ceremony of the widow of Toomoo Paupaiah who had just died burning herself on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband." There were instances of *sati* practiced by even some sudras: perhaps the castes below the Brahmins were trying to follow the brahmanical practices. T. V. Subbarao, in his PhD thesis "Telugu Veeragadha Charitramu", submitted to Sri Venkateswara University unearthed an instance of *sati* among the sudra castes.[49] Bride price (*Kanyasulkam)* was the root cause of child marriages and early widowhood. The Brahmin widows were subjected to this cruel practice. Her head was shaved; her jewelry was taken away, and was not permitted to participate in family ceremonies.[50] The Devadasi system was another institution promoted prostitution in Andhra. Devadasi means nautch-girl or dancing girl associated with temples. *Letters from Madras*, by Julia Maitland records the prevalence of Devadasi system in Andhra region.[51] Though they were married to a local deity, in real life they were pushed into prostitution. It is these degenerating practices that were sought to be changed by the English educated native intelligentsia in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The educated Brahmins were the visible face of the intelligentsia in the 19th century, though later several non-Brahmin castes came up with their own intellectual class. The reform therefore was initiated both among Brahmins, as well as among non-Brahmins.[52]

Suryadevara Raghavaiah Chaudhary, a prominent non-Brahmin reformer notes that the colonial modernity has introduced ideas of rationality, secularism and scientific temper, moreover encountered the Indian tradition that was hegemonised by the Brahmans. Similarly, Mamidi Venkaiah (1764-1835), a Vaisya by caste, questioned the brahmanical hegemony. He demanded that the *Upanayana* ceremony must be performed through Vedic literature but not

[49]Quoted in, V. Ramakrishna, *Social Reform in Andhra (1848- 1919)*, p. 10.
[50]Ibid. pp. 11-12.
[51]Julia Maitland, *Letters from Madras during the years 1836-39*, New Delhi: Oxford U P, 2003. p. 43.
[52]V. Ramakrishna, *Social Reform in Andhra (1848- 1919)*, p. 12.

by Puranic literature as being done by the Brahmins. His objection to the fact that the priestly caste was performing *Upanayana* for the Vaisyas and Kshatriyas through Puranic literature, while for themselves it was through Vedic literature.[53] The Viswabrahmans moved even to the court during 1844 and 1845 and won the case in favour of their own priestly hood for marriages among their caste.[54]The 19th century Andhra therefore witnessed the emergence of critique not only among the Brahmins, but also among the non-Brahmins who, apart from internal social reform, also sought to change the Brahmanical hegemony in society. The women's uplift and caste reform all the two main areas reform in Andhra. Questioning the traditional culture and Brahmanical hegemonic ideology led to a long program of reforming the Andhra society, but unfortunately without completely modernising the tradition itself.

Atlury Murali divides the women's upliftment programme during the 19th and early 20th centuries in Andhra into three phases. The first phase was initiated and led by the 19th century social reformers who believed that the women should be educated and the social evils like child marriage, *kanyasulkam,* enforced widowhood and *devadasi* system must be eradicated. In the second phase an ideological battle was waged through literary production and propagation of reform ideas through vernacular. This phase witnessed the social reform activities carried forward by various Caste Associations, i.e., from 1910s to 1930s. In both the phases, it was men who led the activism to liberate women, but they did not strive for a total liberation of women from the clutches of male dominant patriarchal social order. The third phase was left ideological intervention wherein gender and class were seen as integrated issues. In the 19th century, it was Veeresalingam Panthulu, who not only wrote on need for reform in the society, but also initiated several reform activities. He started the journals, viz., *Vivekavardhini* and *Sathihithabodhini* to propagate reform ideas. It was towards the last

[53] Suryadevara Raghavaiah Chaudary, *Brahmanetharodyama Tatwamu,* Vijayawada: Pallavi Publications, 2012. pp. 3-4.
[54]*Ibid*. pp. 4-5.

decades of the 19th century that people like Gurajada Apparao attacked *kanyasulkam*. Atlury Murali argues that it is the third phase which is crucial as the women themselves started voicing their grievances they critiqued the male centred reform as public veneration and private humiliation to the women. Their demands were completely different and radical than those put forward by the early (male) reformers. Their main demand was for equality in socio-economic spheres. Equally important was their demand for political space partcicularly from 1930s and 40s.[55]

Indian intellectuals of nineteenth century can be divided into three categories. First, those who had adopted the Western value system, the second, those who had adopted Indian traditional culture and the third were those who chose western values but did not completely move away from traditional value system. These three ideologically distinct perspectives, therefore, influenced the process of socio-cultural reform.[56] The intellectuals who belonged to the third category dominated the cultural reform in the Telugu districts of Madras Presidency. Woman's uplift and eradication of untouchability were the main objects of reform[57]. The Andhra intellectuals, viz., Veeresalingam, Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimham, Raghupathi Venkataratnam, Gurajada Apparao, Komarraju Venkatalaxmana Rao and Gidugu Rammurthy were some of the pioneers in this category[58].

The Andhra intellectuals worked for the female education as it was seen the best empowering tool for women in the society. Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, both the colonial state and the indigenous societies and schools empowered women with modern English education. In 1812, the British established the Madras Literary Society, with seven

[55]Atlury Murali, "Perspectives on Women's Liberation: Andhra in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries", *Studies in History, 3, 1 n. s. (1987,)* New Delhi/ Newbury Park/ London: Sage Publications. pp. 97-119.
[56]Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu, *Sweeyacharitramu*, Hyderabad: Prachee Publications, Prachee Edition, 2007, p. xv.
[57] AtluryMurali, "Perspectives on Women's liberation: Andhra in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries", p.97.
[58]*Ibid.*

members from Machilipatnam joining the organization.[59] In 1830s, the first major public association of the Indians, the Hindu Literary Society, was established in Madras. The Society was critical of the activities of the Christian missionaries in Andhra. The members like Enugula Veeraswamaiah and Komaleswarapuram Srinivasa Pillai focused on women's education, English education and helped influence social (reform) consciousness in the society.[60]

Veeresalingam was pioneer in taking up social reform activity in Andhra. He was not only an activist, but also a literary figure in Telugu. All his writings reflected his ideas as reform and real for changing society. He orchestrated debates against social evils that were suppressing women in Hindu society.[61]Following Veeresalingam, Komarraju Laxmanarao worked for socio-cultural reform and published reform literature. He was active in movements against social evils and propagated female education and widow remarriage.[62]

Veeresalingam before concentrating on female education, child marriage, and widow remarriage, had been propagating against corruption, prostitution and the practice of deploying dancing girls in the marriages.[63] Veeresalingam's prime concern was female education. He debated for female education in the journal, *Purusharthapradayini* and Kokkonda's *Andhra Bhashasanjeevani*.[64]Similarly, Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu believed in and propagated for female education. For him same education must be provided

[59]Y. Vaikuntham, *Education and Social Change in South India, Andhra, 180-1920,* Madras: New Era Publications, 1982, p. 124.
[60]S. Inna Reddy, *Social Reform Movements in Andhra (1920-47),* an unpublished thesis submitted to University of Hyderabad, 1998. p. 33.
[61]Akkiraju Ramapathi Rao (ed.), *Veeresalingam Rachanalu: Navalalu.* Third Edition, Vijayawada: Visalandhra Publishing House, 1985. pp. vi- vii.
[62]B. Ramaraju, *Andhra Sahityodharakulu.* Hyderbad: Andhra Saraswatha Patishatthu, 1992. pp. 19-22.
[63]Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu, *Sweeyacharitramu.* Hyderabad: Prachee Publications, Parchi Edition, 2007. p. 357.
[64]Kandukuri Veeresalingamu (Footnotes by Akkiraju Ramapathi Raju), *Rajasekhara Charitramu: Navala.* Hyderabad: Visalandhra Publishing House, 1999. p. 35.

for both men and women.[65] Apart from reformers, the Christian missionaries also contributed for the education of girls in the Madras Presidency. The American Missionary Society, the London Missionary Society and the Church Missionary Society were prominent in establishing boarding homes and day schools.[66] A school for Hindu girls was opened in Visakapatanam by Mrs. G. L. Narsing Rao and Mrs. Suryaprakasa Rao,[67] in 1868, followed by Vijayanagaram Girl's School in 1868. Another one was started at Kakinada, in 1868, by Raja of Pithapur and by Veeresalingam at Dhavaleswaram in 1874. The Vijayanagaram School was for only Brahmin and Rajput girls. The Dhavaleswaram School established by Veeresalingam had no such caste restriction.[68] At the request made by Veeresalingam, the government in 1881 at Rajamundry established a girl's school.[69] Veeresalingam's call for female education was being criticized by orthodox section led by Kokkonda Venkataratnam, through his *Andhra Bhasha Sanjeevani*.[70]In 1874, Veeresalingam started *Vivekavardhini*, a journal, and used it as a tool to propagate women's education[71]. Kokkonda Venkataratnam, in 1875, started *Hasyavardhani*, a supplement to his *Andhra BhasahaSanjeevani* to ridicule Veeresalingam's writings[72]. Veeresalingam, in 1876, brought *Hasyasanjivani*, a supplement to *Vivekavardhini*, to counter Kokkonda's orthodox propaganda[73].He also started another journal called *Satihitabodhini* in 1883, exclusively for women, in which the focus was on women's health and child care.[74]Writers like Gurajada wrote in favor of female education[75].

[65]Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu, *Sweeyacharitramu*, p. 364.
[66]S. Inna Reddy, *Social Reform Movements in Andhra (1920-47),* an unpublished thesis submitted to University of Hyderabad, 1998. p. 44.
[67] V.Ramakrishna, *Social Reform in Andhra (1848- 1919),* p. 92.
[68]Ibid. pp. 91-92.
[69]Ibid. p.94.
[70]Kandukuri Veeresalingamu (Research & Foreword by Aripirala Narayanarao), *Sweeya Charitramu.* Rajamahendri: Andhrakesari Yuvajana Samithi, 2015. p.63.
[71]Ibid. p. 66.
[72]Ibid. p. 79.
[73]Ibid.
[74]Veeresalingamu, *Sweeya Charitramu*. Rajahmundry. 1954. Part II, p. 406.
[75]Setti Eswara Rao (ed.), *Gurajada Rachanalu: Kathanikalu*. Hyderabad: Visalandhra Publishing House, 1987. p. xviii. *Diddubatu* was written by Gurajada advocating female education.

The campaign yielded results soon. The cause of female education spread to other parts of Andhra. Similar societies sprang up in Bellary, Machilipatnam and Visakhapatnam. By the first decade of the 20th century, numbers of schools for girls were established. Various women's associations were formed with the purpose of advocating female education. The women's literacy registered recognizable growth. Simultaneously the intellectuals in Andhra were focusing on bringing consciousness among the public against social evils like child marriage, bride price, enforced widowhood and *devadasi* system.

Samineni Muddoo Narasimham brought the attention to the contemporary (nineteenth century) belief system in Andhra that the girls who attain puberty before marriage, must commit suicide by jumping into a river.[76] It was these superstitious beliefs that encouraged child marriages in Andhra. Statistics about the child marriages during the colonial period inform us that this social evil was predominant in the Andhra region. The *circar* districts (Ganjam, Visakhapatnam, Godavary, Krishna and Guntur) reported the maximum cases of child marriage. The *circar* districts had 11,904 married girls below 4 years. Their number was 24,257[77] in the entire Madras Presidency. The first to criticize the social evil was a journal called *People's Friend*, run by Dampuru Narsaiah, a Madras based teacher.[78] Soon, the Rajahmundry Reform Association took a lead in addressing the evil practice and advocated minimum 14 years of age for girls and 18 years for boys for marriage. Different other Associations also tried to educate the society with regard to the child marriages.[79] Gurajada's writings, especially *Purnamma* and *Kanyasulkam* had a visible impact on the intellectual class as they exposed the evil tradition of child marriage[80]. Intellectuals like Veeresalingam sought to reach popular consciousness by the use of Vedas. In his

[76]Kandukuri Veeresalingam (Footnotes by Akkiraju Ramapathi Rao), *Rajasekhara Charitramu: Navala*. Hyderabad: Visalandhra Publishing House, 1999. p. 139.
[77]V. Ramakrishna, *Social Reform in Andhra (1848- 1919),* p. 103.
[78]S. Inna Reddy, *Social Reform Movements in Andhra (1920-47),* p. 48.
[79]K. R. V. Krishna Row, *Social Reform Association and Its Objects*. (Telugu), Rajamundry, 1894. p. 4.
[80]Setti Eswara Rao (ed.), *Gurajada Rachanalu: Kathanikal*, p. xviii.

autobiography he wrote that the child marriage was not practiced in the ancient period and nor was it recommended in the Vedas[81].

The intellectuals realized that the evil of child marriage was closely associated with *kanyasulkam* (bride price). The infant girls were married off to older men, who had a leg in graveyard for money or other material gifts. Gurazada Apparao was shocked, during his fieldwork on bride price, to know that a girl child, still in womb, was bargained as a commodity.[82] The lure of money enlisted the parents to sell the infant girls. The child marriages led to the problems of increasing young widowhood. The evil practice was prevalent among Brahmin and Vaisya castes in Andhra[83] and to a lesser extent even among Velamas and Viswabrahmans.[84] The two castes were against widow marriage too. Veeresalingam and Rajahmundry Social Reform Association were in the forefront fighting against these backward practices. Despite the effort of Maharaja Ananda Gajapathi of Vijayanagaram to convince the government and Madras Legislature, to pass a legislation abolishing the *kanyasulkam* and child marriages, the colonial government was indifferent, as it feared public unrest.[85] Gurazada Apparao's *Kanyasulkam* play towards the end of the 19th century certainly left an impressive mark on the public conscience and positively influenced cultural space against the issues of bride price, child marriage, enforced widowhood and *devadasi* issue.[86] The play was performed at several places in Andhra to educate and sensitize the people of these evil practices. Veeresalingam's *Rajasekhara Charitramu* throws light on the sufferings faced by the infant and young widows.[87] Madras Widow Remarriage Association had been started in 1874 and it could initiate a debate over widow remarriage,

[81]Kandukuri Veeresalingamu, *Sweeyacharitramu*. Chennapuri: Vijnanachandrika Grandhamala, 1911. p. 25.
[82]Setti Eswara Rao (ed.), *Gurajada Rachanalu: Kavithala Samputam*. Hyderabad: Visalandhra Publishing House, 1986. p. ix.
[83]*Census of India, 1891*, Vol, XIII. p. 274.
[84]S. Inna Reddy, *Social Reform Movements in Andhra (1920-47)*, p. 50.
[85]Ibid. p.49.
[86]Setti Eswara Rao (ed.), *Gurajada Rachanalu: Kathanikalu*. p. xviii.
[87]Kandukuri Veeresalingam (Footnotes by Akkiraju Ramapathi Rao), *Sweeya Charitramu*, p. 72.

though it did not survive very long. [88] Veeresalingam, who had been inspired by many writings and visionaries, started the Rajahmundry Widow Remarriage Association in 1879[89] by. Paravasstu Venkatarangacharyalu had written a small book arguing that widow remarriage was accepted by the *Hindu* sacred texts[90].

Child marriages & Child widows according to The *Census Report for India of 1931*[91]

Age group of Girls	Percentage Married	Percentage of Child widows
0 – 1	0.8	1,515
1 – 2	1.2	1,785
2 – 3	2.0	3,485
3 – 4	4.2	9,076
4 – 5	6.6	15,019
5 – 10	19.3	105,482
10 – 15	38.1	185,339
Total	**100**	**321,701**

[88]Kandukuri Veeresalingamu (Research & Foreword by Aripiral Narayana Rao), *Sweeya Charitramu*. Rajamahendri: Andhrakesari Yuvajana Samithi, 2015. p. 116.
[89] V.Ramakrishna, *Social Reform in Andhra (1848- 1919)*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1983, p.122.
[90]Kandukuri Veeresalingamu (Research & Foreword by Aripiral Narayana Rao), *Sweeya Charitramu*, Rajamahendri: Andhrakesari Yuvajana Samithi, 2015, p. 116.
[91] SeeM. K. Gandhi, *Women and Social Justice*, Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1942 (reprint, 1970), p. 40.

Hindu Widows according to 1921 Census[92]

Age group of Widows	Number of Widows
0 – 5	11, 892
5 – 10	85,037
10 – 15	232,147
Total	**329,076**

Veeresalingam had performed the first widow marriage on 11th December 1881[93]. Around ten marriages were held in Rajahmundry by 1884. Three more marriages were performed by 1891. In Madras, Veeresalingam could perform the first widow marriage, in 1883. In 1885, Sabhapati Mudaliyar, at the request of Veeresalingam, financed two marriages in Bellary. Pyda Ramakrishnaiah who was the staunch supporter and financier to the movement passed away in 1886. Veeresalingam stayed in Madras until 1904 to further his movement. The movement though stagnated in Godavary, spread to other districts, especially to Krishna. Raghupati Venkataratnam, a former active member of 'Social Purity' movement as a student, and a stanch Brahmo at Madras, became a teacher at Machilipatnam, the headquarters of Krishna District. In Guntur, Unnava Lakshmi Narayana, a former student of Rajahmundry Training College, became a prominent leader in widow marriage movement. A few marriages took place in Guntur since 1902. Unnnava Lakshminarayana was called "second Veeresalingam of Guntur".[94] It shows that the movement had wide range of audience in the entire Andhra region. Govinda Ranade called Veeresalingam "Vidyasagar of South

[92]*Young India*, 5-8-1926 published in M. K. Gandhi, *Women and Social Justice*, Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1942 (reprint, 1970), p. 105.
[93]Ibid. p.144.
[94]V.Ramakrishna, *Social Reform in Andhra (1848- 1919)*, pp. 122-26.

India". Veeresalingam was made the President of Indian Social Conference in 1898. He also succeeded in performing a widow marriage in the Adi Velama caste which created a stir among Naidus in Madras and elsewhere. He established a widow's home in Madras. Another home was established in Rajahmundry in 1905, with an attached school for girls and widows. He established *Hitakarini Samaj* and gave his property worth forty one thousand rupees. The aims of the Samaj were to run the widow homes, aid orphanages and impart education and teach handicrafts to make the widows self-reliant. Unnava Lakshminarayana and his friends established a similar widow home in Guntur in 1902. Zamindar of Munagala was a monetary supporter to it, who became president of the Trust. The veteran Freedom Fighter Konda Venkatappayya also contributed to the trust by rendering his services as the President.[95] The social reformers saw *devadasi* system as an institution against women's dignity and represents Hindu society's degeneration. The middle class family system was seen being threatened by the *devadasi* system.

The practice of attaching dancing-girls to temples was prevalent in South India. They were called *devadasis, which* means 'slaves of the God'. They were taught reading, singing and dancing. They used to be sexually exploited by Brahmins and other officials associated with temple management. The insufficient salary forced them to depend on offering pleasures to men for money.[96] When they lost the patronage of local chiefs, they turned into prostitutes. Priyadarshini Vijaisri calls them 'sacred prostitutes'.[97]

As early as 1889, *Sathia Vethanusaram* suggested for a law abolishing *devadasi* system in the Presidency.[98] Veeresalingam addressed the issue of the nautch girls in Andhra.

[95]*Ibid*. pp. 122-29.
[96]Abbe J. A. Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies.* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985. pp. 584-587.
[97]Priyadarshini Vijaisri, 'Contending Identities: Sacred Prostitution and Reform in Colonial South India', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies,* n. s., Vol. XXVIII, no. 3, December 2005.
[98]Y. Vaikuntham, *Education and Social Change in South India: Andhra, 1880- 1920,* pp. 145.

He organized many meetings against the practices. The Madras Hindu Social Reform Association appealed to the Madras government to intervene and prohibit the practice of *devadasi* system.[99] Simultaneously, many intellectuals from Andhra region initiated a debate over the issue. Raghupati Venkataratnam, a Brahmo Samajist, crusaded against the nautch system in Andhra. Through his writings, he criticized the backward social practices and also gave shelter to the destitute children; provided them education and got them married.[100] He wrote against the practice of *devadasi* system in many periodicals like *Brahma Prakasika*, *People's Friend* and the *Fellow Worker*.[101] Under the Social Purity Association, he started the *shuddhi* movement in Machilipatnam during 1894-1898.[102] Konda Venkatappayya Pantulu and Chilakamarthi Lakshmi Narasimham have also critiqued the *devadasi* system. Especially Lakshminarasimham was, through his writings, vocal in addressing the issue.[103] Gurajada's *Diddubatu* and *Samskartha Hrudayam* were popular satirical writing, making fun of those who were patronizing the prostitutes.[104] The post 1920s saw the growth of real reformist consciousness in Andhra that addressed the said issues and backward cultural practices.

The social reform in Andhra since 1920s has become integral to the national movement and the autonomous women's movement simultaneously. The social reform movement, before 1920 was a successful endeavor despite its absence in rural areas. The transition in the movement after 1920s was that the women themselves replaced the male leadership and the social reform agenda was made part of freedom struggle. The issues raised

[99]Priyadarshini Vijaisri, 'Contending Identities: Sacred Prostitution and Reform in Colonial South India', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, n. s., Vol. XXVIII, no. 3, December 2005. p. 393.
[100]J. Viraswamy, 'Social Reform Movement', *Telugu Vani (Voice of the Telugu People, Souvenir: World Telugu Conference)*. Telugu New Year's Day, Hyderabad, 1975. pp. 4-5.
[101]Priyadarshini Vijaisri, 'Contending Identities: Sacred Prostitution and Reform in Colonial South India', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, n. s., Vol. XXVIII, no. 3, December 2005. p. 395.
[102]Y. Vaikuntham, *Education and Social Change in South India: Andhra, 1880- 1920*, p. 144.
[103]*Ibid*.
[104]Setti Eswara Rao (ed.), *Gurajada Rachanalu: Kavithala Kathanikal*, p. xviii.

before were once again taken up, as they had been part of unfinished reform agenda. The nationalists and women reformers once again addressed the child marriage, Kanyasulkam, widow marriage and women's education. After 1920s, the most critiqued and attacked new social evil was dowry (*varasulkam*). The issue of *devadasi* system was addressed more effectively under the nationalist leadership. Social reform became part of political activity and national movement. The legacy of early reform movement led by prominent individuals, reform associations and media was carried forward. We see a good number of girl's schools coming up in Andhra since 1920s. Many women's associations, caste groups and individuals, not only started schools for girls but also propagated female education. They created a discourse on relevant curriculum and duration of education.

Though the female literacy increased relatively, it was still low even after the 1920s, compared to male literacy.

Table:[105]

Year	Literacy rate	
	Men	Women
1901	7.68	0.48
1911	8.14	0.81
1921	10.43	1.43
1931	10.54	1.58

The Andhra Mahila Sabha, the Women's Educational Society (Narsapuram), Dharati Samajam (Visakapatanam), Kakinada Women Students' Association and individuals like

[105] S. InnaReddy, *Social Reform Movements in Andhra (1920-47)*, p.95.

Konda Venkatappayya were in the forefront propagating women's education. The girl's schools quickly sprang up during this period thanks to the efforts of some enlightened people and groups. Maharaja of Vijayanagaram started four schools in Madras. One school was set up at Machilipatanam. Different bodies set up many women's educational institutions. The Vaisya Seva Sadanam was started in 1920 in Rajahmundry; Sarada Niketan in Guntur in 1922; Kasturi Devi Vidyalayam in Nellore in 1923 by women's wing of Indian National Congress; Mahila Jateeya Vidyalayam in Kakinada in 1924 by Kakinada Women's Association and Vaisya Yuvati Vidyalayam in 1927 in Guntur were established. The Andhra Women's Conference advocated for compulsory education and an increase in the number of medical colleges and women's representation in those colleges. Andhra Mahila Sabha demanded to increase the number of educational institutions in the category of primary, secondary and higher education. There was a lot of public discourse with regard to the curriculum to be adapted for girl's education. The curriculum which gives both economic and social self- reliance to women was preferred. Vocational courses like tailoring, cooking, skills in cottage industry and domestic medicine were taught. Adult education for women was also a point for discussion. Andhra Mahila Sabha, during its 14th convention, criticized the government for providing adult education to only men. Caste associations also were in favor of women's education as they saw women's education as tool for the progress of the entire caste. Reddy Annual Conferences, Arya Vaisya Mahila Sabha and Viswabrahamana Maha Sabha passed resolutions to encourage female education. Niyogi Mahasabha of Niyogi Brahmins was no doubt active in encouraging female education, but insisted on only traditional education, which includes only religious and traditional practices. Despite a few reservations, the propaganda and activity in favor of female education was not opposed.[106]

[106]S. Inna Reddy, *Social Reform Movements in Andhra (1920-47)*, pp. 96-105.

The efforts of Veeresalingam and other reformers against child marriages were to be furthered after 1920s, since the 19th century reform could not eradicate the evil completely. Hence, the problem was yet to be taken up with intensive activity. The women's associations like Andhra Mahila Sabha and caste associations like Andhra Kshatriya Mahasabha, Vaisya Mahasabha, Arya Vaisya Mahasabha, Kamma conferences, Reddy annual meetings and Viswabrahmana Mahasabha asked their caste people not to encourage child marriages. The enactment of Sarada Act in 1929, which put minimum age for marriages 14 for women and 18 for men, received both welcome and opposition. Opposition was from orthodox sections across the castes. There were many instances where these opposing sections performed child marriages in public. They even organized *All India Stree Sanatana Dharma Mahasabha* and *All India Sanatana Dharma Mahasabha.* However, the reform sections of the same castes and women's associations supported the Sarada Act. The Andhra Mahila Sabha even went a step ahead and requested the government to increase the minimum marital age for women from 14 to 16 years. The practice of child marriages was more prevalent in the coastal districts than in the ceded districts.[107] The movement against child marriages is naturally more prominent in the coastal districts.

Widow marriage, therefore, continued to be an important task that has to be carried forward. Again, the caste associations were in the forefront and extended their support to the leaders of social reform movement. The movement was later joined by the women's associations all over Andhra. The district and village level conferences were held to propagate widow marriage. The number of widows below 20 years were more in coastal Andhra than in the Ceded districts. The intellectuals were eager to convince people that there is no scriptural opposition against the widow marriages. The Arya Vaisya Mahasabha, was the first caste association that came up with a resolution supporting widow remarriages in

[107]*Ibid*. pp.70- 80.

1928. It appealed to the people to consider the children who became widowed without consummation and since they are virgins, they are eligible for remarriage. The Vaisya Youth Association was also in the forefront in supporting within its caste widow marriages. The Association became more active under the leadership of Darsi Chenchaiah.[108] In 1929, many widow marriages were organized in Vaisya community. The Association was so effective that in every district the widow marriages were performed. For instance, a person called Narayana Setty came forward to perform marriage of any widow between 16 and 18 years to his son. Other Sudra castes like Kamma and Reddy also performed widow marriages. The cause evoked support not only from intellectuals and progressive people, but also from journals like *Andhra Mahila*, *Krishna Patrika*, *Andhra Patrika*, *Hindu Sundari*, *Grihalakshmi*, etc. The caste journals like *Vaisya*, *Prabodhini*, *Devanga Prabha*, and *Vasavi* have openly extended their support to the cause. Despite serious efforts, there still persisted opposition to the widow remarriages. There appears to be an economic angle attributed to the enforced widowhood. The parents of the widows did not want to lose the property she had inherited from her deceased husband.[109]

The movement for widow remarriage movement got strengthened with the establishment of institutions supporting the widows. Thus, widow homes were established all over Andhra. A widow home was started in Rajamundry by Veeresalingam.[110] Another was established in Guntur by Unnav Lakshminarayana.[111]

The *Devadasi* system was so prevalent that even Veeresalingam who vehemently opposed the system had to allow *devadasi* dance during the procession of this first widow

[108]Darsi Chenchaiah, *Nenu-Nadesam* (autobiography in Telugu), 1951, pp. 193-196.
[109] S. Inna Reddy, *Social Reform Movements in Andhra (1920-47)*, pp. 88- 93.
[110]K. V. Ramana Reddy (ed.), *Unnava Rachanalu Konni*. Kavali: Society for Social Change, 1979. p. iv.
[111]*Ibid.*

marriage in 1881 performed by him in Andhra.[112] Gurajada Apparao's *Kanyasulkam* and *Samskartha Hrudayam* advocated marriage for *devadasis,*[113] as in the case of widows. Family was seen as an ideal institution that could undo the *devadasi* system. The fight against the tradition of attaching dancing-girls to temples in Andhra was accelerated from 1920s. Darsi Chenchayya was one of the leading intellectuals, who took lead in reforming the *devadasis* or *kalavantulu*.[114] Women's organizations in Andhra came forward to address the issue of *devadasis* or *kalavantulu* (as they are called in Andhra). Muthulakshmi Reddy, a medical doctor and legislator,[115] was active on this issue. She drew much inspiration from Gandhi.[116] Gandhi, when he toured in Andhra in 1921, had given a call for the emancipation of dancing-girls.[117] Gandhi wrote: "Whether they be known as *devadasis* or by any other name, the problem is the same. It is a matter of bitter shame and sorrow, of deep humiliation, that a number of women have to sell their chastity for man's lust".[118] Gandhi was seen as an emancipator by all the deprived sections in the society. When Gandhi visited Kakinada a group of prostitutes represented him on their condition.[119] A man from *devadasi* community, who had married to a woman from the same community, wrote to Gandhi saying that the evil of *devadasi* system was prevalent more in Andhra than elsewhere. He wrote on the miseries of the community. Though he and his wife lived a family life like any other Hindu family, they were still considered to be part of the *devadasi* system. He observed that it was very difficult to get rid of this discrimination. He informed Gandhi that the *devadasi* community

[112]Kandukuri Veeresalingamu, *Sweeyacharitra-I.* 1982. p. 135. In Kandukuri Veeresalingam (Footnotes by Akkina Ramapathi Rao), *Rajasekhara Charitramu: Navala*. Hyderabad: Visalandhra Publishing House, 1999. p. 217.
[113]Setti Eswara Rao (ed.), *Gurajada Rachanalu: Kathanikalu*. p. xviii.
[114]Y. Vaikuntham, *Education and Social Change in South India: Andhra, 180- 1920,* pp. 144- 45.
[115]Kalpana Kannabhiran, "Judiciary, Social Reform and Debate on 'Religious Prostitution' in Colonial India", *Economic and Political Weekly,* Vol. 30, No. 43 (Oct 28, 1995). p. WS 65.
[116]Priyadarshini Vijaisri, 'Contending Identities: Sacred Prostitution and Reform in Colonial South India', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies,* n. s., Vol. XXVIII, no. 3, December 2005. p. 397.
[117]Y. Vaikuntham, *Education and Social Change in South India: Andhra, 180- 1920,* p. 145.
[118]*Young India*, 16-4-1925 published in M. K. Gandhi, *Women and Social Justice*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1942 (reprint, 1970). p. 141.
[119]*Ibid.* p. 129.

was no less discriminated than the *dalits* and hence urged Gandhi not to forget his community in his *Harijan* movement.[120]

Muthulakshmi Reddy, while addressing the seventh Andhra Provincial Women's Conference at Elore, demanded sanitary housing for the poor, compulsory and primary education to children, reform in inheritance rights and marriage laws, equal and high moral standards between the sexes and the overthrow of the immoral traffic in children and women.[121] To quote: "I may draw your attention to the ancient civilization of India which I am proud to say had assigned to women, equal rights and status in society. Our ancients seem to have had a high conception of women's power or shakti (our symbolic deity Arthanariswara is nothing but a recognition of women's influence in life and society).... Our position became a subordinate one only during the Middle Ages, during the period of invasions and internal dissentions".[122]She was vocal in Legislative Assembly of the Madras Presidency in addressing these issues. She emphasized for a legislation abolishing *devadasi* system.[123] Dr. S. Muthulakshmi Reddy wrote to Gandhi that the *Devadasi* bill which was introduced by her became a legislation, but so-called educated men including some of the Congressmen are not supportive for its implementation[124].

There was an anti-abolition group within the community especially in Tamil region and Madras city. Their articulation was self-assertive. They were concerned about the way

[120]*Harijan*, 14-9-1934 published in M. K. Gandhi, *Women and Social Justice.* Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1942 (reprint, 1970). p. 146.
[121]Kalpana Kannabhiran, "Judiciary, Social Reform and Debate on 'Religious Prostitution' in Colonial India", p.WS65.
[122] She spoke as an Indian delegate to the Paris International Conference of Women. Muthulakshmi Reddy, *Autobiography*, pp.41–2. In Priyadarshini Vijaisri, 'Contending Identities: Sacred Prostitution and Reform in Colonial South India', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies,* n. s., Vol. XXVIII, no. 3, December 2005. p. 398, footnote 72.
[123]Kalpana Kannabhiran, "Judiciary, Social Reform and Debate on 'Religious Prostitution' in Colonial India", p. WS65.
[124]*Young India*, 29-8-1929 published in M. K. Gandhi, *Women and Social Justice.* Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1942 (reprint, 1970). p. 144.

they were 'misrepresented' by Muthulakshmi Reddy. They asked not to equate them to prostitutes but treat them, for their noble practice, with dignity and honor on par with a monogamous family woman. Many associations were formed to protect the practice and some of them in 1927 met even the Law Minister of Madras requesting to stop the enactment of the *Devadasi* Prevention of Dedication Bill proposed by Muthulakshmi Reddy. The Madras Presidency Devadasi Association, The Madras Rudrakannikai Sangam, and other groups in Tamil and Kannada regions sprang up to oppose legislative intervention.[125] However, in Telugu speaking region of the Madras Presidency, the women from *devadasi* community strived for reform.

The women of the *devadasi* community in Telugu region came forward in favor of reform from within the community, during the 1920s. The reformist bodies were formed in Anantapur, Bellary, Cuddapah, Elore, Guntur, Narsapur and Repalle areas. The first devadasi organization, The Andhra Kalavantula Social Reform Association, was formed and inaugurated in Guntur, in 1921. It was the country's first province-wide devadasi association. A massive campaign was initiated for the monogamous marital relationship in the community. The campaign was so effective that the men of the community came forward to marry the women of the community. A Marriage Board was established in 1925. They were not just confined to the social reform but also brought political awareness in the community. They represented to the government of Madras to nominate one of them as Madras Legislative Council Member, who would represent the community and address the grievances of the community. The community had expressed faith in the leadership of both Gandhi and Muthulakshmi Reddy. They welcomed Nehru Report (1928) and appreciated the socialist ideology of the Congress party. Some of them became office-bearers of Congress party local

[125]Kalpana Kannabhiran, "Judiciary, Social Reform and Debate on 'Religious Prostitution' in Colonial India", p. WS68.

and district committees following the call by Muthulakshmi Reddy. Leaders of the community asked their people not to join any communal and narrow-minded organizations. Kalavantula Vidya Sangam opened schools for the boys of the community. Yamini Purna Tilakam, from the community became a member of Andhra Pradesh Provincial Congress Committee.[126]

Yamini Purna Tilakam served the *devadasi* community not only through politics and reform, but also by producing literature. She started a fortnightly magazine called *Hindu Yuvathi*.[127] She also set up an orphan home called Hindu Yuvati Saranalayam in Madras, in 1921,[128] which provided shelter and basic education including training in basket-making, spinning, tailoring and weaving.[129] She also considered marriage as an effective means of reform and rehabilitation.[130] The efforts of the Kalavantula Reform Association, the Press led by *Krishna Patrika* and the reformers like Muthulakshmi Reddy brought the traffic in minor girls, as an offence under the Indian Penal Code, in 1925.[131] The Madras Legislative Council passed the Hindu Religious Endowments Act in 1929, which released devadasi community from temple service and gave *inam* lands of the temple to their families.[132] However, the Kalavantula Social Reform Movement and the land gradually passed on into the hands of the men of the community, which actively sidelined women in the community.[133] Finally, the

[126]Priyadarshini Vijaisri, 'Contending Identities: Sacred Prostitution and Reform in Colonial South India', pp. 400-401.
[127]*Ibid*. P. 402.
[128]Y. Vaikuntham, *Education and Social Change in South India: Andhra, 180- 1920,* p. 145.
[129]Priyadarshini Vijaisri, 'Contending Identities: Sacred Prostitution and Reform in Colonial South India', p. 402.
[130]*Ibid*. p. 402.
[131]Y. Vaikuntham, *Education and Social Change in South India: Andhra, 180- 1920.* pp. 145-46.
[132]*Ibid*. p.146.
[133]Priyadarshini Vijaisri, 'Contending Identities: Sacred Prostitution and Reform in Colonial South India', p. 402.

Devadasi Prevention of Dedication Act was passed in 1949.[134] Meanwhile, dowry has become a social problem in Andhra, which needed the attention of the reformers.

Dowry was offered to the bridegroom's family by the bride's family. The practice has become widespread during the 20th century, within womb of the colonial modernity. The expansion of English education and the job opportunities for the educated provided a stable income and that turned out to be one of the reasons for the practice of dowry. Various caste associations started agitating against it. The caste journal also criticized the practice. The Brahmins were first to stir against it. Brahmana Mahasabha, Vaisya Association, Vaisya Yuvajana Mahasabha and Arya Vaisya Sabha opposed the practice and tried to educate the people. The regional Women's Association of both East and West Godavary condemned the practice. The practice has become prevalent across the castes. The parents of educated sons demanding huge amounts of dowry has become a norm. The first All India Women's Conference, presided over by Muthulakshmi Reddy voiced its opposition to dowry. The conference suggested the parents instead giving dowry to the boys, transfer the property to the bride. Their intention was that the bride should enjoy economic freedom. The conference also suggested freedom of choice to the bride in her marriage. The same suggestions were later carried forward by the Andhra Mahila Sabha. Some were of the opinion that the women should marry only after they become economically independent through their good academic performance.[135]

Simultaneously, we see a wave of anti-caste movements in Andhra. The untouchability was questioned.[136] Unnava Lakshminarayana strived for abolition of untouchability by encouraging co-dining among dalits and non-dalits.[137] Gurajada in his

[134]Y. Vaikuntham, *Education and Social Change in South India: Andhra, 180- 1920,* p. 146.
[135]S. Inna Reddy, *Social Reform Movements in Andhra (1920-47).* pp. 115-119.
[136]K. V. Ramanareddy (ed.), *Unnava Rachanalu Konni*. p. ix.
[137]*Ibid.* pp. ix-x.

Lavanarajukala, criticized social exclusion and discrimination against dalits.[138] Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu, in 1909 in Rajahmundry, started Rammohana School for panchamas, with English as medium of instruction, despite the fact that there were already three to four government schools for *panchamas*, but the medium of instruction was vernacular.[139] It is well evident that Chilakamarthi, visionary, wanted to include *panchamas* into mainstream modern society by introducing them to English education.[140] Non-Brahmin movement in Madras Presidency and especially in Telugu districts gave a formidable resistance to the hegemony of Brahmans. The demand of the non-Brahmin movement was for 'non- Brahminization of services', as the major share in public service jobs was monopolized by the Brahmins, who had initial access to the English education. Tripuraneni Ramaswamy was the prominent leader of non-Brahmin movement in Andhra. He studied all *Puranas* of Hindu texts to defend his argument that the sacred texts were written only to keep some castes servile to Brahmin caste group.[141] Tripuraneni was appreciated by Unnava Lakshminarayana who was a Brahmin by caste.[142] His novel *Malapalli* (1922) which reflected on the contemporary Andhra social structure and caste discrimination was banned by the government.[143] Later, with a similar narrative a movie called *Malapilla* (1938)[144] was made. Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu, a nationalist social reformer, writes in 1940s that Indians should live in harmony by erasing caste and religious differences. He wished unity between Brahmins and non-Brahmins and Hindus and Muslims.[145]

[138]Setti Eswara Rao (ed.), *Gurajada Rachanalu: Kathanikalu*. p. xviii.
[139]Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu, *Sweeyacharitramu.* p. 253.
[140]Ibid.
[141]Uma Ramaswamy., "The Belief System of the Non- Brahmin Movement in India: The Andhra Case", in *Asian Survey*, Vol. 3, (March 1978). pp. 290-300.
[142]K. V. Ramana Reddy (ed.), *Unnava Rachanalu Konni*. p. x.
[143]*Ibid*. p. xxxvi.
[144] Akkina Mareswara Rao, *Cultural and Ideological Mediation of Telugu Cinema in Colonial Andhra, 1931-1947*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis submitted to the University of Hyderabad, 1997. p. 169.
[145]Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu, *Sweeyacharitramu*. p. xxi.

Thus, colonial Andhra was hit by a wave of reform movements for cultural transformation, both in the realm of ideas and practices, but within the framework of colonial modernity. The intellectuals of Andhra took up the responsibility of removing social evils that were subjugating women and dalits.

Post-Colonial Modernity

The process of reforming Indian culture and shaping of popular consciousness with rationalism and humanitarian ideals continued into the early decades of independent India. The process of political and administrative integration of India continued into 1940s through 1950s. The development of communication, industrialization, modern agriculture brought increased social mobility. This modernization affected not only the small group of elites but also the rural poor.[146] Forces of secularization and democracy were established in post-independence India.[147] It became essential and inevitable to independent India to eradicate untouchability, as the communities living under the stigma were the main labor force for agriculture in rural areas. The policy of positive discrimination (similar to affirmative action) towards untouchables, backward castes and tribes enabled them to move to the status of already advantaged groups.[148] By abolishing untouchability, by enforcing right of untouchables to enter Hindu temples and to use water from the wells of *savarnas*, the degree of realization towards the idea of rationality and humanitarianism reached its peak after India achieved independence.[149] Dominant castes are powerful in politics and other professions in such a way that they are omnipresent and leave their mark in every sphere of life including culture. It is well evident in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra.[150]

[146]M. N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*. New Delhi: Orient Longman Limited, 1966. p. 62.
[147]*Ibid*. p.8.
[148]*Ibid*. pp. 87-88.
[149]*Ibid*. pp. 53-54.
[150]M. N. Srinivias, *The Dominant Caste and Other Essays*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987. p. 8.

In independent India the Women members of Parliament emphasized on the introduction of Hindu Code Bill in its entirety, though a few of them were against the bill. The Bill had four provisions; The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, The Hindu Succession Act of 1956, The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act of 1956 and The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act of 1956. The Hindu Marriage Act fixed the marriage age as 18 and 15 for boys and girls respectively.[151] It made bigamy punishable. The Hindu Succession Act entitled the widows to succeed to the property of their husbands; provided daughter's right to share in father's property, though daughter was not considered to have share in ancestral property. The sons were entitled to have property rights over the joint family property respecting Mitakshara coparcenary. The Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act recognized the father as the natural guardian of legitimate children in respect of their person and property, while the mother was the natural guardian of the illegitimate child.[152]The Dowry Prohibition Act (or) the Act XXXVIII of 1961 came into force since July 1961 not only prohibited both giving and taking dowry, but also made punishable offense for both the parties.[153] The Act also declares that the dowry, if given, must be transferred to the bride within a stipulated time.[154]

The movement for female education was initiated by social reformers like Veeresalingam, followed by some progressive women like Kotikalapudi Seethamma and Bandaru Achamamba.[155] The growing consciousness of women reflected in increased women's organizations, literature and journals. *Hindu Sundari* (1908) was the first women's journal, run by women themselves in colonial Andhra, followed by *Savithri* (1910) and

[151]P. Jagadeesan, *Marriage and Social Legislations in Tamilnadu,* Madras: Elatchiappan Publications, 1990. pp. 127-128.
[152]Janaki Nair, *Women and Law in Colonial India: A Social History*. Bangalore: Kali for Women in collaboration with the National Law School of India University, 1996. pp. 223-226.
[153]Monmayee Basu, *Hindu Women and Marriage Law: From Sacrament to Contract.* New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001. p. 93.
[154]*Ibid*. p. 143.
[155]Vasireddy Krishnarao, *Mahilabhyudaya Vangmaya Parichayam (Parisodhana Vyasam)*. Hanmakonda: Charan Publications, 1989. p. 8.

Anasuya (1914). *Asika, Andhra Mahila, Andhra Lakshmi, Vidyavathi, Sreemathi* and *Soundaryavalli* were also prominent. Women leaders like Bandaru Achamamba, Kotikalapudi Seethamma, Venkataramanamma, Unnava Lakshibayamma, Varalakshmamma and Narasamamba produced effective literature, making a visible marker in culture and consciousness. The women's were issues also central to journals that came up after 1920s, like *Grihalakshmi, Sadhana* and *Bharathi*.[156]

The formations of women's organizations began with a Mahila Sangham started by Bhandaru Achamamba in 1901, followed by *Stree Noothana Mandali* in Guntur, *Stree Prarthna Samajam* in Kakinada and *Mahila Samajam* in Rajahmundry. When *Pradhamandhra Mahasabha* took place in Bapatla in 1913, women who attended it had a separate meeting for women presided over by Kotikalapudi Seethamma. Stree Vidyarthini Samajam was started in Kakinada in 1917. Sarada Samajam was founded in Ananthapuram.[157]

The issues that were central to these organizations and their reform activities were female education, bride price, child marriage, widow remarriage and the tradition of *devadasi* system. There was a growing consciousness among the Telugu women who advocated for divorce if the marriage was found to be not compatible. Darsi Annapurnamma suggested divorce as a tool for a better life and even she argued that divorce is good for society and individuals if the couple was not coping with each other.[158] The women of Andhra advocated for equal rights for both men and women during the 1920s and 1930s. Darsi Annapurnamma, being part of Theosophical society, addressed large gatherings across Andhra region

[156]*Ibid*.
[157]Malladi Subbamma, *Andhra Pradeshlo Mahilodyamam: Mahila Sanghalu (1860-1983)*. Hyderabad: Prajaswamya Prachuranalu (Pvt) Ltd., 1985. p. 43.
[158]*Bharathi*, "Darsi Annapurnamma Jeevitham" January 1932, p. 172.

including Secunderabad which was part of Nizam's territory, demanding for equal rights for women on par with men.[159]

Kamaraju Sarojini Devi, in her article published in *Bharathi*, requested the upcoming educated women to take up modern employment which include Law, Medicine, Clerk, Police and Arts like dance, singing and acting. She rightly pointed out that the women accused, who could not make their presentation clear in courts during depositions had been jailed. To help such helpless women in fighting their cases, there must be women lawyers who could rightly advocate for such accused and get justice for them. In the same way, she suggested the educated women to profess the medical practice to help the women patients who had been bearing decease and pain as they could not express their real deceases to the men doctors. She also challenged that the women, as they had been studying the same modern education as their male counterparts, could perform their duties with efficiency as clerks on par with men. She was not content with the achievements of women artists only as painters and singers but she expected women to choose dancing and acting as their careers for a better representation of women. She was of the opinion that women could perform better than the men do in the teaching profession. She rightly pointed out how the women-accused would be humiliated by the police men and requested the women to profess the police job to safeguard the women's rights during interrogations.[160]

Thus, a section of Indians could access education in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They got influenced by the western values and manners. Some of them were provoked by the critique of utilitarians and missionaries that the culture of Hindu society had been degenerated. The ideology of Indian reformers was of twofold: one was to fight the customs and manners subjugating women and *dalits* and the other was to fight the colonial

[159] *Ibid*. pp. 171-172.
[160] Kamaraju Sarojini Devi, "Streelaku E Jeevika?" in *Bharathi*. April. 1939. pp. 490-492.

hegemony. They took up social and religious reform activities simultaneously, but their ideology was bourgeois as they wanted re-positioning of women for betterment of family from within, but not for complete liberation of women. Veeresalingam, the pioneer of social reform in Madras and colonial Andhra advocated that women are meant for looking after family and socialization of male within the household.[161] Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu believed that women must study English but not desert Indian tradition and culture.[162]

The Government of India after independence took certain measures to protect the *dalits* and women from discrimination and victimization by enacting legislations and providing better opportunities for them. Untouchability was banned, reservations for *dalits* were provided through positive discrimination, women were given property rights, and dowry was banned and so on. The government reform however was not radical as women still were conditioned by the traditional patriarchal structure but with certain concessions. The Telugu cinema, before independence, reflected upon this bourgeois ideology of the reformers. Telugu cinema after independence postured the idea of taking colonial modernity and Indian tradition hand in hand. It not only advocated for upliftment of women's position and abolishing social evils that were hostile to women, but within the joint family system, which had been under threat from the colonial modernity.

Some social reformers in the 1940s introspected on the social reform movement in colonial Andhra had failed in completely eradicating social evils. Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu wrote in 1940s, that except *devadasi* issue, all the other problems like child marriage and enforced widowhood grew stronger than earlier.[163] Darsi Chenchaiah also concludes that as a whole the social reform movement in Andhra was a failure and writes,

[161]Akkiraju Ramapathi Rao (ed), *Veeresalingam Rachanalu: Mudava Samputam*. Hyderabad: Visalandhra Publishing House, 1996. p. vi.
[162]Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu, *Sweeyacharitramu*. pp. 365-366.
[163]*Ibid*. p. xx.

"The size of the reform in society is similar to a drop of water in the ocean".[164] Dowry had replaced bride price in marriage culture of Andhra in the twentieth century.[165]

[164]Darsi Chenchaiah, *Nenu- Nadesam*, 1951, p. 193.
[165]Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu, *Sweeyacharitramu*, Hyderabad: Prachee Publications, 2007, p. xx.

Chapter III

3. Reflections of Tradition and Modernity in Telugu Cinema: Representation of Child marriage, *Kanyasulkam,* Enforced Widowhood, Widow Remarriage and *Devadasi* in *Kanyasulkam*, *Peddamanushulu* and *Mangalyabalam*

This chapter would try to sketch the Telugu cinema of 1950s and 1960s, which reflected the women's issues taken up during the social reform movement in 19th and early 20th centuries. Child marriage, bride price, enforced widowhood, widow remarriage and Devadasi system are the major issues that were represented in the movies *Mangalyabalam* and *Kanyasulkam*, which are our case studies. The chapter attempts to find the ideology of post-colonial Telugu cinema analyzing *Kanyasulkam, Peddamanushulu* and *Mangalyabalam.* The Synopsis of *Kanyasulkam* followed by its analysis, *Peddamanushulu*'s synospsis followed by its anasysis and the synopsis of *Mangalyabalam* and its analysis would be focus of our udy to understand the ideology, if reformist or revivalist, of post-colonial Telugu cinema. In detail, we would endeavor to find if the cinema carried the reformist or revivalist ideology or it carried both the ideologies simultaneously. Casation for carrying certain ideology by cinema would be discussed.

Like all art forms, Cinema, as a new mechanical art, is reflective of culture and society. Indian cinema, whatever is the language, was very much concerned with issues and movements in society. Compared to the other artifacts, cinema is the most effective medium[166] of interrogation and communication. The early Telugu cinema reflected contemporary reality[167] and criticized the social evils, the Telugu society was plagued with. The social evils like *kanyasulkam*, child marriage, enforced widowhood and *devadasi* system

[166] *Vijayachitra*, May, 1974. p. 39.
[167] *Cinema Rangam*, May 1958, p. 51-53.

were seen as hindrance to the progress of the society. These issues were the predominant concern of the colonial intellectuals and movements. In the colonial period, the social reform activities were propagated through press, literature, theatre and also by the new and most effective art form 'cinema'. Though the mythology gave the story content to the early cinema, the social movies have made their entry into early cinema. *Malapilla* and *Rythu Bidda* have been the most popular social movies in Telugu made in the early period of talkies. For instance, Polavarapu Srihari Rao, emphasizing the need for social movies, suggested to the directors in 1946, that the producers should choose contemporary social issues and demonstrate the resolve to solve them. He also reminded them to take the best qualities and uniqueness of the foreign societies and project it in Indian cinema.[168]

In the words of V. Madhusudana Rao,[169] a contemporary Telugu Cinema director, "Cinema is a wonderful medium that can have the most impact on the people. It, like a sword, can give good results to the society but also can encourage bad as well. Cinema should be able to bring consciousness among the people. It should be thought provoking. It should be able to make them think progressively. But unfortunately the arts and cultural means (cinema and theatre) are in the hands of capitalists. They are intoxicating the people not to think progressively". Most of the early movies were made by taking the core story of the novels but with some modifications. Since the story is already known to the people, the movies were able bring the audience to the theatres.[170]

Reflecting on the cinema, one of the early female movie artist, Shavukaru Janaki reflects: "Cinema should be able to fill self confidence in women but not make them coward. It should portray bold characters of women. It has to teach the society that only economic independence cannot change the status of women but the social independence can. One girl

[168]*Roopavani*, February 1946. p. 44.
[169]*Vijayachitra*, July 1974, pp.41- 43.
[170]*Ibid*., pp. 38- 43.

from my relative's family who had finished her MBBS wanted to marry her classmate. Her parents did not agree as he does not belong to their caste. She was married to a match they chose. Though she is economically independent, she could not do what she had aspired. This is the women's year (1975). Cultural artifacts like cinema can bring more change than the women's movements do."[171]

B.N. Reddy,[172] another doyen of the Telugu film industry, in his radio speech in Madras in 1965, analyzed the emergence and the development of Telugu cinema. The early cinema (before the World War II), according to him was progressive and relevant to the society, whereas the movies produced after the war became dry, with overt emphasis on entertainment. He also said that the movies lost creativity and innovation. "They were made of similar stories," was his complaint. For him, the movies like *Malapilla*, *Rythu Bidda*, *Sumangali*, *Vandemataram*, *Bhaktha Potana* and *Yogi Vemana* are the best movies produced in the history of Telugu cinema. All these movies were produced before 1947. R. Nagendra Rao, reflecting on the 1950s Telugu cinema, felt that increasing nature of mythological narratives in Telugu cinema and emphasis on entertainment has replaced social message.[173]

The present study however, indicates that the entry of mythological themes, commercialism did not completely alienate Telugu cinema from its earlier concern with social issues and themes. The producers and directors did not go away from the everyday life of the people. They chose stories revolving around the concerns of the contemporary society. The most striking feature of Telugu cinema was its increasing integration of creative literature into movies. The stories were taken from novels like *Kanyasulkam* and social reform literature dealing with the issues like child marriage, bride price, enforced widowhood, widow remarriage and *devadasi* system. The movie *Kanyasulkam* (1955) dealt

[171]*Ibid*., April 1974. pp. 6-7.
[172]*Cinema Rangam*, October 1965. pp. 63-69.
[173]*Ibid*., November 1954. p. 22.

with child marriage, bride price, enforced widowhood, the aspect of *devadasi* system and widow remarriage. The *Mangalyabalam* (1959) was a movie that interrogates child marriage and questions its sanctity. The newly emerged evils like dowry were well depicted in the post-colonial Telugu cinema. The three important movies on dowry are *Pelli Chesi Choodu* (1952), *Atta Okinti Kodale* (1957) and *Varakatnam* (1968). The Telugu cinema represented the contemporary relationships among the individuals and groups. It advocated for the unity of the families or joint family system. It defended the collective agriculture, an inspiration from the contemporary Soviet experiment[174]. The early decades of independent India has suffered from the short of food grains. The first three five year plans have concentrated on self-sufficiency in food grain production and industrialization. The movie *Todi Kodallu* (1957) advocated for collective agriculture. Situated in two major irrigational basins of both Krishna and Godavari rivers, the coastal Andhra was the granary of the country. How irrigated coastal agricultural economy and rural communities have contributed for the self-sufficiency in food grains production happened to be the themes in Telugu movies. As most of the producers, directors and the writers of cinema industry hailed from coastal Andhra, the local socio-economic environment was well represented in the movies like *Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu* (1958), *Kutumba Gauravam* (1960) and *Ardhangi* (1955). Simultaneously, the movies also advocated joint family system, the basis for rural society. The movie, *Ardhangi* represented the contemporary social functioning of patriarchy and the oppression of women. It does not mean that all that Telugu industry produced during the first two decades were just social movies and among socials only related to social issues. The industry moved into producing diversified themes, including folklore and mythology.

The early cinema writers, directors and producers were moved by utopian ideas and under the influence of reform ideas of 19th and early 20th centuries. Though the content for

[174] *Chitraseema*, January 1958. p. 66.

the production of movie was mythology in the beginning, the Telugu cinema in no time moved into production of social movies. The commercial success of the social movies gave impetus for the sustenance of such themes. The commercial hit happens only when it is received positively by the public. The public were already seized with the nationalist ideology and reform ideas on women and fight against untouchability. It is this social and political environment that patronized movies like *Mala Pilla, Rythu Bidda* (relationship between zamindar and peasants), *Sumangali* and *Gruhapravesam*. The nationalist movies driven by the Gandhian ideals were also produced.

The same trend continued even after the attainment of the independence in 1947, with a little change. The added themes are the issues of dowry and the disintegrating joint-family. Though the dowry had been present during the colonial period, specifically during the first half of the 20th century,[175] its evil effects were represented in Telugu cinema mostly from the 1950s. The seeds for the disintegration of joint family system were sowed in the first half of the 20th century, due to urbanization and impact of modernity during 1950s and 1960s. The issues of joint-family and dowry would be discussed in the subsequent chapters. The focus of our study in this chapter is representation of social evils pertaining to women in contemporary Hindu households, through the case study of three important Telugu movies of 1950s and 1960s: *Kanyasulkam, Peddamanushulu* and *Mangalyabalam*.

***Kanyasulkam* (1955)[176]:**

[175]Kodavatiganti Kutumbarao (edited by Kethu Viswanatha Reddy), *Chaduvu*. Vijayawada: Visalandhra Publishing House, 1982. p. viii.

[176] The screen adaptation was done by Vempati Sadasivabrahmam based on the play in Telugu, *Kanyasulkam* by Gurajada Apparao. The movie was directed by P. Pullaiah; produced by D. L. Narayana; music by Ghantasala Venkateswara Rao; starred by N. T. Rama Rao, Savitri, Ch. Sita Ramanjaneyulu, Govindarajulu, Subba Rao, S. Janaki, V. Ramanna Panthulu, Vangara, Gummadi, Hemalatha, Suryakantham, chaya Devi, Chadalavada, Master kundu, etc.

We first provide a detailed synopsis of the movie and follow it up with analysis. The movie opens with a scene where two main characters are introduced. Madhuravani[177], a *devadasi* woman, lights the cigar which is kept in the mouth of Gireesam. Madhuravani catches the match box thrown by Gireesam and lights the cigar for Gireesam. Gireesam tells her that from that day onwards, both his name Sree Sree Sree Gireesam and her name, Madhuravani, would be alive forever. He, sitting on a cot in a comfortable and extended position, tries to hold the hand of Madhuravani. Madhuravani softly moves away from him and starts dancing. (Arts like dancing and singing are cultural professions of *Devadasis*). She sings and dances in front of him.

Madhuravani sings the song, "Sarasuda dari cherara…." Gireesam watches it and admires her, "Ahaha… am I dreaming? Or am I awake? Is it *Bhulokam* (Earth) or *Swarga lokam* (Heaven)? Who dances like this? Rambha? Menaka? Urvasa? Or Thilothamma? Aa ha ha ha ….. What a bliss? What a bliss?" Gireesam pretends to be enjoying the bliss that he has got by witnessing Madhuravani's dance and singing. He pretends to have slipped into sleep. Madhuravani, thinking that he is asleep, steals his purse from his 'jubba' (upper garment).

She does not know that he is awake. He opens the eyes and recalls that he needs to pay Rs. 20 to '*poota koollamma*' (a woman (most of the times widows) under traditional system, who provides food for money). Madhuravani hides the purse under the pillow of her bed. Madhuravani by seeing Gireesam waking up says, "You look like you woke up!" Gireesam by reaching her cot praises her for dance and song. While praising her, he secretly gets the purse and keeps it in his jubba pocket. He says that she is the queen of the

[177] This role is played by Savitri. She is called Sahajanati (which means one who lives in the role while acting) in *Chitraseema*, May 1958. p. 56.

prostitutes, who brought fame to Kalinga Country.[178] Madhuravani questions him: "Then why I do not have any properties and always in search of money?" By seeing her financial difficulties, Gireesam by holding her chin, says that he, being unable to bear her financial difficulties, wrote two letters to his two friends, Nizam Nawab and King of Baroda and they would, for sure, give him a job of no less than Rs. 1000, and also he and she would shift to Hyderabad.

Madhuravani opines that if at all what he is saying is true, he would not care for people like her. Gireesam pleads that she need not doubt about it and says that he has decided to do the job, only for her sake. If not, he says, he is not a man who would do a job under somebody. Madhuravani asks him how he will manage the house and kitchen as of now.

Gireesam says that for time being he brought some Rs 20 and requests her to give him that back. Madhuravani takes out the Rs.20 from Gireesam's pocket and hands over to him. She says, **"**God has created you and me equally but has thrown us in a small mistaken path**"**. Both of them laugh. Gireesam takes a leave from her saying he has a lecture on widow marriages in town hall and will attend it and come back.

He goes to *poota koollamma* (widowed owner of a local food court). She asks him if it is true that he is visiting the harem (place of nautch girls; here it is Madhuravani's place). He convinces her that he does not even think of them as he considers even their touch as impure. She expresses her persistent wish (she always keeps expressing it to him) that she would be married by him and she would live a happy life like any married woman. He assures her that her wish would be realized and she will no longer need to run that food mess.

[178]The Orissa state and Northern districts of Andhra Pradesh (present Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatanam) were called Kalinga region since ancient times.

By way of laying foundation to the movie two institutions are introduced: one *devadasi* system and prostitution and the second how the enforced widowhood made some women to live by running two joints and long for marriage as a route for escaping from it. The male protagonist Gireesam, with pretentions of modernity and access to colonial system of bureaucracy lives like a parasite on both these institutions. The movie then goes on to the introduction of Brahminical household and the system of child marriages, bride price and the position of widows in the joint family. The money, as a commodity is depicted as directing the lives of all the characters.

Ramappa Panthulu moving back to the story in the movie has been happily and profitably leading his life as a settlement and marriage broker. He charges the people (clients) who approach him for both civil and criminal legal aid.

Naidu (*Sidhanthi*) comes and informs Ramappa Panthulu that his assigned job of convincing Lubdhavadhanulu, an old Brahmin, for marriage, foretelling that he has the luck of offspring if gets married even at an advanced age. Ramappa Panthulu replies that he should actually tell him that he has the luck of new property, if he gets married. Lubdhavadhanulu loves and dies for money. Ramappa Panthulu has already sent Manda Sidhanthi to Lubdhavadhanulu to tell this. He also asks Naidu Sidhanthi to go to Lubadhavadhanulu and deceive him with the same statements.

Manda Sidhanthi while foreseeing the future of Lubdhavadhanulu fore-tells that Lubdhavadhanulu has both luck of marriage and *dhanam* (money). Naidu Sidhanthi also joins them and endorses the same. They also tell him that he will face calamity of death, if he does not get married soon.

Ramappa Panthulu also joins the place and encourages Lubdhavadhanulu for marriage as he has the luck of riches only if get married. Lubdhavadhanulu sends both Sidhanthis to tell

Ramappa that he has, this time decided to get married. He entrusts the job to Ramapa Panthulu to fix a girl for him to marry. Ramappa Panthulu assures him that he would fix the daughter of Agnihotravadhanulu (another Brahmin) for Rs.1800 as bride price. He collects Rs.200 from Lubdhavadhanulu as advance. Though Lubdhavadhanulu is greedy of money, he gets ready to pay Rs.1800 as bride price, as there is no other go.

To get Rs.200, Lubdhavadhanulu goes inside his room. His daughter, Meenakshi a widow, who has illicit relationship with Ramappa Panthulu questions Ramappa Panthulu, in her father's absence, is the marriage to help her father or for his own sake. She is of the opinion that Ramappa is encouraging her father to go for marriage at an old age only for money but not for her father's sake. She leaves from there as her father is coming with Rs.200. Lubdhavadhanulu hands over Rs.200 to Ramappa and asks him to fix marriage in the same month as there is a misfortune and the calamity of death foretold, if he does not get married soon. Ramappa Panthulu leaves. Meenakshi comes to give water to Lubdhavadhanulu asks him, "What father? Are you trying for another marriage?" Lubdhavanlu answers, "Should I die instead of marriage? It seems calamity of death would hit me if I do not get married and even I have the luck of *dhanam* (money) if I get married". Meenakshi leaves from there disgusted.

Ramappa Panthulu visits Agnihotrvadhanulu's home. Agnihotrvadhanulu's widowed daughter goes inside pooja room and informs him that someone came for him.

His daughter: Father, someone has come for you.

Agnihotrvadhanulu: "*vidhava munda*" (widowed women), do not disturb me while reciting *sandhya vandanam* (evening prayer).

Gachamma: You have anyway, made her a widow. You are always habituated throwing your anger on her. It seems Ramappa Pathulu from Ramachandra Puram Agraharam has came to see you.

Agnihotavadhanulu: Haaaa! Ramappa Panthulu garu? (with excitement). He immediately leaves for hall to see Ramappa Panthulu.

Gachamma: (To Agnihotravadhanulu while leaving) Innocent girl. You do not have minimum pity or affection over her condition to have become a widow at early age. (Addressing daughter) Do not mind daughter. Instead of taking birth in this home, had you been born as a tree in a forest, you would have enjoyed the world.

Ramappa Panthulu tells Agnihotravadhanulu that Lubdhavadhanulu is ready to marry Agnihotravadhanulu's daughter, Suchi, who is 6 years old. Agnihotravadhanlu tells him that she is 9 years old as the bride price would increase according to age. The increment would be there only before puberty. They fix the date of marriage at the coming *pournami* (full Monday). Agnihotravadhanulu assures Ramappa Panthulu about his commission.

Poota koollamma scolds and tries to beat Gireesam for spending Rs.20 as a nautch-girl (Madhuravani). She had gives Rs.20 to him to buy provisions for her mess. She also foretells and curses him that he would be battered by one Venkappa, to whose daughter-in-law he has written a love letter. He leaves from there declaring that he would pay off all her money.

Madhuravani receives a post. She happens to see Ganapathi Sastri, brother-in-law of Agnihotravadhanulu along with his disciple Mahesam, passing nearby and calls upon them. She asks Ganapathi Sastri why he has not visited her for a long time. He says he shifted from Visakhapatnam. She also says that she is thinking of shifting from Vijayanagaram. She

enquires where they have headed? Ganapathi Sastri says that they are going to Krishnaraya Puram Agraharam, which is the native place of Agnihotravadhanulu. She praises Mahesam for his acting as 'Priyamvada' in the play, "*Sakunthala*". After they left she reads the letter from Ramappa Panthulu. He wrote that he is stuck with important works. He is coming in two or three days with money to pay off her debts.

Agnihotravadhanulu's son, a young boy is studying under Gireesam. He tells Gireesam that despite his maternal uncle's warning, not to study with Gireesam, he did and failed. He blames Gireesam: all that he learnt from Gireesam is smoking. He alleges that Gireesam taught him education with errors and mistakes. Gireesam confidently responds to him saying that talking to him itself is an education. He taught all matters like widow marriage and nautch question. He also tells the boy that he should thank him for introducing him to smoking as the smoking was appreciated in fourth lesson of Brihannaradha. He offers him that he would go along with him to Agnihotravadhanulu and deceive him saying that his son has passed the exams. He also assures him that he would make him a man equal to Surendranath Banrjee if he is obedient to him. The boy is happy for all the offers and leaves to buy sweets for Gireesam. Gireesam, now thinks that this problem is somehow solved and Madhuravani needs to be attended that night, as he has anyway broken up with *Poota koollamma*.

Poota koollamma happens to see a photo of both Gireesam and Madhuravani from a photographer and gets angry. Ramappa Panthulu is now at harem of Madhuravani. While she is lightening his cigar, he tries to romance with her. She sharply moves away and scolds him saying she has some ethics. That is why she does not let Ramappa Panthulu touch her. She explains him that she is still the woman of Gireesam as she has not made a formal breakup.

Madhuravani: Man or Woman must have ethics.

Ramappa Panthulu: When I have decided to keep you with me and got ready to elope you to my village, why do you pretend "*prativrityam*" (chastity) saying you are of someone's woman?

Madhuravani: Do you think prostitute does not deserve to speak? Should not a prostitute have an ethic? I say I am another's woman until I formally breakup with Gireesam.

Ramappa Panthulu: Panthulu? Then why would you divorce him?

Madhuravani: If you give me away the promised Rs.200, I would immediately breakup with him.

Ramappa Panthulu accepts to give. While handing over Rs.200 to her, he tries to romance with her by holding her hand. She sharply throws away his hand and says that it is difficult to spend time with him as he is unstable. She asks how she can have faith in unstable man. Finding that she is expecting an apology, he immediately apologies to her and gives money. Her ego is satisfied and she takes money happily. When he asks her to count the money, she says she has faith in him. She says she would rather give back the money. He refuses to take back the money. Ramappa Panthulu, out of jealous tries to belittle Gireesam. He also says that Gireesam is the son of younger maternal aunt of Lubdhavadhanulu and hence he knows him close and he used to be called Gerra, Girra etc. Madhurvani asks him if she can share this with Gireesam? He answers "if required, tell him that I told". Madhuravani says "if you are planning to compete with him, you can leave from here, anyway the door is open". Meanwhile, she says Gireesam garu is entering the home and you can tell all these words you have been telling me to Gireesam. Ramappa panthulu is frightened and Madhuravani hides him under the cot.

Gireesam enters and calls on her, “My dear empress”. When he tries to touch her, she says she is impure now. He says English people like him do not believe in impurity and all. She wants to play with Gireesam and Ramappa Panthulu. She enquires with him if he is a third rated fellow. Gireesam asks with anger: “which man has bitched about me behind my back?” Which guy dared to tell about me”?

Madhuravani: (Laughing satirically) only man should tell? Did not God give voice to women?

Gireesam: (May be *Poota koollamma* must have said) Female? God has permitted female to live on voice only. But, why would a respected woman come to your home.

Madhuravani: (Confidently laughs and satirically speaks) Ha Ha Ha ... When respected men come, why should not respectful woman? Ha Ha … you can show anger later, sit down (showing the cot). See there, guest.

Gireesam tells her that he came with a lot of enthusiasm today but has been disappointed. He got enthusiasm because he got job at Nizam’s court for Rs. 1000 sikka rupees per month. He asks her if she would go with him to Hyderabad. Madhuravani tells him sarcastically, why me? Take *Poota koollamma* with you’. Getting angry, he questions her “Do you think I cannot find out who is telling you insane lies? He proclaims, even if beyond seven seas, he would catch and shoot him dead. He asks her to tell who has been telling her all those lies. Madhuravani laughs and says: “Ramapp ….” Pretends to be coughing and says, “Rama Rama. Not one person. Entire world is echoing”.

Somebody knocks the door. Gireesam requests Madhuravani not to open the door guessing it may be *Poota koollamma*. Madhuravani says that the door is already open, and

walks towards the door. Gireesam also hides himself under cot and finds Ramappa. Now both of them are under the cot.

Gireesam: For this petty affair (for this kind of girl) do you have to hide here? If you had asked me, I would have arranged 20 girls, like this woman. Brother … she can hide 20 men like you and me. Do not believe her.

Ramappa Panthulu says that she has collected Rs. 200 from him. *Poota koollamma* comes in demanding Madhuravani Rs. 20. Madhuravani asks her to demand from Gireesam himself and gestures her to underneath the cot. *Poota koollamma* beats Ramappa Panthulu thinking he is Gireesam. Gireesam escapes.

Gireesam along with Agnihotravadhanulu's son arrive in Agnihotravadhanulu's home. Agnihotravadhanulu does not believe Gireesam in the beginning but once Gireesam says he is from Rajahmundry, Agnihotravadhanulu finds that he is the nephew of Ramavadhanulu, who was a good friend of Agnihotravadhanulu. Gireesam has eyes on Buchamma, a beautiful widowed daughter of Agnihotravadhanulu. Agnihotravadhanulu requests Gireesam to read out the petition order filed by Agnihotravadhanulu for '*manovarthi*' (supporting grant) to his widowed daughter.

Meanwhile Agnihotravadhanulu's wife requests Gireesam to converse in English with her son so that they all would feel happy. Gireesam and the boy deceive the family by speaking and singing poems.

Gireesam: Well my dear Venkatesham. Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are.

Venkatesam: There is a white man in the Sun.

Agnihotravadhanulu asks what they are talking about. Gireesam tells that they are discussing which lesson to be studied during the vacation. Venakatesam's maternal uncle asks him to sing a Telugu poem. Knowing that Venkatesam cannot do it, Gireesam intervenes and tells that the English people do not encourage Telugu in their schools. They encourage only Geography, Arithmetic, Algebra and Mathematics. At last Gireesam could manage the family by giving positive impression about Venkatesam's studies, Agnihotravadhanulu being happy about his son's studies, tells that his son Venkatesam has got fortune regarding marriage and it being performed without expenditure. Ganapathi Sastri asks "How would you do so. Do you think that performing a boy's marriage is as easy as selling daughters"?

Agnihotravadhanulu: Just wait and see how I would do. Do you know Lubdhavadhanulu from Ramachandrapuram?

Ganapathi Sastri: I do not know.

Agnihotravadhanulu: He is a billionaire. He has proposed for Susi for Rs.1800. It seems they themselves would bear the expenditure of both the parties. We can get Susi's marriage performed at their home. I would get Venkatesam married with that Rs.1800.

Gachamma: How old is the bridegroom?

Agnihotravadhanulu: Whatever it may be … around 45 years.

Gachamma: Is it …!

Gireesam: Lubdhavadhanulu is my elder maternal aunt's son. He is aged around 60 years.

Gachamma: What a disaster? Would you get a 6-year-old girl married to a 60-year-old man?

Ganapathi Sastri: "Brother-in-law! If you proceed with this proposal, it is on par with setting fire to your own house". By being greedy for a sum of Rs.1500, you have already ruined the

life of Buchi (Buchamma) by getting her married to an old man who had a foot in the graveyard. It looks like; still you have not learnt a lesson?

Agnihotravadhanulu: (With anger) all jobless fellows stay put up in my home and further blame me. I have already exchanged the thambulam (betel leaves).

Gachamma: It looks like you have taken the decision without my consent?

Agnihotravadhanulu: Hmm … consulting a female? (He leaves with a fit of anger)

Agnihotravadhanulu, talking to himself, brings a few petitioned documents from the nearby shelf and says, "I am being blamed to have ruined the life of Buchi. But, it is not so, and she need not worry. If this petition is filed, she would receive a property, which is worth, Rs.20,000 and 12 acres of land".

Gachamma: You always think of money. Do you think a woman needs nothing else? If you require money, I would arrange it for you by selling the land given to me by my parents. Please cancel this match. Let at least one of my daughter's live happily by having a family.

Agnihotravadhanulu: Why are you complaining so loudly? Have we ever taken back our promise?

Gachamma: Even if you stand on your word, do you think I would accept this unbefitting match?

Agnihotravadhanulu: If you do not want to accept, go and hang yourself.

Gachamma: If you can hang both of us it would be great.

Agnihotravadhanulu: What? Why are you shouting so loud?

Agnihotravadhanulu raises his hand to beat his wife. Ganapathi Sastri intervenes and stops. He tells them that this complaining is awful, especially when a guest (Gireesam) is at home. Ganapati Sastri asks his sister (wife of Agnihotravadhanulu) to come to another room to talk something secretly. He suggests her not to complain against Agnihotravadhanlu. He advises her, if she continues to speak harshly, Agnihotravadhanulu would become more aggressive and suggests her to go into the kitchen.

While Gireesam is waiting for a chance to flirt with Buchamma, Ganapathi Sastri tells Gireesam that his brother-in-law, Agnihotravadhanulu is foolish and adamant. Gireesam assures Ganapathi Sastri that Agnihotravadhanulu would easily change by his lecture about "Veereshalingam Panthulu".

While having dinner, Agnihotravadhanlu communicates to his wife.

Agnihotravadhanulu: Why are standing there like a log? Go get me curd.

Gachamma: If I had been a log**,** I would not be worrying. It has been my responsibility to conceive the children and nurture them for 9 months and foster them. While transforming the innocent infants into widows is your turn. Will any woman tolerate this injustice?

She serves the curd. While having food, Gireesam converses with Ganapathi Sastri in a louder voice as being audible to Agnihotravadhanulu.

Gireesam: Avadhanulu garu (Ganapathi Sastri) when I was in 'Pune', I gave a continuous and effective lecture for four hours on the aspect of "selling girls" that is *kanyasulkam*. In a similar way, a country named Africa, has the issue of slavery, where human beings are sold like animals.

Agnihotravadhanulu: (to himself loudly) Due to getting educated in English is useless. It is a crazy thing, 'Brahmanyam' is ruining. Even chanting from this context looks like unnecessary discussion.

Gachamma: (To Gireesam) Do not discuss proper things with him. He turns a deaf ear. However, he would follow issues like "marriage for aged men" and "nautch programs", even if they are conversed in 'Urdu',

Agnihotravadhanulu: So, (to wife) are you throwing rhetoric at me. Even if your brother is here, I will not keep quiet.

Gachamma: You will not keep quiet and further I will not live happily. Why should I face these difficulties even at this old age?

Agnihotravadhanulu: Shut up. (In anger)

Gachamma: Due to shutting up my mouth, you have ruined the life of my elder daughter (Buchamma). I have been bearing her with fairly hard difficulties. What will we take with us when we die, if not see our children being happy?

Buchamma: Father. Use my jewellery to perform brother's marriage. But, do not ruin the life of sister.

Agnihotravadhanulu, out of anger physically hits Buchamma and leaves. There is a *Harikatha* troop singing the tragedy song of Poornamma, who was married to an old man. The song describes the marriage of Poornamma, a pre-pubescent girl, with an old man. Poornamma, after her marriage, gets teased by her friends and village folks. Her old husband comes to take her away. She takes blessings from her parents and Goddess "Durga" and later burst into tears. Her mother is also found crying. However, her father is pleased after receiving money as '*Kanyasulakam*' (bride price). Poornamma's 'old husband' is ready to

take her away. Her family is prepared to give her a send off. As usual, she goes to offer a garland to Goddess Durga at the nearby temple. All her family members and relatives wait for her till it turns dark. However, the fact is that Poornamma commits suicide and immerses in 'Goddess Durga'.

Agnihotravadhanulu's wife and girl child Suchi also watch the program. They return after the program ends. Agnihotravadhanulu's wife is highly disturbed by the play as she imagines that the future life of Suchi might turn into that of Poornamma. While everyone is asleep, she jumps into the well situated in the courtyard. Suchi, who was sleeping beside her mother, wakes up everyone after finding her missing. Later, Gireesam saves Suchi's mother.

Ganapathi Sastri assures that he would break this unbefitting match. While leaving he asks Buchamma to look after his sister. Further, he comments Agnihotravadhanulu that he does not have any mercy regarding his wife or children and is a stone hearted man.

Madhuravani shifts to Ramappa Panthulu's house situated in the town. Madhuravani starts practicing the "Veena" and plays it after a long time. In the mean time, Polisetti comes to collect his old debt, Rs.16, from Ramappa Panthulu and realizing that Ramappa is not at home, tries to impress Madhuravani by belittling Ramappa. He discloses that Ramappa lives on brokerage commissions and tells Madhuravani that the claims of Ramappa about his interested property and lands are lies.

Meanwhile, Ramappa Panthulu enters the house and with this, Polisetti changes his version and starts praising Ramappa. Madhuravani silently enjoys the situation. Polisetti reminds Ramappa about his old debt of Rs.16. Ramappa Panthulu assures that he would return it soon and asks him to leave.

A police constable comes to Ramappa's house and informs him that the inspector came to know that Ramappa has collected money from someone by exploiting his name. Hence, the inspector wants him at the police station within no time. Ramappa Panthulu, before leaving, warns Madhuravani not to open the doors.

Ganapathi Sastri disguising himself as a 'saint' and his disciple Mahesam as a 'girl' reach Madhuravani's house. However, Madhuravani identifies them and subsequently learns from them that Agnihotravadhanlu has arranged for the marriage of Suchi, with the aged Lubdhavadhanlu for a particular bride price. And it is being brokered by Ramappa Panthulu who is greedy for commission. Madhuravani considers it as an injustice done to the girl. At the moment, their intention to disguise is to breach the marriage Lubdhavadhanulu, who resides in the same town. Madhuravani supports the purpose.

Ramappa Panthulu, chided by inspector, promises to pay the money he has taken. Ganapathi and his disciple are now sitting in front of Ramappa Panthulu's home and the action is directed by Madhuravani. As Ramappa Panthulu arrives, Ganapathi Sastri introduces himself as "Gunturu Sastrulu" from the banks of *Krishna* and insists that he requires help from him. Ramappa Panthulu asks Madhuravani to return the money that he had given her the other day. She replies that she has purchased groceries.

Ganapathi Sastri along with Mahesam (in disguise now onwards) urge Ramappa Panthulu to breach the marriage fixation of Lubdhavadhanulu with Suchi and arrange with his daughter 'Mahesam'. Madhuravani pretends as if she does not know them and scolds them, "Do you think Ramappa Panthulu is a marriage broker?" Ganapathi Sastri mentions that he is prepared to offer his daughter for a lesser amount and offers 1/10 of the amount to Ramappa Panthulu as commission. However, Ramappa Panthulu demands 1/5 of the amount in the *Kanyasulakam*. Madhuravani, pretending, alarms Ramappa Panthulu that he would

face difficulties from both the parties as he was the one who has fixed the match of Lubdhavadhanulu with the daughter of Agnihotravdhanulu. Further, he is again fixing the match of Lubdhavadhanulu with the daughter of Gunturu Sashtrulu (Ganapathi Sastri). Ramappa Panthulu says “Madhuram is innocent” and by assuring that he would send for him later, asks Ganapathi Sastri to take a leave now.

Ramappa Panthulu in the name of Agnihotravdhanulu, writes to Lubdhavadhanulu that he is breaching the fixation of the marriage as he does not want to give his daughter in marriage to an old man.

Gireesam stays at Agnihotravadhanulu’s home with the motif of teaching Venkatesam during holidays. While Gireesam and Venkatesam pretend concentrating on studies, Agnihotravadhanulu mentions that he is heading to a nearby village for purchasing provisions for marriage of Suchi. He praises Gireesam for his beautiful articulation of the petition to be filed for *'manovarthi'* (survival grant) of Buchamma.

Gireesam talks to himself, “Avadhanulu mama garu has headed to the nearby village and Gachamm atta is bedridden. And, Buchamma is all alone. You have got an opportunity Gireesam. Make use of it”.

As Gireesam reaches Buchamma, out of fear, she calls for Venkatesam. Gireesam, while pretends to be teaching, is also found flirting Buchamma, who is busy doing her work. As he starts teaching the child, Buchamma goes on to observe them. Gireesam deliberately attempts to sensitize her from the traditional mode of thinking. She is innocent and is not familiar that widow remarriages are happening. He informs her about various instances of widow marriages conducted in olden days.

Buchamma pays attention to him. Meanwhile, Suchi comes in and calls Buchamma to accompany her to attend a 'child's naming ceremony' in a neighbours' home. Buchamma along with Suchi leaves. Gireesam is disappointed. He thinks she is over simple. He observes that Buchamma is completely ignorant of love signals. Gireesam thinks that a new and fair strategy is to be explored. What is that? Gireesam, now, speaks to himself. **"**Somehow if I elope and marry her (widow marriage) I will get both fame and pleasure. Two birds at one shot. Marrying this kind of "utterly innocent beautiful young virgin widow" is rather profitable whereas it is a hell to marry unbelievable widows who are prompt to elope with some Muslim or *Doodekula* fellow. Marrying a *munda* (an abusive word) like *Pootakoollamma* will not be considered by the society as a widow marriage, but will become a '*Donga munda* marriage'. Who is this Buchamma? *Sakshaatthu Parama Pavithramaina* widow with guild letter**"**.

Buchamma and Suchi, along with the other women of the village go for the *Nagula Chavithi* programme. Here Suchi and another girl, similar in age, tease each other that their husbands look like grandfathers. After reaching home, Suchi complains about the issue to Gachamma.

Suchi: "Amma... Amma! A girl has teased me that my fiancé is an old man and I will not marry him".

Gachamma: "Don't marry. As long as I am alive I will not let this marriage happen.

Buchamma reveals to her mother that her brother has informed her that Lubdhavadhanulu would withdraw from getting married, if Gireesam asks him to do so. Gachamma asks her to call Gireesam to her room. Though bedridden, she is still in her consciousness. As Gireesam enters the room, he inquires about her health. However, Gachamma informs him, "It is not about my health. It seems Lubdhavadhanulu is your

cousin. I will fall at your feet and prepare *chappal*s stitched out of my skin, if you would please divert him from getting married to my daughter?"

Gireesam says, if required, he is ready to offer his life for her, and as per his assumption, Lubdhavadhanlu is a fool and adamant. He assures her that he would write to him – strong letters and that to three times – to awaken his wisdom. He asks Buchamma to get him a paper and pen immediately. He touches her fingers, while giving him the paper and pen. Lubdhavadhanulu receives the letter and flares up.

Ramappa Panthulu and Madhuravani are spending time happily. Ramappa Panthulu mentions that he would have excelled as a judge, if he had learnt English. Madhuravani praises Gireesam about his fluency in English. Ramappa, flared, says Gireesam's English is "broken English and butler English" and if anyone converses like him in the court would be slapped with a *slipper*. Madhuravani informs Ramappa Panthulu that Gireesam is the cousin of Lubdhavadhanulu and he may manhandle Ramappa Panthulu during the marriage. Ramappa Panthulu says that Lubdhavadhanulu, being greedy, would not invite any relative. She says that Gireesam would attend the marriage without an invitation. He questions her if she has invited him. Madhuravani says that Gireesam himself is looking after the arrangements of the marriage and hence he would surly attend it. Ramappa Panthulu asks her what will happen if Gireesam comes. Madhuravani with sarcastically mentions, "You are asking me, a female, to answer?" Ramappa Panthulu replies, "In the case of court affairs, the female's wisdom is deep and micro. I can easily guess and moreover, am weak in these social affairs. I do not get ideas". Madhuravani suggests him to give the cooking contract to *Pootakoollamma*, as Gireesam is afraid of her. Ramappa Panthulu appreciates her for such a valuable idea. But, he is afraid of the assumption that Gireesam might physically assault both of them – Ramappa and *Pootakoollamma*. Madhuravani assures Ramappa that he need not be afraid. If *Pootakoollamma* is seen around, Gireesam will run away. She is a shrew and scolds

very badly. Ramappa Panthulu adds to this that her hand is also very harsh, as he recalls, how she had beat him assuming that he was Gireesam.

Lubdhavadhanulu receives the letter written by Gireesam, which chides him as an old man and Ramappa Panthulu as a jackal. Both Ramappa Panthulu and Lubdhavadhanulu become annoyed with Gireesam.

Lubdhavadhanulu goes to Ramappa Panthulu again with a letter. This time it is from Agnihotravadhanulu (actually written, forged and sent by Ramappa Panthulu). The letter is read out by Ramappa Panthulu. It says that Agnihotravadhanulu wants to breach the marriage fixation as Lubdhavadhanulu is aged, diseased and his daughter's moral behaviour is unethical. Ramappa Panthulu convinces Lubdhavadhanulu to opt out and go for another marriage. Moreover, gives a word that he would assist in fixing the marriage with Gunturu Sastrulu's daughter.

Gireesam, through his humming a song conveys a message that it is good to marry widows. Buchamma, after listening to his song, asks him "Gireesam garu... you have been saying that marrying a widow is good. Then why don't you marry a widow?" Gireesam, by thinking this as the right opportunity proceeds by making an indirect proposal (marrying him) to her and conveying about a bright future. She starts thinking, if it is really possible.

In the meantime, Lubdhavadhanulu's marriage is fixed. He presents a gold chain to the would-be bride, Mahesam. The chain, for the time-being, was borrowed from Ramappa Panthulu. He is being prepared as a bridegroom at home. Some girls tease him saying "grandfather is becoming bridegroom". Lubdhavadhanulu rules out the annoyance. Madhuravani is preparing Mahesam as the bride at Ramappa Panthulu's home.

Ganapathi Sastrulu has planned to take the *kanysulakam* (bride price) from Lubdhavadhanulu in Ramappa Panthulu's absence to evade the commission promised as 1/5 of total Rs.1200 bride price.

Agnihotravadhanulu aggressively warns his wife that he would physically assault her, if she does not stop weeping and get ready for the marriage ceremony. Gireesam convinces Buchamma that if she elopes with him, her sister's marriage with Lubdhavadhanulu would be obstructed. She is shocked and scared to do so. He subjects her to emotional blackmail. He asks her, "Can't you take up this small risk for the sake of your sister's future? If you elope with me, your sister's marriage would be obstructed and your father would never think of a marriage for your sister with any old man". Buchamma is now convinced and decides to elope with him on the previous night of the marriage. They both deploy to divert the bullock cart in which Buchamma would be travelling.

As Ramappa Panthulu has gone to another village, Gunturu Sastrulu manages the priest, so that he reaches the marriage ceremony venue, a night early. Madhuravani is cooperative. Lubdhavadhanulu hands over the bride price to Gunturu Sastrulu. By collecting it, Gunturu Sastrulu allows to tie the knot (Sutradharana). Lubdhavadhanulu ties the turmeric thread around the neck of Mahesam, the disguised bride and the daughter of Gunturu Sastrulu (Ganapathi Sastri).

Madhuravani with her dance and singing entertains the audience, who have attended the marriage ceremony. In those days, it was a tradition that *devadasis* (nautch girls) would dance, sing and entertain the audience during ceremonies.

Subsequently, Guntur Sastrulu and Mahesam manage to escape on the same night from Lubdhavadhanulu's home. Lubdhavadhanulu observes Mahesam escaping. He becomes frustrated and feels defeated after knowing that he has married a male. Ramappa Panthulu

asks him to give his gold chain back and to this Lubdhavadhanulu states that he does not know anything about the gold chain. He further blames that both, Ramappa Panthulu and Gunturu Sastrulu have plotted against him. However, Ramappa Panthulu charges that Lubdhavadhanulu killed Mahesam.

Ramappa Panthulu meets the marriage convoy of Agnihotravadhanulu's daughter at the entrance of the village. He informs Agnihotravadhanulu that Lubdhavadhanulu has, the earlier night, got married to another girl, and has got her for a lesser bride price. He further informs that, as he had opposed the marriage, Lubdhavadhanulu had opposed him. Ramappa Panthulu asks the 'band' to direct Agnihotravadhanulu to Lubdhavadhanulu's home. While Agnihotravadhanulu is physically assaulting Lubdhavadhanulu the people around stop him. He returns to the village entrance, where his people had halted. His wife tries to inform him that Buchamma has eloped with Gireesam. Meanwhile, Ramappa Panthulu is in a haste to inform the news to Agnihotravadhanulu.

Ramappa Panthulu drags Agnihotravadhanulu to the local police station to file a complaint against Gireesam, who is identified to have eloped along with Buchamma. The police inform that the issue does not come under their jurisdiction, as she has eloped on the way. He requests them to speak with the Visakhapatnam police to file a complaint. Agnihotravadhanulu leaves immediately. Gradually, Ramappa Panthulu informs the police that Lubdhavadhanulu murdered his just betrothed wife and so the police start off to Lubdhavdhanulu's home.

Ganapathi Sastri inquires Gachamma about the homely atmosphere being tense and disturbed. She, lamenting discloses that Buchamma has eloped with the teacher Gireesam.

Gireesam and Buchamma are found to have settled in a house. He brings some grocery and costumes.

Gireesam: “Well my dear empress. Why are you still sitting as if grief stricken? You should be happy like the parrot that has escaped its cage. But, you are found to be thinking too much?”

Buchamma: “Nothing.”

Gireesam: See, I brought oil, talcum powder and a silk saree. Adorn by applying ‘bottu’ (red/saffron *sindhur* applied on the forehead - the act of applying ‘bottu’ is found to be prohibited for widows.) and ‘katuka’ like an *apsarasa* (a mythical character symbolising beauty)

Buchamma: I am a widow. Why do I need all these?

Gireesam: You are no more a widow. As you have eloped with me, you have cracked your widowhood and have become a sacred woman.

He tries to embrace her. She moves away from him.

Buchamma lamenting, finds fault with Gireesam, saying that he has eloped with her to Visakhapatnam by deceiving her. She criticizes him for influencing her and states that if she elopes with him, her sister’s marriage would be obstructed and therefore, her mother would not attempt to commit suicide.

Gireesam informs Buchamma that Suchi’s marriage has not taken place. However, she goes on weeping and asks him; why he has brought her to Visakhapatnam, instead of taking her to the promised place, Rajahmundry. By giving her assurance of marriage, he tries once again to hug her. However, she warns him about attempting suicide, if he makes any physical advancement. She says that her brain may have been corrupted, but not her wisdom. Gireesam, within himself, feels proud to have got a girl who has self-control over sexuality

and convinces himself that his manipulation would not be work over her. He apologizes to her.

Gireesam: "I apologize to you *vadinaa*... Do not be worried. There is a great social reformer called Soujanya Rao. I would fix our marriage under his supervision.

Buchamma is found relaxed by hearing the term, 'marriage'. Suchi and Gachamma come down to Visakhapatnam and are put up at Ganapathi Sastrulu's home. Ganapathi is perplexed about the developments within Gachamma's home. He is astonished to find Madhuravani at his home in Visakhapatnam. Madhuravani reports to him of how Ramappa Panthulu had drawn in Lubdhavadhanulu into a false murder case – the purported murder of his newly married wife. Hence, Lubdhavadhanulu, considered to be absconding is identified to have been hiding at the advocate Soujanya Rao. Ganapathi Sastri tells her that Soujanya Rao is a gentleman and can save Lubdhavadhanulu. Madhuravani is happy with this news and tells him, "Let us both request him to save Lubdhavadhanulu". Ganapathi Sastri is afraid of the fact that he would be found guilty for all the incidents and informs her that Soujanya Rao would not allow *devadasis* in his sight as he is against nautch. Ganapathi Sastri asks her to think of some alternative idea to save Lubdhavadhanulu. She suggests that it must be made a point to make Ramappa Panthulu leave Visakhapatnam with immediate effect, or else, he would create turmoil. She asks him to find out where Ramappa has been put up in Visakhapatnam.

Gireesam meets Soujanya Rao. Soujanya Rao says, "So, you have fixed your marriage after a long time". Gireesam obediently replies, "As you know, I had postponed my marriage till date, due to the fact that I have committed to devote my entire life for social reform. I reject the pleasures from woman. Hence, I am called Napoleon of anti-nautch. By

observing transparency in Buchamma's heart and her pitiful condition, I have melted. Hence, I have decided to marry her".

Soujanya Rao says that he is extremely pleased to see Gireesam's commitment and vision. He strongly opines that our country would progress, if young men like Gireesam are huge in number. He believes that Buchamma is fortunate. Madhuravani – who is about to enter the room, in which Gireesam and Soujanya Rao are seated – sees Gireesam and assumes that Gireesam has come to deceive and manipulate Soujanya Rao. Gireesam observes Madhuravani.

Gireesam proclaims to Soujanya Rao that he is fortunate to get such a pure woman like Buchamma. He pretends to believe in the saying: "*paropakara punyaya papaya parapeedanam,* one would get *punyam* by saving and helping another". Madhuravani enters and wishes Soujanya Rao. Soujanya Rao wishes her back and offers her a seat. Madhuravani prefers to stand. Gireesam, meanwhile, pretends as if he does not know her and wishes her. Soujanya Rao asks Gireesam if she is Buchamma. Gireesam is tensed to answer. Madhuravani intervenes and tells Soujanya Rao that she could have deceived him by introducing herself with a fake name, had she been any other person, but she cannot lie to him. Gireesam asserts that everybody would speak only truth to Soujanya Rao and asks Madhuravani, if isn't true? Madhuravani answers, "except one person". She means that Gireesam is the only person, who can speak lies in front of, even Soujanya Rao. Gireesam tells Soujanya Rao, "Such man should be pitied. He translates to Madhuravani "*Attivani Yedala Kanikaram Choopinchali*". Soujanya Rao says, "we should not lie to anyone". Madhuravani tells that her mother had taught her to be good with good people and to be bad with bad people. Soujanya Rao says, "Your mother has taught you so. But, if we try to be good with even bad people, this world would seem more beautiful". Gireesam says, "What valuable words! Golden words… golden words ... Suppose I am a bad person, (by looking at

Madhuravani) and to be good with such a bad person, like me also is wisdom. Everybody would be good with good people like you (Soujanya Rao)". He quotes a poet: "*Apakariki Nupakaramu Nepamennaka Cheyu Vadhu Nerpari Sumathi*" (He who does favour to even a disservice man is adroit).

Soujanya Rao mentions that he has rightly identified what his philosophy is. Madhuravani reveals that Gireesam was her teacher. Soujanya Rao says, "good" and asks Madhuravani who she is. Madhuravani introduces herself, "My name does not matter for the work that I have approached for. I request you to forgive me. I came here to help Lubdhavadhanulu's case as a witness".

Soujanya Rao: Then, we consider you as our blessing Goddess.

Madhuravani: I may not deserve such a status.

Soujanya Rao: Why are you saying that?

Madhuravani: I think you are "anti-nautch".

Soujanya Rao: Yes.

Madhuravani: (to Soujanya Rao) What about Gireesam?

Soujanya Rao: Don't you know. He is the "Napoleon of anti-nautch".

Gireesam being shameful and tensed starts to leave the place. As he approaches the entrance of the other room, *Pootakoollamma* catches hold of him. *Pootakoollamma* who is cleaning, Soujanya Rao's home stops him by saying, "Where are you silently slipping to? I have heard everything". Gireesam requests her to let him go out. *Pootakoollamma* expresses pity and says: "Are you trying to deceive and manipulate another widow? Let me inform Panthulu garu (Soujanya Rao) right now". Gireesam with a low tone informs her that it is not a widow, but is Madhuravani. *Pootakoollamma* asks him with anger, "So, you have not yet left her?" Gireesam escapes. *Pootakoollamma* curses him.

Soujanya Rao: So, you are Madhuravani? A Prostitute? What a deceit?

Madhuravani: Forgive me. We, the prostitutes are allowed to see the God in the temples, aren't we? Are we prohibited to visit gentlemen like you? Whoever I may be, I am a person who is going to save your client.

Soujanya Rao asks her, how is she going to help his client? Madhuravani assures him that she would present all the facts including witnesses to save Lubdhavadhanulu. Soujanya Rao asks her if she knows Gireesam. Meanwhile, Gireesam just enters from the back door of the room and listens to what Soujanya Rao asks Madhuravani. Madhuravani says, "Forgive me" and looks as if is hiding something. Gireesam is again found to be escaping from them. Seeing this, Soujanya Rao calls him, "Napoleon of the anti-nautch garu…. Come here". Soujanya Rao warns him, "You have deceived even me! You thought of ruining Buchamma's life? Get lost from here with immediate effect?" Gireesam turns to escape from there and speaks to himself, "damn it" *katha addam thirigindi*. Madhuravani pleads Soujanya Rao, "One word… you are a reverent. I do not deserve to suggest you. Think, how many 'Buchammas' would Gireesam ruin, if he is still a bachelor in the society. The information that Buchamma has eloped has spread out. Gireesam also is ready to marry her. It may be better to betroth them off. Please think about it".

Police catch Lubdhavadhanulu. His widowed daughter rushes and informs the police, that they do not know the whereabouts of the newly married bride. Subsequently, the police take a statement and leave.

Ramappa Panthulu, being firm on getting Lubdhavadhanulu arrested, warns Madhuravani not to interfere with legal issues and asks her to get him the documents box. She hides an important document and gives the box to him. He takes out some documents and leaves along with Agnihotravadhanulu.

Ludhavadhanulu along with his daughter meets Soujanya Rao and narrates whatever happened and pleads him to save him from the murder case and he would pay him whatever he has saved. To this, Soujanya Rao replies that he is not in need of Lubdhavdhanulu's money and opines that he feels, from their narration, that the murder has not at all been executed. Meanwhile, the police enter Soujanya Rao's house. Lubdhavadhanulu being afraid holds the feet of Soujanya Rao to save him. Assuring safety and 'zaamin' (bail), Soujanya Rao, gives surety and sends the police. *Pootakoollamma*, who at present is a home maid at Soujanya Rao's home, gives a glass of water and starts conversing with Lubdhavadhanulu. *Pootakoollamma* questions, why would people like you and want you to get married at an old age. She mentions that due to old bridegrooms, like Lubdhavadhanulu, the fate of women, like hers, are forcing women to commit for illicit relationships. The servant of Lubdhavadhanulu nods, as if, she is saying facts and Lubdhavadhanulu regrets to this.

Madhuravani blames Ramappa Panthulu that he has helped in the elopement of the newly married bride and has offered the gold chain to her. She restricts him from entering the home and warns him that she would not allow him until he gets her that chain.

Ramappa Panthulu tries to get hold of a gold chain promising Meenakshi, Lubdhavdhanulu's daughter, with whom he had illicit relationship. He mentions that he has decided to desert Madhuravani by giving her back the gold chain and elope with Meenakshi to marry her at Rajamahendravaram. Lubdhavdhanulu catches both of them, beats and sends out even his daughter, Meenakshi.

Mahesam, the newly married bride, pretends to have eloped with Ramappa Panthulu and drags him into street by catching hold of him. With this, the neighbours come out and start watching them. Mahesam blames Ramappa Panthulu, eloping with her, and currently is trying to get rid of her. She blames him that he has ruined her life in such a way that she is in

no condition of either going to in-law's home or to her parents' home. In this regard, Ramappa Panthulu counters by saying that he is innocent. Madhuravani enters the scene and demands Ramappa to return her gold chain. Mahesam demands him to stay with her forever. The entire scene is fashioned and dramatized in the street. Agnihotravadhanulu comes out and says that Ramappa Panthulu has eloped with Lubdhavdhanlu's newly married wife. Gunturu Sastrulu enters the scene scolding Mahesam saying, "you have brought defame to the family". He also blames Ramappa Panthulu for manipulating an innocent girl and bringing disrespect to his family. Ramappa Panthulu cries out, "I am innocent". While Guntur Sastrulu is blaming Ramappa Panthulu, Madhuravani hands over to Agnihotravadhanulu the forged letter by Ramappa Panthulu written to Lubdhavadhanulu in the name of Agnihotravadhanulu. Agnihotravadhanulu goes through the letter. An enraged Agnihotravadhanulu, attacks Ramappa Panthulu. Ramappa Panthulu being chased by Agnihotravadhanulu retreats from there.

Soujanya Rao arranges for the marriage of Gireesam and Buchamma. Gireesam, the bridegroom and Buchamma, the bride is sitting on the "*Mandapam*". Many people attend it. Soujanya Rao addresses the people, "My dear brothers and sisters, in our country there is a social evil (or) evil-practice according to which parents sell infant girls to old men for money. This is called "*Kanyasulakam*" (bride price). Buchamma, a victim of this evil practice, who became a widow at an infant age, is going to get married to this Gireesam, a social reformer. I am pleading all of you to support this ideal re-marriage".

The crowd speaks out in support of the marriage. While reciting the marriage *mantras* and the 'band' being played, Gireesam ties the knot '*mangala suthra*' around the neck of Buchamma. In no time, Agnihotravadhanulu, reaches there and asks the inspector of police to arrest Gireesam. However, Soujanya Rao intervenes.

Soujanya Rao: “What is the crime laid on Gireesam?”

Agnihotravadhanulu: “running away with my daughter, taking her jewellery and manipulating her.”

Inspector: “this comes under “abduction” sir (to Soujanya Rao)”

Soujanya Rao: “This is not abduction. She herself has come here to get married.”

Agnihotravadhanulu: “What kind of a respectable man are you? You are speaking in favour of this rouge, who has eloped with a widow. He has manipulated her. My daughter is a ‘minor’. She is innocent.”

Soujanya Rao: “In which year was your daughter born?”

Agnihotravadhanulu: “In *Aavanama samvatsaram*. If you decide to calculate her age, then it is 16.”

Buchamma: “No, I am 18 years old. I was born in *Angirasa*. (to father) You have composed my *jathakam*, it is in my jewellery box. Why are you lying like this father? You have been the cause for my widowhood. Did you file a complaint, really with a concern over me? You did this to get my jewellery.”

Agnihotravdhanulu: “Chee ... Shut up.”

Buchamma: “You have ruined my life only because; I have been calm, so far. Tell me by swearing upon God. Did I bring your property and jewellery with me? Don’t you want to see me, as a full-fledged family woman?”

Gachamma, who was standing beside Buchamma, stops her and says to Soujanya Rao, “Panthulu garu, all that jewellery belongs to Buchamma. She has not taken anything of ours.” The inspector blames Agnihotravadhanulu while leaving. After the marriage, all the

main characters of the movie are found celebrating the marriage of Buchamma and Gireesam. Ganapathi Sastri returns Rs.1200 to Lubdhavadhanulu. Madhuravani narrates to Soujanya Rao, how Ganapathi Sastri had planned a plot to stop the child marriage. Ganapathi Sastri praises the role played by Madhuravani without harming anyone. Ganapathi introduces Mahesam to Lubdhavadhanulu that he has married Mahesam. Lubdhavadhanulu apologizes for his narrow-mindedness of getting married to a child. He acknowledges Mahesam for arousing his consciousness. He declares that he is going to write the 'will' – by giving half of his property to Mahesam and requests Agnihotravadhanulu to betroth Suchi to Mahesam. He also declares that he is going to write the 'will' – the other half of the property to the widows' association. He lets his daughter Meenakshi, either to stay in widows' home or accompany him to *Kasi*.

Soujanya Rao appreciates Madhuravani, **"**You have proved that for humans; identity is not important, but, the conscience. To express my gratitude, I present you this "*Bhagavad Gita*". Read and become blessed**"**. Madhuravani thanks him, draws the holy book towards her eyes, embraces it, and eases by closing her eyes. The conclusion is manifested in her face as compared to that of the beginning.

Representing Tradition and Negotiating Modernity in *Kanyasulkam*

As we have discussed in Chapter II, women were subjugated under the traditional cultural practices in Andhra. *Kanyasulkam* (bride price), child marriage, enforced widowhood and *devadasi* system were the characteristic features of upper caste Brahmins in Andhra society. The English educated intellectuals engaged in propagating new reform ideas and built movement to get rid of these negative cultural practices. Veeresalingam was pioneer in building social reform movement in Andhra. Gurajada, in 1892 wrote *Kanyasulkam* play representing all these issues and also exposing limitations of contemporary social reform

movement. The play critiqued the colonial modernity and also the drawbacks of social reform activity, which encouraged pseudo reformers like Gireesam, product of colonial modernity. Despite a vibrant social reform movement, the social evils could not be eradicated completely. Darsi Chenchaiah writes in 1952: Many such local associations mushroomed in competition. Marriage for *Kalavanthulu* (nautch girls) became common. But, is that profession eradicated? No. The size of the reform in society is similar to a group of water in the ocean. There are many reasons for the failure of reform in *Kalavanthulu.* One is economic and second one is certain unique features of the society. Many parents do not want their daughters to be married as they live on their daughters' profession.[179] The theme and content of Gurajada's play *Kanyasulkam* was taken and made into a movie in 1955. The fact that all the social evils were still persistent in Andhra, even after independence created an ideal context for creative movies. Cinema was used as a tool to propagate social and cultural reform since the beginning of the talkie era in India and Telugu cinema is not an exception. Cinema is an industry which would survive only on business and profits. It needs audience. The movie makers observed that the already familiar stories could pull the audience into theatres. They chose Epics and Puranas in the early years, but moved on to the modern literature which reflected contemporary societal problems.

Krishnam Raju, a Telugu actor in 1970s and 1980s opines that the Telugu novels were adopted into Telugu cinema as the novels reflected the Telugu culture and Teluguness (nativity). The movies, *Malapilla, Varavikrayam* and *Kanyasulkam* were adopted from Telugu novels and sensitised the public by exposing the evil practices rooted in the society.[180]

The movie, *Kanyasulkam* represented the issues related to women that were taken up during the social reform movement in Telugu districts of the Madras Presidency. The plays'

[179]Darsi Chenchaiah, *Nenu- Nadesam,* 1951. pp. 180-182.
[180]*Chalana Chitra*, 1 December, 1973. p. 15.

context and contemporaneity also needs our attention. It was written in the last decade of the 19th century, when the social reform movement was at its peak. The movie was produced without taking liberty with the content of the original narrative, barring few changes. Buchamma, according to the play, after getting married to Gireesam would be sent to Widow home, whereas the movie ends with their marriage.

It is the only Telugu movie, which represented almost all social evils prevailing both in the colonial and post- colonial periods. It reflected child marriage, bride price, enforced widowhood, widow remarriage, *devadasi* system and exposed the opportunism of the English educated self-proclaimed pseudo reformists. The issue of child marriage that was prevalent in the colonial period, continued into the post-independence India. Hence, the movie was seen as relevant in contemporary period as it was representing the contemporary social problems, familiar to the public. The movies reflecting the issues familiar to the public were well received.[181]

It is to be noted that the movie also represented traditional value system along with colonial modernity. At some point it questions the colonial developments. It criticises the pseudo English educated social reformers. On the other hand, it supports child marriage (a child marriage is proposed between Mahesam and Suchi at the end of the movie) and does not condemn enforced widowhood (There is no proposal for remarriage of widows *Poootakoollamma* and Meenakshi). The context of the movie falls in the discourse of decolonization. It is observed that the reason for an attempt to restore traditional value system is the political context of post-colonial India which drove the ruling classes to satisfy the rural gentry. Telugu cinema of the period carried the same ideology as the movie makers and the capital came from the rural gentry.

[181] *Ibid.*

Representation of Child Marriage

The aspect of child marriage had been a long lasting issue prevailing in Andhra society. In comparison, the situation seems to have been similar in its existence as in other parts of the Indian sub continent. The aspect is well portrayed through the roles of Suchi, Buchamma, *Poota koollamma* and Meenakshi. In the movie, Suchi, is found being pushed into the vicious social circle through the act of child marriage. She is a 9-year-old girl to be given in marriage to an old man, aged around 60 years. The root cause of this vicious circle was the aspect of bride price (*Kanyasulkam*). It was mainly for the sake of *Kanyasulkam*, that most of the poor fathers, gave their daughters away at an early age. Sometimes the fathers utilized this money to get their sons' married off. In the movie, Agnihotravadhanulu is found mentioning that he would perform his son's (Venkatesam) marriage grandly. Subsequently, his brother-in-law is found countering, that it is not as easy as selling a daughter. Agnihotravadhanulu reveals that the money received as bride price (*Kanyasulkam*) for Suchi's marriage would be utilized for getting Mahesam betrothed.

Agnihotravadhanulu: "You will see how I would get it done. Do you know Lubdhavadhanulu from Ramachandrapuram?"

Ganapathi Sastri: "I do not know."

Agnihotravadhanulu: "He is a billionaire. He has proposed to marry Suchi by paying a bride price (*Kanyasulkam*) of Rs.1800. It seems they would bear the marriage expenses of both the parties. We can perform Suchi's marriage at their home and I would get Venkatesam married off with that Rs.1800."

Gachamma: "How old is the bridegroom?"

Agnihotravadhanulu: "Whatever it might be…around 45 years."

Gachamma: “Is it …!”

Gireesam: “Lubdhavadhanulu is my elder maternal aunt’s son. He is aged around 60 years.”

Gachamma: “What a disaster? Would you get a 6-year-old girl married to a 60-year-old man?”

Ganapathi Sastri: ““Brother-in-law! If you proceed with this proposal, it is on par with setting fire to your own house”. By being greedy for a sum of Rs.1500, you have already ruined the life of Buchi (Buchamma) by getting her married to an old man who had a foot in the graveyard. It looks like; still you have not learnt a lesson?”

Agnihotravadhanulu: “(With anger) all jobless fellows stay put up in my home and further blame me. I have already exchanged the thambulam (betel leaves).”

Gachamma: “It looks like you have taken the decision without my consent?”

Agnihotravadhanulu: “Hmm … consulting a female? (He leaves with a fit of anger)”

The patriarchal system denied women the right of decision making in the family. It may be observed that, without the consent of his wife, Agnihotravadhanulu takes the decision of getting their daughter married off. Though his wife questions him about his dismissal of her opinion, he rules out her protest, by stating that women’s opinion need not be taken into consideration.

The institution of family[182] is grounded upon such tough rules, that no one within the family structure dares to directly offend the head’s decision. If they consider any decision of the head is erroneous, then they are to consider other ways to resolve the issue without

[182] Traditional family was supported by Shavukaru Janaki in *Vijayachitra*, April 1975, p. 7. She also opined in the same source that women are naturally inferior to men and hence women should never try to overcome the superiority of men. Shavukaru Janaki played the role of Buchamma in *Kanyasulkam.* ‘Family’ would be discussed elaborately in the subsequent chapter.

contradicting the head. Ganapathi Sastri assures his sister, Gachamma that he would do something to breach the wedding. He knows that Ramappa Panthulu has been active in fixing the match and is greedy for the commission. Ramappa Panthulu can be tricked only with the help of Madhuravani.

Informed about the issue, Madhuravani becomes sympathetic to Suchi. She extends her support to Ganapathi Sastri in this issue. Ganapathi Sastri in disguise, as Gunturu Sastrulu and his disciple Mahesam as a girl request Ramappa Panthulu to fix Lubdhavadhanulu's match with Mahesam. Ramappa Panthulu, greedy of commission breaches the fixed marriage of Suchi with Lubdhavadhanulu. He writes a letter in the name of Agnihotravadhanulu to Lubdhavadhanulu; stating the breakup of the fixed marriage, and the cause being, age difference. Later, he fixes Lubdhavadhanulu's marriage with Mahesam. Agnihotravadhanulu realises this only when he reaches Lubdhavadhanulu's village with his kith and kin for performing the marriage. In the mean time, the wedding of Lubdhavadhanulu and Mahesam is performed. Subsequently, Mahesam flees on the very night of the wedding. Ganapathi Sastrulu plots the entire event and sees to that it is executed. With this, Suchi is brought out of the vicious circle of child marriage.

Buchamma elopes with Gireesam, not just to get married but also to obstruct Suchi's wedding. It may be considered as a sacrifice for her sister. She did not want her sister to live the life of a child widow. Madhuravani, being a prostitute, is sympathetic to the issue. It may be envisaged that she was sympathetic to the issue as a woman. Her role in diverting the marriage of Suchi is appreciable.

The movie projects the multifaceted characteristic of social reformers. K. N. Panikkar's opines that the social reformers had dual character with regard to their ideology.[183]

[183]K. N. Panikkar, *Culture, Ideology, Hegemony*, New Delhi: Tulika, 1995, p. 92.

Atlury Murali asserts that the Andhra intellectuals had the same character of duality as they were carried away by bourgeois ideology.[184]It is noticed that the Telugu cinema of 1950s was a product of such ideology. Though, one of the major themes of *Kanyasulkam* movie is anti-child marriage, however, it does not completely go against child marriage. The movie criticizes the aspect of marriage between a pre-pubescent girl and an old man, nevertheless supports child marriage – which takes place between the two children, Suchi and Mahesam. At the end of the movie, it may be observed that a match is fixed between Mahesam, who has not yet attained the right age for marriage and Suchi, still a pre-pubescent girl.

Representation of enforced widowhood

The aspect of enforced widowhood is found to have been practised in the upper castes of the Hindu society. Among them, the Brahmins were the major practitioners. If a girl or woman lost her husband, she was not allowed to re-marry. All the child widows were made to stay back at the parents' home. The movie portrays the above issue through, Buchamma and Meenakshi who are projected as staying at their parents' home. Their domestic services are exploited; however, their presence is considered to be inauspicious. They cannot interfere in auspicious programmes. Their lives seem to be on par with the dead. They are not allowed to adorn with ornaments, their heads are tonsured and more over are allowed to eat only meagre.[185] It is not that they do not want to get married. They aspire for a marital life which brings them respect, freedom to engage in the events happening in the family. We see Buchamma, Meenakshi and *Pootakoollamma* aspiring for this life.

The three young widows in the movie are widows, who are subjected to enforced widowhood. *Pootakoollamma* is exploited by Gireesam by his promise of marrying her. She

[184]Atlury Murali, "Perspectives on Women's Liberation: Andhra in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries", *Studies in History, 3, 1 n. s. (1987,)* Sage Publications, New Delhi, pp. 97-119.
[185]Maithreyi Krishnaraj, "The Women's Movement in India: A Hundred Years History", *Social Change, 42, 3, (2012), p*. 326.

becomes angry because Gireesam is visiting Madhuravani. Meenakshi is the other widow, who starts having an illicit relationship with Ramappa Panthulu. However, Ramappa Panthulu is found deceiving her, with the promise that he would marry her. Buchamma is exploited again by Gireesam, with his promise of marrying her. However, she is not victimized sexually as she stands firm on protecting her chastity. It is observed that they are all child widows.

The child widows were not only victims of sexual abuse but of domestic violence. The property that they have inherited from their deceased husbands is enjoyed by the parental family. Most of the times they are urged to look after the domestic chores and are considered to be free labour. We observe Buchamma, always engaged in domestic chores. Her father Agnihotravadhanulu, who had married her off to an old man for Rs.1500, is happy that she would even inherit Rs. 20, 000 and 12 acres of land.

Ganapathi Sastri: "You being greedy of Rs.1500, have already (*cut her throat*) ruined Buchi's life by giving her in marriage to an old man who was ready about to die."

Agnihotravadhanulu: "I am said to have (*cut her throat*) ruined her life. She does not have to worry. If this petition is filed, she would inherit a property worth, Rs. 20,000 and 12 acres of land.

It may be observed that, if women turned into widows, they had no alternative of getting married. Gachamma does not want to see her second daughter, Suchi to suffer like Buchamma. She is sympathetic to Buchamma, who is still a child. She is familiar that a woman requires something else than money. After observing the life of Buchamma, she considers to protect Suchi from the vicious circle. The life of Buchamma should have been a lesson for the family. However; Agnihotravadhanulu does not learn anything from the experience. Gachamma replies to Agnihotravadhanulu, "You always think of money. Do you think a woman needs nothing else? If you require money, I would arrange it for you by

selling the land given to me by my parents. Please cancel this match. Let at least one of my daughter's live happily by having a family."

Depiction of Widow Remarriage

The movie, *Kanyasulkam* portrays the aspect of widow remarriage as part of the social reform movement. Of all the issues, it gained much popularity during the social reform movement in Andhra. Veeresalingam Panthulu is considered as the father of social reform movement in Andhra. Though he propagated against child marriage and encouraged education for women, he is remembered and revered for his contribution in the field of widow remarriage.

As discussed earlier, the widows were denied respect and the biological needs were not at all taken into consideration. They were like the 'living dead' in the society. By seeing their plight, some men with ideas of reformation initiated to advocate for the aspect of widow remarriage. Veeresalingam is a pioneer in this field of activism.

The movie, *Kanyasulkam*, is found portraying a role mimicking Veeresalingam Panthulu – Soujanya Rao, a lawyer and social reformer. He performs widow remarriages. He is also anti-nautch. He is a benevolent lawyer advocating genuine cases. When Buchamma stands firm on protecting her chastity before marriage, Gireesam assures her that he would marry her in the presence of the most popular social reformer in Visakhapatnam and he does it. Soujanya Rao is depicted as a man of high quality and gives legitimacy to any widow remarriage. It may be remembered that in those days, the act of performing a widow remarriage was not that easy, the widow, bridegroom and the organizers had to be committed and vigilant to perform it successfully. Sometimes, the widow and bridegroom had to elope, take refuge from a social reformer and had to confront a lot of risks. Veeresalingam in his autobiography outlines one such incident, in which a person had to face difficulties to bring a

widow from Peddapuram to Rajahmundry. The widow, without informing the family and despite various challenges, reaches Veeresalingam.[186] The movie, *Kanyasulkam* exemplifies a similar event where a widow, Buchamma aspiring to lead a married life confronts many obstacles to reach the social reformer, Soujanya Rao.

It may be observed that the movie depicts only one widow remarriage; Gireesam marrying Buchamma. The wedding does not happen without hurdles and these are created. Buchamma's father, Agnihotravadhanulu tries to obstruct the wedding by bringing the police. His argument is that, Gireesam, through manipulation has eloped with Buchamma, and moreover has carried away jewellery and other valuable things. Hence, Gireesam should be arrested under the case of abduction. He claims that his daughter is still a minor. Nevertheless, Buchamma intervenes and proclaims that she is 18 years old.

The Hindu Marriage Law of 1955 resolved that the minimum age for getting married for the boy was 18 and 15 for the girl. Subsequently, it made the implementation of monogamy, both for men and women compulsory and gave the provision of registering the act of marriage.[187] The movie was released in 1955 and it may be noted that, in the same year the law was brought into force.

When Soujanya Rao, in the movie, is convincing the police with facts, Agnihotravadhanulu expresses his anger against him, commenting: "What kind of a respectable man are you? However, Buchamma dares and accuses, Agnihotravadhanulu that he wants to obstruct the wedding as he wants her jewellery. He is, according to her, more concerned with the jewellery than her life. Moreover, she alleges that he is the root cause for

[186] Kandukuri Veeresalingam, *Sweeyacharitra- I*, 1982. pp. 165-166. In Kandukuri Veeresalingam (Footnotes by Akkiraju Ramapathi Rao), *Rajasekhara Charistramu: Navala,* Hyderabad: Visalandhra Publishing House, 1999. p. 179.
[187]P. Jagadeesan, *Marriage and Social Legislations in Tamil Nadu,* Madras: Elatchiappan Publications, 1990. pp. 127- 128.

her widowhood. Buchamma states, "You have ruined my life only because; I have been calm, so far. Tell me by swearing upon God. Did I bring your property and jewellery with me? Don't you want to see me, as a full-fledged family woman?" We may observe that Buchamma rebels against her father for the first time in the movie.

It is alos an instance that vindicates the dual nature of the movie. The other two young widows, *Pootakoollamma* and Meenakshi remain without an option regarding marriage. The question is, is it because they were not virgins? The movie makers seem to have thought that widows, who are not virgins, do not deserve the right to get married. May be, as the majority of the masses were still under the psych of traditional value system, the movie makers might have choosen to keep silence regarding their marriage.

***Devadasi* system**

The presentation of *devadasi* system in the movie is realistic. Madhuravani is a prostitute. She is a product of the *devadasi* system. She is bold and frank. Despite her natural problems, she is more independent than her counter parts in the family system. She is a singer-cum-dancer. Darsi Chenchaiah opines: "The prostitutes excelled in music, dance, singing and acting. They used to be invited to perform for entertainment on occasions like marriage and festivities. Only this was not sufficient for their livelihood. So, they resorted to prostitution for living".[188]

Some *Devadasis* functioned as concubines to landlords and *zamindars.* Thangirala Subbarao in *Renati Suryachandrulu* writes: "It was not considered to be wrong in those days for Zamindars and landlords to keep prostitutes with them. There used to be *devadasis* dedicated to temples. They were different from normal prostitutes. They used to dedicate

[188]Darsi Chenchaiah, *Nenu- Nadesam* (autobiography in Telugu), 1951, p. 176.

their sexual lives, sometimes as second wife, to only a zamindar or a landlord."[189] Madhuravani was such a *devadasi* who used to be a concubine to landlords or any rich man who could foster her. She acts as one, for Gireesam and to Ramappa Panthulu at a different point of time.

Madhuravani participates in public affairs. She discusses and debates with men. She is able to help Ganapathi Sastrulu in breaching Suchi's marriage with Lubdhavadhanulu. She again helps Lubdhavadhanulu from getting arrested. She goes to Soujanya Rao despite knowing the fact, that he is anti-nautch and gets appreciated and gifted, the *Bhagavad Gita* by him. She is able to change Soujanya Rao's narrow mindedness of anti-nautch and moreover makes him realize that nautch problem should be addressed instead of opposed.

Soujanya Rao appreciates Madhuravani, **"**You have proved that for humans; identity is not important, but, the conscience. To express my gratitude, I present you this "*Bhagavad Gita*". Read and become blessed**"**. She was conscious enough to facilitate the obstruction of a child marriage. She plays a prominent role in deviating Suchi's child marriage.

Critiquing Colonial Modernity

The progression of colonial modernity in Indian culture and one of its influences on the body politics' perception persisted in the form of English education. The criticism against the English educated men requires our attention. The movie, *Kanyasulkam* demonstrates through Gireesam, the category of pseudo English educated men who wanted name, fame and property of the widows. This was undertaken in the name of widow remarriages. But it also shows that this category was the only option to take forward the reform activity. Gurajada

[189]D. V. Narasaraju., *Adrustavanthuni Atmakatha*, Hyderabad: Creative Links Publications, 2006. P. 223.

Apparao had been critical towards colonial modernity.[190] He represented a modernity that included both; the continuation of a past and the change that occurred due to the contact of English culture. We should not misread him as a revivalist. He did not praise the Indian past nor did he wish to imbibe the English culture as it is. He wanted the continuation of a tradition that had been alive for a long time. He disliked the evil influences, defects and bad habits brought by the English culture.[191] He was sure that Western civilization would help us in getting rid of superstitious beliefs. However, he exposed it, as it teaches such a freedom that would be empty of social progress.[192]Gurajada's *Kanyasulkam* was critical towards the aspect, social reform. He being a contemporary of social reform movement noticed a newly emerged tradition of getting child widows married to a man – irrespective of his whereabouts and background.[193]

There are disparities between the original play its adaptation undertaken for the movie. Gurajada in his play aspired for the betterment of women. Moreover, he wanted them to be conscious enough to make decisions for their future. He conveys this through Soujanya Rao. Soujanya Rao, in the play, being vigilant of manipulative English educated men sends Buchamma to 'Pune Widow Home' and Gireesam for higher education. His idea behind it was to educate Buchamma to a level of making decisions on her own for her future. In contrast, the movie depicts Soujanya Rao as Veeresalingam, who just performs widow marriages with men coming forward.[194]

Nevertheless, the movie presents most of the issues raised during the social reform movement that had lasted for almost 100 years in Andhra.

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[190] Gurajada Apparao, *Girls for Sale* (translated into English by Velcheru Narayana Rao), New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2011. p. 290.
[191]*Ibid*.
[192]*Ibid*.
[193] Katyayani Vidmahe, *Kanyasulkam: Samajika Sambandhalu*, Warangal: Jijnasa Prachruranalu, 2005. p. 18.
[194]*Ibid.*

***Peddamanushulu* (1954)**[195]

The movie starts with a song interrogating the contemporary polity and society of the 1950s. The song is both a political and social satire. It conveys that the freedom fighters, who had brought independence have passed away and the 'selfish', who are capable of making freedom a commodity in the market have occupied the citadel. The leadership of the aristocrats and their capability of 'swallowing the temples' and cheating the poor is found to be in vogue. These illiterates are being embraced by the luck of power. They are deceiting the public by making false promises. The indebted lives happily, while the lender is confined to poor food. The tiller would behave like a landlord. The renters would demonstrate that they are the real owners.

The Political Leader Dharma Rao is elected as the Chairman of the Municipality of Adikesavapuram. Subsequently, Ramadasu is elected as a member in Municipal Council. Seshavataram and Nagoji Rao are also elected as Municipal Council Members. A felicitation program is orgainized by all the associations including students, youth, caste and womens' organizations. Sidhanti, the priest of the village praises Dharma Rao, Ramadasu, and other elders – Seshavataram and Nagoji Rao.

Dharma Rao's brother Sankaraiah tries to expose the deceiving attitude of the leaders, but is branded as a mentally retard. Dhrarma Rao is the guardian (*Dharmakartha*) to the *Adikesava* temple and a foster to the orphanage. Seshavatharam is a trading merchant. Nagoji Rao is the contractor and Sidhanthi is the priest. There is an alliance among these four, and they are dressed as the 'respectable' in the municipality. Ramadasu, an honest personality runs a daily titled, *Prajaseva* (serving the public). Moreover, he looks after the orphanage as

[195] The movie was directed and produced by K. V. Reddy; music by O. Ramachandra Rao, A. Rama Rao; Gawrinatha Sasrti, Relangi, A. V. Subbarao, Vangara, Ch. Kutumbarao, Ramachandra Kasyap, Gopal Pillai, Sri Ranjani, Hemalatha, Padmavathidevi, Seshamba, etc.

its secretary. Ramadasu is also one of the Municipal Council Member. Though he is aware that the trader, contractor and the priest are villainous, he has faith in Dharma Rao's commitment for public service. For him, Dharma Rao is such an ideal personality, that he keeps Dharma Rao's portrait beside Gandhi and Nehru.

The bad quartet (Dharma Rao, Nagoji Rao, Seshavataram and Sidhanti) dressed as the 'respectable' are capable of manipulating and misleading the people of *Adikesavapuram.* Though Ramadasu is aware of the misdeeds of other three, he believes that Dharma Rao is a respectable personality.

Dharma Rao's brother Sankaraiah, branded as the mad Sankaraiah, casts satires during the felicitation program. Dharma Rao sees to it that Sankaraiah is removed from the hall. Dharma Rao along with Sidhanti returns to home after the completion of the program. Dharma Rao and Sankaraiah have a widowed sister. Sankaraiah is of the opinion that Dharma Rao has owned his share of property, along with that of their widowed sister, who had been married to an old man. Sidhanti orders the widow not to stumble upon Dharma Rao, who has just become the Chairman of the Municipality, as it was considered to be inauspicious. She is a young widow and has an illicit relationship with the car driver of Dharma Rao.

Dharma Rao is so shrewd that he gets his brother, Sankaraiah, branded as a mad man due to which his opinion is not taken seriously in the society. Dharma Rao's wife forcibly confined within the four walls.

Seshavataram's wife, in comparision is a far younger woman. As she is found reading a popular magazine, Seshavataram forces her not to read such popular literature but instead take up epic literature, viz., the *Mahabharatam* and the *Bhagavatam.*

Nagoji Rao, the road contractor is subsequently found selling arrack in the black market. At various points of time, Nagoji and Seshavataram are dismayed with Ramadasu for always praising only the Chairman, Dharma Rao and they are further disappointed as Ramadasu's Prajaseva, at a particular point of time publishes news praising only Dharma Rao.

Ramadasu is married and has a young daughter, Padma, a visually challenged. Dharma Rao's only son Prabhakar who is studying Medicine in Madras has sympathy for Padma. He cares to get her operated.

Sankaraiah, while talking to Ramadasu passes a satire on him, for keeping Dharma Rao's portrait beside the portraits of Gandhi and Nehru. He tries to sensitize Ramadasu by informing that Dharma Rao is 'a wolf in sheep's skin'. Ramadasu unable to tolerate the defaming of his reverent, Dharma Rao, expresses his anger over Sankaraiah.

Shanta, a young widow works as a teacher at the orphanage. She looks after the orphan children. She is more of a daughter to Ramadasu. The portraits of Gandhi, Vivekananda and of Seetaram *(Seetha and Rama)* are displayed in the orphanage.

Nagoji Rao offers Dharma Rao, some commission earned on selling arrack and carrying the main road contract works. The amount handed over with complete secrecy. The *prasadam* (a material substance of food that is a religious offering) is publicly taken to Dharma Rao's home, instead of distributing it to the devotees, while Ramadasu and Shanta are found serving food at the orphanage. Dharma Rao sends Pentaiah, a servant, to call Ramadasu. Ramadasu arrives and realizes that a discussion is being done regarding the election accounts among the quartet. They are planning to collect funds from the public to meet the election expenditure. Ramadasu opines that it is not ideal to collect funds from the public. According to him, anyone can serve the people with public funds. Dharma Rao, in

order to avoid the conflict, proposes to make party fund from which all the expenditure related to politics can be met. Nagoji Rao proposes that – half of the collected amount (Rs. 10,000) from public for running the orphanage can be converted into party fund. Ramadasu opposes it and opines that it is immoral and incorrect to utilize the orphanage fund for personal or political purposes. Dharma Rao interferes and suggests that the election expenditure can be managed in some or other way. Subsequently, he asks Ramadasu, whether all the arrangements have been done for the evening dance programme at the orphanage. Ramadasu responding that all is set requests him not to utlize the funds collected for running the orphanage at any cost and leaves. Dharma Rao tells to his associates, **"**it's not the raging, but a contrivance is required in politics. However, the funds needed to meet the expenses are to be collected and would be collected. While doing so, we have to do it with a consensus from the public. Leave the issue to me. I will take care of it**"**. They disperse. As Sidhanti, Nagoji and Seshavataram come out of Dharma Rao's home; Seshavataram, who has intentionally left his umbrella behind, goes inside with the pretext of collecting it. He, without giving any clue to the third party submits to Dharma Rao the commission earned on selling rice and sugar.

Dharma Rao's son Prabhakar reaches the village from Madras. He directly goes to Ramadasu's home and informs them that he would get Padma operated in Madras. He tells an instance that he has seen the same medical case like Padma's in Madras where the operation was a successful one and the patient got sight. He informs that she is to be to be operated twice, the first one to be perfomed instantly, and the second, after six months.

While Ramadasu and Dharma Rao are discussing about the dance programme to be organized at the orphanage, Sidhanti is enthusiastic to know whether the dancers are women or men. He seems to be enthusiastic to see women dancing. Hearing that it is neither men nor women, but the orphan children, he gets disappointed.

Dharma Rao, coming to know that his son Prabhakar has gone to visit Padma instead of coming directly to home becomes angry and chides his wife for the act. Dharma Rao's wife is an 'ideal wife' who just keeps quite.

While Dharma Rao is leaving for the dance program organized at the orphanage, his wife requests, if she could attend it. He replies, "Will you see dance? It is better you did not say you would dance" (*Dance Chustav? Inka Nayam Chestanannavukaadu*). This is one of the ways, in which the husband humiliated her. She is a loyal wife. Dharma Rao alone goes to the programme.

The programme was not just about the performance of a dance. It was a *nritya natakam* (a drama perfomed through dance). *Naannaa Puli* is the title and the message of the programme is not to say lies. The habit of repeatedly lying would turn hostile to ones' own life. The narration is in the form of a song. A father, who is going into the forest to collect firewood, is prompted by his son to take him along. The father tells the son to be at a particular place, further asks him not to leave the place, until he comes back. He does not want his son to enter deep into the forest, as it is known for its tigers. He suggests the son to call him if he sees a tiger. The father leaves deep into the forest. However, he still stays near by to the son. As the son feels to fool around, he cries, "Father! Tiger has come". The father rushes to save him and finds that his son is fooling around. The act is repeated a second time. Still, the father believing comes and finds that his son has lied. However, the third time, there is a real tiger that comes and attacks the son. The son cries for his father. Despite hearing his son's cries, the father thinks his son is once again lying. Hence, he does not go to rescue him. The son loses hope on his life. The tiger without killing the boy teaches him that, one should not say lies even for the sake of kidding. In the traditional narrative, the tiger kills the boy. However, in this play, the boy is just taught a lesson. The message of the play is 'saying lies, even for the sake of kidding is dangerous'.

Ramadasu's wife is depressed of their daughter Padma's unfortunate fate of visually challengedness. Ramadasu consoles her concluding that it is her fate. She tells him that Prabhakar has told them that Padma would get sight, if she were to be operated. Ramadasu is not in a condition to bear the expenses. He expresses that the family is financially weak and helpless. The wife suggests him to borrow from the Chairman, but he has already received financial assistance from the Chairman for his press works. However, he goes to borrow money from the Chairman. Dharma Rao pretends to be indifferent towards the interest on the principal amount, but is greedy of it. He makes sure Ramadasu writes a promissory note that he is willing to take the money for an interest of 0.75 percent. The whole process is performed through the accountant and without giving proper information. Ramadasu thinks Dharma Rao is a 'respectable' man, who does not give money for interest. Hence, he himself commits in writing that he would pay the mentioned interest on the principal amount.

Prabhakar takes Padma and her mother to Madras. Sidhanti brings to Dharma Rao a match for Prabhakar. The movie is contextualized to the circumstances of the 1950s. By this time, the father's bridegrooms were receiving dowry.

Sidhanti: "This match is suitable to your status. (*Mana Anthastuku, Hodaaku Annividhala Thagina Sambandham*). She is the only daughter. She is beautiful, educated, disciplined and loyal. I have seen her."

Dharma Rao: "Beauty does not matter, but dowry is important. It should be Rs. one lakh, apart from jewellery. Her parents must 'write' the entire property on her name and submit those documents to us. Let them keep some 10 acres of land for their survival."

Sankaraiah along with his followers sings a 'Bhajana' warning Seshavatharam that his black market affair would be one day exposed and he would pay for it.

Siva Siva Murthivi Gananatha, Neevu
Sivuni Kumarudavu Gananatha
Congresollu Ninugolva Gananatha Neevu
Kamitharthamithuvayya Gananatha
Vaari Kaankshalanni Deerthuvayya Gananatha
Communistul Ninigolva Gananatha
Vaarni Kaapaduchunduvayya Gananatha
Okkasari Mantri Cheyyi Gananatha
Neevu Odakunte Ottupettu Gananatha
Blacku Markettu Cheyyi Gananatha
Ninnu Pattakunte Ottu Pettu Gananatha
Bokka Pettakunte Ottu Pettu Gananatha…

Seshavatharam gets angry with Sankaraiah and scolds him. Sidhanti, who happens to be at the shop, tells Seshavatharam that it is better to complain about it to Dharma Rao. Sankaraiah still humiliates them saying they can "tell even to their fathers."

They both complain to Dharma Rao against his brother Sankaraiah. Seshavatahram tells him that Sankaraiah defamed him by announcing he is doing business in the black market. Sidhanti tells him that Sankaraiah is branding him as "the swallower of temple". Sidhanthi creates stories against Sankaraiah saying that Sankaraiah has turned a womanizer and is teasing women who visit the temple. While they are telling all these, Sankaraiah hears secretly. He waits for Sidhanthi at the temple and beats him as he reaches. Sidhanthi runs and enters the sanctum (*Garbhagudi*) of the temple. Subsequently, as only Brahmins are allowed into it, he escapes from Sankaraiah.

Ramadasu receives a letter from Madras, which informs that Padma has been successfully operated. She would be discharged in a week. She will have to undergo one more surgery and then she would get sight for sure. He shares the good news with Shanta. Shanta opines that all the credit would go to Prabhakar. Ramadasu expresses that Dharma Rao also deserves the credit, who has provided financial assistance to the press and has established the orphanage. He has now lent money for Padma's medical expenditure too. Ramadasu opines that he cannot clear off the indebtedness to Dharma Rao, even if he serves

him for a lifetime. He starts to Dharma Rao's home to share the news with him. However, there is a windstorm. He suggests the children at the orphanage to be careful and sets out.

Dharma Rao chides Sankaraiah for humiliating Seshavataram and Sidhanthi. He warns if the act were repeated, he would be shot dead. Sankaraiah uses the same 'weapon' that Dharma Rao and the others utlize against him. All of them had branded him as crazy and a mentally retard. He replies to Dharma Rao that he did it, because he is crazy. His point is that since he is crazy, he has humiliated them unintentionally. Ramadasu, while entering, sees Sankaraiah going out of Dharma Rao's home. Dharma Rao expresses his agony, on how he is being harassed by Sankaraiah and people of that kind. Due to the blowing of wind, there is a disturbance at the window. With this, Dharma Rao approaches to close it and sees his driver romancing with his widowed sister by holding her saree. An enraged, Dharma Rao kills the driver by shooting, despite Ramadasu's effort to stop him. Ramadasu surrenders to the police admitting the crime. He tells the police that the incident happened accidentally. He claims that the driver suddenly rose from behind the car. As he was trying to shoot a bird, the bullet had hit the driver. Ramadasu assumes that the public are in need of the valuable services of Dharma Rao, who can best serve the public as a leader.

Ramadasu is behind the bars. Dharma Rao goes to visit him in the jail. He pretends to be regretting and feeling grateful to Ramadasu. He proposes to him that he would reveal the truth so that Ramadasu would be released and he would be punished. Ramadasu rejects the idea and tells that the public needs the services of Dharma Rao. His only request to Dharma Rao is to look after his family.

The quartet is sitting at Dharma Rao's home. Seshavatharam alleges that Ramadasu has eaten up the fund collected for the orphanage. To this, the Sidhanti adds that Ramadasu's deceiving nature is now exposed. According to him, Ramadasu had pretended as a

respectable personality in the town as they four had been. Nagoji Rao alleges that Ramadasu is poisonous. Sidhanti adds that Ramadasu being poisonous killed a human being. Nagoji opines that Ramadasu had pre-planned and killed Dharma Rao's driver with Dharma Rao's gun at Dharma Rao's home, so that Dharma Rao himself would be held responsible for the murder. Dharma Rao pretends to be innocent and behaves as if he is not invoved in the act. He poses a question why Ramadasu might have killed the driver. Nagoji exclaims that the driver is a womanizer and he has established an affair with Ramadasu's daughter Padma. Sidhanti requests Dharma Rao to avoid Ramadasu's family. Nagoji suggests him not to let Prabhakar meet Padma. Dharma Rao assures them that he is now alert. Seshavatharam again reminds Dharma Rao that Ramadasu had swallowed the funds of the orphanage. He also requests Dharma Rao to replace Ramadasu as the secretary to the orphanage with someone who is faithful. Dharma Rao tells he had already entrusted Nagoji, the job of searching for a new secretary. Nagoji Rao replies that he has already sent for an experienced woman to take charge and she may be on the way.

Kanakasundara Govinda Vadana Gangabai has twenty years of experience in the field. She seems to be more interested in adorning. Dharma Rao asks her if she has any experience in the field. She shows the experience certificates given to her by 'our great leaders'. She is appointed as the new secretary of the orphanage. She is a merciless and dominant woman that gets proven on her first visit to the orphanage. She dominates her assistant cum teacher Santha. As she comes to know that Santha has not qualified in the teacher training, threatens that the government may prosecute her. However, assures that she can manage it. When Sidhanti pronounces her as 'Gangabayamma', she emphasizes that she must be called just 'Gangabai'. Sidhanti reminds Dharma Rao that they are to go to receive the people coming for negotiating about the marriage fixation of Prabhakar. The driver of

Dharma Rao, now, is an ‘old man’. Dharma Rao seems to have appointed preferably an old man over a young driver.

Padma and her mother are back at home. Padma sings a song in the temple – expressing to God – about her pain of ‘blindness’ and her father’s separation. She is depressed of the problems. She has been a visually challenged young woman and now her father is away from her. She is desperate to overcome these problems. She asks God, if she would be put out of these problems. Prabhakar goes there and sees her. He consoles her that there is no point in grieving for the issues already happened (Ramadasu is arrested). He reminds that her mother is already depressed and has become sick. If she knows that Padma is dismayed, she would become more depressed. He takes her home. While taking her home – Dharma Rao and the people who have come for negotiating about the fixation of the marriage – observe them. As one of them, enquires about the girl, Sidhanti manages by replying that she is a visually challenged patient of Prabhakar.

Padma’s mother is depressed. She loses hope on Padma getting back her sight. Prabhakar consoles and fills confidence in her that Padma would get sight for sure when she undergoes another operation. He tells her that he would come back and take her to Madras. While taking leave from them, he asks Santha to look after them.

Dharma Rao’s ego does not allow him to have any direct communication with his son. He entrusts the job to Sidhanti. Sidhanti asks Prabhakar to take a final decision on the fixation of his marriage with those who came all the way from Rajahmundry. Prabahkar replies: “Why should they be informed of my marriage affair?” His mother says, “It would be disrespectful act of not taking a decision when somebody is waiting for it”. Prabahkar answers that he is not ready to marry yet. Sidhanti tries to convince and persuade him by saying that he can marry whenever he wants, but has to give his consent for the betrothal.

Prabhakar emphasizes that he is not interested in the proposed marriage. He literally rejects the proposal. Dharma Rao listens to the conversation from behind the curtain.

Sidhanti: “Do not take hasty decision. Your parents and all of us like this match. If we drop this compatible match, can we get it again?”

Prabhakar: “Nothing to worry. Why are you all in such haste about my marriage, while I myself am not? I will marry when I want to, and the girl I like. It is better you people do not intervene in this matter.

Sidhanti: “(submissively) we… are like ‘guardians’. (*Alaa ante ela nayanaa! Edo peddavaallam…*)”

Prabahkar: “I am not disagreeing with that (that you are ‘guardians’). However, if even if I disagree, would it be of any value?”

Sidhanti: “Annapurnamma garu! I will take a leave then…”

Prabhakar: “Please…”

Meanwhile, Sidhanti makes out that Dharma Rao has listened to the conversation. He turns the blame on Padma. He opines that Prabhakar is not ready to marry now, and that is because of Padma. Dharma Rao expresses his agony that the society is sinful. He says that Ramadasu’s family has started to trait him despite his enormous help. Prabhakar starts to Madras and says good-bye to his mother. However, as she asks him to inform his father, he replies that she can do that. Dharma Rao and Sidhanti also hear it from behind the door curtain. Sidhanti kindles hatred in Dharma Rao against Padma. He suggests, to see to it that Prabhakar never steps into Ramadasu’s home. Dharma Rao with hatred determines to do so.

Gangabai behaves mercilessly with the children at the orphanage home. She is atrocious against them. While punishing a boy, all the children laugh loudly and this results in her anger. She orders the worker to serve only half a meal to them. They collectively stage a hunger strike (Gandhi's Satyagraha). She tries to threaten them saying, "I have seen many Satyagrahas". Meanwhile, Padma happens to go there. All the children rush to her. Gangabai scolds her by blaming Ramadasu for the corruption. She alleges that Ramadasu has exhausted the funds collected for the orphanage. She disperses the children's and casts Padma out. She chides Santha for certifying Ramadasu as honest. She threatens of seeing to that Santha is dismissed.

Gangabai meets the quartet and shares how she has thrown out Padma. All of them appreciate her for her boldness. Meanwhile, Dharma Rao's servant informs them that Padma and her mother are coming. Dharma Rao assigns the job of sending them away to Sidhanti, Nagoji, Seshavatharam and Gangabai. They chide Padma and her sick mother and further blaming that they are not grateful to Dharma Rao. They allege that their family has trapped Prabhakar by sending Padma in the name of treatment. Padma and her mother are hurt. They leave the town to escape the blame and go to their relatives in a nearby village.

Sankaraiah happens to go to the orphanage. Gangabai not knowing that he is the brother of Chairman tells him, "Get out". After realizing, she treats him with respect. Gangabai happily informs him that she sends milk, vegetables and other provisions from orphanage to the houses of Dharma Rao, Sidhanti, Seshavatharam and Nagoji. As they are in discussion, Santha reveals the presentations and gifts sent to her by Seshavatharam. However, she is hurt and angry. She is a young widow. She knows that he is trying to take advantage by sending her gifts. Gangabai tries to convince her that it is not improper. Sankaraiah sets out with the presentations to Seshavatharam's home.

Seshavatharam's wife is playing the harmonium, singing the song "*Kalavaramaye Madilo Naa Madilo*", a romantic duet in the movie *Pathalabhairavi* (1951). Seshavatharam who is consuming alcohol in one of the rooms is impressed with her and comes to her. He asks her to repeat the song. She expresses her irksomeness – due to the stinking of alcohol. He manages by telling that he has swallowed medicine for stomach pain. Meanwhile, Sankaraiah knocks the door. Recognizing his voice, Seshavatharam asks his wife to inform that he is not home. She is an innocent young wife. There is a huge age gap between both of them. Seshavatharam is filled with lust. His wife, an innocent homemaker, has never been made to go out of the four walls. She responds to Seshavatharam that she would not lie. Subsequently, asks him, about the mistake that he has done. He convinces her. Seshavatharam hides himself. She opens the door – only half – so that she can just show her face. She tells Sankaraiah that her husband is not at home. Sankaraiah saying he has an urgent work with Seshavatharam enters the hall. He smells alcohol. She tells him that her husband takes medicine whenever he has pain in the stomach. Sankaraiah finds that the smell is coming from inside and tries to enter. The obedient wife of Seshavatharam stands against him before the door not letting him inside, saying that her husband is not at home. The clever Sankaraiah starts playing harmonium. The innocent wife of Seshavatharam starts dancing to the tune. With this, Seshavatharam gets enraged and comes to them shouting, "Stop it". He scolds Sankaraiah, "How dare you sing to and make a lonely woman dance? I would have reported to the police had it not been you. I would get you skinned. Get out you bloody rascal". Sankaraiah replies, "Why are you shouting? Is it you or me, who does such things with other women? Being an old man, more over having such a beautiful wife, do you want other women? Didn't you send these presentations to Santhamma?" Sankaraiah reveals the truth to Seshavatharam's wife. Her sharp reaction is that she says she would commit suicide immediately. By the time Seshavatharam stops her, Sankaraiah sets out declaring he would

report to the police against Seshavatharam's offerings. Seshavatharam pleads him not to do so. He regrets for his misdeed. Sankaraiah warns him not to repeat such things and leaves. Seshavatharam consoles his grieving wife.

Prabahkar on his arrival at the town comes to know from Sankaraiah that Padma and her mother have left the town and shifted to Ramapuram, where their relatives are put up. Sankaraiah compares Dharma Rao with 'Duryodhana' and his associates as '*Dusta Chatustayam*'. He informs Prabhakar that since he has proposed to marry Padma, the '*Dusta Chatustayam*' has schemed to send Padma and her mother away. Prabhakar sets out to Ramapuram to see them.

Padma is singing a song, *"Neemeeda Pranalu Nilipindi Raadha. Ravoyi Gopalakrishna"*. Here, she is like the Radha, lover of Krishna and he as Krishna. The various aspects in Hindu mythology are taken as references in the early movies. Prabhakar meets them. They say it is their fate to undergo sufferings. He requests them to go with him to get Padma operated because she would get sight for sure this time as the doctor in Madras had promised. Though they are unwilling at first, they go with him as the relative in Ramapuram also suggests them to go with Prabhakar. He tells them that the sight of Padma is more important than the rumors. She is operated and she gets sight.

We propose that the blindness of Padma is similar to that of the public, which has not been able to see the deceiving and lustfulness of the 'guardians'. The sight to Padma is an indication of unveiling the lustfulness of the 'guardians'.

Prabhakar starts a hospital in his hometown. Padma and her mother are still living in Ramapuram. Seshavatharam goes to the hospital for a stomach check up and gets a prescription. Sankaraiah makes fun of him that he would rather prefer to take 'other' medicine (alcohol). Seshavatharam leaves from there. Sankaraiah reveals to Prabhakar that

Seshavatharam is a drunkard and womanizer. Prabhakar is exclaimed. He says, "I thought he is a respectable man!" Sankaraiah says, "In the contemporary society, he who is an alcoholic is a gentleman. He who gives false witness is a 'guardian'. He who deserts his wife is a greater 'guardian'. One who has taken over the property of a widow is the greatest 'guardian'".

Sidhanti informs to Dharma Rao that there is treasure (*Nidhi*) in the temple. They both along with Nagoji and Seshavatharam determine to dig it out secretly without giving any clue to the public and the government. They call the entire public to the temple. They show to the public the need of the hour to renovate the temple. They also ask the public to give funds voluntarily. They also declare that the temple would be closed after the festival (*Makara Sankranti*) for renovation. There scheme is to let the renovation works happen during the daytime and they can do their digging for the treasure (*Nidhi*) in the night. The montage is properly executed. During this period, the temple is locked. In the mean time, Ramadasu is released from prison. Prabhakar, Sankaraiah, Padma and her mother receive him at the prison. Ramadasu undergoes emotional happiness to see Padma getting her sight. He expresses his gratitude to Prabhakar for getting Padma her sight. He asks them about the well-being of Dharma Rao, moreover had expected him. Sankaraiah indicates that Dharma Rao's cupidity has reached its peak. Ramadasu cannot comprehend and they move to home.

Dharma Rao's is informed by his wife that Ramadasu has been released from prison and is back home. She requests him if she can call him on. However, he chides her, saying she is an ideal homemaker who should not roam around.

Ramadasu being informed about the incidents; grasps that the society has changed. He looks at the photo of Dharma Rao at his home, which is placed beside the portraits of Gandhi and Nehru. It means that for Ramadasu, he is as equal as Gandhi and Nehru. He asks Santha

if Dharma Rao has been a mute spectator to all the incidents. Santha emphasizes that all this would not have happened without Dharma Rao's encouragement and support. Ramadasu is unable to believe it and likes to visit Dharma Rao at once. Despite opposition from the family members, he sets out to see Dharma Rao.

Sidhanthi hands over to Dharma Rao, Rs. 15,000 collected for renovating the temple in the presence of Seshavatharam. He happily says that the quartet need not give funds. Meanwhile, Nagoji joins them informing Ramadasu along with the family has shifted to his home. Sidhanti, Seshavatharama and Nagoji advise Dharma Rao not to entertain him. Sidhanti says, if Dharma Rao shows any sympathy to Ramadasu, all their plans would be spoilt and Dharma Rao accepts to the proposal. Ramadasu reaches Dharma Rao's premises. Dharma Rao's servant Pentaiah greets him with respect and informs that Dharma Rao is in a meeting with some 'respectable' men. He goes inside and informs Dharma Rao that Ramadasu has came to see him. They order to kick and drive him away. Pentaiah conveys the same to Ramadasu in a very rude manner. Ramadasu exclaims, "Pentaiah!" Pentaiah orders to control his tongue. He corrects him that he is not Pentaiah, but Penteswara Rao. He shuts the doors.

A humiliated and disappointed Ramadasu goes back home. On the way, Prabhakar sees and invites him to visit the hospital. Ramadasu appreciates his service orientness. It makes him feel that he has come into light from darkness. During the conversation**,** Prabhakar proposes to Ramadasu that he would marry Padma if he has no objection. Ramadasu is happy but he thinks he should not bring conflicts and differences between Prabhakar and his father Dharma Rao. Prabhakar informs that he has breached with his father.

Ramadasu reaches home with conflicting thoughts. His wife along with Padma asks him why he is in such a mood. He tells them that Prabhakar has proposed to marry Padma.

He realizes that Padma is also interested in Prabhakar. He blesses her saying it is the wish of the God.

Sankaraiah along with two sannyasis is found singing 'Bhajan' at night in the temple. Sidhanthi and Nagoji who are on their mission get angry and ask them to leave. Sankaraiah poses them with rational questions like "what work do you have here at night?" He also tells them, "The renovation works are happening during day time. Our presence during night time at temple will not disturb the work". Nagoji threatens them to leave. The sannyasis leave but Sankaraiah stays stubbornly. Nagoji and Sidhanthi take the complaint to Dharma Rao. Dharma Rao not only chides Sankaraiah but also warns him that he would skin him, if he were to be found roaming around the temple. In front of him, Dharma Rao orders the associates to break his bones and throw him outdoors if he is seen again at the temple.

Sankaraiah informs Prabhakar and Ramadasu that something wrong is happening at the temple. He tells that the "*Dusta Chatustayam*" is going to "stab the God". Interestingly he is sympathetic to the God, *Aadi Kesava Swamy*. By listening to him, both Ramadasu and Prabhakar confirm that there is something wrong happening in the temple during nighttime. Sankaraiah tells them that he is going to watch them that night. Ramadasu alarms him to be careful, as the "*Dusta Chatustayam*" is capable of doing any atrocity. Sankaraiah is confident that they cannot discover him.

The next night, Sankaraiah hides in a corner of the temple. The "*Dusta Chatustayam* along with Pentaiah enters the temple. In the process of following them secretly, Sankaraiah unintentionally hits a bell in the temple that sounds. They catch and thrash him. He is tied and thrown into a dungeon, owned by Nagoji. Nagoji's muscle man, Hanumanthu is entrusted with the job of not letting Sankaraiah escape.

Nagoji and Seshavatharam happen to see Gangabai taking all the children to a movie. They come to know from her that Santha is alone at the orphanage. Gangabai does not know that these two have been mulling on Santha for sexual favors. Nagoji in a drunken state tries to assault Santha sexually. Santha tries to escape from him. Seshavatharam reaches and knocks the door. Nagoji's concentration gets disturbed, as he is already drunk. Meanwhile, Santha escapes. Nagoji and Seshavatharam do not expect each other.

Santha goes to Ramadasu's home. She reveals about the incident that had happened in orphanage. She pleads them to let her stay with them and requests him to save her chastity. They give her shelter and Ramadasu assures her that he would look after her like his own daughter. Ramadasu's wife Seethamma takes her in. Prabhakar, after hearing to Santha, tells Ramadasu that his father Dharma Rao must be held responsible for all these atrocities. He further mentions that something is to be done to counter the "*Dusta Chatustayam's*" atrocities. An enraged Ramadasu determines to reveal and propagate all the misdeeds done by them.

The following night, the "*Dusta Chatustayam*" along with Pentaiah start digging under the God's idol. In the very beginning of the digging, the bells in the temple start ringing. Instead of considering it as a sign of alarm, one among the "*Dusta Chatustayam*" Sidhanthi, tells the others that God himself has given the consent – in the form if a sign. The execution is well undertaken. They are digging in the temple (an illegal act) and simultaneously Ramadasu is found revealing the facts through printing the news. After digging a few feet, the "*Dusta Chatustayam*" becomes tired; they leave the place to continue the process for the next day.

The next day Ramadasu's newspaper, *Prajaseva*, publishes all the facts. It publishes, "Molestation in the Orphanage by the 'Guardians'", "What happened to Chairman's brother

Sankaram?", "The hidden agenda behind closing down the temple?" The quartet sits for an urgent meeting and discuss. The rest of the quartet requests Dharma Rao to take some or other action with immediate effect, otherwise Ramadasu would reveal all the facts in detail.

Dharma Rao goes to Ramadasu's press that night. Ramadasu is on his presswork while the others at home are asleep. Dharma Rao asks him for a clarification on publishing the news. Ramadasu replies, "It's not me but you have to respond".

Dharma Rao: How do you respond to your writing against us?

Ramadasu: It is not me, but you have to answer. (giving clarification on the allegations made upon him)

Dharma Rao: Have you thought of its consequences?

Ramadasu: I am not bothered about the consequences. My only job is to do my duty.

Dharma Rao: What is your duty?

Ramadasu: To look after the welfare of the people.

Dharma Rao: Do you think it is only your duty, but also not mine?

Ramadasu: Once I had mistakenly believed that your duty is the welfare of the people. Now, I have realized that I am mistaken. What all you need in this world is Property, Power, Positions, Status and Prestige. To attain them, you would go to any extent.

Dharma Rao: Shut up (with anger).

Ramadasu: You may order me to shut my mouth, but how can you shut up the mouth of your conscience, which is a direct witness? If not today, you will have to answer in the future.

Dharma Rao: I am not bothered about your philosophy (*Vedantam*). I have not come here to debate with you. I am in the best interest of you; however, giving you a final warning to withdraw your effort to expose us.

Ramadasu: Impossible. I would perform my social duty even at the cost of my life and family. I would expose all your evil atrocities at any cost.

Dharma Rao: I know why you are so courageous. You may be thinking you know the secret of killing the driver. According to the public, you are the murderer, not only for now but forever.

Ramadasu: You are a 'guardian' before the public (utters sarcastically). I consider ethics as more important than life. I do not have the selfishness and cupidity to benefit myself at the cost of public. I do promise that I would never reveal the fact that you are the real murderer, but would expose all the recent atrocities of you, for sure. You will have to answer to the public in person for all the misdeeds you have committed.

Dharma Rao: Be careful Ramadasu. You are playing with fire.

Ramadasu: No problem. You may possess Muscle, Money and Power, but Justice and *Dharma* are on my side. I am ready to face the sufferings.

Dharma Rao leaves from there with anger. Hearing the sounds of argument, Seethamma, the wife of Ramadasu, goes to him and suggests not to widen differences with powerful people. He replies there will be differences with only powerful people, but not with ordinary people.

Dharma Rao rushes to Prabhakar's hospital. He asks Prabhakar to cut off friendship with Ramadasu. Prabhakar asks, "Why?" He answers, "Because he is our enemy".

Prabhakar: ‘Our’ means?

Dharma Rao: Our family.

Prabhakar: What harm has he done to our family?

Dharma Rao: I, as the head of the family, know what he has done. You being young, do not know (representing patriarchy).

Prabhakar: I would like to know. Why don’t you tell me?

Dharma Rao: That is unnecessary for you. I am the one to decide, who our enemy is and who our friend is.

Prabhakar: So, I have no right to know the facts.

Dharma Rao: Should I consult you for everything that I am doing?

Prabhakar: I am not insisting for it. However, I am not responsible for the things you have done on your own (negotiating with the traditional family structure but not negating it).

Dharma Rao: Do you mean you have separated from me? All that I am earning is for you. Do you think I will take all the earnings with myself along, when I am dead?

Prabhakar: Had you had that sense, you would not have committed all these atrocities.

Dharma Rao: All that I have done is bitter to you, right? I earned property, got you educated and brought fame and prestige to the family. Now, you give me lectures.

Prabhakar: Yes. Your understanding is incomplete. You do not bother about others. What all you need is Power, Prestige and Status. You would resort to any sort of atrocity and take away many a number of lives. You are not humanistic. You have no affection for your wife,

sister, brother or children. You need only money, money and money. For this, you have spoilt your sister's life by getting her married to an old man (due to which she is now a young widow). You have branded your own brother as crazy fellow roaming in the streets, further by branding him as 'mentally retarded'. Above all, you want me to share all the crimes you have committed.

Dharma Rao: Shut up (shouts with anger).

Prabhakar: There is no use of 'shouting'. There will be no relation between you and me from today. I want neither your property nor a share in your sins (crimes).

Thus, Prabhakar breaches the relation with his father. With this, Dharma Rao resorts to a different element of domination. Since, he could not succeed in withdrawing Ramadasu from exposing the facts; he now wants to get him killed. He entrusts the job to Nagoji.

Ramadasu is busy in printing the news. The machine breaks down. He wants to go to the city immediately to get it repaired, as the printing of the newspaper should not be delayed. His wife Seethamma expresses concern that three women (Seethamma, Padma and Santa) will have to sleep all alone at home, if Ramadasu leaves for that night. Her fear is that somebody may attack. Ramadasu sends a letter to Prabhakar to sleep at his home, if possible, as there are only women at home. Prabhakar sleeps there. The contract killers stab Prabhakar thinking he is Ramadasu. During the attack, one of them finds out that it is the son of the Chairman. They run away and Prabhakar is hospitalized.

Prabhakar is operated and declared as safe by the doctor. Doctor gives Dharma Rao the letter found in Prabhakar's pocket. As already mentioned, Ramadasu, wrote it, requesting Prabahakar to sleep at his home. The quartet lodges a complaint with the police, alleging that

Ramadasu had plotted to get the son of the Chairman beaten and they produce the letter as evidence. The police arrest Ramadasu and produce him in court.

The quartet turns false witnesses. They claim that Ramadasu developed hatred against Dharma Rao's family, as he was not allowed to take over the position of secretary of the orphanage after imprisonment. They claim that they did not allow him as he had already been defamed, due to the killing of a driver and having an illicit affair with Santa at the orphanage. The court decides that the hearings would happen then on, as there is sufficient *prima facie* evidence.

Ramadasu is in judicial custody. The quartet along with Pentaiah again start off with digging in the temple. Sidhanthi is over enthusiastic, as Ramadasu has been put in jail. He declares that even the God, *Adikesava Swamy* cannot get Ramadasu released. Simultaneously Ramadasu in jail is also shown in montage. They go on digging. Sankaram, who had been tied and hidden escapes. He alarms the public that there are thieves in the temple. By the time people reach, the roof above the digging place falls on the five diggers. The people inform the police.

The three 'guardians' along with the servant are found dead, while Dharma Rao is seriously injured. He gives a death note to the police and public that Ramadasu is innocent. He admits that, it was, he who had killed the driver. He also reveals that he tried to kill Ramadasu, but his son had been injured. Ramadasu is brought to Dharma Rao, as his last wish was to ask pardon from Ramadasu, he further requests to arrange the marriage of Padma and Prabhakar. He succumbs to injuries. Padma and Prabhakar get married in the temple. Sankaraiah becomes a sannyasis and leaves for pilgrimage. He justifies his pilgrimage that his duty of performing "*Dusta Sikshana Sishta Rakshana*" is finished. The movie ends with a tune of "*Nandamaya Gurada Nandamaya…*".

Representing Widowhood

K. V. Reddy said to have asked D. V. Narasaraju to write as many scenes as he feels, as it was the first picture for Narasaraju. He wrote 120 scenes for *Peddamanushulu* (1954) out of which 60 scenes were finalized after editing.[196] The storywriter, D. V. Narasaraju in his autobiography mentions that the nature of contemporary politicians had changed after independence. They conveyed, "Do as I say! But don't do as I do!"[197]

The movie, while contextualizing post-independent India exposes the hollowness of the modern Indian society and its newly adopted functioning of modern political-economy. Due to the impact of colonialism, the socio-political and economic relations in the society had undergone a radical change by the time India attained its independence. The ruling classes adopted a new approach of exploitation and manipulation. The synergy of various elite classes commanded the economy, polity and society.

Kosaraju hails from Appikatla village of Bapatla (Taluka) in Guntur district. He used to write songs for election campaigns.[198] He wrote three songs in a span of three to four days.[199]the song, "*Siva Siva Murthivi Gananadha*" was aimed at the Congress Party ministers, who lost the election to Communists in 1952. Some of the lines in the song, like "*Okkasari Manthri Cheyyi Gananadha, Nuvvu Odakunte Ottu Pettu Gananadha*" were deleted, when D. V. Narasaraju saw the movie in and around 2003, on Doordarshan, the official channel of Government of India.[200]The movie not only interrogated the modern practice of political and economic exploitation after independence, but also reflected cultural ideology of the contemporary society, which was highly discriminative and atrocious to

[196]D. V. Narasaraju., *Adrustavanthuni Atmakatha*, Hyderabad: Creative Links Publications, 2006. P. 182.
[197]*Ibid*. P.26.
[198]*Ibid*. P.234.
[199]*Ibid*. P.236.
[200]*Ibid.*

women. With the imposition of a hegemonic ideology, the traditional Andhra society kept women within the household and not letting them into the public sphere. The aspect of enforced widowhood was still popular. The issue of Widow Remarriage activity, in comparison to the period of Veeresalingam, by 1940s had slowly disappeared. [201] The women's issues, in a whole, were well depicted in the movie.

The aspects, child marriage, enforced widowhood and other patriarchal values of the contemporary society are represented in the movie. The aspect of child marriage is found to be projected as related to not just culture, but also to economy. Dharma Rao's brother and son at different occasions expose the cruel intentions of Dharma Rao in marrying of his sister (when she was still a child) to an old man only for money. Since the old man soon dies, the sister becomes a young widow. As a young woman, she will have desires and would like to fulfill her biological needs. She starts an illicit relationship with the driver of Dharma Rao. Dharma Rao finds this and murders the driver. From here on, we may find differences erupting between Dharma Rao and Ramadasu, which eventually leads to the exposure of Dharma Rao's actual identity. The culture of marrying off young women to old men is well represented.

Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu observes in his autobiography that the idea of widow remarriage was slowly disappearing during the phase – when India was about to attain its independence. He also appeals to the heads of families to consider widow remarriages in similar to normal marriages. He also appealed to the educated young men to marry young widows.[202]In the movie, we find no reflection of the aspect of widow remarriage. It is to be noted that the movie even does not try to mention an idea of widow marriage, despite its periodization. The aspect of enforced widowhood was the main reason for all the problems in

[201]Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu, *Sweeyacharitramu*, p. 360.
[202]*Ibid*.

Dharma Rao's family. Even when the driver is killed, Dharma Rao does not think of getting his sister remarried. Furthermore, he deliberately appoints an old man as the driver.

Santha is also a young widow and an orphan who is working in the orphanage. The culture was so effective that she being a young widow, she does not even think of remarriage. Her helpless condition is taken as an advantage, to subject her to sexual harassment by Seshavatharam and Nagoji, who are considered to be the 'guardians' in town.

The movie is a reflection of contemporary society's culture, ideology, economy and polity. It represents the way in which women were suppressed, both in the private and public spheres. Dharma Rao, when his wife makes a request, – if she can attend the cultural programme at the orphanage – scolds her not to think of involving beyond home. The contemporary cinema journal *Kinema* reviews the movie and gives a credit of success to both the writer and director of the movie. It says, "Dialogues written by D. V. Narasaraju and direction made by K. V. Reddy brought success to the movie".[203]

Mangalyabalam **(1959)[204]**

Paparao, being a patriot, resigned to his 'police superintendent' position in favour of freedom struggle. He is living in a town near by his native village along with his wife Kantham, mother Parvathamma, his son Suryam (10) and daughter Saroja (7). His sister Seethamma, who is married to Garikapati Ramaiah against the will of the family, is residing in the native village, where Paparao owns lands. Sanyasi Rao is Paparao's clerk who supervises his lands in the village. Paparao's family has cut all the communication with

[203] *Kinema*, April, 1954, p. 32.

[204] The screen adaptation was done by Atreya, Subbarao and Madusudana Rao based on the Bengali novel *Agnipareeksha* by Asapurnadevi.The movie was directed by Adurthi Subba Rao; produced by D. Madhusudana Rao; music by M. Venu; starred by Savitri, Nageswara Rao, Rajasulochana, Relangi, Suryakantham, S. V. Ranga Rao, Kannamba, etc.

Seetha's family, but only Parvathamma is in communication and that too she makes visits to Seetha, now and then. Seethamma and Ramaiah have a son called Chandram (10). His full name is Chandra Sekhar.

Saroja happily informs her grandmother, Parvathamma that she has passed the exam with a first division. Parvathamma, pleased with Saroja's performance praises her, "fortune is her sibling". Paparao comes there and responds to his mother.

Paparao: Amma! Female's fortunes cannot be foreseen. Her fortunes cannot be visible until marriage.

Kantham: I would get my daughter married to some I.C.S. officer.

Paparao: Would this generation child listen to the parents with regard to the affair of marriage? They usually fall in love and marry.

Sanyasi Rao happens to inform Paparao's family that Seetha has been suffering from heart problem and her family is not in a position to provide her proper medication. Paparao sends his mother, Parvathamma with some money to Seethamma though disliked by Kantham. Parvathamma takes Suryam and Saroja along with her to Seethamma's home. Seethammma expresses her wish to Parvathamma that both their families would be united by establishing a new relationship by getting her son Chandram and her brother's daughter Saroja married. She also expresses her wish to see the marriage.

Paparao receives a telegram to reach the village to visit his sister, Seethamma due to her health condition being been critical. Meanwhile, as the condition is deteriorating, Parvathamma, to fulfil the final wish of her daughter, Seethamma gets the children, Saroja and Chandram married according to Hindu marriage. Thus, 'child marriage' happens and Paparao reaches only after the marriage is over. Realizing the fact, he resents his mother

Parvathamma, his sister Seethamma and takes away his son Suryam and daughter Saroja. By watching, Seethamma dies.

Kanthammma, coming to know about the marriage, beats the innocent child, Saroja and throws away the marriage knot (*mangala sutram*). She declares that she would approach the court against the 'child marriage'. The court, under the Child Marriage Restraints Act 1929, Section VI, fines Garikipati Ramaiah, the father of Chandram, Rs. 2000, failing which he would yield one-month imprisonment and also under Section V of the same Act, fines, Sistla Venkata Subrahmanya Sastri, the priest, Rs. 100, failing which would yield one week imprisonment.

When Parvathamma and Ramaiah are saddened thinking how to arrange the money (Rs. 2000 + Rs. 100), Sanyasi Rao Panthulu suggests Parvathamma to go to her son Paparao in the town and get the money from him. She refuses to go, as she cannot show her face to Paparao and her daughter-in-law Kantham. Sanyasi Rao advices her to file a petition in the court for a survival grant (*bharanam*) from Paparao. She rejects the idea, as her conscience does not accept to go against her son.

Sanyasi Rao himself goes to Paparao and comes back with a good news that Paparao has granted ten acres of his land in the village for Parvathamma for survival, but only till she is alive.

Chandram completes primary education and Parvathamma decides to send him to the town for further studies. Now, Suryam is a young man studying in a college in the town where Paparao's family lives. As the summer vacation starts for Chandram, his friend Kailasam, in a casual discussion with all the friends, tells that his father is financing his education for obtaining dowry. He proposes that all of them should go for a countrywide trip. However, Chandram says that he must go to visit his home, especially to visit his

grandmother, Parvathamma. Hence, the trip is postponed. Chandram visits home and shares love with Parvathamma.

Sanyasi Rao and Ramaiah are in search of a match for Chandram. Parvathamma opposes any such search and reminds Chandram, who has a little memory of the incident, that he was married when he was a child and therefore Saroja is his wife forever, though the marriage was dissolved by the court. She also asks him to get his wife back so that his mother's soul would rest in peace. She informs him that the family of Paparao, father of Saroja, lives in the same town where Chandram studies. He is now determined to work on his task.

Chandram finds the address and sees Paparao, Kantham and Saroja starting to Tirupati, a Hindu pilgrimage centre. Saroja's brother, Suryam, who is now a physician, is married to Santha. The couple stay back at home.

As already discussed, Kailasam, Chandram and friends are preparing for a trip. Kailasam proposes to start the trip from Chennapatnam. Chandram makes a slight change and convinces them to visit Tirupati first.

Chandram gets himself introduced to Saroja as Sekhar with the pretext of admiring her live song in Tirupati. Chandram sketches a plan in which he and his friends play a live drama in which his friends would attack Saroja and he would fight them off to save her. They successfully complete the project. Saroja is impressed with Chandram.

Tirumala (Tirupati hill) is a famous spot for marriage ceremonies. Kailasam saves a young bride from committing suicide and comes to know from her that she was going to be married off to a sixty-year-old man, by her maternal uncle to get rid of her burden as she is an

orphan. Kailasam, assuring her protection and a compatible bridegroom, takes her to his hometown, which is also the hometown of Paparao.

Saroja, coming to visit Chandram's residing place (still in Tirupati), finds that he is listening to her song in a tape recorder. She enters the room, switches off the tape recorder and sings the song. Chandram, after some time, finds her presence. When he goes inside to get something, Saroja leaves a letter on the table and leaves. Finding the letter left by Saroja, Chandram reads it out:

"Dear Chandram, I came to inform you that I am leaving today itself, with my family for home. Since I could not tell you directly, I am leaving this letter. Please do not misunderstand me. As May 7th is my birthday, you must attend it without fail. I will be waiting for you."

Kailasam takes the saved bride to the doctor Suryam, Saroja's brother. Saroja recognises her as her classmate Meenakshi and keeps her at home itself.

Kailasam and Sekhar (Chandram) go to attend Saroja's birthday celebrations. Paparao introduces Kailasam to Kantham that he is the would-be son-in-law and is the son of Vilasam Vykuntam. After the celebrations, Paparao along with his wife Kantham leave for the play "*Kurukshetra*". Suryam, the physician, leaves on an urgent call to attend a medical case. Kailasam and Meenakshi leave to the garden. Sekhar and Saroja sitting in the hall start a conversation. When Sekhar asks Saroja what is her opinion on marriage, she answers, "mind is inconsistent. Joining and separating may happen for every other moment. Hence, I conceive the marriage knot (*mangala sutra*) alone as sacred".

Sekhar seems to agree with her. Saroja asks him if he is married. Sekhar unable to answer her switches over to another topic. Sekhar and Saroja go to the roof of the building to enjoy the pleasant moonlight, where Sekhar asks Saroja, if he can share with her about an

incident that occurred during his childhood. She replies that, in such a pleasant moonlight, which is meant to be enjoyed, she is not interested to hear, if it is a tragedy. He does not reveal the truth.

Kailasam and Meena in the Garden and Sekhar and Saroja on the roof of the building, sing a duet. Seeing Saroja and Chandram on the roof, the house worker informs Paparao and Kantham, who are just entering the home. By the time, they come to the roof to check. Kailasam manages to replace Sekhar. Kantham is pleased and Paparao thinks that it is time to get Kailasam and Saroja married.

Suryam and Santha alarm Saroja to be in her limits with regard to Sekhar. Saroja replies that, she knows her limits, and informs them that she loves Sekhar and would marry him. Suryam reveals to Saroja that she was married to her cousin, Chandram. She is shocked. He tries to fill confidence in her by saying: "sister, do not be saddened. I can understand your pain and agitation. This is a tough time (*agni pareeksha*) for you. Have faith that you still can stand on. (Saroja takes the *mangala sutra*) You are a matured woman, who knows what is right and what is wrong. You need not worry. This *Mangalyabalam* itself would give you 'will power'."

Suryam and Santha leave from there on their works. Saroja starts recalling the marriage memories (with a little memory) on one hand and the sweetest memories with Sekhar on the other hand (the scene was excellently presented). She faces intra-conflict. She seems to have taken the side of *mangala sutra* from the intra-conflict, touches it to her eyes as a respect and ties it to her neck. She starts avoiding Suryam, which is a pain for her. She bears that pain for *mangala sutra*. Unable to bear the separation both of them sing a 'tragedy' song separately.

Hearing from Sanyasi Rao, about the ill health of Parvathamma, Paparao wants to bring her home. Kantham opposes her entry into the home, especially just during the marriage process of Saroja with Kailasam. She expresses her concern that if Parvathamma comes home, she would not let Saroja's another marriage. She suggests that Paparao can rather spend as much money as required for Parvathamma's health. Paparao is unable to take any decision. Their son Suryam declares that he would treat Parvathamma, his grandmother, in the hospital, if not at home. When he started to bring her, Paparao asks him to bring her home rather than to the hospital to escape a bad image of a merciless son.

Parvathamma is back at home. She is being looked after by Suryam, Saroja and Santha. Parvathamma comes to know from Saroja that Saroja came to know about her marriage and wants to reunite with her husband. Parvathamma not only blesses her but also informs her that Saroja's husband Chandram is studying in the same town in which they are residing in.

Paparao and Kantham, knowing that Sekhar has been manipulating Saroja, trap him and in the meantime, Sekhar arrives. Paparao misfires at him. Sekhar escapes and reveals to him that he is Chandram, nephew and son-in-law of Paparao. Paparao and Kantham humiliate him and ask him to leave. Sekhar is reluctant. Paparao triggers the gun, but it misfires. Sekhar leaves. Paparao asks the watchman, not to allow Sekhar inside ever. Hearing the sound, Parvathamma comes out and asks Paparao about the incident happening. He says that it was one of Saroja's classmates who comes home, now and then. He is saying he is in love with Saroja. She says that this generation is of such a kind that it misuses the opportunity, if allowed inside the house. She also suggests, "You should have slapped him on both the sides". Paparao says, he actually fired a shot but it has missed the target, otherwise he would have been dead by this time. Paparao leaves with Kanthamma.

Kanthamma mentions to Paparao that it was not done by Chandram himself but he is being directed by the old woman (Parvathamma). She says, "Listen to my word. Confirm the match with Vaikuntam's family (Kailasam's father) as soon as possible. Otherwise we cannot hold back our own girl". Paparao assures her that he himself has decided to fix a date of the marriage.

Vaikuntam, father of Kailasam, forces his son to accept to marry Saroja. He tells him that she has beauty, education and property. Still Kailasam rejects. Vaikuntam threatens him that he would write a 'will' in favour of *Sri Venkateswara Swamy*, if he does not marry her. Sekharam comes and Kailasam leaves.

Vaikuntam tells Sekhar that he has spent thousands of rupees on Kailasam's education expecting Kailasam's obedience and dowry. He asks Sekhar, why Kailasam is not ready to marry Paparao's daughter, Saroja. Vaikuntam forces Sekhar to convince Kailasam for the marriage by evening.

Kailasam is admitted to the hospital of Suryam with the cause; stomach pain. Thinking Saroja does not know the truth, Sekhar sends a letter to Saroja through Meena. He also asks Meena to tell Saroja to reply. The summary in the letter is that they were married during childhood and that bondage cannot be broken by anyone. Though their parents, for their differences, broke it through court, they are husband and wife forever 'morally'.

Meena gives the letter to Saroja in front of her grandmother, Parvathamma. Despite Parvathamma asking to read it, Saroja tears it down and says, she cannot love any other person, when she is already dedicated to one man. She cries in the lap of Parvathamma and says:

Saroja: Grandmother! Can I stand morally high and avoid this hell '*paapa koopam*'?

Parvathamma: You would stand. You have that strength. The land you are born in is such a one. It is the motherland of the greatest women like, Seetha and Savithri. Do walk in their footsteps. No “calamity” will reach you.

Sekhar meets Kailasam in the hospital and accepts Kailasam’s request to perform their marriage with Meena. Meena, as she is the nurse, comes there and informs Sekhar that his letter was torn down by Saroja without reading.

Sekhar goes to Saroja at midnight and tries to convince her. She misunderstands him as Sekhar. Parvathamma hearing some disturbance in Saroja’s room comes to beat Sekhar and finds him as Chandram. She tells Saroja the truth and takes an ‘oath’ from both of them.

Chandram: Ammamma… there is no great god than you to us. We are promising on your feet.

Parvathamma blesses both of them and leaves for her room. Saroja, requests Chandram to forgive her by touching his feet. She is now happy that at last she reached the feet of Chandram.

Sanyasi Rao informs Paparao and Kantham that Vaikuntam is ready for marriage. The ceremony can be arranged in a day or two. He tells them that Vaikuntam asked him to inform them that since, Dowry Prohibition Act is in force, he better would take the dowry secretly and before the marriage commences. The movie was produced in 1959. In addition, the Andhra Pradesh Dowry Act had been passed in 1958, just one year before the movie was made. The Dowry Prohibition Act was passed by the Government of India in 1961.

Hearing this, Parvathamma argues that it is against ‘Dharma’ to perform another marriage to a married woman when her husband is alive. She reminds Paparao, how the marriage had happened, how he has breached it in the name of – no property, no education to

the boy. Now, he has completed college education and she would give him the 10 acres of land.

Paparao says that as he has already given the word, this marriage must happen at any cost. Saroja, coming into the hall says that she would not accept this marriage. Kantham blames Parvathamma that she brainwashed Saroja. Parvathamma, saddened, sets out. Saroja says she also would go to village with Parvathamma. Parvathamma asks Saroja not go with her because it would yield disrespect to Saroja herself. She also tells her that nobody can perform another marriage to her against her will and asks her to be brave and patient. Paparao requests his mother not to leave at this point when a grand event is going to take place at home (Saroja's betrothal). However, she leaves.

On the proposal of Kantham, Paparao who also gets angry with his mother asks Sanyasi Panthulu to sell off the 10 acres of land given for the survival of Parvathamma.

Kailasam in the hospital proposes to Meena for marriage as early as possible. Doctor Suryam reaches there. He misunderstands him that he is cheating two girls: both Meena and Saroja. Parvathamma also reaches there and scolds Kailasam for accepting marriage with Saroja who is already married. She does not know that Kailasam is helping Saroja and Chandram. Meanwhile, Chandram also reaches there. Parvathamma reveals that Chandram is Saroja's cousin and Saroja's husband too. Kailasam, Chandram, Suryam, Meena plan a strategy and assure Parvathamma that Chandram along with Saroja would reach the village. Parvathamma, first, goes to the village.

Vaikuntam, his wife and his son Kailasam go to Paparao's house for arranging the marriage. Kailasam to push the Paparao's family into moral crisis asks for a clarification. He asks, if the news that Saroja was married is correct. Kantham admits it was right but it had happened, when the Saroja was an innocent child. In addition, the marriage was dissolved.

While this discussion was happening, Saroja, disguising as Meena, walks out – in front of them and elopes with Chandram. Meena in disguise of Saroja comes and sits for introduction. After noticing that it is Meena, all are shocked. Vaikuntam blames Paparao's family for cheating. Suryam criticizes Vaikuntam for accepting to get his son Kailasam married, just for dowry to a woman who has already been married. He tells that Kailasam is in love with Meena and would marry her.

Vaikuntam, after scolding his son Kailasam for not revealing his love story in prior, accepts Meena as his daughter-in-law. Papa Rao and Kantham finding Saroja eloping, blames Suryam.

Papa Rao: You all are playing this drama, where did Saroja go?

Suryam: Where would a married girl go to, father? (he means that she has gone to her in-law's home)

Meanwhile, the house servant comes in hastily and informs Paparao that Saroja is going away with Sekhar in a car. Paparao with his gun tries to chase Sekhar car and starts shooting. However, Paparao's car's tyre goes flat.

On the information that *Shaaukar* Sidhayya's men are tilling Parvathamma's land, her son-in-law and father of Chandram, Ramayya leaves for the land along with his men despite Parvathamma stopping him. Chandram and Saroja reach the village and go to the house. Parvathamma gives warm welcome to them. Now, Saroja is for the first time at her in-laws' home.

Ramayya questions Sidhayya for entering his land. Sidhayya tells him that he bought the land by paying a huge amount. Physical fight erupts between the two parties.

Chandram reaches the field, stops the fight and initiates dialogue. Sanyasi Rao stops the car of Paparao and gets him to the field where he finds Chandram. Paparao asks Chandram "where is Saroja".

Papa Rao: Leave hopes on life.

Chandram: Mavayya, I am not such a coward who leaves his wife to save his life.

Papa Rao: Shut up. I would have killed you that day itself. Today it is inevitable. I am asking you finally. (Final warning) Would you surrender Saroja to me or not?

Chandram: It would not happen as long as I am alive.

Papa Rao: (He points the gun at Chandram

Saroja: (Running) Nanna, Nanna ... (She stands in front of Chandram)

Papa Rao: Saroja…

Saroja: Shoot me father. This is not a difficult job for those who want to spoil the life of a daughter and get her an unwilling marriage. It is not that sad to those who want to get their daughters' marriage performed again, while her husband is still alive. Shoot. Death is better than that of marriage. Uu … carry on.

Papa Rao: He is not your husband.

Saroja: He is my husband.

Papa Rao: The relationship was breached long back.

Saroja: Who are you to break the sacred bondage?

Papa Rao: Saroja…would you move aside or not? (Pointing at them).

Saroja: I will not move. Shoot if you can

Chandram: (Moving to the side of Saroja from her behind) Shoot us. Let your adamant and revenge be satisfied with our blood. Unite us, with at least death, if not with "*Maangalya* Bondage". We would become cohabitates at least in death, if not in life. Shoot. Shoot mavayya … shoot.

When Paparao opens fire, Parvathamma keeps her hand against the barrel and her hand is injured. Chandram, Paparao, Saroja, Ramayya all hold her.

Parvathamma: Do not be saddened my son (to Paparao).

Papa Rao: No mother, do not call me 'son'. I do not deserve to be called your son (regretting).

Parvathamma: Do not say so, my son. Take it as whatever happened has happened for good.

Papa Rao: Amma….

Parvathamma: My son. Why is there so much hatred between these two families? You are rich. He (Ramaiah) is poor. That is the only difference, isn't it? Should their lives (Saroja and Chandram) be scapegoats for these small differences? Should such bloodshed happen? We can give properties to the have knots. Can we give life to those who loose lives? Would you fulfil my wish? Bless this couple. The hatred between these two families should end today. Make a promise and I am for it, irrespective of whether, I am alive or dead. This is what my first and last wish is. Join both their hands by your own hands (she joins hands – all the three hands. Put '*Tilak*' on their forehead with this blood. Put "*Pelli Parani*". Listen to me my son.

All of them appear in Paparao's home. Kantham regrets for her mistakes. She apologizes to her mother-in-law Parvathamma who forgives and blesses her. The whole family is united.

Chandram: Saroja…does marriage mean tying '*mangalyam*'. Or, the merging of hearts?

Saroja: Deceiving people in disguise.

The movie has a happy conclusion.

The aspect of Child marriage and its sanctity

The movie acknowledges the story to a Bengali novel titled: *Agni Pareeksha*. It presents the sanctity of *Mangala Sutra* and the institution of marriage from a positive angle. The sanctity of the Hindu marriage is depicted beyond modern legislations and courts. The movie's representation does not limit with transmitting the traditional value system but engages with it and proceeds collectively.

The movie speaks out that there is a powerful element in the Hindu traditional value system that is beyond the aspects of social reform and modern colonial legality (Child Marriage Restraint Act). The director, Adurthi Subba Rao is considered to be a craftsman in portraying family relations and bondages. In this movie, he negotiates the traditional value system and family relations with the modern law. The act of child marriage is respected and the first marriage is considered to be the final and a sacred one. It does not in anyway rule out the modern ideas and law.

Since his childhood, Dukkipati Madhusudana Rao is found to have been influenced by the aspect, social reform. He thought that the art should not be just for art sake, but it should have a social message. To know about Dukkipati's critical thinking and reformist ideology, we must read about his childhood incidents. Dukkipati Madhusudana Rao, on a

visit to a play during his early days, suggested the theatre group to opt for social themes. The theatre group impressed with his idea entrusted the job to him. He assisted in writing the play, *Asaajyothi*, composed by Koneru Kutumba Rao and another play, *Satyanveshana*, composed Surapaneni Sobhana Rao. He organized both the plays. *Satyanveshana* depicted themes like, widow remarriage, eradication of caste and religious narrow mindedness. These two plays portraying progressive ideology attracted a huge audience during their performances all over the Telugu country between 1941 and 1943. As the play kindled young minds to rebel against the traditional social structures, the government went to the extent of imposing a ban on them. [205] With such background, Dukkipati preferred all his movies to have social themes, instead of mythological and folklores. Dukkipati, being a social reform supporter and progressive ideologue, respected the sanctity of marriage, even if it was a 'child marriage'. We can perceive that some producers of this time were not in for negation of the sanctity of Hindu marriage, be it child marriage or any marriage that is performed through the act of tying the knot (*Tali or Mangalasutra*). They did not even seem to be going against the modern law that restrained both child marriage and dowry. They wanted both tradition and modernity going, hand in hand.

The movie represents the contradiction between colonial modernity and the traditional value system. On one hand, it enlightens the people that child marriage would lead to punishment and on the other advocates the sanctity of Hindu marriage. The cause of early society's backwardness was conceived to be illiteracy. However, the movie exposes the urban educated man and woman, could not negate the traditional value system but negotiate with it.

The issue of marriage between children was a common practice in colonial Andhra and may be found even in the post-colonial Andhra. The ideologues, who wrote their

[205] Katragadda Murari, *Telugu Chalana Chitra Nirmathala Charitra, 1931-2005*, Hyderabad: Telugu Film Producer's Council, p. 107.

autobiographies during the colonial period, sketched the fact that they were married when they were just children. Ayyadevara Kaleswararao writes that he was married in 1894 to a child girl when he was also a child.[206] Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu writes that his younger sister, who was just three years in age was married to a boy who was eighteen.[207]

An old generation woman, Parvathamma, gets Chandram (10) and Saroja (7) married. Her thinking was traditional. Her son Paparao and daughter-in-law Kantham, later, oppose the marriage and approach the court, a colonial modernist institution. The court declares the marriage illegal by judging it as a child marriage. The second generation, Chandram and Saroja, are educated; however, see the marriage to be sanctified. Not only Chandram and Saroja, but also Suryam, Saroja's brother, who is a medical practitioner, supports and respects the institution of marriage according to the Hindu norms.

Saroja, who has been in love with Sekhar (Chandram) suddenly, disengages with him as soon as she comes to know that she was married at the age of seven. Her brother remembers it. After seeing, Saroja moving intimately with Sekhar, he alerts her that she was married to Chandram. When she is shocked, he consoles her and fills confidence in her.

"Sister, do not be saddened. I can understand your pain and agitation. This is a tough time (*agni pareeksha*) for you. Have faith that you still can stand on. (Saroja takes the *mangala sutra*) You are a matured woman and are familiar with what is right and what is wrong. You need not worry. This *mangalyabalam* itself would give you 'will power'."

She bears the pain to separate herself from her beloved. Despite pain and suffering, she honours the marriage sanctity. She even opposes her parents and leaves with her childhood husband, Chandram. The family is separated into two groups. One is in favour of

[206]Ayyadevara Kaleswararao, *Navyandhramu: Naa Jeevithakatha*, Hyderabad: Telugu Samithi, 2006. p. 21.
[207]Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu, *Sweeyacharitramu*, pp. 17-18.

the childhood marriage and the other against it. Parvathamma, Suryam and Saroja are in favour, whereas Saroja's parents are against it.

The movie proceeds negotiating between tradition and modernity. It represents the then contemporary social reality. One may pose a question, "how come a land with rich legacy of social reform movement could accept the child marriage?"

The reformist ideology swept across the Telugu districts of Madras Presidency. Woman and untouchability were the objects of Reform.[208] As already mentioned in the previous chapters, the issues of Reform were child marriage, bride price, enforced widowhood, widow remarriage and *devadasi* system. The Reform movement could not bring change in Toto.

Representation of contemporary social issues

It is a known fact that the Indian cinema adopted Puranas and Epic stories in the beginning as the producers knew that the familiar stories would reach out to the audience faster. Therefore, the mythological narratives had major share. Later, with the same formula, the folk narratives were made into movies. The social life and social issues are inseparable elements in the society. The socials made their entry at the very beginning of the Talkies. The issues of women and untouchability were dealt in the early Telugu Cinema and the representation continued into the post-independent Telugu cinema. The post-independence Telugu cinema adopted these issues and proposed solutions at times.

Most of the autobiographies are the best source of information about child marriages in Andhra. D. V. Narasaraju as a minor was married to his cross cousin, daughter of his maternal uncle, as his maternal uncle was expecting his death. The tradition of the period was

[208]Murali, Atlury. "Perspectives on Women's liberation: Andhra in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries", *Studies in History, 3, 1 n. s. (1987)* p. 97.

such that, elders in families used to decide the matches soon after babies were born.[209] Veeresalingam at the age of thirteen was married and his wife was nine years old.[210]

Though legislations came into force before and after independence, the evil practices in traditional value system were not completely evacuated. Instead, the traditional values and the colonial modernity went hand in hand. Child marriages did not stop in the early decades of independence. It was a social reality. The title of the movie, *Mangalyabalam* itself means "the power of marriage knot (*Thali*)".[211] Once any man ties it around the neck of any woman, it was considered as a legal marriage according to Hindu tradition. We need to recall Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu in this context. He being a social reformer had urged the women of India to study English but not to desert Indian tradition and culture.[212] Saroja in the movie, being an urban educated young woman, leans to approve the child marriage. She has been subjected to, without her knowledge and is from the same psychological framework. Moreover, her brother and grandmother, in different instances remind her of the greatness of Indian culture and tradition. Her grandmother reminds her of the great Indian women, viz., *Seeta, Savitri,* and *Anasuya.* The same happens with the educated man, Chadram.

He is also unable to go against the tradition. He had forgotten about his marriage until his grandmother reminds him. He decides to uphold the values of Hindu tradition and culture. He determines to get back his wife, but is afraid to reveal the incident. He makes plans to see and take care of her. He manages her to love him. Subsequently, he tries to reveal her that he and she had been married. Nevertheless, Saroja does not give him chance. Once Saroja comes to know about her child marriage, she stops communicating and engaging with Chandram.

[209]D. V. Narasaraju. *Adrustavanthuni Atmakatha*, p. 79.
[210] Kandukuri Veeresalingamu. *Sweeyacharitramu.* p. 25.
[211]*Thali* is a sacred thread with turmeric tied by the groom around the neck of the bride, which legalizes the marriage. It is called *Mangalyam* (a Sanskrit term).
[212]Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu. *Sweeyacharitramu.* pp. 365-366.

He tries his best to meet her, but in vain. Paparao and Kanthamma warn him, not to engage with their daughter. When he comes to their house, he reveals that he is their nephew and son-in-law. When they reply that they have breached the relationship, he says nobody can break that bond. Furthermore, he says, **"**You cannot separate me from Saroja even by shooting me dead. We are a married couple, irrespective of whether you endorse it or not. This is a 'sacred relationship'. This bondage cannot be broken by anybody**"**.

The Hindu tradition shoves Saroja, though educated, to determine and accept her marriage which has had happened without her consent or her consciousness during her childhood. This decision is even against her conscious love for Sekhar. Of course, she does not know that it is Sekhar, who has married her in childhood. She is afraid that she may go against the tradition in which she has been brought up. She expresses her pain to her grandmother, Parvathamma who actually performed the marriage. The Hindu tradition propagates that, if the laid down social norms and traditional values were not followed, the violator would fall in hell. She is afraid, if she can really become one with her husband. The grandmother boosts her morale. She says she would succeed in upholding the traditional value system, if she walks in the footsteps of the ideal women, viz., Seetha, Savitri and Anasuya.

Saroja: Grandmother! Can I stand morally high and avoid this hell '*paapa koopam*'?

Parvathamma: You would stand. You have that strength. The land you are born in is such a sacred one. It is the motherland of the greatest ideal women, viz., Seetha and Savithri. Do walk in their footsteps. No "calamity" can stop you.

The patriarchy operates within the framework of 'Master and Servant'. The patriarchal structure is a driving force and the operator of the Indian Hindu family system. The senior male is the head of the family. Hence, the father is the head. If the father has

passed away, the eldest son would become the head. The woman is always a subordinate figure to the husband and the other in-laws. The woman is a devoted wife in the family. She respects the marriage knot (*Thali*) and she is the devotee of her husband and is obedient.

Saroja touches the marriage knot (*Thali*) to her eyes given by Suryam. This may be said, indicates her respect not only to the marriage knot (*Thali*), but also to the Hindu values. She touches the feet of Chandram, as she comes to know that he is her husband.

The parents of Saroja are in the mood of fixing her marriage with Kailasam. Parvathamma opposes it. She believes in the Hindu 'Dharma'. She tries to educate them that they would attain sin, if they get Saroja married again.

The narratives of Sati Savitri are familiar to the Hindus. She was an ideal wife who fought against *Yama*, the God of death. She could bring back her deceased husband from the clutches of death. Her vigorous struggle is admired. She became a role model and has been projected as the ideal wife in the Hindu scriptures.

The Hindu society is not only patriarchal but also patrilocal. When Saroja manages to escape along with Chandram (Suryam) to her in-law's home, her enraged father Paparao, finds them in the fields and tries to shoot Suryam. Saroja stands in front of her husband and is ready to die, only to protect her husband. Her father asks her to move away, but she is reluctant.

Saroja: Shoot me father. This is not a difficult job for those who want to spoil the life of a daughter and get her an unwilling marriage. It is not that sad to those who want to get their daughters' marriage performed again, while her husband is still alive. Shoot. Death is better than that of marriage. Uu… carry on.

Papa Rao: He is not your husband.

Saroja: He is my husband.

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Saroja: Who are you to break the sacred bondage?

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Saroja: I will not move. Shoot if you can

Chandram: (Moving to the side of Saroja from her behind) Shoot us. Let your adamant and revenge be satisfied with our blood. Unite us, with at least death, if not with "*Maangalya* Bondage". We would become cohabitates at least in death, if not in life. Shoot. Shoot mavayya … shoot.

The movie instead of negating the traditional value system negotiates it with modern legality.

Thus, it may be observed that the Telugu cinema in the 1950s and 1960s carried an alternative ideology which included both reformism and revivalism. The issues that were taken up during the social reform period were well represented which sensitized the public. The aspect of child marriage was still prevalent, even after India becoming independent, despite various legal appraisals to prohibit it. The issues like bride price, enforced widowhood had not been completely eradicated in entirety. The institution of *devadasi* was still a problem. All the contemporary issues are found to be properly depicted in the movies of this period. The Telugu cinema as an entertaining medium tried to awaken the traditional society of Andhra by exposing the social evils hostile to women. The movie, *Kanysulkam* exposes child marriage, bride price, enforced widowhood, *devadasi* issue and the pseudo English educated intellectuals. It advocates widow remarriage. Further, the movie, *Mangalyabalam* exposes the issue of child marriage, but recognizes the sanctity of Hindu marriage. It ruled out the colonial legal system that prohibited child marriage. The movie,

Peddamanushulu exposes the incompleteness of the social reform in Andhra. It proved that the post-independent India still suffers from the social evil of enforced widowhood but did not advocate for widow marriage. The young widow in the movie aspires to fulfil her biological needs, which leads to an 'illicit relationship' which is considered to be against the traditional value system. It results in ruining the lives of the people around her. The Telugu cinema, as a whole, represented the social issues on one hand and on the other hand it attempted to restore traditional value system.

Chapter IV

4. Representation of Dowry in *Pelli Chesi Choodu, Atta Okinti Kodale* and *Varakatnam*

The present chapter analyzes the movies, *Pelli Chesi Choodu, Atta Okinti Kodale* and *Varakatnam*, which have not only reflected the modern issue of dowry, but also its ramifications. The chapter would first give a brief introduction of dowry in its modern form. It provides the synopsis of each movie followed by the analysis. We would watch the movie critically, if the issue of dowry is represented as it is. If it is true, what are the consequences of the issue of dowry? We would try to see the means of reformism with regard to the issue of dowry in the movies.

Dowry in its Modern Form

Varakatnam is a Telugu term synonymous to the English word 'dowry'. Dowry degraded the women. Disinheritance of daughters to the father's property was the crux of the problem.[213]

It was there during ancient period, medieval era and continued into colonial period too. It took strong form during the second half of the 20th century. During ancient period it was called *stridhana* which can be translated into 'bride's property'. But the bride had no right over it. The practice of exchanging dowry was prevalent in only upper class and upper castes and upward mobile castes. It was to maintain Hypergamy. During colonial period it took major shift with the pace of colonial modernity that brought capitalist form of economy. Economic differences emerged at high rates. The dowry was made related to the status of both the families and especially the bridegroom's family. Though in ancient period it was

[213] Madhu Kishwar. "Dowry Calculation's: Daughter's Rights in her Parental Family", *Manushi*, No. 78, (September-October-1993). p. 12.

supposed to be a gift for bride from her parental family, it became a demand in 20th century. *Manusrmiti* mentions that there was voluntary practice of gifting ornaments and other valuables to the groom's family.[214] The beginning of the 19th century saw the changes in dowry practice. It was the beginning of the modern economy in India under the colonial government which sunk the people in materialism and the voluntary practice of dowry was replace by demanding for it.[215] Colonial structure did not completely evade the pre-colonial social structure. The dowry took more rigorous form.

It was spread among all castes and hence was the major change in 20th century. Hypergamy has been the phenomena till date in all the castes. The harassment for dowry by the in-laws was common during that period. The growing concern of escalating dowry amounts led to the enactment of Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961[216]. According to the National Crime Bureau of Government of India, approximately 6, 000 dowry deaths happen in India by 2003 and 25,000 brides are harmed are killed. Caste is considered to be major cause for the inflation of dowry in India despite modernization whereas dowry decreased or disappeared with modernization in Europe.[217]

As part of Post- colonial discourse, Telugu literature produced both pro-colonial and anti-colonial approaches in which anti- colonial was more effective and active.[218] The newly emerged artifact of 20th century, the film and especially cinema did not escape from this discourse. Both the traditional and modern socio-cultural developments reflected in the

[214]N. Vinay Paranjape. "Socio-Legal Dimensions of Dowry as Matrimonial Offence". *Women's Links*, 5 (1), January-March, 1999. (pp.17-23). p. 2.
[215]Ibid.
[216] Siwan Anderson. "Why Dowry Payments declined with the Modernization in Europe but are raising in India", *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 111, No. 2, April 2001, (pp. 269-310), The University of Chicago Press. p. 270.
[217]*Ibid*. p. 273.
[218] Kanakasabha Ramana. "Post-colonial socio-cultural reflections in Telugu Literature", *International Journal of Social, Behavioral, Educational, Economic, Business and Industrial Engineering*, Vol. 6. No. 7, 2012. p. 1850.

Telugu cinema. Though extended dowry is also an issue and reflected in the recent Telugu movies but only 'dowry' was presented in the early Telugu cinema.

As mentioned, dowry (as a demand by groom's family) was one of the colonial products which became a subject of discussion and debate in the Telugu cinema. The cinema mediated between the tradition and modernity. Telugu cinema in the post- colonial period exposed the newly emerged evil practice 'dowry' in order to keep the traditional institution of marriage undisturbed. It echoed for a happy and pleasant family system than a disturbed one.

The system of dowry was not practiced until the nineteenth century in Andhra. Ayyadevara Kaleswararao says there was no culture of dowry during his marriage days in the last decade of 19th century.[219] The culture started in the first half of the twentieth century. Chilakamathi Laxmeenarasimhamu writes in his autobiography, "Veeresalingam and myself endeavored to eradicate the growing practice of dowry in marriages but in vain. We expected that the English educated men would reject dowry but it is happening other way round. They are becoming greedy of dowry. Their families feel proud to receive huge amount of dowry. We campaigned that taking dowry is equally considered to be as bad act as that of selling girls for bride price. The practice in the beginning was confined to only upper castes but now is being practiced by lower castes too. This practice is increasing among elite castes like Vaisyas and Kammas".[220]

The issue of dowry created disturbance in the families. The newly married woman had to stay at husband's home abiding by the patrilocal system. They used to be subjected to domestic violence if their natal families had failed to pay dowry. Sometimes, the married woman was not allowed to in-law's home until dowry is adjusted. The situation in Andhra Pradesh was so severe that the Andhra Pradesh Government brought Andhra Pradesh Dowry

[219]Ayyadevara Kaleswararao. *Navyandhramu: Naa Jeevithakatha*, p. 21.
[220]Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu. *Sweeyacharitramu.* p. 358-359.

Act into force in 1958 itself three years before the Government of India enacted Dowry Prohibition Act in 1961. As discussed in the previous chapter, the moviemakers wanted to film the social issues and show solutions in order to bring the audience to their movies. Dowry became one of the themes for the Post-independence Telugu cinema. Though it is reflected in many movies like, *Pelli Chesi Choodu* (1952), *Rojulu Marayi* (1955), *Atta Okinti Kodale* (1958), *Varakatnam* (1968), the central theme of *Rojulu Marayi* is the issue of land and peasants and inter-caste marriage. *Pelli Chesi Choodu, Atta Okinti Kodale, Varakatnam* were filmed solely on the issue of 'dowry'. We have taken these three movies as part of our study.

***Pelli Chesi Choodu* (1952)**[221]

In Godapadu village, Rattamma has a son, Raju and a daughter, Ammadu. Their neighbors are Govindaiah, his wife Chukkamma and his daughter Chitti. Raju does not behave responsibly at home. He runs a local children's drama unit called *Godapati Balamitra Sangham.* He has a disciple Sisindri. Raju is always engaged in directing 'plays', as he has 'stage fear'. Hence, he has Bheemanna as his bodyguard.

Raju organizes a play with the theme, "*Pelli Chesi Choodu*". The song "*Brahmayya…*" is sung. Raju's mother is angry with him as he is wiles away his time with 'plays' and is not at all serious about the family issues, especially about his sister's marriage (Ammadu). Govindaiah wants to give his daughter, Chitti to Raju in marriage. Raju is not interested. Govindaiah proposes to Rattamma to send her son to his home for a formal visit to see his daughter, Chitti.

[221] The movie was directed by L. V. Prasad; produced by Nagi Reddy, Chakrapani.; music by Ghantasala Venkateswara Rao; starred by N. T. Rama Rao, S. V. Ranga Rao, Jogarao, Doraswami, D. K. Sivaramakrishnaiah, Kutmbarao, Balakrishna, G. Varalakshmi, Savitri, Suryakantam, Pushpalaha, Meenakshi, Padmanabham., etc.

Bheemanna and Chitti are in love. Chitti makes fun with Bheemanna that she would marry only a man who is chosen by her parents. Bheemanna conveys a message through a song that he would not let anybody marry her. He says, he would thrash them. Ragu and Sisindri go to Govindaiah's home. Bheemanna stops them, but Govindaiah takes them inside. Raju is afraid of Bheemanna who is a local body builder and this is a reason for appointing him as his own bodyguard. Raju tells his mother that he would not marry and he is not at all interested in the marriage. Govindaiah comes in and tells Rattamma, how afraid is Raju of Bheemudu. Raju emphasizes that he would not marry Chitti at all. He is afraid of Bheemanna. Rattamma tells Govindaiah that she wants to primarily get her daughter Ammadu married and only then Raju. Govindaiah wants to get his daughter Chitti married first. He assures he would search a match for Ammadu later. Raju and Sisindri declare that they would get a match for Ammadu first. Govindaiah makes fun of them saying that they cannot bring a match. He tells Rattamma that elders say "*Pelli Chesi Choodu, Illu Katti Choodu*". His opinion is that he himself being a tactical and wise personality is struggling to get his daughter married. Raju takes it as a challenge.

He along with Sisindri is on the mission. He roams all around the region. They sing a song "we would prove ourselves by performing marriage and we will be accepted as marriage elders".

At last, he happens to go to Dhoopadu village. They stay at a mess, run by a *Poota Koollamma*. They start to go to Venkaiah's home for fixing a match. They enquire about the address of Venkaiah with Viyyanna's servant. He takes them to Viyyanna.

In Dhoopadu village, Viyyanna is the President of the Panchayat Board and an Ex. District Board Member. He has a daughter called Savitri. He has spent all his property by giving donations and organizing costly hospitalities for guests. He feels hurt, if a stranger

visits the village and does not accept his hospitality. Viyyanna asks Raju about his whereabouts. Viyyanna finds that Raju's father was his friend and promises him to fix a match for Ammadu. He informs Raju about a person named, Venkatapathi in the village Gaddipadu, Venkatapati has a son called Venkata Ramana (Ramana here after) who has done his is B.A., B.L. and practices Law at Madras. Viyyanna promises to Raju that he would make sure to arrange the marriage between Ammadu and Ramana. He also happens to know Raju is unmarried. He asks him to marry his daughter Savitri. Raju tells that he would marry only after Ammadu's marriage. Viyyanna says he would bear the dowry for Ammadu's marriage. Raju and Sisindri are given accommodation in the first floor. They make an attempt to escape from there. Savitri sees them. They think she would catch them. Instead, Savitri encourages them to escape. She tells them that all that her father told them are lies. He has no money at all to arrange dowry for Ammadu. She says he has spent all the property for honors. Further, reveals that he has no money to give as dowry and all the marriage proposals that have come for her have failed. Seeing her honesty, Raju decides to marry her.

Viyyanna feels happy as Raju starts calling him father-in- law. He immediately sends for Raju's mother for fixing the match. Govindaiah is present at the situation, when Viyyanna's servant informs Rattamma about the fixation of the marriage. Govindaiah tries to discourage Rattamma that Viyyana has nothing more than a house, which is kept as a surety. However, Rattamma and Ammadu are happy about the respectful match for Raju. Govindaiah is jealous and hurt.

Many big personalities like politicians and police officers attend the marriage of Raju and Viyyanna's daughter, Savitri. With this, Viyyanna takes up the responsibility of Ammadu's marriage. Viyyanna along with Sisindri visits Venkatapati and arranges for the marriage of Ammadu and Ramana, settling it for an amount of Rs.15000 as dowry. Venkatapati is greedy of money. Nevertheless, his hobby is to read the Puranas.

Chukkamma is jealous that Rattamma's daughter is getting married before her daughter's marriage. She provokes and humiliates Govindaiah that Rattamma though a widow brought a very respectable match. Govindaiah proclaims that he would breach the marriage and get his daughter married to the same bridegroom. Therefore, during the marriage programme, he informs Venkatapati that Viyyanna has no money to pay off as dowry. According to him, the amount of dowry decides the status of bridegroom and family. He strongly believes that he can never be cheated. Listening to Govindaiah, Venkatapathi rushes to Viyyanna. Meanwhile, the marriage ceremony is completed. Having no money, Viyyanna assures Venkatapathi that he would write a promissory note. Viyyanna promises to adjust money within ten days but Venkatapati does not listen. Venkatapati gets offended. He asks his son to choose between father and wife and drags him. The newly wedded wife, Ammadu, holds the feet of Ramana. Ramana seems to be merciful to Ammadu but becomes helpless. He does not want to disrespect his father. Govindaiah shares this news with Chukkamma and tells that half of his task is completed and the rest would be the marriage of his daughter with Ramana.

The whole family of Rattamma is depressed. Viyyanna wants to make a move to his village. He sees Rattamma weeping on the floor in a room, Ammadu is in front of the God's portrait in another room, Savitri consoles the dismayed Ammadu, Raju and Sisindri. He informs Savitri that he would arrange for the dowry and would settle the things. By saying this, he leaves for his village.

Ammadu tries to commit suicide, but is saved by Savitri, Rattamma and Raju. Raju assures the family that he would bring the brother-in-law home at any cost. He declares, if he fails, he would not show his face. Venkatapathi is now thinking for a re-marriage to be performed for his son Ramana. Ramana tries to convince his father, but in vain. Venkatapathi is arrogant as he is the father of a man and not a woman.

While the son and father are in this discussion, Raju reaches Venkatapati's home and requests him by giving all the jewellery and whatever else was at his house. He tells him that his family was not aware of the promises made for the fixation of the match. His father-in-law was the only one who knew it. He apologizes for whatever happened and offers whatever his family has. Venkatapathi is in no mood to listen to him. He is offended not only for not receiving the dowry but also for being cheated, an act he faced for the first time in his life. He shouts at Raju to go out and goes inside. Raju begs Ramana by holding his feet to accept Ammadu as his wife saying all his family is in depression and Ammadu would not live if she is not accepted as his wife. He requests him to save his family's honor. He says he cannot even go back home and show his face if he fails in taking him home. He requests him to save her life. Ramana is melted. Ramana tells him that he would meet him outside and pretends to be in consensus with his father. Seeing this, Venkatapathi feels proud of his son. Ramana tells his father that he is going to Madras to practice Law.

Ramana and Raju meet at the railway station. Ramana along with his brother-in-law gets into the train goes to Godapadu and sends his luggage with a servant, Simhadri to Madras. They reach Rattamma's home. Ramana seems to know music. He along with Raju and Sisindri sing a song conveying a message that they are going to play a live drama. The song appeals to the youth of India not to ruin the marital lives by nodding to those conservatives, who are greedy for dowry, instead the youth must enjoy the life by looking after the family.

Govindaiah happens to come there and asks who is singing. Ammadu manages him saying it is a Ghantasala record. He suggests Rattamma to file a *manovarthi* petition against Venkatapati and Ramana for compensation in the court. Rattamma tells him that she is hopeful that Venkatapathi's family would show mercy over Ammadu. Raju comes there and asks him to leave, blaming him for breaching Ammadu's marriage. Raju, thinking that the

secret can no more be hidden, suggests Ramana to take a leave. Ramana tells he would take Ammadu also with him to Madras. They reach Madras.

The village starts echoing that Ammadu has eloped, but does not know with whom. Chukkamma gets irritated as the news reaches her. She rushes to home and informs Govindaiah. Ramana writes to Raju, inviting him to Madras. Raju and Sisindri go to Madras.

Govindaiah takes the eloping rumor to Venkatapathi saying, "Your daughter-in-law has eloped with some *Ravanasura*". Venkatapathi says that he is being cheated. Govindaiah lies to him that Rattamma is going to file a *manovarthi* petition. Venkatapthi being irritated says, he is not afraid of such difficulties and opines that she should go ahead. He asks him if there is a suitable match for his son. Govindaiah suggests him to give his son in marriage to his daughter Chitti and he would work for him like the *Hanumantha* working for *Rama*. Venkatapathi gets annoyed. He declares that he does not want to have relations with that village anymore and asks him to leave even denying him lunch.

Govindaiah, now, goes to Viyyanna's home and tells him that Venkatapathi denied him even lunch. Viyyanna asks his servant to arrange him lunch. Meanwhile, Govindaiah tells him that Venkatapathi has asked him to see a match for his son. He also suggests him to convince Rattamma and Raju to file a *manovarthi* petition. Venkatapathi tests him asking what is the fee he expects for *manovarthi* petition? He answers, ''for free''. The servant informs him that, "lunch is ready''. Viyyanna asks him to leave by even denying lunch to him. He further, questions, "How many families have you breached?" He also warns him not to show his face. Venkatapati writes to his son that Ammadu is not seen at home and Rattamma family is going to file a *manovarthi* case against him. He informs that he has decided to go again for his marriage and to discuss about it; he is going to see him in Madras.

By the time, Venkatapati reaches Madras, Ramana, Ammadu, Raju start playing a drama. Ramana pretends to be suffering from mental illness as his wife has eloped. Raju is the doctor and Ammadu is the nurse. The doctor advices Venkatapathi to take Ramana from Madras to Ooti. Venkatapathi says, he rather prefers to take him to his village and requests him to send at least the nurse (as the doctor, Raju, denies going) along with them to aid Ramana**.**

Viyyanna along with his younger daughter, Chichu happens to visit Rattamma's home. He is informed of all the developments. He feels happy that Ramana is teaching a lesson to his father Venkatapathi feels proud of him for getting such a boy for Ammadu. Viyyanna leaves for home. Chichu wants to stay back with Savitri for her friend Sisindri (both are kids).

Venkatapati brings Ramana and the nurse (Ammadu) to his village. Venkatapathi is impressed with Ammadu, watching her service as a nurse to Ramana. Ramana and Ammadu are in a happy mood trailing on the first floor and singing a duet. Hearing it, Venkatapathi thinks Ramana's illness has again erupted. He goes to see. Ramana does not see Venkatapathi but Ammadu does. Ammadu suddenly pretends being harassed by Ramana. She pretends to have been annoyed and says she would leave. Venkatapathi requests her not to leave and assures her he would tell Ramana not to harass her.

Raju and Sisindri are now at home. Rattamma expresses her concern with them for Ammadu. She is tensed about what if Ammadu in disguise is discovered and asks Raju to visit her once. Raju says that his brother-in-law has informed him that he would write to them after reaching home. Raju and Sisindri assure her that Ramana is efficient enough to deal with anything.

Venkatapathi is reading out the text of *Purana.* Ammadu is listening to him. The servant, Simhadri informs them that Ramana wants Ammadu to sing a song to sleep. She says to Venkatapathi, that she is just a nurse and she would only give medication to him. She says only wives would sing for men. Venkatapathi proposes to Ammadu to marry Ramana. She pretends to be offended as he proposed a marriage to her with a married man. Ramana goes on shouting from the first floor. Venkatpathi goes to him and tries to convince him by saying how can a woman sing for other man? He offers to read *Purana*, instead of song. Ramana making mad sounds comes to the ground floor. To pacify him Ammadu goes with him to the first floor.

Ammadu and Ramana go out for a walk. She faints. They reach home. One person who has seen them at his agricultural field tells Venkatapathi that he has seen Ramana with a woman. He is lying to him that she is his daughter-in-law. Ramana and Ammadu hear it. Ramana asks her to pretend to have fainted. Venkatapathi asks him what happened to her. He answers that she has fainted due to his words, which mention that she is his wife. Ramana tells his father that he has recovered and wants to go to Madras. Ammadu pretends that she does not want to leave Venkatapathi's place. Ramana tells her if she wants to stay back as she is enjoying listening to *Purana*, she can stay back, but he would leave. Venkatapathi tells Ramana to take her too and take her to a good doctor. He thinks that Ramana has not recovered yet. He tells her that he also would reach Madras later and read out *Purana* for her.

In Madras, the doctor finds that Ammadu has conceived, a three-month pregnancy. Ammadu writes the news to Savitri. Savitri shares the news with Rattamma. Rattamma wants her daughter's first delivery at her home. She sends Raju and Savitri to bring her home. She gives birth to a baby boy. Govindaiah visits the home and pretends to Rattamma that he has sympathy over Ammadu. He tells her that like *Seethamma*, Ammadu somehow managed to give birth to a baby. He tells her that the village is jealous of it and the family is outcast. He

asks who is father of the baby. Rattamma, to save the pride of Ammadu and family reveals the truth. Ammadu comes and gets him out. Govidaiah is offended.

Govindaiah informs Venkatapathi the news and frightens him that Rattamma is introducing the boy to everybody as Venakatapathi's grandson. He also tells him that Rattamma is going to file a petition. A frightened, Venkatapathi requests him to suppress all the evidences from his village and he would bear whatever may be the expenditure. Govindaiah offers him that he would suppress all the evidences with zero expenditure only if Ramana marries his daughter Chitti. Venakatapathi gets angry and tells him that his status does not match his one. Offended by the status issue, Govindaiah shouts at him saying who would give a daughter to a married person. He also says nobody can protect him. He starts leaving from there. It builds pressure on Venkatapathi. Venkatapathi stops him and calms down. Thus, they both propose a match between Chitti and Ramana.

Govindaiah shares it with Chukkamma and Chitti. Chukkamma is happy but Chitti is worried. She escapes to Bheemanna and informs of this development. Bheemanna along with her goes to Rattamma's home and warns them that he would kill Ramana for accepting the match with his wife, Chitti. Viyyanna happens to be there and asks him if he has already married Chitti as he mentions the term 'wife'. To this, Bheemanna replies that Chitti's mother had promised his mother during their childhood that she would be given in marriage to him. Since then, he is calling her as his wife. Viyyanna performs a very simple marriage (just tying a thread of turmeric stick) of Chitti and Bheemmanna there and then and assures the couple that he would stand by even if the case goes to High Court.

Knowing this, Govindaiah and Chukkamma plan to take away Chitti. They know that Bheemanna is just physically strong but is scared of the police. Govindaiah manages to send some fake police to Bheemanna's home and get his daughter. Chukkamma throws away the

sacred thread. Bheemanna resorts to Viyyanna with the thread. Viyyanna assures him to get his wife back.

Ramana receives a letter that Ammadu is coming to Madras with the baby. He thinks and becomes worried about, how to manage his father. Ammadu, Raju and Sisindri along with the baby boy reach Madras. Ammadu weeps embracing Ramana and fears about, how long would the drama go on, especially now as they have a baby. Ramana gives her moral support. He says, "Let us play this drama as long as it is worth to play. I would rebel against my father when our drama can no longer proceed. Do you think I would lose my baby?" He asks Raju to write to his father that his health is again disturbed. Govindaiah, Chukkamma and Chitti go to Venkatapathi's home. Chukkamma starts taking authority of the house. She even dominates Venkatapathi himself. Venkatapathi receives telegram from Madras. He starts to Madras. Govindaiah tells him that the issue of Ramana's health condition is a drama and he is being cheated. Chukkamma says that all this drama is being directed by Rattamma and Rattamma has taken control of Ramana. At this, Venkatapathi starts to examine the things. Venkatapati takes them all to Madras. They discover that Ramana and Ammadu are playing a drama. Venkatapati threatens his son Ramana that he would not give the property, if he does not marry Chittemma. Ramana rebels against his father, refuses to marry Chittemma and asserts that he would not desert Ammadu. He tells his father that he does not want any property. Govindaiah goes to the extent of requesting Venkatapathi to marry Chittemma. Chukkamma opposes the proposal.

Meanwhile, Viyyanna and Bheemanna also reach Madras to stop Chittemma and Ramana from getting married. Chittema goes to Bheemanna. Viyanna informs Venkatapati that Chittemma is already married. Venkatapati threatens Govindaiah that he would initiate legal action against him. Govindaiah apologises. Govindaiah and Chukkamma endorse the marriage of Chitti with Bheemanna. Ramana wants to go away along with his wife and son.

The separation from the grandson yields grief in Venkatapati. Viyyanna tries to convince Ramana not to go away but in vain. Venkatapathi pretends to faint. Ramana and Ammadu accept to live with him. At last, Venkatapathi is happy with his son Ramana, daughter-in-law Ammadu and grandson. All ends well.

This is an example of the then society's nature perceiving a marriage. They did not bother about the age difference in marriage. Marriages were dependent on both caste and property. The greedy Govindaiah, just for property, is ready to marry his daughter to an old man, Venkatapathi who is already a grandfather. The post independent India had still to undergo a radical change in terms of socio-economic reformation. The movie was released in 1952 portraying the social evils like bride price and dowry in the contemporary society. The bride price and its scandalous affairs had been under discussion for long period in Telugu land especially since 1892 when Gurajada's play *Kanyasulkam* was first brought into the masses as a text. However, Govindaiah's wife (towards the end) and daughter boldly reject the proposal and announce that the daughter has already been married to her cross cousin by asserting her freedom to choose her bridegroom in the presence of Viyyanna. Towards the end, Venkatapathi realizes and regrets that his greed for dowry disturbed his family and accepts the daughter-in-law and the grandson. Disgusted with him, Ramana and his wife are leaving with the kid. Venkatapathi being unable to bear the separation from grandson pretends to faint. His son, daughter-in-law and grandson decide to stay with him. All ends well.

Dowry, educated son and feudal patriarchal father

L. V. Prasad is the director who believes in entertainment. He was fond of comedy.[222] He is the lover of entertainment. Chakrapani and B. Nagireddy were the producers of the movie. Chakrapani is also of the L. V. Prasad's kind. He himself was the storywriter of *Pelli Chesi Choodu*. His philosophy was that audience expects entertainment.[223] He believed in comedy.[224] Once, a distributor had suggested Chakrapani to choose social message in his movie *Gundamma Katha* (1962). Chakrapani got angry and said, "There are *Harikatha*[225] troops for that. The audience needs entertainment, not a message. Do you think they pay money to receive your message?"[226] He believed in entertainment.

That is how the movie *Pelli Chesi Choodu* is full of comedy but conveys message. The skill of the moviemakers lies in conveying social message without boring the audience. The movie is of this kind. Though the movie is considered to be part of 'comedy genre', this was the first to expose the dowry evil that had been prevalent in Andhra. The entire movie revolves around the issue of dowry. The very title of the movie throws challenge to the audience if they can perform a marriage. The challenge is thrown to the fathers whose responsibility is to get their daughters married. The movie opens with a theatre play called *Pelli Chesi Choodu.*

[222]M. B. S. Prasad. *Padakkurchee Kaburlu-7: Naalugu Vijaya Comedylu*, published by M. B. S. Prasad, Hyderabad, 2007. p. 10.
[223] Katragadda Murari. *Telugu Chalana Chitra Nirmathala Charitra, 1931-2005.* p. 71.
[224]Ibid.
[225]*Harikatha*, a folk theatre performance of the Puranas which teach ethics.
[226]M. B. S. Prasad. *Padakkurchee Kaburlu-7: Naalugu Vijaya Comedylu*, published by M. B. S. Prasad, Hyderabad, 2007. p. 55.

Dowry inflation happened in European societies during medieval period but declined along with modernization but in contrast, the inflation of dowry increased along the modernization in India. The reason is caste.[227]

The post 1947, India has seen a drastic change in the practice of dowry. The market oriented capitalist economy imposed in colonial India replaced the land (feudal mode of transaction) with the liquid forms of wealth. This led to the emergence of new groups to join to the status of elites especially after 1947 accompanied by economic differentiation.[228] While intra-caste and intra-kin economic heterogeneity deepened, caste and kinship have remained central to social life. Intra- caste marriages were essentially universal in India. Though the castes' names were not mentioned in the movies, we need to infer that all arranged marriages were intra-caste marriages but the class and status were not discarded, as the dowry became tradition. The dowry inflation happened in caste-based societies.[229] The name, fame and status of Viyyanna persuade Venkatapathi that Viyyanna would pay the agreed dowry Rs. 15,000 When the faith is broken due to the non-payment of dowry, Venkatapathi breaches the marriage.

Dowry has been integral part of the institution of marriage. It is not considered to be a marriage if dowry is not part of it. If a parent has one daughter and one son, it is considered that the dowry taken for the son can be paid to the daughter's in-laws as dowry. Raju has a sister called Ammadu. Both of them are unmarried. Raju would get dowry but he has a determination that he would get married only after his sister is married off. Raju has taken up

[227]Siwan Anderson. "Why Dowry Payments declined with the Modernization in Europe but are raising in India", *Journal of Political Economy,* Vol. 111, No. 2, April 2001. (pp. 269-310), The University of Chicago Press. p. 272.

[228] Rajni Palriwala. "Reaffirming the Anti- Dowry Struggle", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 24, No. 17 (Apr. 29, 1989) pp. 942- 944.

[229]Siwan Anderson. "Why Dowry Payments declined with the Modernization in Europe but are raising in India", pp. 272-3.

the challenge to get his sister Ammadu married. His disciple Sisindri is his companion. In his charge, he marries Viyyanna's daughter Savitri. Viyyanna had also been unable to get his daughter married as he had melted all his properties. He had no money to pay dowry. He believes that a marriage can be performed by lies. He succeeds in getting his daughter married making hollow surety to Raju that he would arrange dowry for Ammadu so that Raju marries Savitri without dowry.

The in-laws of the bridegroom are so particular that they would even drag away the bridegroom from the wedding stage if the agreed dowry is not paid. Dowry is not only about the money but also it is a prestige or status. The amount of dowry is considered to be the criteria of scaling the status of bridegroom's family. The patriarchal society allows a man to marry several times but the woman is not allowed. This flexibility gave more power to the man and his kin. He can break the marriage at any time even soon after the tying of knot (*Tali*). That is what reflects in the movie.

Govindaiah who wanted to get his daughter Chitti married to Raju is disappointed as Raju has married Savitri. Raju's sister Ammadu is also going to be married. Govindaiah and his wife are jealous of it. They cannot digest Ammadu's marriage before their daughter's marriage. Govindaiah knows that Viyyanna has no money to pay dowry. He informs Venkatapathi during the wedding ceremony. By the time Venkatapathi is replied by Viyyanna that he would pay dowry in ten days the tying of knot is over. According to Hindu tradition, tying of knot legitimizes the marriage. Venkatapathi who feels that he can never be cheated or fooled realizes that he has been cheated. Being enraged, he takes away his son Ramana. Raman being an educated young man follows his father not to humiliate him by rebelling against him despite a lot of sympathy for Ammadu.

The worst sufferer of the dowry evil is the bride and then the family of bride. Bride whose marriage is interrupted or broke at the wedding stage is the worst sufferer. If the tying of knot is completed she cannot marry again according to Hindu traditional value system. If the marriage is broken at the wedding stage even before knot, nobody would come forward to marry her. In either of the cases the bride is the most grief ridden and she is left with no option but committing suicide. The girls in India are brought up with the sole aim of getting married. They are oriented that marriage is the only respectable social life for them. If they fail in that, they feel losing respect and the suicide is the only option. Another sufferer of the dowry is bride's family.

Once the bridegroom Ramana is dragged away, Ammadu goes into depression and the family gets into grief. Viyyanna who is supposed to pay dowry slips from there assuring he would arrange the dowry in ten days. He is wholehearted but helpless. He was once a rich person but by wasting money and providing hospitalities, he lost all property except his house. Savitri consoles Ammadu but her grief is beyond consolation. She is lying in front of the God. Her mother Rattamma is sunk in grief in another room. Her brother Raju is saddened. Silence is prevailing at home. By the time Savitri comes back by sending off her father Viyyanna, she finds Ammadu missing. Ammadu has jumped into the well. One of the easiest and nearest ways of committing suicide by women in Indian villages is jumping into water. The girls usually are not taught swimming but only the boys. Before she dies, Raju saves her.

Dowry affects the educated youth too. The generation gap is seen in the villages. The fathers, feudal patriarchs, want status even in dowry. The educated sons, though not against the dowry, are not particular. The statement also may not be generalized. The post - independence society was ideal in nature thanks to the social reform activity, national movement, non-Brahmin movement and literary propaganda of the colonial period especially

first half of the 20th century. Though ideal, the youth was not out of the clutches of the traditional value system. They respected the joint-family system. It should not be mistaken that the then ideal men were, though progressive in liberating women, not ready to give complete liberation to women. They wanted to liberate women from the social evils like *sati,* child marriage, widow remarriage, *devadasi* and dowry but within the existing patriarchal family structure.

After leaving the bride at wedding stage, Ramana is sad to imagine the life of that poor bride. Seeing his guilty feeling, his father tries to fill confidence in him. He tells him that he would arrange another marriage to his son with an immediate effect. Ramana tries to convince his father that they will pay dowry within ten days as they have assured. We observe the patriarchal orientation of Venkatapathi in his statements to his son. He is arrogant that his son is man who can marry again. It is socially accepted. That makes him make patriarchal comments. He tries to fill confidence and teach feudal values to his son who looks mood off. The conversation:

Father: What humiliation to you. Make a worriless go and by listening to me go and look after your practice (law) and all, otherwise, no relation will be there between you and me, that's all.

Son: What is the mistake they have made now? They have assured to pay dowry within ten days, haven't they?

Father: (with anger and aggressiveness) Not about money, even if they submit anything more also, they will not be allowed to step in even our threshold, that's all. They tried to cheat me, cheat. How come I will be cheated? See I will get you a bride from an elite family within three days and perform your marriage. <u>You are a 'man', what is the problem for you?</u>

Ramana is melted to see the agony expressed by Raju to his father Venkatapathi and himself. He is moved by the news that Ammadu made suicide attempt. He knows that he is the bridge between his father and his wife in order to protect the joint-family. He cannot miss either of them. He is sensitive enough to understand the agony and misery faced by the bride and her family. He needs to negotiate between the idea of feudal traditional value system and ideal progressiveness. He deceives his father saying he is going to Madras. Instead, he goes to Ammadu stays with her family for a short period and takes her to Madras where he is practicing law. Since it is difficult to hide somebody in a village for a considerable time, he leaves to Madras along with Ammadu. His philosophy is that he would proceed with this drama as long as it is hidden. He is ready to rebel against his father when there is no option to hide. His rebellion though directly against his father must be interpreted as the against the social evil dowry.

Cinema is so effective medium that it can give you many inferences. It conveys social message through entertainment. Songs have been integral part of entertainment in Telugu cinema. The tradition of reciting poems in theatre performances were adopted into Telugu cinema. Though certain dialogues are also effective in communicating messages, they cannot match the songs in effective communication.

Song is composed of many skills and technology. Lyrics are written by finest poets, sung by greatest singers, assisted by melodious music and tunes. It has a character of penetrating into masses very fast. *Pelli Chesi Choodu* was commercially hit not only because of its social message and entertaining comedy but also because of the songs.

Ramana by singing a song conveys to the audience that he is going to direct and play a drama in order to escape the traditional value system. The song itself conveys a social message to the youth how to make the life happier and comfortable. As already mentioned,

1950s and 60s Telugu country was undergoing a cultural and ideological transformation. This transformation was trying to idealize the youth in progressive path. It educates the youth to take the world as a stage and they are playing their roles. It looks like the lyricist took the idea of "*world is a stage*" from *Shakespeare*.[230]

Janamantha Oka Nataka Rangam (The world is a stage)

Janamantha Ika Patradharule (All have their roles)

Ee Jagannataka Sutradhari Aa Sarvasaakshi Eeswarude (Director of all this drama is the God himself)

Once the drama is started, first night is over. Ramana is happy with his wife Ammadu. He wants to share his happiness with the people. He sings another song advocating and advising the youth not to entertain those who try to ruin their lives in the name of dowry. The song advocates that youth who are future leaders and builders of the nation have to refuse the dowry, get married, look after the family and live comfortably by avoiding those who ruin their lives in the name of dowry.

Bhavi Baratha Vidhathalara! (You! Future leaders)

Yuvathee Yuvakulara! (You! The young women and men)

Swaanubhavamuna Chaatu Naa Sandesamide (This is message from my own experience)

Pelli Chesukuni Illu Choosukuni (By getting married and being with family)

Challaga Kalam Gadapaloy! (Life should be enjoyed happily)

Ellaru Sukhamunu Choodaloy! (All people should experience the pleasures)

Meerellaru Hayiga Undaloy! (All of you should live comfortably)

[230]M.B.S. Prasad. *Padakkurchee Kaburlu-7: Nalaugu Vijaya Comedylu,* p. 12.

Katnala Mojulo – Mana Jevethalane Balichesi, (With greedy of dowry- ruining our lives)

Kaapuramulu Koolchu – Ghanulaku Saasti Kaaga (Teaching lessons to ruiners)

Patnala, Pallela, Desadesamula – Manaperu Cheppukoni, (by referring to us everywhere)

Prajalu Sukhapadaga (people should enjoy the lives)

Intaabayataa – Janta Kavula Vale (Like twin poets both in private and public)

Antuku Thiragaloy- (Couple should roam around)

Kantipapavale Dampathulepudoo (Couples should always like pupil of the eye)

Chanti Pillalanu Saakaloy ..!! (Nurture the kids)

Navabhavamula- Navaragamula (With new ideas- new ways)

Navajeevaname- Nadapaloy- (New life should be led)

Bhavakavulavale Evarikee Theliyani (Like a romantic poet, anonymous)

Evo Patalu Padaloy… Pelli… (Songs must be sung)

The impact of theatre culture and sweeping left ideology in Telugu land was there on cinema too. The left and progressive ideologues exploited 'song' as an effective cultural artifact to penetrate into the masses. They used it to spread their ideology. Their aim was to sensitize the masses with regard to the exploitation and certain issues related women and *dalits*. Many from IPTA (Indian Progressive Theatre Association) joined the cinema industry all over India and Telugu industry was no exception. Many members of IPTA, actors, writers and lyricists joined Telugu industry. Their impact was visible in the early Telugu cinema. Great Telugu Cinema producers, directors, writers and lyricists like K. S. Prakasa Rao, L. V. Prasad, Tatineni Prakasa Rao, V. Madhusudhana Rao, Sunkara, Vasireddy, Atreya, Anisetti

and Pinisetti had been part of IPTA.[231] Hence, they exhibited progressiveness while producing movies.

Marriage became indispensable to attain social adulthood however hurdles in hoarding dowry could delay the marriage.[232] Viyyanna losing all his property was unable to marry off his daughter Savitri as nobody would marry a girl whose family cannot pay dowry. Savitri tells Raju that her father was lying to him that he has money, which is untrue. She herself reveals to Raju that her father has no money and hence cannot pay dowry. She observes that she is still unmarried only because her father has been not in a position to pay dowry despite his efforts to marry off her as early as possible.

The fathers who had daughters and were heads of the patriarchal families used to put all efforts to get the daughters married. If they were poor, they used to lie or they used to manipulate the relatives to get the daughters married. Viyyanna lies to Raju that he would pay dowry for Ammadu if Raju marries Savitri without dowry. Raju marries her. Viyyanna again lies to Venkatapathi that he would pay Rs. 15,000 as dowry to get Ammadu married to Ramana. He is a good person but had become moneyless. Knowing the fact that he had no money at all, he agreed the dowry. Govindaiah sees the compatible status to get his daughter Chitti married. He and his wife are not ready to marry her to Bheemaiah who is uneducated. They want to marry her to Raju who is educated and school teacher. Govindaiah tried to manipulate Raju but failed. He tries to manipulate Venkatapathi to get Chitti married to Ramana. His manipulation succeeds second time. The point to make here is that 'dowry' devalued two fathers by degrading them to the state of liar and manipulator.

[231] Gollapudi Marutheerao. "Telugu Cine Katha Parinama Dasalu", *Aravaiyella Telugu Cinema: Vyasa Samputi*, edited by Muddali Raghuram, Hyderabad: Kinnera Publications, 1994. p. 42.
[232] Rajni Palriwala. "Reaffirming the Anti- Dowry Struggle", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 24, No. 17 (Apr. 29, 1989) pp. 942- 944.

M. N. Srinivas observes: "Educated Peasant youths are able to command dowries because parents of girls want their daughters to marry salaried men. Men having salaried jobs or being in the professions and living in cities have prestige and are in short supply".[233] He adds that the emulsion of upper castes (institution of dowry had been prevalent in upper castes) by lower castes increased since independence accompanied by increased access to education and employment in organized sector and the eroding moral authority of dominant castes in preventing the dependent castes from emulsion.[234]

The movie, *Pelli Chesi Choodu* depicts the plight of girl's parents and their competition for the grooms who are educated and in salaried jobs. Govindaiah and his wife Chukkamma aspire to marry their daughter Chitti to Raju who is a teacher and a far relative of them against Chitti's will to marry Bheemudu who is uneducated. Venkatapathi commands the amount of dowry from Viyyanna whose responsibility is to marry off Ammadu. Govindaiah again puts best efforts to manipulate Venkatapathi to marry Chitti to Venkatapathi's son Ramana who is a law graduate and practicing in Madras even if it is second marriage for the bridegroom.

The dowry evil scared the parents of girls in such a way that they were ready to marry off their daughters to even old men in order to give the daughter's a financially safe life. Towards the end of the movie, when Ramana rebels against his father and declares that he would live with only Ammadu, Govindaiah who had manipulated Venkatapathi to replace Ammadu by his daughter suggests that Venkatapathi marry her now. The movie vindicates that dowry created many social consequences and the age difference between the bride and bridegroom was not considered in front of the status and money. However, Govindaiah was

[233]M. N. Srinivas. *J. P. Naik Memorial Lecture, 1983: Some Reflections on Dowry,* published for The Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi by Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1984, 1988. p. 21.
[234]Ibid. p. 20.

presented as a cruel, cunning and shameless but it has to be analyzed and concluded that he was a creation of the socio-economic environment of the 1950s where the employment opportunities were less and the traditional employment had been devastated due to the colonial government. The economic differentiation led to the demand for financially sound bridegrooms.

***Varakatnam* (1968)**[235]

In a village, Meesala Venkaiah is a rich peasant and his wife is Annapurna and their son is Devasimha. Bhadraiah is a rich peasant in the neighboring village, though is not on par with Venkaiah. His wife had passed away. His son is Balaramaiah, and Subhadra is his daughter-in-law who have daughter, Sujatha. In the same village, Sriramulu is a marginal peasant. His daughter is Lakshmi, son is Subbaiah, and Rama is his daughter-in-law. Subbaiah has a daughter and a son. In another village, there is a person named, Devaiah, who is a coward husband of Chukkamma, they have a son, Rangaiah.

Meesala Venkaiah is full of self-esteem. He believes in one word and one action. His son Devasimha is an ideal youth. Bhadraiah is a cool man but his son is short tempered and self-respective. They are performing marriage between Devasimha and Sujatha. Venkaiah has a friend called Achaiah from his village. Achaiah keeps deceiving Venkaiah and his wife Annapurna for provisions like curd and vegetables. He is expertise in bringing differences between people. He expresses doubt to Venkaiah, if Bhadraiah can pay a dowry of Rs. 50,000 and suggests him to see it. Venkaiah, though has confidence in Bhadraiah's family, requests Bhadraiah to at least show the amount to be given as dowry. Bhadraiah assures him that possesses and would pay soon after the marriage. Achaiah insists to see it. Bhadraiah's son

[235] The movie was directed by N. T. Rama Rao; produced by N. Trivikrama Rao; music T. V. Raju; N. T. Rama Rao, Krishna Kumari, Savitri, Rajanala, Raavi Kondala Rao, Nagabhushanam , Relangi, Padmanabham, Suryakantam, Satyanarayana, Mikkilineni, Allu Ramalingaiah, etc.

Balaramaiah, being hurt, throws the money and jewellery in front of them and expresses his anger. Devasimha has already tied a *kankanam* to the bride Sujatha and pressed his foot on her foot, which means they have become a married couple according to the Hindu tradition. And, only tying the marriage knot is left. An angered Venkaiah takes away Devasimha amid the marriage proclaiming he would fix another match within a month. Balaramaiah declares he would get his sister married within a week. Devaiah's people start moving to their village.

In the same village, marriage between Laxmi, daughter of Sriramulu and Rangaiah, son of Chukkamma is performed. Chukkamma is noted to be a shrew. She asks Sriramulu to pay an amount of Rs. 5,000 as dowry amid the marriage ceremony. Sriramulu answers he would pay it later and requests her to let the marriage happen. She shouts at him. Her son Rangaiah is now determined to marry her. He liked her. He knows how his mother broke many matches for him for dowry. He is intelligent enough to tie knot before his mother orders him to quit the marriage. She gets angry.

Chukkamma: Ohh…You tied the knot?

Rangaiah: Mother! You kept me unmarried as you did not receive dowry. Now I got the favorable time and I like this girl. That is why; I tied the knot before the auspicious time elapses.

Chukkamma: May your cleverness go to hell! It does not matter if you have tied three knots or thirty-three knots. The marriage is not valid without dowry. Leave her and come with us.

She drags him away. People tell her that Laxmi is now her daughter-in-law irrespective of she likes or not as the knot is tied. She takes her home declaring she would not let her have marital life with his son. Sriramulu is weeping and crying. His son Subbaiah falls from '*Machu*' and his leg is broken.

Both the marriages in the same village are disturbed. Venkaiah's people are leaving in bullock carts. Devasimha is in deep critical thinking. His mother Annapurna is sympathetic to the bride. She knows a bride's life – whose marriage is breached in between the process, which is miserable. The bullock carts have started to leave for home. Annapurna and Devasimha are in sad mood. Their worry is about the innocent helpless bride Sujatha. We simultaneously hear a background song questioning the society and tries to awaken it to chase off the institution of dowry.

Is it? Is it our tradition?

The evil practice sunk deep in this society since many generations

Is it this?

Should innocent girl's lives be sacrificed

To the claws of devil of dowry?

What is the use of making laws?

What is the use of promulgating edicts?

When it cannot drive away the raising hood (selfishness)….

When it cannot respect women who are epitome of patience….

No use in reading the epics…

No use in quoting morals and ideals…

Morals must be followed

And shown in action….

It must be able to wipe out the tears

Of innocent helpless girls…

The song was written by C. Narayana Reddy and sung by Ghantasala. The song was admired by the contemporary Telugu youth.

Chukkamma is exploiting Laxmi by making perform all the domestic chores. She has to cook, wash clothes and clean the house. At night, she has to sleep with Chukkamma. Chukkamma even in sleep locks her with her hands so that she cannot meet Rangayya. Still Rangayya manages with the help of his father Devayya to meet her and lead a marital life. The husband is affectionate and the father-in-law is sympathetic. However, neither of them can counter Chukkamma. They are scared of her shrewdness.

Meesala Venkaiah's wife Annapurna is worried about the future of Sujatha. A dejected picture of Sujatha is always in front of Annapurna. She is disturbed. She thinks that the life of a woman, whom so ever, daughter it may be, is miserable in the society. She blames Achaiah and requests him not to provoke her husband for another match. Achaiah brings a match for Devasimha who is not at home. The relatives come directly with dowry and betel leaves. They exchange the betel leaves, confirm the marriage alliance between the two families. Venkaiah asks Annapurna to receive it by her hands. She refuses. She is not ready to accept anybody else as her daughter-in-law except Sujatha. She says**,** "I cannot sell my son in greed for dowry". Venkaiah's ego is hurt and is angry with her for denying his request. He now declares that he has accepted it. The relatives opine that it is better to take his son's consent. He is confident that his son does not cross his word. He proclaims, "Did my father deny the match my grandfather had brought for him? Did I deny the match my father had brought for me? In addition, in my turn, will my son deny a match I bring? This is our legacy. Hail our tradition". Devasimha appears and tries to educate his father.

Devasimha: We can claim it as a tradition if it is for the good. It cannot be a tradition if it ruins a girl's life and sells a man. As a man, one must be wise enough to understand fellow humans. You have sons but they are not for sale in the market. Even the bride's family must not rush with money at the drop of a hat. Instead of sacrificing daughters for the blood sucking dowry devil, it's better to kill them and take it as they were never born.

Kinsmen: Ha ..!

Devasimha: Then what? My father, listening to this man's (Achaiah) advice stopped me while I was about to tie the knot. I immediately followed my father abiding by his elderliness, traditions and customs. What would happen, if I walk out on my own this time at the marriage ceremony?

Kinsmen: Is it?

Devasimha: A relationship should be developed with love and affection. Nevertheless, my father wanted it through money. Don't the daughters-in-law enjoy the value that this lifeless cash notes do? All that we are made to visualize in them is this money. Though I am younger than and not as experienced as you are, I am humane. I possess wisdom to honor and admit a woman. Neither you can buy me nor can my father sell me. Instead of buying a stonehearted man like me, better marry off your daughter to a man with heart and compassion. She will be happy.

He finishes his speech and leaves to the other room. The relatives turn back to move. Achaiah requests them not to leave and suggests them that the girl's side relatives must not be in a hast. They leave shouting at him and appreciating Devasimha for not ruining their girl's life. Venkaiah blames that both his wife and son have spoiled his image in public. Annapurna requests him not to do injustice to Sujatha. He warns her to persuade the son for another marriage and if not, he would separate from the son.

Sujatha is in tears and the aspect of pathos is shown. Her father is observing it and sympathetic to her. She is weeping in front of her mother's portrait. She goes on questioning and brings out her agony.

Sujatha: Amma! I have become a never ending problem to the family. I got separated from the man whom I was engaged to. Why did you give birth to me an unlucky daughter? Had you been alive, would my life have got ruined? Why did you leave me behind as a burden to the earth?

Her sister-in-law Subhadra comes and consoles her assuring that she is there for her as good as her mother.

Devasimha wants to go to Sujatha. He wants blessings from his mother.

Mother: How can a mother bless the son when she cannot see to his happiness? Should I advise you to go against your father? Or should I order to do injustice to that innocent girl? Your wisdom (judgment) is your path. Your righteous duty is your protection.

Devasimha: Amma! I will not defy your order. I will not move away from my duty. I will take leave now.

Devasimha goes to see Sujatha at night. He is waiting to see her if she comes to near to window. Dogs by encircling him are barking. Balaramaiah and neighbors come out. Devasimha covers himself in a rug in order not to be identified. Thinking he is a thief, they beat him. Bhadraiah stops them and sends him without uncovering him. Balaramaiah emphasizes to his father to go for another match for Sujatha. His understanding is that an unmarried girl is always followed by this kind of rogues.

Annapurna finds Devasimha is hurt. She hides it with her husband. He is consistent on his word to get his son another match. She prays to god to get peace to the home.

Chukkamma does not want his son Rangaiah to be with her daughter-n-law Laxmi. Hence, she keeps her with her only even while sleeping. But, suddenly she feels why Laxmi is not

sensible enough to sleep in backyard to watch cows. She sends her to sleep there. Rangaiah romances with Laxmi.

Sriramulu is reminded of his daughter Laxmi by one man who invited his daughter and son-in-law for the first festival after the marriage. His daughter's marriage and Laxmi's marriage happened at a time. Subbaiah asks his father Sriramulu to go and invite Laxmi and her husband to the Dasara festival. Chukkamma not even lets him see his daughter. She sends him back declaring he can take Laxmi home only by paying dowry Rs. 5,000. While he is going saddened on the road beside the backyard wall, Laxmi calls him from behind that wall. Sriramulu is emotional and feeling guilty for being unable to see her as he could not pay dowry.

Sriramulu: Daughter! Why were you born to a poor father who cannot afford to pay dowry? In this dirty world where money has more value than humans, you lost happiness in both parental home and in- law's place.

Laxmi: My sorrow is not that father. I am sad for being unable to offer my father even a glass of water.

Sriramulu: Don't worry dear, I will come again. I will bring the promised dowry. Don't feel sad for not inviting you for the festival. Don't think even in dream that your father has forgotten you, a motherless girl. I will bring dowry next time by whatever hardships. I will pull you out of this trouble.

Laxmi: Father! I, as the daughter-in-law to this family, would have to face everything be it hardships or comforts. But, I cannot bear to see you being subjected to humiliation for the deed you gave birth to me. Take it as I too have passed away like my mother.

Both father and daughter, though cannot see each other, touch their hands over the wall. Devaiah is melted see their affection. Chukkamma calls her shouting to finish the house hold work. Devaiah wants to take action against Chukkamma but helpless.

Venkaiah seems to be a bit sensible now. His wife tells him that it was their own mistake to suspect Bhadraiah's family's credit and to do injustice to poor Sujatha. He agrees to it that suspecting them is wrong but he expects that they should have given the money as at least a courtesy to me. But, his weakness is that once he takes a stand, he will not budge. That is Meesala Venkaiah. He takes it as dishonor once he asks and he does not get. He finds that his son has stopped eating. He tells her not to worry unnecessarily. He challenges that he would get the best girl for Devasimha whomever he likes. Devasimha appears and interferes.

Devasimha: A girl's life is not so cheap. Is a bride any fruit to select from a basket? Marriage is lifelong affair. It is not elderliness to parents with the authority of parenthood to play with two people who promise to live together lifelong.

Venkaiah blames that both mother and son are jointly attacking him. He asks wife to stop crying and son from lecturing. His understanding is that nobody has ever argued and faulted with him so far. Devasimha tells him that sidekicks, dependents and cronies never go against the master.

Devasimha: If you had a daughter, and if son-in-law had walked out mid the way marriage, then you would have understood the pain of the father and the daughter.

Venkaiah: I know I am not that naïve. If I had a daughter, I would not have waited like your father-in-law for request. I would have thrown five times more than that they had asked. Are they only one to give dowry? Every family of a daughter would give. This is a custom. Dowry is a tradition.

Devasimha: Dowry…dowry… someone started this evil practice for his selfishness; others followed it for their profit. Earlier it was a practice, then a custom, after few years it became a tradition.

Venkaiah: Oho…

Devasimha: Aha…then, why the weight is given to groom's father and punishment to the bride's father? Is it a fine charged by the society to the girls born in this country? Or is it a punishment given by the God?

Annapurna: Hubby! What is this gainsaying? And you?

Venkaiah: You back your son and calling mine gainsaying? How dare he accuses me of selling my son! I thought it was honor to me if people say his son has got so much dowry. Otherwise, who want this silly dowry? He is just a little boy. How dare he speaks and damages my honor?

Devasimha: Honor? Is this honor? Is it honor to bring son just before tying knot? Is it honor to challenge to find another girl for son? Is it honor to ruin the life of that innocent girl? Is it honor to fix another marriage to me? Bloody, honor.

Mother, those who think they have honor, why don't they think of doing honorable things?

Venkaiah: Do you see what your son is saying? He says I have no honor and nobody praises me for my deeds.

Devasimha: Let anyone think anything, I am declaring my decision. If I ever take a wife in this life, that is only Sujatha whom I tied *kankanam* and I pressed with my foot against hers.

Venkaiah challenges that he would see how that girl would step in his home. Devasimha addresses his mother that if not Sujatha, she would have no daughter-in-law forever. But,

Venkaiah is affectionate to his son. Since his son did not have meal, he too skips it. Annapurna feels she is between devil and the deep sea.

During *Nagulachavithi* Sujatha and Subhadra go in serach of an anthill to worship the 'snake god'. Devasimha comes there and informs them his determination. Sujatha too tells the same. Subhadra blesses them.

Balaramaiah is hasty to get his sister Sujatha married. His concern is how can they keep an unmarried girl at home. His father is of the opinion that they must have patience in this regard. He tries to moderate his son expressing what would he answer if the family of Meesala Venkaiah sends for Sujatha. Balaramaiah declares that he would not send his sister with them even if they fall at his feet. He adds that there are many who are ready to marry her and his friend Mallaiah Dora, richest peasant of the 'Pargana', is coming to see Sujatha for a match the next day.

Mallaiah Dora along with his follower Bhattumurthi is travelling on bullock cart to see her. He is enthusiastic but arrogant. He is singing on the way. Devasimha is going his home on his bullock cart in the opposite direction to Mallaiah Dora. Devasimha is sleeping on the cart and the bullocks themselves are taking the way. They do not know each other. The arrogant Mallaiah Dora whips Devasimha while both the carts are crossing for no reason. Devasimha wants to teach him a lesson. He takes his cart 'u' turn and chases Mallaiah Dora. He beats Mallaiah Dora and kicks him into the canal. Mallaiah Dora who is in mud postpones his match seeing.

Rangaiah is trying to please and impress his mother Chukkamma. She understands that he is trying to deceive her to romance with his wife. A woman with kid in the arm happens to wish Sriramulu. She informs that she was also married along with Laxmi and has given birth to a baby. Sriramulu recalls his daughter. He thinks it is a curse to be born as

daughter to a poor man. He decides to pay the dowry. His son Subbaiah whose leg is not yet fine asks his father to sell house and pay dowry. But, Subbaiah's wife Rama cries saying where would they reside along with children. Her prime concern is her children. Sriramulu determines to work hard and save money. He works to load bullocks. He faints there and is dreaming like bringing his daughter to festival and giving gifts. Seeing his anguish to pay dowry, the middle peasant at whom he is working offers him Rs. 4,000. Sriramulu knows that the man has saved money for his own daughter's marriage. Hence, he refuses to take it. But that man with heart gives him the money saying his daughter's marriage can be done even one year later but Laxmi's life is more important at this juncture. Sriramulu thanks him. He thinks that man has given life to Laxmi. He declares, "If not in this life, I will repay my gratitude even as a dog in your house in my next birth".

Sriramulu sees his daughter. He is pained by the blains on her palm. He hands over Rs. 5,000 to Chukkamma. Now, Chukkamma sharpens her argument. She wants interest on the dowry amount as it was supposed to be paid during the marriage itself. On this pretext, she does not send Laxmi with her father. Rangaiah is a mute spectator. He is helpless though wants to help father-in-law and Laxmi. Sriramulu returns home without Laxmi.

Achaiah informs Venkaiah that Devasimha has been roaming other side of the river where Sujatha's village is situated. His doubt is that Bhadraiah family has taken him into confidence. Annapurna is of the opinion that it is no wrong for a man to visit in-law's home. Venkaiah thinks it is dishonor to him and how shameless is his son. He proclaims even the crow that comes from their home should not arrive in his home. Annapurna murmurs Achaiah is mischievous.

Devasimha throws a fruit to the window of Sujatha. She smiles. He jumps and ties the knot and declares she is now officially his wife. Sujatha bursts into tears with happiness. Savitri witnesses it from window and sighs with relief. He leaves early in the morning.

Some neighbor women go to Chukkamma's home to invite them for a program. They see Laxmi and her clothes dirty. They do mockery of Chukkamma for being well dressed despite her age where keeping Laxmi dirty despite her youngness. Laxmi happens to tear sari with bit negligence. Chukkamma beats her for criticism from villagers and tearing sari. She does not even provide her meal. Rangaiah gets angry and wants to counter the harassment but is scared of mother. For Chukkamma even brinzal is cockroach to harass the daughter-in-law.

Bhadraiah and Balaramaiah leave for guarding the crops at night in the farm. It is usual for peasants during harvest season. While going they alert Subhadra to take care of the home. They do not know that she is equally happy along with Sujatha to invite Devasimha. Devasimah arrives in. Devasimha and Sujatha are happy and pleasant.

Chukkamma's atrocities against the daughter-in-law are boundless. She now locks her inside a room at night without providing meal. The sympathetic and affectionate husband of Laxmi tries to feed her with sweets through window. He studied some poetry also. He recalls what a poet has said about the tears of a woman. He recites to her "If tears drop from a woman, there will be a calamity". The small noise also wakes Chukkamam. She scolds the son and beats daughter-in-law. Devaiah wants to intervene but cannot. Since, both father and son are afraid of Chukkamma, they both scheme to steal money from home. But, the key of money box is with Chukkamma. Rangaiah does it. He buys some men with that money to play a drama. Next morning, they enter Chukkamma's premises introducing themselves as ambassadars of Sriramulu. They say Sriramulu has sent an amount of Rs. 1116, which is much more than the interest that he has to pay. She is happy to take. They say they came to

take their master's daughter in palanquin and her son as a dog wagging its tail. Their point is that they have bought her son so he must be like a dog to them. Rangaiah pretends to be rejecting their proposal.

Rangaiah: No, I will not come.

Ambassador: You have been sold off. We have bought you by paying money with interest. If you do not come with us, we will break your bones.

Ranjaiah: Beat me if you have guts.

Ambassador beats him. Chukkamma is unable to digest her son being beaten but is helpless. She asks the villagers to react. The ambassadors question them too what were they doing when Chukkamma was harassing daughter-in-law. They take away Rangaiah forcefully by beating.

Chukkamma: How dare you to beat my son in front of myself?

Ambassador: He is your son? No, he has bought some cattle in the market. If he does not follow us, we would tie him and take away.

They call Laxmi out. Chukkamma is hasty in sending her with them to escape her son from beatings. Laxmi takes blessings from both father-in-law and mother-in-law (by touching feet of them). They take Laxmi in Palanquin and make Rangaiah walk. Chukkamma expresses her anguish to her husband that her son has been forcefully taken away. Devaiah shows her the money that they brought. He wanted to teach her that she sold her son for money. Money came and son has gone.

Sriramulu, father of Laxmi, is sleeping. He dreams to have seen Laxmi.

Sriramulu: (intra communication) The father unable to pay dowry does not deserve to enter daughter's home. I am a stone hearted man who has no affection. I am not a human. He recalls what his wife had told him while passing away. The soul of her is now reminding her same.

Soul: Hubby! I am leaving her as a motherless girl in your hands. Marry her in a good family. Promise me to see to it that she will not face any problem. I am dying with that hope.

Sriramulu: (intra communication) I am a useless man who could not keep a promise. I am responsible for all these troubles. Only death can bring relief to this life.

He is moving out. His son holds him and gives him confidence saying that his leg in now fine to work. He says they can, now, work hard, pay off the interest and bring Laxmi home for festival.

Subbaiah: Father! Isn't it my responsibility too to keep the promise I gave my mother? My leg is fine now. Let's work hard together. Let's eat frugal meals and save to pay the dowry's interest. Let's keep our honor.

Rama (w/o Subbaiah): Honor? What honor? If you spend every penny only to clear off your sister's dowry, how will you run this family and pay the debts? On what surety that person lent you Rs. 4,000? Isn't it the house? Where will these children, who are already suffering from short of meal and cloth, stay if we lose this house also? What will happen to them? Will it be honorable to you if they beg on streets? Is it prestigious for you if I work as a maid servant for livelihood?

Subbaiah: What are you blabbering? Get inside.

Rama: Today you will not keep quite if I do not go inside, tomorrow if I am inside, the money lenders will not keep quite.

Sriramulu: That is also true. My life is hopeless and incompatible. No festival, no fun. I cannot buy a dress for my granddaughter and a toy for my grandson. Neither can I keep my daughter happy nor assure daughter-in-law. It is your fate to cry because of my hopelessness. Instead of living a miserable life, it's better to commit mass suicide. Death will liberate these useless lives. That is boon given by the God to us. Come, let's all die together. He moves forward shouting, "no dowry, no interest, no life at all…". Laxmi and Rangaiah reach encountering him. He cannot believe it. Rangaiah thinks all the family came out to invite Laxmi and him. Sriramulu is relieved.

Mallaliah Dora goes to Bhadraiah's home for bride seeing. He is being given company by Balaramaiah. They are having fruits. Bhadraiah is smoking. Mallaiah Dora lectures on smoking and its effects. Balaramaiah orders to send betel leaves. Subhadra, his wife, brings. He scolds her and tells her to send the leaves by Sujatha. He wants his sister to be seen by Mallaiah Dora. Sujatha unwillingly brings. Balaramaiah introduces her to Mallaiah Dora. Bhadriah does not like it. He feels irritated to hear about another marriage for his daughter. He asks her to get him some water. He wants her to leave from Mallaiah Dora. Balaramaiah suggests his father to fix a date for betrothal. Bhadraiah says he himself would intimate if it is the case. Mallaiah Dora and his sidekick Bhattumurthi misunderstand his words and decide to stay back. Sujatha is weeping in sad. She is consoled and assured by Subhadra that she would not let her any disturbance between Devasimha and her.

Devasimha jumps to the first floor. Thinking it is Sujatha, Mallaiah Dora tries to romance with him. Devasimha also pretends to be Sujatha but later Mallaiah finds. They both fight. The noise awakens others at home. Balaramaiah happens to injure the head of Devasimha. Bhadraiah educates Balaramaiah that Mallaiah Dora had entered the room when Sujatha was alone before marriage itself. Balaramaiah, now, throws him out scolding he is a traitor. Meanwhile, Sujatha goes out of home and jumps into a canal to commit suicide.

Chukkamma, after her daughter-in-law left home, is unable to do household work by herself. Devaiah sings a song for her conveying the message, “As you sow so you reap”.

Devasimha is on bed. Bhadraiah and the family find Sujatha missing. Bhadraiah and Annapurna find Devasimha is missing. Annapurna is also sick depressed of it. Venkaiah is feeling bad for his son’s missing and his wife’s illness. A girl found in the canal happens to be brought to their home by some people. She is fainted. Annapurna identifies her as Sujatha, their daughter-in-law. She gets sadder and expresses her agony and angry with her husband Venkaiah. Annapurna is weeping while speaking.

Annapurna: Tell me! What drove such an innocent girl to take this extreme step? Tell me, why did a son who never looked straight into the father’s eyes left this home? Tell me, aren’t you responsible for all these developments? Have you realized your mistakes at least now? Tell me, have you understood that heart and love is greater than hypocrisy? Tell me! Tell me!

Venkaiah sets out with realization. He is searching for Achaiah manipulated him for all these developments who misled him since dowry matter and finds him on ‘Rachabanda’ making fun of him with others. *Rachabanda* is an open arrangement in the middle of any village in Telugu region of India where all the elders of the village sit on it discussing various things casual and official as well. It is built with stone around a palm tree. He catches him and expressed his angry. He beats him black and blue. Achaiah pleads to forgive him saying he is regretting. Venkaiah forgives him and goes home. Sujatha comes into consciousness. She finds she is at her in-laws’ home. Annapurna expresses to her how she could not help her. She says, “Poor girl! We have done injustice to you”. Sujatha says, “No, mother-in-law. Devasimha was always near me. He came for me with love”. She by showing auspicious thread reveals that he tied it. She tells that her brother injured him when he had come in

rescue of him. She also reveals that all that she wanted to commit suicide was due to the humiliation meted out to him by her brother.

Bhadraiah, enraged to hear that his son was injured, collects his men and a convoy of bullock carts goes to Bhadraiah's home. He brought Annapurna and Sujatha also. Bhadraiah apologizes for everything. Bhadraiah scolds his son for breaking the marriage, for ruining Sujatha's life and for still keeping the relatives outside the home. Balaramaiah regrets. Two families meet. Meanwhile Devaiah, Rangaiah, Laxmi and Chukkamma also reach there. They are happy. Chukkamma is regretting for harassing the daughter-in-law for dowry.

Rangaiah: Mother! Tell about the bad experiences of demanding for dowry from brides.

Chukkamma: Family gets split. Son and daughter-in-law who are supposed to enjoy the life would face troubles. I have learnt lessons.

The movie ends.

Reflections of Dowry and its ramifications

The title of the movie *Varakatnam* itself denotes the theme of the movie. Dowry is the central theme and its social consequences are the sub themes. Social consequences reflected in the movie are impoverishment of the natal family of woman, subjection of woman to domestic violence due to non-payment of dowry and hypergamy. Hypergamy was considered to be order of the day with regard to the institution of marriage.

Rajni Palriwala observes, "Hypergamy, the marriage of a woman into a family belonging to a clan or a sub- caste of slightly 'higher' status than her own, was an important feature of this complex. The ideology of hypergamy, tied to the caste system, meant status asymmetry between the affinal groups, such that the relation between dowry and hypergamy may be seen as an exchange of goods for an increase in the status of the bride's family.

Dowry and hypergamy were also tied to the 'upper' caste ideology, which entailed seclusion of women, their exclusion from productive work, their categorisation as economic burdens as well as status asymmetry between husband and wife. Dowry helped 'ease' the entry of women into their marital homes. While in material form and content as well as the social groups among whom it is found dowry has changed radically, it continues to carry with it this ideological complex".[236]

As discussed earlier dowry created class within the caste in India. The economic condition of the bride's parents was to match the market value of bridegroom. Bhadraiah's family is rich enough to make a marital relationship with Meesala Venkaiah who is considered a rich peasant. We can infer that still Bhadraiah's family is less rich than that of Meesala Venkaiah. Meesala Venkaiah being misled by his friend Achaiah expresses to Bhadraiah his wish to see the amount of dowry just before tying of the knot. Bhadraiah is showing it in hard cash. Bhadraiah's son Balaramaiah feels offended and expresses his anger on Venkaiah for doubting his family's ability to pay the promised dowry Rs. 50,000. It is humiliation to his family. Since the bridegroom who was rich was a commodity of high demand in market, not only a high dowry was expected but also the groom's kin can call the tube to which the bride's kin have to dance. Balaramaiah's anger offends Venkaiah's ego that he is the father of the bridegroom. The patriarchal society has taught him to have upper hand in every sphere be economic or social over the brides' kin. He breaks the marriage on the wedding stage when almost all the customs to be performed have already been performed except tying knot. Balaramaiah also declares that he would get his sister married within a time of fillip.

[236] Rajni Palriwala, "Reaffirming the Anti- Dowry Struggle", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 24, No. 17 (Apr. 29, 1989), p. 943.

Siwan Anderson observes: "The social consequences of this increase in dowry payments are severe. The sums of cash and goods involved are often so large that the payment can lead to impoverishment of the bridal family. This has a devastating effect on the lives of unmarried women, who are increasingly considered burdensome economic liabilities. The custom of dowry has been linked to the practice of female infanticide and, among married women, to the more obvious connection with bride burning and dowry death, that is, physical harm visited on the wife if promised dowry payments are not forthcoming".[237]

The institution of dowry paved customs and tradition advantageous to the bridegroom's family and disadvantageous to the bride's family. Dowry, which had developed during the 20th century especially from Second World War, imposes an unconscionable burden on the bride's family. Apart from dowry, the bride's family was supposed to follow certain conditions like satisfying the groom's kin by organizing wonderful dances of nautch girls.[238] Previous night of the wedding, the bridegroom's kin were satisfied by the dance of nautch girls arranged by bride's brother Balaramaiah. It was a practice followed by the upper class people only. The same day another Rangaiah is going to marry Laxmi but no dance of nauthc girls is organized. Even the dowry promised to Rangaiah is Rs. 5,000 whereas it is Rs. 50, 000 to Devasimha, son of rich peasant Venkaiah. In the beginning of the movie it is indicated that Bhadraiah - Venkaiah families are rich and Rangaiah - Laxmi families fall in middle class. The bridegroom Devasimha is brought in Palanquin whereas Rangaiah is brought in bullock cart.

Marriages were supposed to be performed by the bride's kin. It was supposed to be conspicuous of grand event. This led to the impoverishment of the bride's family in the case of middle class. The natal families of brides used to fall in debts by borrowing money to pay

[237]Siwan Anderson. "Why Dowry Payments declined with the Modernization in Europe but are raising in India", p. 271.
[238]M.N. Srinivas. *J. P. Naik Memorial Lecture, 1983: Some Reflections on Dowry*, pp. 10, 24 &28.

dowry, which led them to become poverty ridden.[239] Soon after the marriage, Chukkamma starts harassing Laxmi as she could not bring the promised dowry. The already poverty ridden Sriramulu's family gets pushed into more impoverishment when he borrows money to pay dowry. His son Subbaiah's leg is broken. Subbaiah himself has a wife, daughter and a son. The family is not in a condition to buy dress for the kids. Nevertheless, their priority is to pay dowry in order to protect Laxmi from domestic violence.

One of the noteworthy ramifications of dowry was that it was affecting the kin and affinal relations.[240] As already discussed, the affinal relation between the families of Venkaiah and Bhadraiah are severed. And the same emerges with the families of Rangaiah, son of Devaiah and Sriramulu. Devaiah's wife Chukkamma subjects her daughter-in-law to domestic violence. She even beats her in front of her father, Sriramulu that is pain staking to him. Chukkamma disrespects him when he goes to see his daughter. He is not allowed. The reason is dowry.

Girls grow up sensitive to the fact that their marriage can mean the ruin of natal family.[241] Laxmi, though cannot see her father, talks to him from behind the compound wall asking him not to impoverish their family in order to arrange dowry. She is ready to face subjection of domestic violence whatever maybe the pain but cannot see natal family being ruined. The tragic conversation between father and daughter is so effective that any audience would burst into tears. The pathos with relevant dialogues is beautifully constructed.

Sriramulu: Daughter! Why were you born to a poor father who cannot afford to pay dowry? In this dirty world where money has more value than humans, you lost happiness in both parental home and in- law's place.

[239]Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu. *Sweeyacharitramu.* p. 358-359.
[240]M.N. Srinivas. *J. P. Naik Memorial Lecture, 1983: Some Reflections on Dowry,* p. 8.
[241] Rajni Palriwala. "Reaffirming the Anti- Dowry Struggle", pp. 942- 944.

Laxmi: My sorrow is not that father. I am sad for being unable to offer my father even a glass of water.

Sriramulu: Don't worry dear, I will come again. I will bring the promised dowry. Don't feel sad for not inviting you for the festival. Don't think even in dream that your father has forgotten you, a motherless girl. I will bring dowry next time by whatever hardships. I will pull you out of this trouble.

Laxmi: Father! I, as the daughter-in-law to this family, would have to face everything be it hardships or comforts. But, I cannot bear to see you being subjected to humiliation for the deed you gave birth to me. Take it as I too have passed away like my mother.

One of the ramifications of dowry is domestic violence. The woman failing bring dowry is subjected to domestic violence by the in-laws. One interesting point we find is that it is not the husband who harasses but the in-laws and especially the mother-in-law in many of the early Telugu movies that go around the issue of dowry. The reason is that the 1950s and 1960s society was still undergoing the huge ideological transformation. Youth was the target of this sweep. The cinema represented the youth as ideal and sympathetic to the odds faced by the woman. Simultaneously it was perceived that the uneducated mothers-in-law were the remnants of the old patriarchal system, which they had come across. They had the idea that as they had brought dowry to the same family so the daughters-in-law must.

The movie, *Varakatnam* represents and exposes the domestic violence against a daughter-in-law by the mother-in-law which is one of the ramifications of dowry. Laxmi whose natal family was not in a condition to pay the promised dowry Rs. 5,000 is subjected to domestic violence by the mother-in-law Chukkamma from the day one. Laxmi has to do all household work like cleaning house, cooking, cleaning utensils and washing clothes. She is kept dumb. She cannot have intimacy with her husband. The very purpose of marriage is

denied to her by Chukkamma. Laxmi's husband Rangaiah and his father though sympathetic to Laxmi are mute spectators of Chukkamma's harassment. Chukkamma does not want intimacy of Rangaiah and Laxmi until the dowry is paid. When Laxmi's father comes to visit her, Laxmi is not allowed to see her father. Chukkamma's harassment goes to peak when Laxmi's father Sriramulu goes to visit her without dowry in the hand. Chukkamma assults Laxmi physically in front of her father. Chukkama is a shrewd woman. For everything, she blames and chides Laxmi. Our purpose of study is not served if we blindly demonize Chukkamma but the social environment of the period. Chukkamma was a product of the patriarchal traditional value system in which mothers-in-law are masters. She took it for granted that she has authority over the daughter-in-law and her body. She was oriented by the contemporary social norms and customs.

As already mentioned, the movie not only directly addressed the contemporary social problems[242] to the public but also it created ideal roles, which propagated reform ideology. *Varakatnam* propagated against the dowry and exposed its ramifications directly. Some roles like Devasimha and Rangaiah were ideal youth who went against the traditional dowry evil and propagate among the contemporary youth to discard dowry. They taught lessons to the conservative patriarchs like Devasimha's father Venkaiah and Rangaiah's mother Chukkamma. Venkaiah eventually is transformed, thanks to his wife and son Devasimha. At last, the depression of his wife and missing of his son brings change in him. Chukkamma is taught a lesson by her husband and son. Once her daughter-in-law is taken away, Chukkamma is unable to look after the household work. She is tired. She is recalling and regretting for her daughter-in-law who was doing this entire domestic household work.

[242]Gollapudi Marutheerao. "Telugu Cine Katha Parinama Dasalu", in Muddali Raghuram (ed.), *Aravaiyella Telugu Cinema: Vyasa Samputi*, Hyderabad: Kinnera Publications, 1994. p. 42.

The songs have played a key role in this movie to sensitize the public. When the marriage of Devasimha and Sujatha is stalled midway the wedding ceremony, a song is heard from background simultaneously showing the bullock carts of bridegroom going back and the sad face of the bride. The song endeavors to sensitize the society by exposing the dowry and its ramifications. It tries to awaken the society to avoid evil traditions practiced for generations. It questions the tradition. It exposes the ineffective laws, Dowry Prohibition Act of Andhra Pradesh, 1958 and Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 by Government of India. It questions the credibility of the ideal society, which just proclaims the morals and ethics but does not follow in deeds.

Is it? Is it our tradition?

The evil practice sunk deep in this society since many generations

Is it this?

Should innocent girl's lives be sacrificed to the claws of devil of dowry?

What is the use of making laws?

What is the use of promulgating edicts?

When it cannot drive away the raising hood (selfishness)….

When it cannot respect women who are epitome of patience….

No use in reading the epics…

No use in quoting morals and ideals…

Morals must be followed

And shown in action….

It must be able to wipe out the tears

Of innocent helpless girls…

The song was written by C. Narayana Reddy and sung by Ghantasala. The song was admired by the contemporary Telugu youth.

The movie revolved around only the dowry and its ramifications. Its ideological orientation fits in the framework of the reform movement during colonial period. It is not away from the early reformers who advocated for partial liberation of the women. They had sought the women to be liberated from social evils but not from traditional value system. One interesting thing to note is the reflection of *devadasi* system in the movie. We see a dance program by *devadasis* performed the previous night of Devasimha's marriage. The *devadasi* dance was part of traditional marriages until recent period. Veeresalingam himself who was against this practice had to succumb to the pressure of public to allow *devadasi* dance during the procession of first ever widow remarriage he was organizing in 1881 in Rajamundry.[243] Chilakamarthi in his autobiography (1940s) writes that the practice of arranging *bogam mela* (dance program by *devadasis*) during marriages was still, very much present.[244] Veeresalingam's autobiography, *Sweeyacharitramu* extensively talks how important was the *bogam mela* in marriage celebrations of colonial Andhra.[245] Ayyadevara Kaleswararao writes the fact that there was a *bogam mela* arranged during his marriage.[246]One of D. V. Narasaraju's maternal uncles arranged Bhogam Melam (dance programme by dancing girls) for his wedding celebration. [247]

Atta Okinti Kodale (1958)[248]

Subbarayudu is head of a rich family. His son Raghu is studying in city. Subbarayudu is a righteous person whose habit is reading *Puranas*. He is unable to bring a compromise between his mother and wife. Fight between wife and mother is normal. Due to a fight

[243]Kandukuri Veeresalingamu (Research & Foreword by Aripiral Narayana Rao), *Sweeya Charitramu*. p. 148. Also see, Kandukuri Veeresalingamu. *Sweeyacharitra-I,* 1982. p. 135. In Kandukuri Veeresalingam (Footnotes by Akkina Ramapathi Rao), *Rajasekhara Charitramu: Navala,* p. 217.
[244]Chilakamarthi Laxmeenarasimhamu. *Sweeyacharitramu.* p. 358.
[245]Kandukuri Veeresalingamu (Research & Foreword by Aripiral Narayana Rao), *Sweeya Charitramu*. p. 76.
[246]Ayyadevara Kaleswararao. *Navyandhramu: Naa Jeevithakatha.* p. 21.
[247]D. V. Narasaraju. *Adrustavanthuni Atmakatha*, p. 79.
[248] The movie was directed and produced by Tilak; music by Pendyala; starred by Girija, Jaggaia, Prameela, Ramanmurthy, Suryakantam, Ramanareddy, Hemalatha, Perumallu, etc.

between his wife Thayaramma and his mother Parvathamma, Parvathamma leaves for her relative Rangaiah's home in nearby village.

Sobha is the daughter of a late Judge. Her mother Sundaramma, a shrewd woman, has shifted to her native village after her husband's demise. Her son Chandram is immersed in music and has no interest in the household affairs. Sundaramma does not allow Chandram's wife Laxmi to live with them as the promised dowry was not paid by Laxmi's family. Laxmi's father (Rangaiah who has given shelter to Parvathamma) is not in a position to pay. Hence, Laxmi is staying with her parents.

Sobha and Raghu are studying in same college in the city. They both are educated and rationale to the social issues. While travelling in train back to their villages, they come to know that theirs are neighbor villages. In confusion, their luggages get exchanged. Both of them realize the mistake after reaching homes. Raghu goes to Sobha's village to exchange the luggage. They decide to meet on the bank of canal nearby their villages the next day. Sobha, in the name of visiting temple, goes to temple and happens to take part in resolving an issue between a woman and her daughter-in-law. She suggests the daughter-in-law to be respectful to mother-in-law. Raghu's mother Thayaramma also happens to see the issue and suggests the mother-in-law to deal with daughter-in-law with love and care. Thayaramma gets impressed with Sobha for her timely and rightly intervention. She wishes to have her as daughter-in-law. She shares her wish with her husband. Subbarayudu doesnot accept the proposal in the beginning as he has given word to have his friend's daughter as daughter-in-law. He realizes that Sobha is the same girl and hence he accepts. Raghu is happy as his parents have their own reasons for wishing Sobha as their daughter-in-law.

Raghu goes to Rangaiah's house to invite Rangaiah's family and bring his grandmother Parvathamma his home. He sees Laxmi and finds out that Sundaramma is not

allowing her home until she brings dowry. He also realizes that Laxmi's husband Chandram does not have sense of happenings and also he is a puppet in the hands of Sundaramma.

When Sobha's brother Chandram along with a priest goes to Raghu's home to decide the wedding date, Raghu says that until unless Chandram takes Laxmi his home, he would not wed Sobha. Being told of this, Sundaramma would rather want to break the alliance but is not ready for bringing Laxmi home **without dowry**. Sobha declares to Sundaramma that she would not marry anybody else except Raghu. So, in an inevitable condition, Sundaramma allows Laxmi into home. Raghu weds Laxmi. Fifteen acres of land had already been written in the 'will', in favor of Sobha by the family. Hence, no dowry issue erupts in Sobha's life.

Sundaramma subjects Laxmi to domestic violence. Laxmi not only bears harassment but also is loyal to the family. She makes Chandram's life alive (otherwise, he is always listening to music). Chandram gradually develops ambition and aspiration for life. Laxmi gives birth to a male baby.

Thayaramma deals her daughter-in-law Sobha with love and care. Meanwhile, differences erupt between Thayaramma and her mother-in-law Parvathamma due to which Parvathamma shifts to Rangaiah's home again. Thayaramma is eagerly awaiting grandchildren. Sobha becomes pregnant. Raghu receives a letter from Chandram that Laxmi has given birth to a male baby. Sobha out of happiness runs to snatch the letter from Raghu but slips from steps. As a result, she happens to be aborted. Disappointed Thayaramma starts expressing anger and agony on Sobha. Raghu notices it and sends Sobha to her natal family and leaves for city in search of a job.

Sobha cannot bear with the domestic violence against Laxmi by Sundaramma. She criticizes her mother for being biased in loving and caring. She realizes that any woman in the society would look after her daughter with love and care but harass the daughter-in-law.

She gets a letter from husband that he has got job and brought grandmother to city. Meanwhile, she happens to witness increased violence against Laxmi by Sundaramma. She questions her mother's violence against Laxmi. She decides she can no more stay there witnessing domestic violence. She starts to city to find her husband. Chandram tries to stop her but in vain. Sobha while leaving teaches Chandram to be a man who would take care of his wife against domestic violence. She joins Raghu and Parvathamma.

Laxmi receives a letter that her father has a leg in graveyard and he wants to see Laxmi and e grandson atleast once before dying. Laxmi is immersed in grief but Sundaramma says Laxmi must not go to see her father, as he did not pay dowry. Chandram lets her go. Sundaramma does not let her take the baby. Laxmi alone goes and visits her father. Her father in grief that he could not see grandson dies soon. Chandram is determined to get Laxmi rid of domestic violence and knows that only way to do so is to live separately from his mother. He asks Laxmi to go to his mother and goes to city in search of a job. Laxmi goes to Sundaramma. Sundaramma does not allow her inside home. Laxmi requests Sundaramma to atleast handover her child. Sundaramma is adamant. She even locks Laxmi in a room. The child is crying. Laxmi manages to reach the child. Sundaramma finds her and scolds. Laxmi questions Sundaramma why she is subjected to separation from father, from husband and still why Sundaramma is trying to separate her from her child. It is all for dowry. Laxmi forcefully takes away the child.

Subbarayudu is unable to bear with the harassment of Thayaramma. He declares that he would bring back his mother Parvathamma. Thayaramma declares that she will not allow. Subbarayudu goes to city and meets his mother, son and daughter-in-law. Meanwhile Raghu receives a letter from Sundaramma inviting him and his wife to stay with her and have all the property. Laxmi happens to go to Raghu's home in city. She is received. Subbarayudu frames

a plan of action to teach lesson to both Sundaramma and Thayaramma. He makes Raghu part of the plan.

Subbarayudu takes his mother Parvathamma home. He knows that Thayaramma is scared of ghosts. Parvathamma pretends according to plan. Parvathamma pretends to have been possessed. Thayaramma being afraid of this allows Parvathamma to live.

Chandram happens to reach the office of Raghu and gets a job. Raghu and Sobha left for Sundaramma's home and Chandram and Laxmi stay back in Raghu's home. Raghu tells Sobha that according to his father's plan he needs to be a drunkard and disturb Sundaramma. He does the same. Unable to bear the disturbance, Sundaramma runs away from home.

Subbarayudu also pretends to have been almost possessed. Scared Thayaramma runs away from home and goes to temple. Both Sundaramma and Thayaramma blame each other's children and fight. At last for mental piece they visit a sage (*Sanyasi*). Sage is none other than Subbarayudu. He teaches them through a *Harikatha*. The translated song is as below:

Have you learnt lesson?

Have you learnt lesson?

Have you got expiation by jumping into

A river which is between the heaven and hell?

Your arrogance went to such an extent

That you scolded mother-in-law black and blue

Your own deeds pushed you into river,

Have you learnt a lesson atleast now? (Thayaramma)

You subjected son and daughter-in-law to harassment

And sent out of home

And brought daughter and son-in-law home

The same son-in-law has become a drunkard

And chasing you out,

Have you learnt a lesson now? (Sundaramma)

Women should always be loyal and humble,

Look after everybody equally and

Should never forget that they are also

A daughter-in-law

Because she is the reason for the world

The peace at home depends on her

If she does not forget that she is also a daughter-in-law

The world would live happily like in the heaven

Have you learnt a lesson?

Both Sundaramma and Thayaramma have realized how their deeds disturbed their families. They seem to have regretted and want to resolve the issues and live a happy life with the family. The conversation goes as below:

Sundaramma: Swami! How do you know all our matters?

Thayaramma: He seems to be a holy man.

Subbarayudu (sannyasi): I am not only a holy man but also a man who opens the eyes of those who are in arrogance and power. To see the faces of the people like you is a sin.

Thayaramma: Swami! We committed grave sin. What is the path for repentance?

Sundaramma: Yes. I will never harass daughter-in-law and will never scold my son. I have committed sin. We will do in accordance to your saying.

Subbarayudu: You have become my disciples. I am giving you two gifts. Take them. Thayaramma's mother-in-law has been liberated from being possessed. Sundaramma's son-in-law has given up intoxication. You both go to Thayaramma's home. You will see all the members of both the families will have gathered.

They go home and see all the members of both the families. Thayaramma tenders apology to her mother-in-law Parvathamma. Parvathamma feels happy and forgives her. Thayaramma tenders apology to daughter-in-law Sobha. Sobha reciprocates apology. Sundaramma also tenders apology to her daughter-in-law Laxmi for domestic violence. Laxmi is happy that Sundaramma has got realization now. Raghu feels happy that the family would flourish in peace and tranquility then onwards. Meanwhile, Subbarayudu joins them and reveals his disguise and its relevance. He opines that even Lord Shiva had to take ten incarnations to win. Being his devotee, Subbarayudu also had to act in one disguise to resolve the issues in two families. Both the families are happy at the end.

Reflections of Dowry

The original story was taken from Reddy Kollady's play. In the play the crux of the story lies in a woman meeting a young woman at a temple and takes her as her daughter-in-law.[249]The music director Pendyala Nageswara Rao is popular in bringing up tragedy tunes.[250] The story and dialogue writer Pinisetty is an experience writer. He wrote the story and dialogues for fifteen movies in Telugu.[251] He is the founder of Palakollu Adarsa Natyamandali.[252] The lyricist Arudra shows optimism even during tragedy.[253] He uses colloquial language in his lyrics. He is skilled in integrating a message by the end of a

[249]*The Hindu,* 'Friday Review'. June 26, 2015.
[250]*Roopavani*, May, 1964. p. 10.
[251]*Roopavani*, October, 1960. p. 13.
[252]*Ibid*. p. 14.
[253]*Cinema Rangam*, April, 1963. p. 44. Also see, *Vijayachitra*, October, 1975. p. 7.

lyric.[254] He is known for his social satires in his lyrics.[255] All the lyrics in the movie touch upon the plight of the women in the contemporary society. Six out of twelve lyrics talk about the dowry and its ramifications. The movie as a whole represents the socio-economic reasons behind the plight of women in society.

The movie, *Atta Okinti Kodale* revolves around the socio-economic relations within families. Since the Hindu society has joint family as a social unit and its traditional culture includes patriarchy and patrilocality, brides had to move to bridegroom's home. Social relation between daughter-in-law and mother-in-law was in most of the times bitter as the mother-in-law tried to show authority. The practice of dowry became an important factor in the relations between the bride and in-laws since twentieth century. In the movie, the reason behind conflict between Thayaramma and her mother-in-law Parvathamma is for authority over the home. Thayaramma, who has been showing love and care for her daughter-in-law Sobha, suddenly changes her attitude by showing anger and disappointment with her as she has been aborted for an accident. Thayaramma's aspiration of seeing a grandchild turns into disappointment due to the abortion. Therefore, The conflict of Thayaramma with her mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is social but not economical. Sundaramma's case is different. The reason for her hatred against daughter-in-law Laxmi is economical. In the beginning, she does not allow Laxmi to her house as the promised dowry was not paid. When Raghu puts a condition that he would marry Sobha, daughter of Sundaramma, only if Laxmi is brought home by Sundaramma, she inevitably brings her home but subjects her to domestic violence.

The educated Sobha questions and expresses anger against that domestic violence meted out against Laxmi but in vain. She, instead of fighting it, leaves for husband's house, as she cannot bear the violence. The traditional system was so strong even after India's

[254]*Ibid*. pp. 46-47.
[255]*Vijayachitra,* October, 1975. p. 7.

independence that the educated too could not fight social evil tooth and nail. Uneducated, spiritual and traditional man, Subbarayudu, is creative enough to smoother the historical trajectory of dowry. The movie does not fight against dowry, but advocates for a negotiation with it by creating a space for dowry when it is affordable to the bridal family. Sobha as a bride takes fifteen acres of land as dowry to in-law's home as her family is able to afford it whereas Laxmi cannot do so as her family cannot afford dowry.

The movie depicts the issue of domestic violence faced by the daughters-in-law in contemporary society. The songs are effective in mirroring the ramifications of dowry. Newly married couple is divided. Even if daughter-in-law is brought home, she is subjected to domestic violence. The very first song, *attaleni kodaluttamuralu*, itself conveys a message that the daughter-in-law who does not have mother-in-law at home is the luckiest. It is a Telugu saying, which evolved out of experience. Mothers-in-law were the most authoritative within the family matters. They used to harass the daughters-in-law to exhibit their authority both social and economic. That is how Sundaramma harasses Laxmi throughout the movie. At last, she and Thayaramma are taught a lesson by Subbarayudu, Raghu, Sobha and Parvathamma.

According to Subbarayudu's plan Raghu and Sobha shift to Sundaramma's house and Raghu harasses Sundaramma by pretending that he is always drunk. On the other hand, Parvathamma gives re-entry into Subbarayudu's house by pretending that she is possessed to scare Thayaramma. The disgusted Sundaramma and scared Thayaramma leave home, visit a temple and are taught a lesson. At the end, both of them realize their mistakes, regret, tender apology to their daughters-in-law and live a happy life.

Thus, the movie tried to protect the traditional culture by modifying it. It did not negate the modernity completely. It opposed modern trend of demanding for dowry but

supported it when it affordable by the bridal family. The theme in the movie is similar to *Pelli Chesi Choodu* and *Varakatnam.*

The movies, *Pelli Chesi Choodu*, *Varakatnam* and *Atta Okinti Kodale* exposed the institution of dowry and its ramifications. *Pelli Chesi Choodu* taught that both the affinal families would be disturbed by the institution of dowry. The very purpose of marital life is disturbed if marriage becomes economy. Plight of parents of daughter was well depicted. The patriarchy was discussed, debated and negotiated. *Varakatnam* questioned patriarchal society, exposed the evil tradition dowry and tried to sensitize the pubic of the domestic violence against the daughter-in-law. It is a reflection of the worst effects of dowry on bride's natal families. *Atta Okinti Kodale* talks about the contemporary patriarchal value system which suppressed the young brides for dowry. The movie exposed the role of mothers-in-law in upholding patriarchal value system by harassing daughters-in-law for dowry. Nevertheless, the movies, same as the reformers, did not convey any alternative idea of revolutionary change. The aspect of total liberation of women was not touched. They wanted a better life for women but within the patriarchal value system where the family plays key role but is headed necessarily by a male. The movies seem to have shouldered the responsibility of postcolonial socio-economic reconstruction agenda- a call given by the national leaders led by Jawaharlal Nehru.

Chapter V

5. Telugu Cinema and its Advocacy for Joint Family

Post-colonial Telugu cinema interrogated and investigated colonial modernity that caused disiontegration of Hindu traditional joint family. The trends in joint family during colonial and early post-colonial India were towards individualism leading to breakup of joint family and were well represented in contemporary Telugu cinema. This study exploreed the reasons for such trends and tried to answer why the Telugu cinema not only represented them but also advocated for joint family. We would, first, give the synopsis of two selected movies *Kutumbagauravam* and *Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu* which represent most of the relevant issues of our study. The institution of traditional joint family and its disintegration process would be discussed in detail and then, the representation of joint family in the two movies would be synchronized in order to illustrate our point.

Kutumbagauravam (1957)[256]

Gopal is the eldest son of the *zamindar*. His stepmother is Rangamma. Rangamma's son is Pratap (a bachelor) and daughter is Bala (child). Satya is the wife of Gopal. All are living with wealth and tranquility in unity. They have three more members in the family. A cow called *Kalyani* and her two sons (bulls) *Ramudu* and *Bheemudu* are members in the family. *Kalyani* is as good as Gopal's mother. He calls her 'mother' as he is an orphan, was fed by her milk when his mother had died. Rangamma and Gopal are as much cordial as mother and son. Rangamma's younger brother Sankaraiah is the manager of the estate and stays with the family. Since *zamindar* has grown older, his eldest son Gopal is looking after the affairs of the estate.

[256] The movie was directed and produced by B. S. Ranga; music by Viswanathan and Ramamurthi; starred by N. T. Rama Rao, Savitri, Kannamba, E. V. Saroja, Rajanala, Padmanabham, etc.

Sankaraiah has been eying on the *zamidary* as it gives honor and respect. Sankaraiah is a power monger and money lover. Pratap loves to be jobless and roaming around the village. He has been introduced to all lumpen habits like smoking *beedi*, drinking soda, chewing *beeda*. His life is full of roaming along the streets with rowdies and indebtedness resulting in bringing defame to the family. He has a rowdy friend, Apparao.

Sankaraiah demands the peasants to pay the debts on time. The peasants request to spare them for that year to pay off the debts as there were no crops in the previous year. Sankaraiah is adamant. Gopal respects their request and acknowledges their contribution to the *zamindar*'s exchequer. Gopal after collecting rents from those who could pay is on the way back home that night. Sankaraiah conspires and contracts with the robbers on fifty-fifty share to plunder Gopal who is going with a lot of collection. The collection seems to be made from those who could pay. Gopal fights the robbers and reaches home safely with the help of *Ramudu* and *Bheemudu*, his bullocks. The means of transport in Telugu country was bullock cart until recent times. Gopal shares to *Kalyani* about the role of *Ramudu* and *Bheemudu* in escaping from the robbers.

A song is sung by both Satya and Bala advocating the importance of united family (including cow and bulls) and *Pathi bhakti* (devotion to husband). There is no other heaven than a happy and united family.

Challani Samsaram Anuraga Sudhasaram

Haayagu Kapuram Ade Santhoshapu Theeram

Peddalu Choope Darini Nadichi Chinnavarinee Premaga Penchi

Manasulu Kalise Maa Ille Madhurananda Mandiramele

Aasa Theera Apyaayatha Meera Aadarinchu Pathiye Manasara

Pathi Sevalalo Paravasamayye Sathi Jeevithamu Sarthakamagule

Gomathaa Maa Jeevanadatha Maa Mahalaxmi Mangalasaritha

Kalakaalam Poojinchedamamma Ellapudoo Mamu Dayaganavamma

The Zamindar is bedridden. He takes promise from Gopal to keep the family united, to protect its honor and to safeguard the peasants' interest. He considers the entire village as his family. Gopal promises. Sankaraiah keeps on trying to poison the mind of Rangamma to bring differences between her and stepson Gopal but Rangamma, knowing his tactics, warns him that she would throw him out. Failing at Rangamma, Sankaraiah resorts to deceive zamindar. Sankaraiah suggests zamindar to divide the property before he dies. The zamindar entrusts Sankaraiah himself to get a 'will' written dividing the entire property equally between two sons and the legitimacy of chieftainship of the zamindar to Gopal, the eldest son. Will is read by Sankaraiah in front of elders from the village. While reading out, zamindar and Gopal ask Sankaraiah to skip all the matter. They did not know that Sankaraiah was manipulating the will in favor of zamindar's second son, Pratap and against Gopal.

Pratap is introduced to a nautch girl called Mohana through his friend Apparao. Mohana lures him and desires to get his family's jewelry. She tells him that she wants to please him with her dance performance by wearing that jewelry. Pratap tries to steal the jewelry at night from his father's room. His father catches him and the angry and agony takes his life. Now the fatherless family is headed by Gopal. Sankaraiah succeeds in his persistent attempt to poison his sister's mind against Gopal when Gopal tries to lend money (Rs. 2000 for all the peasants for their festival) to the peasants against the will of Sankaraiah. Rangamma thinks Gopal is distributing the 'collective' money of the joint- family to enhance his personal image. She resists Gopal giving money to the peasants. Gopal instead of using the money of the family borrows from the money lender and gives the peasants. Rangamma feels annoyed as her order was not followed. She, now onwards, keeps chiding Satya for

everything without reason. She scolds Satya while Satya is distributing betel leaves and turmeric to *Muthaidu* women (women who are not widows) as it has been the practice of their family. She humiliates her in front of all those women saying Satya can organize such events by bringing money from her natal family. While Bala and Satya playing a small game with a ball, the portrait of late *zamindar* is broken by Bala. Here also, Rangamma scolds Satya. On a festive day, Satya adorns *Kalyani* (cow) with jewelry. Rangamma shouts at Satya and removes the jewellery. The enraged bulls *Ramudu* and *Bheemudu* (offsprings of the cow) chases Rangamma. Sankaraiah beats them with stick to avenge. Gopal scolds him for beating mute animals.

Sankaraiah advices Rangamma to sell off *Kalyani*, the cow, to the butchers. Rangamma expresses the future consequences to Sankaraiah. The eldest son is the king or owner of the estate. She tells him that Gopal may throw them all out of the estate. Sankaraiah reveals the secret that the 'will' of deceased zamindar has given all rights over the estate including jewelry and bungalow to Pratap and only 200 acres of barren land to Gopal. Getting confidence from the 'will', Rangamma sells off Kalyani for Rs. 50 while Gopal is not at home despite request and the resistance from Satya. Satya being helpless rushes to Gopal who is tilling the land.

Gopal rushes to the butcher's place. He embraces Kalyani. He cries out knowing from the butcher that he bought it to kill and sell its skin. He sensitizes the butcher by preaching him how important a cow is….

Govunu Champadam Mahapathakam

That is our Kamadhenuvu, Kalpatharuvu

Daani Jeevithamantha Manake Dharapostundi

Aakulalumulu Thini Mana Pasipillalaku Palu Istundi

Dani Panchakam Gomutram kooda Manaku Panchi Pavanam chestundi

He expresses his affection with *Kalyani.* He tells him how it became mother to him. Gopal brings *Kalyani* back home from the butcher and asks Rangamma to pay back the money to the butcher. Rangamma orders Gopal not to cross her words and acts. Nevertheless, Gopal says he cannot leave Kalyani as she is as good as his mother. The butcher wants his money back. Rangamma does not give back the money. Satya offers her bangles to the butcher in lieu of money. The butchers do not take the bangles. They respect them and leave asking Gopal to send money later. Rangamma being hurt is angry. She thinks she has been subjected to negligence and despotism by Gopal. She shouts at Gopal.

Rangamma: Do you think I would tolerate your continuous negligence and despotism against me? If this is the case, it is impossible to you and us (Rangamma and her two offspring Pratap and Bala) to stay together.

Gopal: Mother…do you know its consequences? (He cannot think of division of the family even in dream).

Rangamma: I know very well.

Satya: Aunt! We did a mistake. Forgive us. (Gopal and Satya know that Rangamma's ego is hurt)

Gopal blames Sankaraiah for poisoning Rangamma's mind against him. Gopal slaps Sankaraiah during this intense argument and in turn, Rangamma slaps Gopal. Rangamma tells Gopal that the mother-son relationship between them does not exist anymore. She also tells that they cannot live together anymore. She asks him to send for village elders to witness the division of the family and property.

Gopal: Mother! What a danger? Have you forgotten the promise made to my father? (He had promised his father that he would keep the family united, protect its honor and safeguard the peasants' interest)

Rangamma: (With full of angry) If the 'will' written by your father were implemented, his soul would rest in peace.

All elders from the village come and the 'will' is being read out. The 'will' gives all rights over the estate including jewelry and bungalow to Pratap and only 200 acres of barren land to Gopal. The elders oppose it by blaming Sankaraiah guessing he must have deceived the zamindar to get authority over the estate. They also opine that he has played against Gopal who is hindrance to his cupidity and atrocities. Sankaraiah blames Gopal that he is encouraging them to murder him. Gopal does not bother about all this discussion as he is still in shock about the division of family. Gopal still wants to convince his stepmother to keep the family united. The elders insist for equal shares for both the brothers. They want to hear from Rangamma about her opinion. Gopal does not want his mother facing the public regarding this issue. He tells them that he alone would talk to her in her room and come back. He goes to her.

Gopal: Mother! Forgive me if have committed mistake. Father desired that we would stay together forever. If we bring disrespect like this to the family, his soul would weep.

Rangamma: It is impossible to change my opinion in the name of your father.

Sankaraiah: (Being in the threshold responds to Gopal) there is no injustice in the 'will'. Your father may have thought these hundred acres of land is sufficient for you as you are efficient and powerful.

Gopal: I do not want anything. It is hostile to all of us if the property is divided. If required, I would leave from here just as I am right now (*kattubattalatho*).

Rangamma: Why? To bring blame to me? To propagate that stepmother has done injustice to you? We do not require anything more than that mentioned in the 'will'.

Gopal, with grief inside that his father's wish is going to be broken, addresses the elders requesting to follow the 'will'. He does not want blame to even his stepmother in this regard.

Gopal and Satya along with the cow *Kalyani* shift to the barren land given to them. Raghavulu, a close servant, also moves along with them despite the fact that Gopal and Satya cannot pay him for his services. The villagers offer staying for them since the place is deserted and outside the village. Gopal thanks them for their kindness but decides to stay there itself. The villagers elevate hut for Gopal and Satya at his place itself. The villagers compare the context of Gopal with that of Lord Rama who left for forest to keep the word of his father in the epic *Ramayana*.

The moneylender goes to Rangamma's home to collect the amount Rs. 2000 lent to Gopal. Sankaraiah manhandles him and gets him out declaring that they are not accountable for the debt. The moneylender, now, goes to Gopal's hut to collect the amount. Gopal says that he himself was going to see him to borrow some more money. The moneylender says that he would lend money only after the clearance of the current debt. He also degrades Gopal that he has no credit as he has left all property to his brother Pratap. Gopal faces humiliation by moneylender's words. Unable to see humiliation faced by the husband, Satya gives moneylender her bangles and jewelry in lieu of the debt. Knowing the developments Satya's parents come to take away Satya who is facing hardships along with the husband. Her father humiliates Gopal for living in a hut like a poor man.

Gopal: *Namaskaram* father-in-law. How is everybody at home?

Father-in-law: This courtesy is not required now. So, you both have started living here.

Satya: Father…according to the 'will' written by my father-in-law…

Father: Should the people alive experience the hardships for the deeds (mistakes) done by the dead?

Satya: Father! Do not blame my father-in-law. He has no role in this.

Father: So, I have to understand that my son-in-law is the cause for all this. Looks good, Very good.

Satya: Father! It was to uphold the honor of the family even by sacrificing total property.

Satya: You have been seconding your husband's deeds. Using wife's jewelry to clear the debts is also a sacrifice.

Satya: Father! I myself gave away the jewelry to the moneylender.

Satya's mother asks Satya to go with them home. Gopal also tells her that he too feels that her departure is better in this condition. She asks him too to go with her. He refuses to go. Satya's father asks him to go with them and satires meaning that already so many people are eating up at their home and he would be one of them. Gopal feels more humiliated and bursts into tears. Understanding her father's sarcasm, Satya says she would not go with them and criticizes them that they are sharing love with her and humiliation with her husband. Her father says to her mother that it is her fate and let her experience poverty. Her mother tries to give money to Satya but she refuses to take. She takes only '*pasupu kunkuma'* saying that a woman aspires to get only '*pasupu kunkuma*' from her parents.

Unable to bear the separation from brother and sister-in-law, Bala goes to their home along with the bulls *Ramudu* and *Bheemudu*. They feed the bulls with happiness. All of them sing a song advocating a happy and affectionate life given by the joint family.

Anandale Nindali Anuragale Pandali

Andaru Okatai Undali Kannula Panduga Cheyyali…….

Manushula Theere Marinaa

Manalo Kalathale Masinaa

Jagame Challani Snehaseema

Jeevithamantha Punnama!!

Santhoshalu Velise Chotu

Soubhagyala Nelave!!

Sahrudayalu Virese Thavu

Swargam Kanna Viluve!!

Mee Manchi Maata

Mutyala Moota

Aaha Kaliseemelasi Undamaa

Vegasaagi Podamaa!!

Thallee Pillale Kalavali

Ille Kalakalalaadali

Aaduthu Paaduthu Kalakaalam

Aandanga Gadapali!!

The uniqueness of the song is that even the bulls *Ramudu* and *Bheemudu* also give the chorus to the song. Here one point to understand is that the two sons of *Kalyani* meet her

after a formal separation. *Kalyani* is with Gopal and her offspring *Ramudu* and *Bheemudu* are with Rangamma. Gopal leaves Bala and the bulls at Rangamma's home.

Sankaraiah has looted all the money from Rangamma. Rangamma knows it. While giving the left out Rs. 2000 to Sankaraiah, she reminds him that it is the only money she is left with, and asks him the accounts. He says that it was all due to the lavish life of Pratap and himself is innocent. Pratap, hearing this, warns him that he would not spare him if he plays the same trick that he played with his brother Gopal. He tells Sankaraiah that since Gopal is *Dharmaraju* he left the home but Pratap would beat him and throw out. He snatches that last Rs. 2000 also and leaves.

Rangamma is depressed as there is no money to pay the land tax to the government. Sankaraiah reminds her how the entire village is indebted to them. He assures that he would realize all the debts. He subjects the villagers to atrocities like looting all their homes including utensils, animals like cow and bulls. Hence, the villagers deny working in the estate lands despite threatening by Sankaraiah. Sankaraiah declares crop holiday for one year in order to de-employ the villagers. Rangamma expresses her concern that they have no other source of income if crop holiday is declared. Sankaraiah convinces her by assuring to do business in the nearby town. She is convinced to shift the family to town soon.

All the peasants go to Gopal and request him to show a way for their livelihood. They also happen to reveal that Mohana, the nautch girl, has lured Pratap. Knowing that Pratap is addicted to her all the time, Gopal goes to that place, catches him, beats him and takes him home. He takes him to surrender him to Rangamma. He tells Ranagamma that Pratap is ruining the reputation of the family. Rangamma misunderstands him and tells him that her family does not require his chieftainship (authority). She tells that her family knows how to save the reputation of the family.

Sankaraiah borrows Rs. 40,000 from the moneylender keeping all the property and lands of Pratap in surety. He takes commission from moneylender even for this deal too. The moneylender is shocked to witness such a shrewd human being who takes commission on the transactions of own sister. Sankaraiah justifies that he believes in business and takes business as business only. Even if it were his sister's issue, he would not step back to take commission. Raghavulu knowing that Sankaraiah wants to sell bulls buys them for Rs. 600. But Sankaraiah hands over only Rs. 500 to Rangamma. Just before starting to town, Rangamma asks Sankaraiah if there is any chance to cancel the shifting. He convinces her saying a forwarded step should not be taken back.

Sankaraiah: Sister! Take this Rs. 500. The last bondage has also concluded. (Their bond with the bulls)

Rangamma: Yes. All the bondages have expired. We, like orphans, are leaving for some unknown place by deserting everything including home and land (in grief). Sankaram! Cannot we cancel the shifting? Leaving both mother and native village is….

Sankaraiah: No use sister. A forwarded step should not be taken back. It is inevitable to start.

Mohana expresses her wish to Pratap that she wants to be married by him. He makes a fake promise and leaves from there assuring her that he is going to prepare for the marriage. He is also taken to the town along with the family. Mohana is no more seen now onwards. In the town, Sankaraiah buys a drama company called *Vikata Vinoda Vilas Sabha* from his friend for Rs. 20, 000 invested by Rangamma.

Gopal tries to dig a well in his land for cultivation. However, his energy and money are wasted in futile effort. No water is seen in the well. Instead of water, a rock is found and Gopal is disappointed and depressed. He needs to blast it by paying much money. Satya

offers her *mangala sutra.* Gopal refuses to take it as she had already given her bangles for *Kalyani* and jewellery to moneylender. She convinces him to take and he gets the rock blasted in the well. Now the water is found. Simultaneously, Satya gives birth to a female baby. All the villagers along with Gopal and Satya celebrate both the events.

Rangamma tells Sankaraiah that she has no money to buy even medicine to Bala who has been ill. She blames that he invested her Rs. 20,000 and has not brought any profit. Instead, he has been taking money and at last, she is left with no money. Sankaraiah informs her that the drama company is shortly going to be closed down. Meanwhile he asks if any letter has reached home. She gives him. He reads and informs her that the moneylender has sent the auctioning notice to her son, Pratap. She holds his color and demands him to give her back the money invested in the drama company. He says he cannot and tries to slap her. Pratap enters. Sankaraiah leaves. Pratap follows him to catch. Sankaraiah has sold the company for Rs. 30,000 and is starting to the village to buy out the estate in auction. Sankaraiah's friend who had sold the company to him has been the working partner of the company. He demands his share in the profit that came from the selling of the company. Sankaraiah refuses to give pay him anything. A physical fight happens in which Sankaraiah beats his friend making serious injuries. Pratap reaches there. Sankaraiah manages to put Pratap inside the room where his friend is bleeding and locks from outside. He also informs the police and leaves for the village. Police arrest Pratap. His mother Rangamma is outside the police station for her son. Her daughter Bala is at home without medicine.

Gopal reaches the police station and tries to convince the Inspector of Police that his brother cannot commit such a criminal offence. The inspector does not believe him. Meanwhile, the Inspector gets a call from the hospital and gets informed that the patient got consciousness and told that it was Sankaraiah who injured him. Pratap is released. Gopal, Pratap, Rangamma and Balu start to village.

Sankaraiah participates in the auction to get the zamindar's total property which include bungalow, jewelry, 100 acres of land etc., which actually worth one lakh rupees. Finding the cupidity and atrocities of him, the villagers collect all their jewelry and money to defeat him. They win the auction for Rs. 35,000 on the name of Gopal. A disappointed Sankaraiah is on his way back to the city in bullock cart. Gopal's bullock cart encounters him and a physical fight happens between both of them. The police reach on time and arrest Sankaraiah on the criminal charges for injuring his friend.

Rangamma apologises to Gopal and Satya. She realizes the advantages of joint family. Rangamma, Satya, Balu, Gapal, Pratap, Kalyani (cow), bulls (Ramudu and Bheemudu) and the newly born baby re –unite and start living together.

***Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu* (1961)[257]**

A joint family owns 60 acres of land. Pattabhi Ramaiah (elder) and Sundara Ramaiah are brothers and their wives are Soubhagyam and Ravanamma respectively. Pattabhi couple is childless. Sundariah couple has two sons, elder is Kistaiah and younger is Raghu. Kistaiah's one hand and one leg do not function as he happened to be subjected to current shock while trying to get back his kite on the power supply pillar. Raghu is studying in a town. Pattabhi is head of the family. His wife Soubhagyam is jealous of Ravanamma as she thinks all the property would be inherited by Ravanamma's sons. Pattabhi has a lots of love for Kistayya (disabled), his brother's son. Sundariah is the obedient younger brother of Pattabhi.

Ravanamma brings home Radha, an orphan young girl seen at weekend fair, to provide her employment as a maid. All the family members include her in the family except Soubhagya.

[257] The movie was directed by Tapi Chanakya; produced by Sri Saradhi Studios, Hyderabad; music by Master Venu; starred by N. T. Rama Rao, Relangi, S. V. Ranga Rao, Haranath, Perumallu, Allu Ramalingaiah, Savitri, Suryakantham, Girija, Hemalatha, etc.

Soubhagyam thinks it is unnecessary to keep an orphan at home. Kistaiah, an innocent and wholehearted young man, is very happy that his mother has provided an orphan girl home.

Soubhagyam has a nephew (brother's son), Ranga who wants to be called Raja, and niece (brother's daughter), Janaki. He is coming from Rangoon. Raja wants to live a lavish life. He is dominating. He under looks at slum people. He thinks the Indians have no civic sense. He consoles his sister Janaki whose scooter was dashed by a motor cyclist. He has an assistant called Hanumanthu. He writes to his aunt Soubhagyam that he is going to visit her home. Informed of this by Soubhagyam, Pattabhi expects all bad at home. Soubhagyam wants them to be with her family, as they also have nobody else.

The village is celebrating *Sreeramanavami Thirunala*. Many youths are singing and dancing. Raja along with Janaki and Hanumanthu enter the village in the car. The car stops as the road blocked due to dancing. Watching the dance, Raja thinks the rural people do not know what is dance. According to him without 'man holding woman' is not a dance at all. He tries to teach them how to hold a woman for dance for which he is beaten by villagers led by Kistaiah and his father Sundariah. They did not know that Raja is their relative.

Raja, along with Janaki and Hanumanthu reach Soubhagyam's home and informs Soubhagyam that some people beat him. Kistaiah and Sundaraih also reach there. Raja tells Soubhagyam that it was, they who had beat him. Soubhagyam scolds them. They apologize for the mistake. They say it happened without knowing who Raja is.

Raja tries to molest Radha and gets beaten by her. Feeling humiliated, Raja and Janaki are starting to leave from there. Janaki gets shocked to see Raghu coming home. She tells Raja that it was he whom she had fought with for hitting her scooter. Raghu comes to know that Janaki is his cross cousin kind. He apologizes for the mistake. Both get attracted. He

requests them to stay back. Janaki convinces Raja. They decide to stay back. Pattabhi is in search of match for Raghu.

Kistaiah and Pattabhi feel insecure expecting Raja and Janaki would spoil Raghu. Kistaiah requests Raghu to keep away from Janaki. He tells him that Raja would spoil him. Raja and Soubhagyam wish to get Janaki married to Raghu. Soubhagyam wants to divide the family and property. Raghu and Janaki are in love. Kistaiah wants to have breakfast with Raghu. He informs him that their mother has prepared breakfast and asks him to come. Raghu says he is coming. Raghu's response is different. He does not take Kistaiah seriously. Janaki calls him to the first flour. He goes there, spends some time and tells them that his brother has been waiting for him to have breakfast. They manage to engage him. Kistaiah awaiting Raghu starts to get Raghu. While he is walking upstairs, Soubhagyam stops him. Soubhagyam does not want any disturbance between Raghu and Janaki. Kistaiah throws her. She falls down. She now wants to get separated from Sundaraiah's family. Her pretext for division of family is that she is being continuously harassed, isolated and neglected. She wants the property also to be divided. Raja suggests that "China Wall" to be constructed between the two portions of Pattabhi and Sundariah. By seeing her emphasis for division and harassment to Pattabhi, Sundaraiah tells Pattabhi for division. Sundaraiah is in grief. He knows he and his brother Pattabhi cannot bear the separation.

She threatens to commit suicide if division does not happen. Pattabhi Ramaiah, at night, tries to convince her not to insist on division in the family. Kistaiah and Sundaraiah happen to listen to the discussion. They get grief.

Pattabhi: Soubhagyam! These are not hands but legs. Our dynasty lived together and united for generations. We have never seen living separately and any differences. We have been joint family. Why do you disturb it by dividing? Do not insist for it Soubhagyam.

Soubhagyam: Are you throwing blame on me? Isn't it you brother who signaled for partition?

Pattabhi: He wanted partition. He accepted for partition by seeing your ruckus. He thought partition is better to avoid any ruckus that brings defame to family. Has he ever countered my words or acts till date even at the age of becoming a grandfather? He is *Dharmaraju* for sure. Why do you trouble such an obedient and gentle man? Do we have children? All that we need is cloth and bread. We will never face shortage of them. However, I exercise the authority of family. If you want, you take it over.

Soubhagyam: You cannot convince me. Would you partition or should I commit suicide?

Pattabhi: No. Demon. No. I do not prefer even case or courts. All that you want is partition, right?

Soubhagyam: Yes.

Pattabhi Ramaiah goes to the temple to sit and talk to the God. "Oh. God! I have never been aware of courts and cases. I thought you are there for everything in my life. At least, do not separate my brother from me permanently. That is the only my wish". The partition process starts at home. Sixty acres of land, the house and domestic animals are equally divided between Pattabhi and Sundaraiah. Thirty acres of land is given to Pattabhi and another thirty acres of land is given to Sundaiah. Pattabhi and Sundaraiah share collective grief.

Pattabhi: Brother! I was born as the eldest son of the family. I have upheld the honor of family. It is my misfortune. I never thought even in dream that I would live separately and this family would be partitioned during my lifetime only. Brother, for whatever reason, nobody can separate hearts and affections even if two are physically divided. I am promising on our parents' feet that nobody can succeed in it. It cannot happen.

Sundaraiah: Brother! Why do you get grief? Do I not know your heart? I am abided to whatever you do. All that I want is you should not get grief. Nothing but death can divide us brother.

Sundaraiah embraces Pattabhi Ramaiah and vice versa. Raja declares that Raghu, younger son of Sundariah, would marry Janaki and stays at Pattabhi home along with Soubhagyam. So, half of Sundaraiah's share also would go to them. Kistaiah intervenes.

Kistaiah: What? My brother would marry your sister?

Raja: Shouldn't he marry her?

Kistaiah: He is educated. He is wise. I do not believe if he is said to be deserting all his dependents.

Raja: Nobody wants your trust.

Kistaiah now addresses his younger brother Raghu.

Kistaiah: Brother! Do you know how Raja has destroyed our fruitful and joyful family? Do you still believe him? Would you marry his sister? Brother! Please accept the match brought by Peddaiah (paternal uncle that is Pattabhi Ramaiah).

Raghu: Peddaiah is in search of match for me.

Sundariah: If not, for whom?

Raghu: To whom? I know it is for this handsome (Kistaiah). You are trying to get this physically handicapped married by deceiving the girl by showing me as the bridegroom.

Ravanamma, being enraged for calling Kistaiah as handicapped, slaps Raghu continuously. Kistaiah, Sundaraiah and Pattabhi try to convince Raghu not to be trapped by

Raja but in vain. Raghu declares that he would marry Janaki. Sundariah catches hold of Raghu's color, shouts at him "do not see me even at my death", falls down and goes into coma. A background song follows. It is relevant to mention here. The song reminds the audience how Kaikeyi, by listening to Mandara, sent Rama and Laxmana to forest, how the Kauravas, by believing deceiving words of Sakuni, troubled Pandavas and how the fruitful and joyful family is being divided and partitioned due to the others poisonous preaching. It tries to educate that 'to be united' leads to convenient and happy life where as 'to be separated' leads to grief.

The partition happens and a wall is elevated between two portions separating both the families. Raja suggests Soubhagyam to prefer Registration marriage, which would be convenient, as they need not invite all the kith and kin. It is unnecessary expenditure. However, Soubhagyam expresses her wish to perform marriage with a grand reception so as to make an eye sour for Ravanamma.

The marriage is performed. Kistaiah requests Raghu to take blessings from his parents but in vain. Sundariah who has been in coma comes into consciousness, finds the wall, and sinks in grief. He tells his wife that a son, who is educated, has got married by his own and now the innocent Kistaiah is left at home. She expresses her wish that a girl who would look after him same as a mother should be married to him. Radha is suitable to Kistaiah, according to Ravanamma. Kistaiah does not want to spoil the life of Radha as he is a handicapped. Radha, who is listening to all this conversation, comes out and expresses her wish that she wants to marry him. Sundaraiah informs Pattabhi about Kistaiah's marriage. Kistaiah tells his father that he would invite Raghu for the marriage.

Kistaiah: Father! Let me invite my brother Raghu.

Sundaraiah: Raghu? He would not come. Even he need not come also.

Kistaiah: Father! How can't I invite my sibling? You invited your brother, didn't you? Why not me?

Sundaraiah: Are you both in same frequency as we, brothers, have been? Though we had no education, the goddess earth only taught us ethics, norms and fraternities.

Kistaiah: Whatever you say, I would invite my brother for sure.

Raghu receives a post that he is selected for a manager job in an engineering company. Kistaiah goes to him and invites for his marriage.

Raghu: It will not be possible for me to attend. You can leave now. Uneducated, uncivilized.

Kistaiah: Brother! Is it all that your education taught you? You are unable to be rational. You do not take your own decisions. You nod to others same as an ox. Your education taught you to neglect parents soon after you got married. It taught you to avoid your father while he is fighting death? Is it what your education taught you? Is it your civilization?

Raja intervenes and humiliates Kistaiah.

Raja: *Orey Kuntikulasam* (Orey Physically handicapped)! You are jealous of your brother getting married to a rich girl, right?

Kistaiah: No. Not at all but because he is distancing from us, getting ruined through wrong companies.

Raja: Since Raghu is going to earn money, country brute Kistaiah is trying to befriend with him.

Kistaiah: Cheeh. Shut up. Do you think I think like you? We would rather prefer to fast but we, not even our dog, do not depend on the one who do not look after the parents.

He is humiliated and got out. Marriage of Radha and Kistaiah happens. Pattabhi bears the expenditure of the marriage without the knowledge of Soubhagyam. Raja takes Rs. 25, 000 from Soubhagyam to buy Bombay Show (dance, music and circus) in Hyderabad. Due to the pressure from Soubhagyam. Pattabhi signs the promissory papers keeping all the property as surety.

Raghu, leaving his wife in the village itself, joins the job in Hyderabad. Raja also goes to Hyderabad and buys Bombay show. The show's star dancer is Anarkali, daughter of Manjoo. Manjoo was Basavamma who was *Bajjee* seller in Bandar bazaar ten years back. Anarkali was Ankamma.

Janaki and Radha become pregnant. Both of them deliver baby boys. Raja borrows Rs. 20, 000 from Raghu. Though hesitates, Raghu brings that money from the Company. Show starts and first week's collection is one lakh rupees. Raja keeps the money with Anarkali with a condition that she must be obedient to him but not to her mother Manjoo.

Pattabhi Ramaiah sinks in loads of happiness listening to the news that Kistaiah's son has been named 'Pattabhi Ramaiah'. Radha is hurt as Soubhagyam keeps on degrading him saying he is handicapped. She wishes to get Kistaiah's handicap cured. Raghu's son is named as 'Sundara Ramaiah' by Pattabhi Ramiah.

Gopalam, a relative of Sundaraiah, happens to inform that a doctor in Hyderabad is popular in curing handicaps. While Raghu is moving to Hyderabad along with his wife and son, Soubhagyam asks Janaki to remind Raja of the debt as interest is increasing and the money lenders are pressurizing for payment.

Radha and Kistaiah visit the doctor in Hyderabad. Doctor tests Kistaiah and tells him that he needs to take medicine for twenty days and then he will have to undergo current shock

treatment for ten days. He also advises them to stay in his nurse's portion. Son of nurse is Rangadu who is a servant at Raghu's home.

Janaki intimates Raja to clear the debt of Raghu who has brought it from the Company. Raja assures her that he would clear. He also tells her that this week Show has not happened due to heavy rains, strikes and one day as Anarkali has to 'Pooja'. He is tensed. Raghu warns Raja by putting a stipulated time.

Radha writes to home about the doctor's advices and their safe staying and all. Money lender pressurizes Pattabhi Ramiah for money. Sounhagyam goes to Raja, who lives in Hyderabad. She tells that she needs money immediately to clear the debt. Raja assures her. Manjoo informs Raja that Anarkali is suffering from stomachache exactly when he is in dire need of money. Soubhagyam discovers Manjoo as Basavamma. They both resort to physical fight.

Kistaiah happens to see Raghu's son brought by Rangadu to a park. Raja too happens to see Kistaiah who is with his son at the same place. On doctor's advice, Radha informs Kistaiah's parents to be with him during current shock treatment. Pattabhi Ramaiah, Sundariah and Ravanamma start to Hyderabad.

Kistaiah is admitted to hospital. Raghu informed by Rangadu calls upon Kistaiah. The financially frustrated Raja is advised by the elephant man to arrange a kid so that elephant will play with the kid. He adds that this play during the Show would yield a lot of money to Raja. Raja's man kidnaps Kistaiah's son. Raghu pressurizes Raja for money. Raja asks Manjoo to return the money. Manjoo and Anarkali escape with the money by using Hanumanthu. Raja kicks out his assistant Hanumanthu. Raghu and Raja beat each other. Janaki and Soubhagyam intervene and stop them. Raja takes away even the jewelry of Soubhagyam to perform the last show.

Hanumanthu happens to see Radha and informs that Ranga (Raja) is going to use her kid in the circus where elephant would play with the kid. Radha rushes to Ranga's place. Since Radha has not been attending him at hospital, Kistaiah, despite his last days, the shock treatment is not taken, goes home and comes to know the abduction of the kid. He suspects Ranga as the culprit.

Radha finds the kid at Ranga's place but could not rescue the kid. Ranga locks her inside and takes the kid to the show. Kistaiah also finds Ranga but Ranga manages to escape from him. Pattabhi Ramaiah, Sundariah and Ravanamma reach Hyderabad and find that Kistaiah's son is abducted. They are also on the search. Sundaraiah and Ravanamma happen to see Soubhagyam who is madly searching for Ranga. Hanumanthu who happen to see them informs them that he is going to get the Police and asks them to go to circus place to find the kid. Pattabhi Ramaiah is tensed about Kistaiah and is in search of him.

Radha escapes from the locked room. Raghu wants to take revenge on Raja. Janaki tries to stop him. However, Raghu starts. Pattabhi Ramaiah meets Janaki and is informed by her that Raghu has gone to take revenge. Both of them rush to the Show.

Kistaiah who has been chasing Ranga manages to get inside the show and Radha enters simultaneously. They both see each other. Kistaiah happens to touch current wire and the Show loses power. Kistaiah gets cured and manages to protect the boy by beating Ranga. The police arrive on time and catch Ranga/Raja. All the family members meet. Ranga repents for his greed for lavish life which disturbed the joint family. Kistaiah asks the family to forgive Ranga. The family forgives him. The movie conveys a message through Kistaiah.

Kistaiah: …

Aunt Soubhagyam wanted authority over the family.

Brother Raghu succumbed to *saradalu*.

Cousin Ranga wanted to live a rich and lavish life.

Everybody wanted to live the best but did not know right way to choose.

At the end, wall between the portions is demolished in which Ranga also participates. The family is now again happy in unity.

Hindu Joint- Family:

Faith Robertson Elliot says: "In modern Western societies, 'the family' denotes a unit of consisting of a husband and wife and their children.[258]" This definition is similar to nuclear family. The family which is consisted of husband, wife and their dependent children can be termed as a nuclear family.[259]

A discourse on the Hindu joint- family and its disintegration debate has been a raw and relevant entity for both the academicians and the governments. This chapter would draw attention to the definition of Hindu joint-family. There has been a great deal of debate around if Hindu joint- family is disintegrating or disappearing giving a way to nuclear families. If so, what is the causation? We will try to answer this question by using various sources. This chapter's major focus is to answer what were the causes for representing the Hindu joint-family by the Telugu cinema and why it had to advocate for joint-family.

The Hindu joint family was for the first time given a systematic shape by Sir Henry Maine.[260] The Joint-family has been an integral part of Hindu society in India. It is visible in

[258] Faith Robertson Elliot. *The Family: Change or Continuity?* Atlantic Hightlands: Humanities Press International, INC. 1986. p. 4.
[259] *Ibid*. p. 6.
[260] Patricia Uberoi. *Family, Kinship and Marriage in India,* Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994. p. 31.

Epics, is mentioned in Dharma Sastras and other religious and secular literature. Has joint-family been alike everywhere in India? David Mandelbaum answers:

> India is so vast and her people seem so variegated that any generalized statement of the family in India must be subject to numerous exceptions in detail and amendments in local particulars. Nevertheless, it is possible to depict Indian family organization in general terms that will have some applicability to a very large proportion of the Indian population.[261]

Irawati Karve divides India's kinship organization based on geographical pattern namely Northern, Central, Southern and Eastern zones.[262]

Our focus is not much about if joint-family has been alike in India since our study is more Historical than Anthropological. Convinced by David Mandelbaum's understanding of family in India, we would progress by paying attention to definitions of joint-family. The Scholars have sufficiently interpreted and theorized Hindu Family. Various scholars belonging to different disciplines have defined, investigated and interrogated joint-family. It is necessary to mention some of them, which are relevant to progress our study. K. M. Kapadia defines Hindu joint-family as follows:

> The joint and undivided family used to be accepted as the normal pattern of Hindu family. The basis of such a family was that the different members of it should dwell in the same house, take their meals and perform their worship together and enjoy property in common. Common residence and joint

[261] Mentioned in Joginder Kumar. "Family Structure in the Hundu Society of Rural India", in George Kurian (ed)., *The Family in India: A Regional* View, The Hague: Mouton & Co. N. V., Publishers, 1974. p. 48. Quoted by Ross, A. D., *The Hindu Family in Its Urban Setting*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961. p. 6.
[262] I. Karve. *Kinship Organization in India*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Third Edition, 1990. pp. 4-5.

> preparation of food as well as eating together were the external symbols of homogeneity of the family. [263]

Irawati Karve observes: "A joint family is a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked at one hearth, who hold property in common and who participate in common worship and are related to each other as some particular type of kindred".[264]

According to I. P. Desai: "A household can be called a joint family which has greater generation depth (three or more) than the nuclear family and the members of which are related to one another by property, income and mutual rights and obligations. The members may be related collaterally or lineally". He also defines a nuclear family as: "We can call a household a nuclear family if it is composed of a group of parents and their unmarried children or of the husband, wife and unmarried children, not related to their other kin through or by property or income or the rights and obligations pertaining to them and as are expected of those related by kinship".[265] He also classifies joint families into two types based on lineage: Patrilineal and Matrilineal.[266]

Patricia Uberoi[267] observes: "The family is not a mere unit of social structure but a cultural ideal and a focus of identity". In Frieda Hauswirth's words:[268] "In the joint-family, father, brother, their sons and all male descendants remain under the same roof. Girls taken in marriages are added to this group from the outside, while sisters and daughters of the family in their turn leave it to be absorbed as wives into other families. All property except a bride's

[263]K.M. Kapadia. *Marriage and Family in India,* Calcutta: Oxford University Press, third edition, 1966 (first published in 1955). p. 309.
[264]I. Karve. *Kinship Organization in India*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., Third Edition, 1990. p.8.
[265]I. P. Desai. "The Joint Family in India — An Analysis", *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (September, 1956). p. 148. Published by Indian Sociological Society.URL:http://www.jstor.org/stable/42867960 Accessed: 06-08-2016 17:45 UTC.
[266]Ibid. p. 147.
[267]Patricia Uberoi. *Family, Kinship and Marriage in India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994. p. 36.
[268] Frieda Hauswirth (Mrs. Sarangadhar Das). *Purdah: The Status of Indian Women*, London, 1932. p. 99. URL: http://dspace.gipe.ac.in/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10973/28310/GIPE-009533.pdf.

'six-fold property' (mostly wedding gifts and ornaments) is jointly property held under the unrestricted control and at the absolute disposition of the oldest male member of the family".

S. Chandrasekhar defines how a patriarchal joint family takes structural re-adjustment:

> The father, being the oldest and most experienced, is nominally the head of the family. Under ordinary circumstances it is he who controls, guides and directs the whole family, unless he is very old or disabled, in which case the eldest son or the eldest member in the nearest line of male descent- maternal or paternal uncle- takes his place. The mother always has her say. Though grown- up sons live in the family with their wives, the respect and consideration shown by all members of the family to the old mother is very great. And it may be safely asserted that no important measure of domestic concern will be approved or carried out without the final, if formal, sanction of the mother[269].

A patriarchal joint family is always headed by the senior male member. In *Kutumbagauravam,* as long as the zamindar was healthy, he was the head of the family. If at all he becomes bedridden, his eldest son naturally becomes his hereditary successor of both the patriarchal family. When Gopal's father bedridden, he entrusts Gopal the duty of looking after the family and the dependents on the family. Dependents on the family here are the peasants. He promises to keep his wish. In *Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu,* two brothers along with their wives and children are presented. Eldest brother Pattabhi Ramaiah, as the senior most male member, is the head of patriarchal and patrilocal family.

[269]S. Chandrasekhar. "The Family in India", *Marriage and Family Living,* Vol. 16, No. 4, International Issue on the Family(Nov., 1954). pp. 336-342, published by National Council on Family Relations. p. 338. http://www.jstor.org/stable/348439 Accessed: 30-07-2016 22:13 UTC.

In a joint family, though the senior most male was the authoritative head, other members had their own rights and were heard by the head. In *Kutumbagauaravam,* when Gopal becomes head of the family, he considers the opinions of his stepmother Rangamma. But, Sankaraiah has neither rights nor voice in the affairs of the family. In *Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu,* Pattabhi Ramaiah seeks opinions of his younger brother Sundara Ramaiah.

We, by taking different interpretations made by above-mentioned scholars, can draw a conclusion that the characteristic features of Hindu joint- family are, common cooking and common eating, common home, joint property, common rituals and sharing of emotions be it happy or sorrow. Its members are blood relatives and brides taken in marriage to the sons or brothers. Joint families are patrilineal and matrilineal. Mostly, Families are patrilocal and patrilineal[270]. We would deal with patrilineal families as that is the order of the day in Telugu country. This definition matches to families represented in both the movies *Kutumbagauravam* and *Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu.* In *Kutumbagauravam,* the estate's lord, z*amindar*, has two sons. The eldest son, Gopal is born to *zamindar*'s late wife and Pratap is born to the present wife Rangamma. His daughter from Rangamma is Bala who is a child. Gopal is married to Satya who also becomes member of the family through marriage. Rangamma's brother Sankaraiah also stays with them though he is not a legitimate member of the family. Being manager of the estate, he looks after the lands. The cow *Kalyani*, its offspring, *Ramudu* and *Bheemudu* are emotionally attached to the family, and are considered as members of the family. The institution of joint family can be traced back to ancient period and has presence in the Hindu epics The *Ramayana* and The *Mahabharatha*. The aspect of joint family is at once a corporate, economic, religious and social unit.[271] In the movie,

[270] Joginder Kumar. "Family Structure in the Hindu Society of Rural India", in George Kurian (ed)., *The Family in India: A Regional* View, The Hague: Mouton & Co. N. V., Publishers, 1974. p. 43.
[271]S. Chandrasekhar. "The Family in India", *Marriage and Family Living*, Vol. 16, No. 4, International Issue on the Family(Nov., 1954). pp. 336-342. Published by National Council on Family Relations. p. 338. http://www.jstor.org/stable/348439 Accessed: 30-07-2016 22:13 UTC.

Gopal's two bulls are named as *Ramudu* and *Bheemudu*. *Ramudu* is the local name of Lord Rama, the epic hero of *Ramayana*. Bheemudu is an important character of *Mahabharata*. Rama protects the human kind by killing the evils and establishes *dharma* in *Tretayuga*. Bheema plays a vital role in establishing *dharma* during Dwaparayuga. Their names are iconic in establishing good over evil.

The rural rich, in general, tend to have bigger joint families than the rural poor in India. This trend, perhaps, because of more surviving probability of the rich children. The joint-family system had been less prevalent in the lower strata of the Indian social structure. It may have still declined most rapidly.[272] According to K. Eswaran,[273] business and agricultural castes practice greater degree of linkage than castes with other occupations. Here in the movie, Gopal's family is a rich zamindary-cum-agricultural family which owns an estate covering hundreds of acres of agricultural land. The joint-family becomes extended family when Sankaraiah, brother of Rangamma joins the family. Veeresalingam was brought up in a joint family.[274] D. V. Narasaraju also writes that he comes from a joint family.[275]

Structural Changes in Joint Family

The institution of traditional joint-family was disturbed by the colonial modernity and urbanization. As we have discussed, urbanization and elements of colonial modernity; English education, urban employment etc., forced the youth to establish nuclear families by disintegrating joint-families. According to Kapadia,[276] modern education paved way for new

[272] Dharma Kumar. (ed), *The Cambridge Economic History of India, Vol. 2, c. 1757- 1970*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. p. 234.
[273]K. Eswaran. "The Interdependence of Elementary and Extended Family", in George Kurian (ed.), *The Family in India: A Regional* View, The Hague: Mouton & Co. N. V., Publishers, 1974. p. 167.
[274]Kandukuri Veeresalingam. *Sweeyacharitramu.* Chennapuri: Vijnanachandrika Mandali, 1911. pp. 11- 25.
[275]D. V. Narasaraju. *Adrustavanthuni Atmakatha.* Hyderabad: Creative Links Publications, 2006. p. 27.
[276]K.M. Kapadia. "The Family in Transition", *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (September 1959). pp. 68-99. Published by Indian Sociological Society, URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/42864559. Accessed: 06-08-2016 17:25 UTC. pp. 70-72.

avenues of employment which were diversified and multiplied by the Second World War and Post-Independence development and in connection, the increasing urbanization generated nuclear families as the educated youth increasingly shifted from villages. Growth in population could bring tensions in traditional joint-family, as its economic resource was not growing in proportion.[277]

Scholars have debated if disintegration of Hindu joint family happened or not? A group suggested gradual disintegration and another opined that number of joint families was increasing between 1911 and 1961. While Ross attributes the reason for breakup of joint family to the urbanization, Epstein suggests it was due to the shift from subsistence to money based economy.[278] They, according to T. N. Madan, came to this conclusion by taking the data provided by Indian Statistical Census and its successive Commissioners who proclaimed that the Indian joint family is in the process of disintegration. Madan also argues that though some scholars and Indian Statistical Census Commissioners interpreted suggesting breakup of joint family, the same Census data itself speaks loud that the average household had been increasing gradually in period between 1911 and 1961. The average size of household was 4.6 in 1911 and in 1921. It increased to 4.8 in 1931 and registered 5.0 in 1941, which remained stable even in 1951. It became 5.2 in 1961. Orenstein and Kolenda argue that there was upward trend in the size of average household during this period.[279]

We would suggest that there were breakup trends in the joint family during colonial period and post-colonial period due to urbanization, industrialization and increasing tertiary sector. Other reasons were ideological and those which disturbed peace in the joint family. In Chapter II we have suggested that the increase in urbanization was inconsiderable during the

[277] Joginder Kumar. "Family Structure in the Hindu Society of Rural India", in George Kurian(ed.), *The Family in India: A Regional* View, The Hague: Mouton & Co. N. V., Publishers, 1974. p. 45.
[278] T. N. Madan. "The Hindu family and Development" in Patricia Oberoi (ed.), *Family, Kinship and Marriage in India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994. pp. 427-428.
[279]Ibid. pp.428-429.

period before 1970 in Andhra Pradesh. Agriculture was still a major sector contributing to GSDP and employment to the rural population.

The urbanization in Andhra began in the second half of the 19th century. The introduction of Railways, education, more wages contributed.[280] In search of better employment, people from rural areas moved to urban centers. In 1951, the urban population of Andhra Pradesh was 5.4 million (17. 36 % of total population of 31.1 million). By 1971, the urban population grew to 8.4 million (19.31 %) in a total population of 43.5 million. The percentage of urban population in total population increased from 17.36 in 1951 to 19.31 in 1971.[281]

Urbanization in Andhra Pradesh

Sl. No	Year	Total Population in millions	Percentage of increase	Urban Population in millions	Percentage of increase	% of Urban population in total population
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1	1951	31.1	14.02	5.4	47.86	17.36
2	1961	36.1	15.65	6.3	15.76	17.44
3	1971	43.5	20.90	8.4	33.92	19.31

Thus, the agriculture was still dominant contributor to the GSDP. There was no rapid urbanization. The growth of urbanization was just less than 2 % during the period between

[280]V. Ramakrishna. 'Towards Becoming Andhra Pradesh', in R. S. Rao, V. Hanumantha Rao, N. Venugopal (ed.), *Fifty Years of Andhra Pradesh, 1956-2006,* Hyderabad: Centre for Documentation, Research and Communication, 2006. p. 42.

[281]M. C. Swaminathan. 'Development of Andhra Pradesh-An Overview', in R. S. Rao, V. Hanumantha Rao, N. Venugopal (ed.), *Fifty Years of Andhra Pradesh, 1956-2006,* Hyderabad: Centre for Documentation, Research and Communication, 2006. p. 88.

1951 and 1971. The pattern of crops in area also remained more or less constant. The area of cash crops increased slightly and that of the food grains made a little decrease.

Industrial and urban employment was very less in Andhra Pradesh until 1970. While discussing in Chapter II we learnt that both secondary and tertiary sectors were able to provide only 26% of total employment in Andhra Pradesh, which is just one fourth of total employment. This meager percentage of industrial and tertiary employment cannot have much role in breakup of joint family.

Sectoral Distribution of GSDP* and Workforce[282]

Sl. No	Year	Primary		Secondary		Tertiary	
		GSDP	Workforce	GSDP	Workforce	GSDP	Workforce
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
1	1960-61	49.96	74.00	14.10	11.00	35.94	15.00
2	1970-71	50.96	73.40	15.52	11.20	34.25	15.40

- At current prices

We suggest that this meager growth in urbanization, industrialization and tertiary employment cannot have much effect on joint family. However, there was some effect, though negligible, in creating tension in the joint family. We cannot negate the meager effect too. There were some changes in the institution, which caused breakup in joint family. The society and the cinema considered this little disturbance seriously producers of Telugu country. They considered Family as an imperative social institution, which gave stability and

[282]D. Narasimha Reddy. 'Half a century of Travails of Agriculture in Andhra Pradesh', in R. S. Rao, V. Hanumantha Rao, N. Venugopal (ed.), *Fifty Years of Andhra Pradesh, 1956-2006,* Hyderabad: Centre for Documentation, Research and Communication, 2006. p. 158.

security to the society and individuals. The changes were negotiated and family was modified for its survival. Nilika Mehrotra observes,[283] "With the opening of employment in government services and monetization, people left their traditional occupation and moved to cities or towns where jobs are available. Thus, they break away their ancestral place taking their wives and children with them. Since independence, opportunities and diversification of occupations increased".

The Telugu society was also under the same environment by the beginning of twentieth century. Veeresalingam's *Satyavathi* Charitram, a novel, represents contemporary joint family and problems in keeping it in tact.[284] It reflects economic problems in middle class families, differences between mother-in-law and daughters-in-law and among the daughters-in-law.[285] Cinema also could not escape from social realities. The Telugu cinema as a visual narrative and also as an art form took the responsibility of carrying forward the message of unity within the family, suiting the broader ideological framework of Indian State in favor of national unity through reconstruction agenda aftermath the India's independence. In this context were *Kutumbagauravam* and *Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu* made. They appealed to the joint families not to get affected by the modern values but to negotiate them in order to accept good and reject bad. The structure of the movies was constructive to mediate an ideology. The structure can be classified into three parts:

The first part demonstrates a joint family in which family members have been leading a peaceful and cooperative life. The second one is the breakup of the joint family due to either

[283]Nilika Mehrotra. *Indian Social System*. p.17. http://nsdl.niscair.res.in/jspui/bitstream/123456789/239/1/4.5Indian%20social%20system_nilika.pdf.Downloaded on 06 August 2016, 22:07:03.
[284]Akkipathi Ramapathi Rao. (ed.), *Veeresalingam Rachanalu, Mudavasamputam: Navalalu*, Hyderabad: Visalandhra Publishing House, 1996. p. xvi.
[285]Ibid.

economic or ideological reasons and the third one is a realization of the importance of joint family by family members resulting in re-union.

Joginder Kumar[286] broadly divides the reasons for breakup of joint-families into economical and the peace. He also opines that the same motives both economic and the peace are the forces that keep the joint family intact. He suggests that the following reasons decide the fate of joint family.

1. Peace of the joint family is deliberately disturbed to achieve its disintegration. The motive behind such a move, may be said was purely of an economic nature.
2. The joint-family may breakup purely due to economic reasons without disturbing its peace.
3. Peace does not prevail but there is no tendency to dissolve the joint family.
4. Peace does not prevail; therefore, the joint family disintegrates.

The first case is applicable to the process of disintegration of joint family in the movie *Kutumbagauravam.*

Representing Joint family and its Relevance in *Kutumbagauravam*

Differences erupt in joint family when Sankaraiah poisons Rangamma that Gopal is trying to build up his personal image by using the money from joint property. The money had become an essential item by the time India achieved independence. Gopal being pro-peasant wants to help them by issuing them crop loans. Rangamma, his stepmother, poisoned by Sankaraiah, feels insecure that Gopal is using joint property of both Gopal and Pratap (Rangamma's son) to elevate himself in the society. She stops Gopal giving money objecting he cannot misuse joint property. Gopal now borrows money from a moneylender and lends it

[286] Joginder Kumar. "Family Structure in the Hindu Society of Rural India", in George Kurian (ed.), *The Family in India: A Regional* View, The Hague: Mouton & Co. N. V., Publishers, 1974. pp.50-51.

to peasants. This act hurts ego of Rangamma. She now onwards keeps on chiding Satya deliberately to belittle her. This is a deliberate attempt to protect Rangamma's authority over the joint family. As usually, she chides Satya in public and removes the jewellery adorned to the cow, *Kalyani*. Seeing this, the oxen get angry and chase Rangamma. Sankaraiah with this pretext beats them with stick. Gopal scolds him.

The Telugu society respected animals like cow and oxen. Family members used to grieve the death of such animals. D. V. Narasaraju in his autobiography, *Adrustavanthuni Atmakatha*, explains when an ox of his family grew older, they stopped using it in agricultural works. They proclaimed retirement to it. They did not sell it away. Instead, they just looked after it as an old man in the family. The family grieved its death same as it does if any member of it passes away.[287]

Oxen and Cows were as good as family members to farmers.[288] Selling a cow was also one of the reasons for disintegration of family in the movie *Kutumbagauravam*. Sankaraiah provokes Rangamma to sell away the old and worthless cow *Kalyani* not only to show her authority over the family but also to hurt ego of Gopal. Rangamma becomes panic to hear such an idea, as she knows that Gopal will take it seriously as he reveres *Kalyani* as good as his mother. She tells him that Gopal can get them out if *Kalyani* is sold out. Sankaraiah reveals to her how he managed writing 'will' advantageous to Pratap. Rangamma gets confidence. She now deliberately takes the process of disturbing the peace to its height by selling *Kalyani* for Rs. 50. She sells it. Gopal brings it back. She tells him that they can no longer stay together and therefore division of joint family is imperative. Gopal is against the idea. He reminds Rangamma the wish of late *zamindar* to keep the family united but in vain. The joint property is to be divided according to the 'will' written by the late *zamindar*.

[287]D. V. Narasaraju. *Adrustavanthuni Atmakatha*, Hyderabad: Creative Links Publications, 2006. p. 19.
[288]Ibid.

Accordingly, Gopal gets only 200 acres of barren land and cow *Kalyani* and constructs a hut in his land. He starts living there along with his wife Satya and cow. Pratap has a bungalow, jewellery and hundred acres of fertile land.

Joginder Kumar says: "It may happen that the wife starts quarrels with her mother-in-law, sister-in-law, or her husband's brother's wife, etc. Her husband may either remain aloof or take her side. The process continues till the goal of disintegration is achieved."[289] Hence, we can apply Joginder Kumar's first case in the context. Rangamma and Sankaraiah put conscious effort to divide the family. Rangamma having an economic motive initiates a process of dividing the family, as she is aware of the fact that her own son would get the lion's share in the joint property. Otherwise, she was panic to even hear the idea of division. To realize her idea of division of family, she uses selling of cow as trump card. She knows what will happen if *Kalyani* is sold. Gopal would get hurt. She exactly expects and wants it. Gopal gets irritated. Still he does not want to blame Rangamma. He obeys her as good as her mother but blames Sankaraiah, brother of Rangamma, for deliberately bringing differences between Rangamma and himself with hidden agenda. He also slaps Sankaraiah. In turn, Rangamma slaps Gopal and announces for division of family.

The dead (mostly father who had been head of the family) always brings unity among the family members. The unity not only satisfies the dead but also saves honour of the family.[290] Gopal while emphasizing for joint family is rather concerned with the wish of his late father that the family remains united and his own emotions for institution of joint family than economic interest. While dividing property, he says he prefers to move away along with his wife from home but dislikes division of joint property. He says to Rangamma, "I do not need

[289] Joginder Kumar. "Family Structure in the Hindu Society of Rural India", in George Kurian (ed.), *The Family in India: A Regional* View, The Hague: Mouton & Co. N. V., Publishers, 1974. p.50.
[290]K. Eswaran. "The Interdependence of Elementary and Extended Family", in George Kurian (ed.), *The Family in India: A Regional* View, The Hague: Mouton & Co. N. V., Publishers, 1974. p. 171.

anything. Division of joint property is hostile to all of us. I would rather prefer to leave home just as I am". Rangamma replies, "Why? To get blames to me in public that the stepmother has done injustice to you. Nothing more than that written in 'will' is required to us". Gopal has emotional attachment to the joint family. While leaving the home along with his wife and cow *Kalyani*, he addresses *Kalyani* and her offspring, *Ramudu* and *Bheemudu*, "Do not worry that your mother is not with you. We are going through an atrocious phase where mother and children get separated".

We must see it as part of contemporary socio-historical process where the eldest male of the family was gradually losing undisputed authority over the family. K. Eswaran suggests that the education, professional diversity and socio-geographical diversity made great impact on traditional kinship values especially younger generation.[291] Pratap, Rangamma's son, is the youngest son in the family and Gopal is the eldest. Following the tradition, Gopal gets authority over the joint-family. He happens to witness that Pratap is deviating from traditional life style and has been into smoking and other socially degrading activities. He takes Pratap forcefully to the agricultural field and makes him work. Pratap tries to create rift between Rangamma and Gopal by telling her that he has been beaten and forced to work by Gopal in the field. There is always more chance of misunderstanding when stepbrothers are staying together in a joint family. Pratap, younger brother to Gopal, does not want to sacrifice his amusements and even is ready to question the authority of Head of the family, Gopal.

The monetization was considered immoral and a threat to the traditional and harmonious family institution. Karl Marx and Engels were the pioneers of this argument and in contrast, Adam Smith and others consider it as a progressive tool.[292] Adam Smith and group opine that money is instrumental in taking forward the society in its cultural evolutionary process.

[291] *Ibid*. p. 175.

[292] Savala Minna. "The 'Hindu Joint Family': Past and Present", A back issue of Studia Orientalia 84 (ISSN 0039-3282) published in print in 1998, p. 69. http://ojs.tsv.fi/index.php/StOrE/article/view/45128/11404

Hence, money would play its pivotal role in breaking down the old social structures replaced by newer ones. The crux of the problem would start when Sankaraiah conspires to control the zamindari by himself because it is surrounded by social respect as well as economic means. Sankaraiah being an illegitimate member endeavors to occupy the zamindari. He does not have blood relation with Gopal but with Rangamma and Pratap. Nobody knows that he has conspired while writing 'will' signed by the late zamindar. If the 'will' had not been written by the zamindar, both Gopal and Pratap would have got equal rights on the zamindari. The 'will' entitles Gopal with 200 acres of barren land, which is unusable, and Pratap is given rights over the rest including bungalow. Sankaraiah poisons Rangamma's mind expressing his opinion that Gopal is trying to create his own image among the peasantry by providing them with crop loans from estate's exchequer.

Both sons are the hereditary successors of their father. Their shares are equal with regard to the hereditary properties. Being the mother of Pratap, Rangamma becomes panic by witnessing Gopal – providing loans to the peasantry. Sankaraiah knows that Pratap is an indifferent young unmarried man who is least interested in the estate's affairs. Rangamma had been an innocent homemaker of the late zamindar. By dividing the family, Sankaraiah can enjoy the zamindari rights acquired by Pratap. Though the zamindari rights are legally over economy of the estate, it yields enormous social status. This is what Sankaraiah is interested in. He succeeds in creating rift between Gopal and Rangamma.

Rangamma's behavior needs to be examined in the context of 1950s and 1960s India's economic environment. Then economy was the result of colonial practices and policies. The colonial economy had broken down pre-colonial feudal economic structures where money in liquid was not present. The colonial economy was built around mere money. The monetized colonial economy continued its existence and to some extent, it was intensified during the first decades of India's independence due to the agenda of economic development. Animals

have economic advantages in any given society. However, in rural elite families, the animals created emotions and economic factor did not work, as the families were already affluent. Though the bond is not on par with that between two members of a family, the animals were revered, taken care of and shared love. *Kalyani* (cow) is reverent to Gopal and the family, as he had grown drinking her milk during his childhood since the time his mother had passed away. Here the economic factor is belittled compared to the service she had done to the family. Had it been in any lower class, she would have been considered to be a commodity. Sankaraiah succeeds in poisoning Rangamma's mind. Provoked by him, she sells off *Kalyani* to a butcher. For him *Kalyani* is just a commodity in the newly emerged monetary market. What all he needs is a profit over it.

Though the family had emotions for *Kalyani*, they cannot be compared with that of Gopal. *Kalyani* has been like a mother to Gopal. Hearing the news, he rushes to the butcher. The butcher, who is a symbol of heartlessness, also is melted to witness the love and affection of Gopal for *Kalyani*. When *Kalyani* is back at home, Rangamma takes it as a resistance to her authority at home. She became confident only after Sankaraiah had revealed her his conspiracy in being written the 'will' in favor of Pratap. Being authoritative, she becomes despotic and hasty in taking decisions. She, being a female, is not accountable of keeping the family united whereas Gopal feels accountable to his late father. She slaps Gopal on the account of Gopal slapping Sankaraiah. She is patriarch right now.

The joint-family is considered to be disintegrated only when common property is divided, members of family start living separately under different roofs and eat the food cooked at different hearths. This definition is carved out from the Iravati Karve's idea of joint-family. Village elders play key role in witnessing the partition process. Rangamma emphasizes for implementing the will as it is indicating she is firm in dividing the family.

Gopal, Satya and cow *Kalyani* establish their hut in the land given to them near by the village.

Anisetti Subbarao was both the lyricist and dialogue writer for this movie. He was a progressive writer[293] and activist. He left his 'Law' course to join the national movement in 1943-44 on the call given by Gandhi. Later he worked for many journals and shifted to Telugu cinema industry as a lyricist and dialogue writer. Being a nationalist, Anisetti seems to have shown the joint family as a tool for heaven. In another movie *Ilavelpu* (1956) he wrote a song conveying that family is the only heaven in the world. *Swargamanna Vere Kaladaa - Saanthi Velayu Grihame Kaadaa* means "Is there another heaven besides a peaceful family?"[294]

Two songs in *Kutumbagauravam* are both contextual and advocating the need of the unity in the family. The movie and the song, while contextualizing, were products of the 1950s nationalist agenda, a call given by the Nehru's Government. The need of the nation was to keep India united and peaceful. The institution of family was backbone of the India's social structure and hierarchy. The peace and unity in family was considered basis for peace and unity of the nation. It was the period when the leaders and the intellectuals of the nation were critiques of the colonial products like dowry and (joint) family disintegration. Introduction of English education during colonial period, increased employment opportunities and urbanization since independence and the legislations like Labor laws, Child

[293] C. R. Sarma. "Modern Telugu Literature", in *Modern Indian Literature, An Anthology: Surveys and Poems*, Vol. 1, edited by K. M. George, New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1992. p. 412.
[294] *Cinema Rangam*, June 1964. pp. 65-71.

Marriage Restraint Act, The Hindu Succession Act led to changes in the India's traditional joint family structure.[295]

Advocating for Joint family in *Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu*

In *Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu*, a joint family is represented in which two brothers along with their wives and two young sons of younger brother together. Pattabhi Ramaiah being the eldest in the family exercises the chieftainship of the family. He has no children. His wife is Soubhagyamma. His brother is Sundara Ramaiah whose wife is Ravanamma. Sundaraiah has two young sons, the eldest is Kistaiah (became physically handicapped due to an accident – electric shock – during childhood) and the youngest, Raghu who is studying in town. The patrilocal and patrilineal joint-family owning sixty acres of land is a rich peasant family in a village.

The joint family was still an agency and its role in providing social security to individuals had not been replaced by the newly formed nationalist government despite national government's welfare stand to give constitutional guarantee to the needy like disabled, old people, the sick, and unemployed. As part of it, the national government initiated and implemented certain social security policies but only to a negligible population. The employees in organized sector were covered under some or other social security policy by 1958 under the Employees' State Insurance Corporation. Insured workers' families were brought under medical benefits scheme by 1963. Still large chunk of total population fell uncovered by any social security measure. For the vast majority in the country, the family remained a resort of social security. The aspects, caste and life Insurance also were not in a position to provide social security to individuals and the disabled. As already, discussed, the

[295]Nilika Mehrotra. *Indian Social System*. pp. 17-18. http://nsdl.niscair.res.in/jspui/bitstream/123456789/239/1/4.5Indian%20social%20system_nilika.pdf. Downloaded on 06 August 2016, 22:07:03.

joint family is an agency, which provides social security to individuals. Sundara Ramaiah's eldest son Kistaiah is a handicapped man but is given sufficient social security by the family. Kistaiah is everything for Pattabhi Ramiah. When Kistaiah's wedding is to be organised, the joint family had been divided. Kistaiah is emotionally attached to joint family. He loves his paternal uncle Pattabhi. Pattabhi knowing that Kistaiah is going to get married brings all the supplies for him without the knowledge of his wife, who hates Kistaiah. Kistaiah bursts into tears as his wedding is performed, while the family is breached. Pattabhi fills confidence in him saying, "You should not weep. You are less to no one. You are a child of a family of honour (even rich)". At another occasion, Ravanamma chides her younger son Raghu who humiliates Kistaiah that he is disabled. She slaps Raghu and says, "Raghu! How could you humiliate Kistaiah calling he is disabled? We thought (elderly generation) you would be supportive to him after our death". It proves our understanding of family as an agency of social security to the disabled, old aged and the sick. Raghu also is saved by other members of the family despite he had humiliated them and got separated.

The joint family was a social institution, which enjoyed loyalty of individuals.[296] The individuals in it play their socio-economic role to sustain it. In *Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu*, Pattabhi Ramaiah the elder brother and the senior most male member of the patrilineal family acts the patriarchal head of the family who enjoys the loyalty of rest of the members. His brother Sundara Ramaiah and Sundara Ramaiah's wife play their socio-economic role in the family. They work in the field. They follow the instructions of Pattabhi Ramaiah.

The joint family in *Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu* is broken in terms of roof, kitchen and joint property. Joginder Kumar's first case of disintegration of joint family reflects in *Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu* also. He asserts, "It may happen that the wife starts quarrels

[296]K.M. Kapadia. *Marriage and Family in India*, Calcutta: Oxford University Press, third edition, 1966 (first published in 1955). pp. 311-15.

with her mother-in-law, sister-in-law, or her husband's brother's wife, etc. Her husband may either remain aloof or take her side. The process continues till the goal of disintegration is achieved".[297] Soubhagyam, childless wife of Pattabhi, has been jealous of Ravanamma, wife of Sundaraiah, and her son Kistaiah as she thinks only Ravanamma's sons will inherit and enjoy all the joint property, as she has no children.

When her own niece Janaki and nephew Raja (her brother's children) visit her home, her nephew poisons her to divide the family. He also gives an idea that his sister Janaki can be married to Raghu, Sundariah's second son and younger brother to Kistaiah. Simultaneously, they both fell in love. Soubhagyam has been waiting for a chance to divide the family. Kistaiah being insecure that the shrewd Raja and Janaki can manipulate Raghu tries to take Raghu from Janaki to his mother with the pretext of inviting him for breakfast. They are in first floor. When Kistaiah is stepping up, Soubhagyam beats him and tries to get him back. In the scuffle, she falls down. She takes this as pretext to divide the family. Pattabhi tries to convince her not to demand for breakup in the family. When he gets tired and feels helpless in convincing her, he unwillingly accepts. The family is vertically divided in every term. All the property is divided equally. A wall is constructed to divide house. Raghu stays back with Soubhagyam and Pattabhi. He gets married to Janaki against his parents' decision. The educated sons used to think they are culturally advanced than their parents.[298] Raghu thinks his parents or no one is in a position to guide him or force him. He thinks he is so civilized that nobody can force him to follow.

As Manu says, as soon as father dies, the eldest son must perform the duty of patriarchal head to keep the family intact.

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[297] Joginder Kumar. "Family Structure in the Hindu Society of Rural India", in George Kurian (ed), *The Family in India: A Regional* View, The Hague: Mouton & Co. N. V., Publishers, 1974. p.50.
[298]K.M. Kapadia. *Marriage and Family in India*, p. 325.

> As a father (supports) his sons, so let the eldest support the younger brothers; and let the brothers in accordance with the law have towards their eldest brother as sons (behave towards their father). The eldest son makes the family prosperous or may bring it to ruin; ... Either let them thus live together or (get) apart if each desire (to gain) spiritual merit; for by separate living their merit increases, and hence separation is meritorious.[299]

Pattabhi, as the eldest brother, becomes traditional patriarchal head and looks after the family as its father. His brother is so loyal to him he used to be to his father. Pattabhi when unwillingly and inevitably dividing the family tells his brother that as the head of the family he has saved family, its property and honour. His brother also acknowledges it.

K. M. Kapadia asserts that the existence of joint family depends on economic and ideological planes.[300] Not just economic aspects are reasons for breakup of joint family. Ideological aspects have sufficient impact over the issue. K. M. Kapadia opines, "The ideology of the joint family stipulates cooperative effort, the observance of certain norms and the authority of the elders".[301] Though the economic factor is an underlying reason in dividing the joint family in *Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu*, we cannot rule out the ideological issues. Soubhagyam wants privacy and her own wishes. She does not want to sacrifice her wishes like buying fruits for her own blood relatives Raja and Janaki.

Bhanumathi Ramakrishna,[302] an actress, director, producer, writer, sketches in her autobiography *Nalo Nenu* how joint families (households) were disintegrating on ideological plane. Under the colonial government, the Indian traditional joint family was under threat. The urban educated men were shifting their conjugal families (nucleus) away from their

[299] *Ibid*. pp. 220-221.
[300] *Ibid*. p. 319.
[301] *Ibid*. p. 320.
[302] Bhanumathi Ramakrishna. *Nalo Nenu*. 1991.

traditional joint families. It does not mean that the families were completely divided and were away from each other. They used to meet during occasions. Bhanumathi was unable to bear separation from her son whose wife took him away. The conflict within Bhanumathi between tradition and modernity was visible in terms of her family relations. Though she was into one of the most effective modern fields that is, cinema, she could not release herself from the clutches of traditional Hindu stigma. She writes she could not imagine how her daughter-in-law wanted to live separately with her husband.

K. M. Kapadia says:

> The history of the Hindu family unfolds one significant fact, viz. that even when trends towards individualism were recognized and attempts were being made to harmonize them with the interest of the joint family, the family constitution was unequivocally declared to be, and maintained as, joint and agnatic. Hindu sentiments are hence even today in favour of the joint family. The destruction of the joint family by legislation is therefore rightly considered to be non-Hindu, because it ignores Hindu family history and sentiments.[303]

I. P. Desai concludes: "Nearly 65% of the households are 3 or 4 generations deep. The relationship is between the lineal descendants and is up to three or four generations. In addition, in the remaining cases the relationship is between the father and the son and with the collaterals such as the father's brother. The lineal depth of relationship is thus largely

[303]K.M. Kapadia. *Marriage and Family in India*, p. 245.

between father, son, and grandson. The collateral relationships are between a man and his father's brother and his own brothers".[304]

K. M. Kapadia opines that there was a trend losing faith in the joint family but joint family still was a dependable institution as it provides social security because the alternative forces have not yet grown to an extent they can perform the duty of family.[305] Telugu cinema also proposes similar idea of essentiality of joint family. In *Kutumbagauravam*, after the breakup of joint family, innocent Rangamma misled by her brother Sankaraiah, shifts her family (she, her son Pratap and daughter Bala along with Sankaraiah) to nearby town and goes through several difficulties due to Sankaraiah himself. She realizes that a legitimate male authority is required in order to safeguard the family. Her son Pratap is neither capable enough nor experienced to uphold the family. Size of the family is also small. When she along with her children is plunged in overwrought difficulties, capable and experienced Gopal extends unconditional support to her family by entering the scene and clearing all the odds. She then understands the imperative joint family, which gives social security. The temporarily broken joint family is again re-united.

In *Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu*, Soubhagyam, Raja and Raghu realize the relevance of joint family in rescuing a member of the family when he/she is in grave trouble, be it economic problem or social. Kistaiah and Sundaraiah play that role in rescuing Raghu, Janaki and Soubhagyam from the vicious and complex circle of Raja. The cooperation of the family members to keep the family intact is such that they forgive even grave damages they have done to the family or other members of the family. Kistaiah receives Raja as his cousin and invites him to join the joint family despite his grave damages to himself and the joint family.

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[304]i. P. Desai. "The Joint Family in India—An Analysis", *Sociological Bulletin*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (September, 1956), p. 156.Published by Indian Sociological Society. URL:http://www.jstor.org/stable/42867960 Accessed: 06-08-2016 17:45 UTC.

[305]K.M. Kapadia. *Marriage and Family in India*, p. 312.

The trend of making this kind of movies is part of broader ideological framework. The limitations of the government were such that it could not take social security measure to all its citizens. Hence the family was considered to be the only institution that can give the best social security even compared to the welfare State. The existence of the family and especially joint family where quite a good number of members having blood relation bondage and marital bondage are present was imperative in the given socio-economic context. Another reason for making movies advocating the institution of joint family was that the movie makers came from rural traditional joint families. The joint property and means used to pump capital to them to invest in cinema industry. This drove them to make such movies. Thus, the Telugu cinema advocated for joint family while conveying a modified relations within the family. It also has respected individuality to a limited extent which is a symbol of colonial modernity. Hence, the ideology of post-colonial Telugu cinema is understood to have mediated both tradition and modernity together.

Chapter VI

6. **Conclusion**

Cinema is one of the most effective art forms of the twentieth century. It has a wide range of audience across caste, religion, gender and race. It is a medium easily followed by even illiterates. As an effective medium, the Telugu cinema not only presented contemporary society but also represented certain ideology. Exploring the ideology of post-colonial Telugu cinema is the focus of our study. We also attempt to find the causation of representing a particular ideology by post-colonial Telugu cinema. Reading both text and context is an essential part of our study. We attempted to sketch a detailed discourse of tradition and modernity in colonial Andhra. Then the post-colonial Telugu cinema, based on three themes – women's issues, patriarchal dowry and joint family – is studied in detail to find its culture and ideology.

Traditional Andhra society while negotiating with colonial modernity underwent a radical change since second half of nineteenth century. The change was in all spheres, economic, social and political. The economy was monetized due to the introduction of new land administration systems, irrigation facilities and commercial crops resulting in peasant differentiation. This aspect of peasant differentiation led to the formation of rural gentry. Modern industrialization including railways, jute mills, cotton mills, steel industry and introduction of English education by providing modern employment resulted in urbanization. Simultaneously, western contact through English education ignited the Andhra intellectuals to counter the hegemonic colonial ideology, which was trying to subjugate the Indians by manipulating their minds that India was a patriarchal backward country, which had been subjecting women to all sorts of oppression and discrimination for centuries. As a result, the

middle class intellectuals determined to reform Andhra society. Literature was the earliest medium of reflecting social reform. EnugulaVeeraswamaiah (1780-1836) was the first in Andhra to mention the subjugation of women and practice of untouchability in Hindu society and advocated female education and widow remarriages through his book *Kaasiyatra Charitra*. Samineni Muttoo Narasimha Naidoo also did the same in his book *Hitasoochinee*. It was under the leadership of Veeresalingam the idea of social reform was transformed into a movement. He was both a writer and an activist and subsequently became the major player in making social reform sweep across colonial Andhra until the second decade of twentieth century. He propagated female education, widow remarriage and fought against child marriage. His contemporary, Gurajada Appa Rao, wrote *Kanyasulkam* (1892), a social play, exposing the contemporary social evils, viz., bride price, child marriage, early and enforced widowhood, *devadasi* system and pseudo English educated social reformers like Gireesam. It was one of the earliest critiques of colonial modernity. The play was first performed in 1897. Thus, the theatre also played its social role in social reform movement. Since the second decade of twentieth century the women themselves started various organizations to take up the women's issues. They exposed the patriarchal, atrocious and anti-women socio-traditional practices through writings and activism. Various journals were started to serve the purpose. Muthulaxmi Reddy was a pioneer woman activist in Madras Presidency and she is remembered for endeavoring to reform *devadasis*. Literature advocating to liberate women from patriarchal social structure was abundantly produced in Telugu during the first half of twentieth century. The writings of G. V. Chalam and Unnava Laxminarayana reflected it. *Nenu Naadesam*, an autobiography of Darsi Chenchaiah, speaks volumes about the contemporary society reflecting the social reform movement in Andhra during the first half of twentieth century. The progressive and visionary writers like G. V. Chalam, later, entered the field of Telugu Cinema and left their mark in the narrative of cinema.

The movies like *Malapilla* and *Raithu Bidda* made in 1930s carried forward the progressive ideology of social reform. Thus, the social reform movement did not just end with literature and theatre but was taken ahead by the contemporary Telugu cinema. As there was continuity of socio-economic and political ideology from colonial to post-colonial periods, the cinema of post-colonial Andhra also had to continue its social role in exposing different social evils and advocating for a peaceful family life. However, in reality the post-colonial Telugu cinema instead of taking forward the social reform ideology, supported selective social evil like dowry. As Atlury Murali suggests, the social reformers of Andhra strived for reform in the position of Hindu women but not for her complete liberalization from the patriarchal clutches. They propagated for a better position for women but within the purview of family structure. The Telugu cinema interrogated and investigated the colonial modernity by presenting contemporary women's issues like bride price, infant marriages, enforced widowhood, *devadasi* practice and dowry, which had been still alive despite colonial social reform. It also took an ideological standpoint with regard to the disturbance in the joint family. The Hindu joint family had been facing threat due to the newly emerged economic and ideological changes within the family and individuals. The monetized economy, urbanization and urban employment demanded for nuclear families disintegrating from traditional Hindu joint family. The newly encompassing ideological perspectives were also another important reason for the disintegration of joint family.

The colonial Andhra had suffered from social evils like bride price, child marriage, enforced widowhood and the issue of *devadasi* system. In addition, all these evils continued into post-colonial Andhra. Bride price (*Kanyasulkam*) was the root cause of all social evils that had encompassed women into a vicious circle in Hindu society. It led to the creation of

social problem of 'girls for sale'.[306] Being greedy of bride price, the fathers of infant girls used to sell their infant daughters in marriage to old men who had a foot in the graveyard. This practice resulted in pushing infant girls into the atrocious act of enforced widowhood. We can read the gravity of the issue by the fact that young widows sometimes used to be penalized for killing their illegitimate newborn children. These incidents moved the Andhra intellectuals to propagate for widow remarriage. Veeresalingam was the pioneer of all the social reformers in this regard. He has been well recognized for his pivotal role in the movement of widow remarriages. All these issues were represented in the Telugu movie *Kanyasulkam* (1955) made after India achieving independence from the colonial government. It was made based on Gurajada Appa Rao's play, *Kanyasulkam* (1892).

There are a few changes in the movie plot. One of the noteworthy changes is, Buchamma is married to Gireesam in the movie whereas she is sent to a widow home in Pune by a genuine social reformer, Soujanya Rao in the play. The context of the play is situated during the last decade of nineteenth century and the movie represents the 1950s, the early period of a newly emerged Independent India. The newly emerged ruling class of colonial India had entered Parliamentary democratic politics. Hence, its prime concern was rather winning in electoral battle for which it needed to restore the pre-colonial traditional value system in order to empower the rural gentry to garner votes. No doubt, the post-colonial Indian State took some sort of relieving measures for the upliftment of widows by providing them with vocational education and widow homes. In this context, it is to be understood that the ruling class ideology was dual in nature. It was supporting social reform on one hand and revivalist ideology on the other hand. Narrative of post-colonial Telugu cinema tried to legitimize the traditional value system by presenting the institution of marriage. Gurajada

[306] Gurajada Apparao. Tr. (Velcheru Narayana Rao) *Girls for Sale (Kanyasulkam),* New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2007.

Apparao's real idea of sending Buchamma to widow home was because he was critical of the manipulative English educated pseudo social reformers of the day. He preferred widows to be at widow homes and get education. He thought the widows only after getting educated could decide if they want to marry. Another example that vindicates the revivalist ideology of *Kanyasulkam* movie is that it did not advocate for remarriage of the other two widows, *Poota Koollamma* and Meenakshi. It also encourages child marriage by proposing the marriage of Suchi (9) and Mahesam.

The movie *Kanyasulkam* represents the family of Agnihotravadhanlu consisting of his wife Gachamma, widowed young daughter Buchamma, daughter Suchi and son Venkatesam. Gachamma's brother is Ganapathi Sastrulu. Another family represented is of Lubdhavadhanlu, who is accompanied by his widowed young daughter Meenakshi. She has developed illicit relationship with Ramappa Panthulu, who is a marriage broker. Madhuravani, a *devadasi*, is surviving by sharing pleasure to Ramappa Panthulu and Gireesam. Gireesam, an English educated manipulative young man in the disguise of a social reformer, cheats a widow woman, *Poota Koollamma*, who runs a restaurant by assuring her that he would marry her. He also engages a relationship with Madhuravani. He is also a cousin of Lubdhavadhanlu. When Agnihotravadhanlu made an agreement to sell Suchi to Lubdhavadhanlu, his wife Gachamma opposes it and her brother Ganapathi Sastrulu assures her that he would stop the match. He succeeds in his task with the help of his disciple and Madhuravani. Gireesam elopes Buchamma deceiving that he would marry her. Suchi's match with Lubdhavadhanlu is stopped and Buchamma is married to Gireesam.

The movie represented the contemporary society as a whole. It represented all the contemporary social evils, bride price, infant marriage, enforced widowhood and women who have been put into the practice of prostitution. However, it advocates the traditional value system. It exposed pseudo social reformers like Gireesam who was the symbol of colonial

modernity. The cinema as the most effective medium of the period tried to reestablish the traditional patriarchal value system.

Another movie, *Peddamanushulu* well depicted the plight of young widows. Dharma Rao and his family get ruined due to the custom of enforced widowhood. His sister who had been married to an old man for money becomes a young widow and she, as a human being wants to fulfill her biological needs, which leads to the killing of her illicit partner by Dharma Rao. Dharma Rao or any character in the movie does not think of remarriage for her even after they know that as a young woman she needs a partner. The plight of another widow Santha is also well represented. However, the movie does not advocate widow remarriage. Both the widows remain widows forever. It is nothing but restoring pre-colonial social values and practices.

The Telugu cinema of the period also tried to respect certain traditional values like marriage. In *Mangalyabalam*, marriage between minors is respected by the movie in order to respect the tradition. The movie also shows that the child marriage is prohibited and those who violate it would be punished by the legal institution. Chandram and Saroja were married by their grandmother, when they were children. Moreover, they do not even remember that they are being married. Saroja's parents move to court and get the marriage nullified and those accountable for child marriage are held and punished. Only after the children grow and become graduates, they happen to know that they were married. They solemnize the marriage which means that the movie respects the traditional value system over colonial legal system which is a result of colonial modernity. The narrative of the movie, instead of negating the child marriage, negotiated between marriage and legality.

The post- colonial Telugu cinema, also, interrogated the patriarchal institution of dowry. Dowry had been a volunteer amount to be given to bridegroom by bride's family

during ancient period but became a demand during the first half of the twentieth century due to the colonial modernity. The colonial interventions in the India's socio-economic spheres brought changes in socio-economic practices of Indians. Marriage and its way of performance were also affected. As a result, the volunteer dowry took rigorous form and became a demand. The English education and urban regular employment at the time of frequent famines gave stable and safe life to the educated young men. Naturally, the fathers of brides wanted to marry their daughters off to such bridegrooms. The more grew demand for such bridegrooms, greater the dowry was demanded from parents of brides. Thus, dowry became a social evil as its ramifications resulted in pushing bride's natal families into impoverishment. The contemporary post-colonial Telugu cinema mediated the social problem in an effective manner to the audience. It not only interrogated the institution but also created ideal roles through which it showed solutions to the issues though temporary in nature.

The strategy of mixed economy by the Nehru's government after independence did not mitigate the effects of market oriented monetized economy introduced during colonial period. This market oriented economy-accelerated hypergamy. Marriage without dowry was not imaginable and the early decades of India's independence witnessed adverse effects of modern dowry. Ramifications of it were (are) multiple in number and severe in nature. Wedding ceremonies are found to have been stopped in between, affinal groups were pushed into differences, peace is disturbed. Brides were either left at natal families or subjected to domestic violence until the payment of dowry was done. They were denied of human rights at the in-laws home. The brides left at natal families felt they had no other option than to commit suicide. We can weigh severity of ramifications of the dowry when the government of Andhra Pradesh brought a social legislation prohibiting dowry in 1958 and Government of India in 1961.

Despite these social legislations, the institution of dowry not only has been existing till date, but also is increasing and spreading at an accelerating pace. The Telugu cinema, as a gauging medium, recognized this patriarchal and atrocious social practice and strove to make movies with themes of this kind. Cinema has its own combinations and permutations as an industry. It just does not represent the contemporary society but also expects profits. Only social issues would not bring it profits. Cinema makers like Chakrapani, L. V. Prasad caught the pulse of the people that foremost expectation by the audience is entertainment from cinema. Hence, cinema makers balanced both the entertainment and representation of contemporary society in cinema. This asymmetry is reflected in *Pelli Chesi Choodu*.

Pelli Chesi Choodu is a synergy of both social message and healthy comedy. The entertainment in the movie was not away from the content narrative. It is well intertwined with the story. The movie plot is engaged with the lives of three young women whose marriages are intertwined with dowry and hypergamy. Raju's only burden is to get his sister Ammadu married. Nevertheless, his relative Govidaiah plans to marry his daughter Chitti off to him by assuring that he would get Ammadu married. Meanwhile Raju happens to marry Savitri, daughter of Viyyanna on an agreement that Viyyanna would take the responsibility of getting Ammadu, married by paying off the dowry. The young men having salaried jobs were in short supply. They had both safe and stable life living in urban areas, which also brought them prestige attracting fathers of brides. Thanks to the commitments of governments after independence, education became more accessible to the lower castes placing them in organized sector and this encouraged them to emulate the upper caste traditions and customs like dowry. Institution of marriage itself after independence in India fell into a crisis as the ramifications of dowry became more and more rigid and rigorous. Viyyanna by assuring relatively a high amount of Rs. 15,000 as dowry gets Ammadu married to Ramana, a law graduate, son of Venkatapathi, who is a rich man. The failure of Viyyanna in adjusting

money on time leads to leaving the married bride at natal family itself. As mentioned earlier, the innocent brides had no option than committing suicide. Ammadu attempts suicide. The issue of bride price led to infant marriages of girls with old men and dowry caused a similar effect in matches. The movie reflects the socio-economic and cultural conditions of contemporary society. The fact that the fathers of daughters sometimes were ready to get their young daughters married to old men with an agreement that dowry is not demanded. Govindaiah being unable to pay dowry but also with an objective of providing a safe and stable economic future for his daughter gets ready to marry Chitti off to Venkatapathi, already father of a married son, Ramana.

Telugu cinema not only tried to awaken the people by presenting ramifications of dowry but also showed path of idealism and it was the youth who were attracted to it. Ramana who is a law graduate understands the grief of a left over bride and her family. Nor can he discard his father's contemporary traditional ideology. The modern aspect, dowry had already been established as a tradition. The movie reflected the ideology of negotiating between tradition and modernity and between dry thinking and emotional understanding of human beings through the character of Ramana. The greatness of narration of the movie lied in solving the delicate issue without disturbing the traditional value system through a character. Ramana's efforts to convince his father in favor of the bride Ammadu remain futile. Ramana failing in convincing his father chooses a new path by living with Ammadu without the knowledge of his father. He, later, makes his father realize the ramifications of dowry. Thus, the movie presents a social theme awakening the Telugu people who were sunk in the institution of dowry.

Atta Okinti Kodale reflects the plight of women due to the patriarchal value system. The issue of *Dowry* brings all miseries into the life of Laxmi and her natal family, as they were not in a position to pay it. In an inevitable situation, Sundaramma, the mother-in-law,

had to accept her home, as her educated daughter Sobha and would-be son-in-law Raghu put a condition for their marriage. Sundaramma subjects Laxmi to domestic violence, exploits her for domestic purposes, does not allow her to visit her natal home even in the verge of her father's death and snatches her own child, which is all witnessed by the helpless Chandram, Sundaramma's son. Thayaramma another mother-in-law in the movie starts humiliating daughter-in-law for not giving birth to children. Both Sundaramma and Thayaramma are taught a lesson and sensitized about the ramification of dowry in the end of the movie.

The movie *Varakatnam* depicts lives of two young women who are the direct sufferers of dowry. It represents another set of ramifications of dowry; midway stalling of weddings, severed relations of affinal groups, domestic violence and impoverishment of bridal families. Sujatha's wedding was stalled midway the marriage ceremony. Relations between her family and bridegroom's family are severed. A depressed Sujatha undergoes a psychological trauma, as she was the product of traditional value system. Women in India know that they are looked down if their marriage is stalled or disturbed. The movie succeeded in presenting domestic violence against the daughters-in-law by the in-laws in a realistic manner. Laxmi has to undergo all the atrocities and humiliations meted out to her by her mother-in-law, Chukkamma. Chukkamma keeps on chiding and beating Laxmi for not bringing dowry. She does not allow Laxmi to have intimacy with Rangaiah until Laxmi's family pays the promised dowry. Dowry also severs the relations between the families of Rangaiah and Sriramulu. The movie tried to awaken the society by presenting the most affecting ramification of dowry, the impoverishment of bridal family. It appealed to the audience to reject dowry to awaken the humanity in everybody by presenting the miseries faced by bridal family due to the culture of expensive marriage and dowry.

The miseries faced by Sriramulu family and its pathetic condition leave audience burst into tears. His family is pushed into financial crisis. It appealed to the society that they

should not disturb the peace created by the institution called family. Sriramulu witnesses the domestic violence subjected on his daughter, Laxmi by her mother-in-law, Chukkamma. One instance in the movie that reflects the inner conflict of helpless newly married woman is that, when Laxmi finds that her father can no more pay dowry. Laxmi tells to her father, "Father! I, as the daughter-in-law to my husband's family, would have to face everything, be it hardships or comforts. However, I cannot bear to see you being subjected to humiliation for the reason that you have given birth to me. Take it as if, I too have passed away like my mother". Despite critical economic condition of the family, Sriramulu borrows money to pay off the dowry to get his daughter rid of all the problems meted out against her at the in-laws home. Male characters in the movie are presented to be sympathetic to the sufferings of Laxmi but are helpless as they are also scared to go against Chukkamma, a female representative of patriarchy. Rangaiah wants to intervene and liberate his wife Laxmi from the rigid and atrocious patriarchal clutches of his mother Chukkamma but does not dare to cut off relations with her. His condition is similar to that of Ramana in *Pelli Chesi Choodu.*

The movie *Varakatnam* showed a new path for liberation to women, who were like, Laxmi. It conveyed message to the contemporary youth that it is their responsibility to reform their families and sensitize their parents. Rangaiah makes a plan in such a way that he and Laxmi are taken away to Laxmi's natal family. His mother then realizes the importance of daughter-in-law as the burden of all the household work falls on her. She realizes and learns a lesson at last. Rangaiah asks, "Mother! Would you brief about the bad experiences of demanding dowry from brides" and Chukkamma sadly answers, "Family gets split. Son and daughter-in-law who are supposed to enjoy the life would face troubles. I have learnt my lessons" – at the end of the movie. Thus, the post-colonial Telugu cinema had evolved its own ideology of negotiating between tradition and modernity and social theme and profit oriented entertainment by interrogating dowry. It wanted to eradicate patriarchal dowry by

reforming the society but without disturbing the sensitiveness of the tradition and family. Its way of presentation is different from that of social legislations by the governments. Thus, the ideology of Telugu cinema was in favor of harmonious joint family but with some relaxations to women which we call it reformist ideology.

The Telugu cinema furthered its ideological understanding of family. It not only represented structural changes that were happening in Hindu joint family due to the colonial modernity but also took an ideological stand point in favor of continuity of joint family. The agents of colonial modernity, English education, urban employment both industrial and tertiary though less in quantity, monetized economy and increasing individualism led to growing tendency of disintegrating joint families.

Two groups of scholars came up with their own interpretations by using historical sources with regard to the debate on disintegration that was happening. One group led by Ross and Epstein by using the Census data argued that there was a trend of disintegration while the other group suggested that the trend was upward in favor of joint family. The latter group led by T. N. Madan showed statistical data that the average size of joint family was increasing. They assert that the very Census data suggests that the average size of joint family increased from 4.6 in 1911 to 5.2 in 1961.

Ross argues that the urbanization was the prime factor in disintegration of joint family. In the case of Andhra Pradesh, the data suggests that urbanization increased only around 2 % during the period between 1951 and 1971. In 1951, the percentage of urban population was 17.36 % of total population and it increased only to 19.31 % by 1971. The employment provided by both industrial and tertiary sectors was still 26.6 % of total employment in Andhra Pradesh by 1970. It suggests that around three fourth of total employment was still provided by agricultural sector. Families dependent on agriculture and

business, according to K. Eswaran, tend to continue joint families. Hence, we suggest that the urbanization and salaried jobs had effect over the functioning of joint families but could not uproot the institution of joint family. K. M. Kapadia's stand on the debate is relevant in this regard. He suggests that there were both economic and ideological reasons, which caused disintegration.

We cannot simply negate the trend of disintegration in Andhra Pradesh during the period between 1950 and 1970. Though the share of urbanization and salaried jobs in total urbanization and employment was meager in quantity, the effects of small growth in these fields cannot be ruled out. The monetized economy encouraged individuality among members of agricultural families. The educated sons of agricultural families could not find space for their idea of living.

The Telugu cinema, in this critical situation when the joint family was facing threats from individuals, propagated in favor of its continuity. It is established that on both economic and ideological planes the joint family was disturbed. That is the reason why the contemporary Telugu cinema represented the issue on a large scale and propagated for unity among members of joint families.

The Telugu cinema divided family narratives into three major parts. The first is depiction of Hindu traditional patriarchal joint family. The second part carries the narrative of presenting process of disintegration and third one advocates the need of unity among members of family by realizing the importance of joint family. The movies *Kutumbagauravam* and *Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu* represented similar style of presenting joint family, disintegration and its reunification.

In *Kutumbagauravam*, an agricultural *zamidary* family living with peace and tranquility is represented. Gopal's father is *zamindar*. Gopal has wife Sathya, stepmother

Rangamma, stepbrother young Pratap and stepsister Bala (child). A non-legal member in the family is Rangamma's brother Sankaraiah. Their harmony is disturbed for a brief period as the *zamindar* passes away. The family is divided into two nuclear families, Gopal and Sathya under one roof and Rangamma and her unmarried children under one roof. Rangamma, who had disintegrated the family with an economic motive, after realizing the importance of joint family which provides social security reunifies the family.

Jogindar Kumar reasons the disintegration of joint family into four contexts and the first context is relevant in analyzing the movies we have selected as case studies. He says that the peace is intentionally disturbed in order to ensure disintegration of joint family with an economic motive. Rangamma's brother Sankaraiah provokes economic motive in Rangamma by saying that Gopal is exploiting the joint property to enhance his personal image while Gopal tries to loan the peasants. When Rangamma objects it, Gopal loans the peasants by borrowing the money from a moneylender. It hurts Rangamma's ego and being informed by Sankaraiah that the 'will' written by the zamindar has been manipulated in advantage to Rangamma's son and disadvantaging Gopal. She deliberately disturbs peace in the family to ensure disintegration. She succeeds in her task despite the wish of an emotional Gopal pleading for the continuity of the joint family. On realization of advantages of joint family, she reunifies the family in which Gopal and his wife are always interested.

In *Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu*, an agricultural rich peasant family is represented. Two brothers are living with their wives and younger brother's two unmarried sons. Pattabhi Ramaiah, his wife Sowbhagyam, his younger brother Sundara Ramaiah along with his wife Ravanamma and sons Raghu, an educated man, and Kistaiah, a physically handicapped man are the members of the family. Sowbhagyam is jealous of Ravanmma and sons that they would inherit all the joint property, as she has no children. She on the suggestion of her nephew Raja intentionally disturbs the peace of the family and demands for disintegration

despite her husband's wish to keep the family intact. Her husband, Pattabhi Ramaiah, being head of the family and other members except educated Raghu want to continue the joint family. Unable to bear the reluctance of Sowbhagyam, they too accept for division. The division happens regarding the house and property. Sowbhagyam at last realizes the need for a joint family in providing all kinds of support to individuals.

The narratives of these two movies have advocated and appealed to the audience to continue the joint family. The movies showed the advantages of joint families and disadvantages of disintegration. Rangamma in *Kutumbagauravam* realizes the importance of the family only when she experiences the worst socio–economic ramifications of disintegration. Rangamma, having faith in Sankaraiah, plays to his tunes. She announces crop holidays against the non-cooperation of peasants and shifts to nearby urban town. She keeps on giving money to Sankariah whenever he asks until she is left with no cash. By the time she realizes that her brother, a non-legal member of the Hindu family, has cheated her and taken away all the money, she has already been sunk in other socio-legal problems as her daughter urgently needs medical support and son gets caught by the police on a murder charge. In this breathless condition, she gets unconditional support unexpectedly from Gopal. These developments experienced by Rangamma bring change in her idea of family.

Similarly, Sowbhagyam in *Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu* regrets for dividing the joint family. She, only when Raja behaves despotic after shifting to an urban town, regrets her role in disintegrating the family and giving economic authority to her nephew Raja. Raja who took all the money from his aunt Sowbhagyam invests it in a circus company and experiences losses due to his partners. He wants to make profits by hook or crook. In this process, he behaves authoritatively with the family members and goes to an extent of using Kistaiah's baby boy in circus. He has used Sowbhagyam's jewellery. Showbhagyam later realizes that she would not get back her money and jewellery given to Raja. She goes mad for it. The

movie presents how a divided family would get devastated. Thus, it advocates for a continuity of the joint family. The Telugu cinema of the period was realistic in nature. For it, urban life means cupidity and cheating and rural life means innocent and honest.

Thus, the Telugu cinema during post-colonial period carried forward the idea of decolonization and seems to have been more revivalist and less reformist though it exposed some social evils like *devadasi* and dowry. It did not expose the enforced widowhood nor did it advocate widow remarriage unlike Telugu cinema of colonial period.The post-colonial cinema also supported traditional joint family, which is the symbol of pre-colonial feudal ideology. In contrary, Telugu cinema of colonial period, though was bourgeois in nature, was radical in spreading progressive ideology especially with regard to women's issues. Widow remarriage was advocated in *Mallee Pelli* and the patriarchal family was questioned in *Gruhapravesam*.[307] To understand the differences between the ideological discourse of Telugu cinema of colonial and post-colonial periods, it is required to read the historical contexts of both the periods.

The context of freedom struggle in colonial period forced the bourgeois freedom leaders at both national and provincial levels to mobilize the untouchable and women against the colonial government. Subsequently, a call was given that the freedom for untouchables meant liberation from untouchability and for women meant liberation from the patriarchal value system. In this context, the Telugu cinema of colonial period represented the same ideology of the bourgeois freedom fighters. In the same way, the ideology of post-colonial Telugu cinema needs to be understood in the context of its post-colonialism. The leaders of newly emerged Indian State, free from colonial clutches, had no external enemy to show to the masses. Their main aim was to strategize to garner the mass support for electoral

[307]Akkina Mareswara Rao. *Cultural and Ideological Mediation of Telugu Cinema in Colonial Andhra, 1931-1947.* An unpublished doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Hyderabad, 1997. p. 367.

victories. To fulfill this aim, they had to satisfy rural gentry who had control over illiterate masses who were in huge numbers. Hence, they carried the ideology of restoring the pre-colonial power structure, which legitimized the domination of rural gentry. These ruling elite knew that the masses could not follow the radical ideas and changes to change the age-old traditional value system. It is the major reason why the Governments in post-colonial period were least bothered about radical social change except making some legislation against child marriage, dowry and the issue of *devadasi* system – to mask themselves with progressive ideology but never were committed for social change.The ideology of post-colonial Telugu cinema must be seen in this context.

The post-colonial Telugu cinema reflected the contemporary Telugu society but did not advocate radical ideology of liberating women from patriarchal values system. It reflected social evils like child marriage, enforced widowhood, the issue of *devadasi* and dowry which were still existing even after independence despite rich social reform movement in India and also Andhra. *Peddamanushulu* represents two young widows but does not bring any discourse over widow remarriage. Nevertheless, it reflects the fact that the widows in contemporary society are humiliated and sexually abused. We do not see progressive content that had reflected in *Mallee Pelli* of colonial period in *Peddamanushulu* of post-colonial period. The context of *Kanyasulkam* play was colonial in which the all the above mentioned social issues were exposed and even the colonial modernity itself was critiqued. The young widow Buchamma was sent to a widow home in order to provide her an option of studying first. She is thus given liberty to choose marriage only after she gets educated and enlightened. She is protected from the pseudo social reformer. When the narrative of the play was taken to make movie in the context of post-colonialism, Buchamma is not given an opportunity to study but is married to the pseudo social reformer, Gireesam. The issue of child marriage in *Mangalyabalam* is prosecuted by the court in post-colonial context but the

marriage is solemnized by the movie. It can be maintained that the Telugu cinema of post-colonial period did not strive for eradication of women's issues but gave legitimacy to the traditional value system.

The traditional value system of colonial Andhra had a cultural practice of exchanging dowry but for a volunteer amount. It became a menace due to the colonial modernity. It became a social issue by the time India achieved independence. Telugu cinema in this regard took progressive stand of condemning it. The demand of dowry became a status symbol for the patriarchal fathers of bridegrooms. For fathers of bridegrooms in both the movies *Pelli Chesi Choodu*, *Atta Okinti Kodale* and *Varakatnam*, dowry is rather a social status. Hypergamy (caste and class) was one of the primary reasons for it. Hence, the Telugu cinema while not opposing some of the social evils that had been persisting since pre-colonial period like child marriage and enforced widowhood condemned newly emerged social evils due to colonial modernity like dowry.

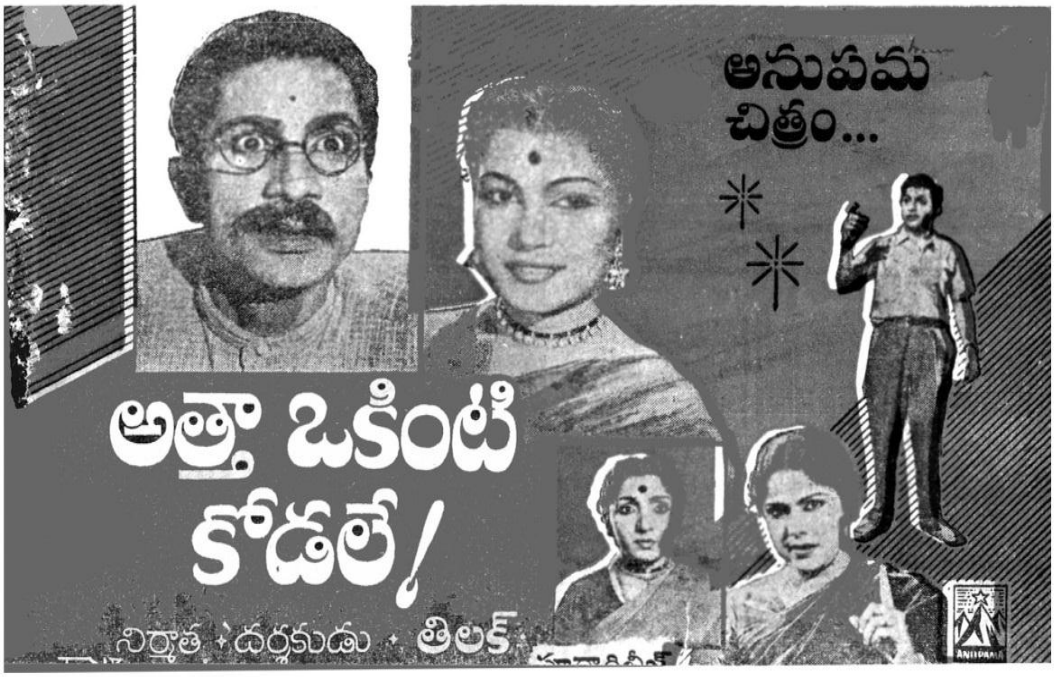
Traditional joint family was a pre-colonial social institution that had colonial impact over it. The post-colonial Telugu cinema played the role of social institution by advocating for joint family.Family was still seen as an institution, which can provide social security in the context when the government was unable to provide. When the family was being disturbed, the Telugu cinema took the responsibility of stabilizing it by awakening and educating the people through propagating advantages of joint family and disadvantages of disintegration. It presented rural, a symbol of tradition, as innocent and urban, a symbol of modernity, as evil. In both the movies *Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu* and *Kutumbagauravam* it is presented that, the disintegration is hostile to the individuals of family while the continuation of joint family yields peace and tranquility. It is also depicted in both the movies that the rural capital invested in urban new avenues brings losses, as the urban is full of cupidity to which the rural tradition people and families cannot fit.

It is not new to say that the cinema as an effective medium can spread certain ideology among the masses. The post-colonial Telugu cinema embraced not only revivalist ideology but also carried forward reformist ideology. Hence, it can be concluded that it created new discourse of taking forward both the revivalist and reformist ideologies by negotiating between Indian tradition and colonial modernity. We conclude that one of the reasons for supporting traditional value system by the Telugu cinema was due to the ideology of the movie makers who hailed from feudal patriarchal joint families (rural gentry) whose investments came from their rural ancestral agricultural fields[308] and whose families were enjoying local power. Another reason was due to the influence of the Indian State, which had fallen into the hands of bourgeois leaders who framed an ideology of restoring old social order in order to reestablish the power of rural local gentry over the masses.

[308]S. V. Srinivas. *Politics as Performance: A Social History of the Telugu Cinema.* Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2013. p. 11.

Appendix

Atta Okinti Kodale **(1958)**



Atta Okinti Kodale (1958)

Director: Tilak

Producer: Tilak

Story and Dialogues: Pinisetti

Music: Pendyala

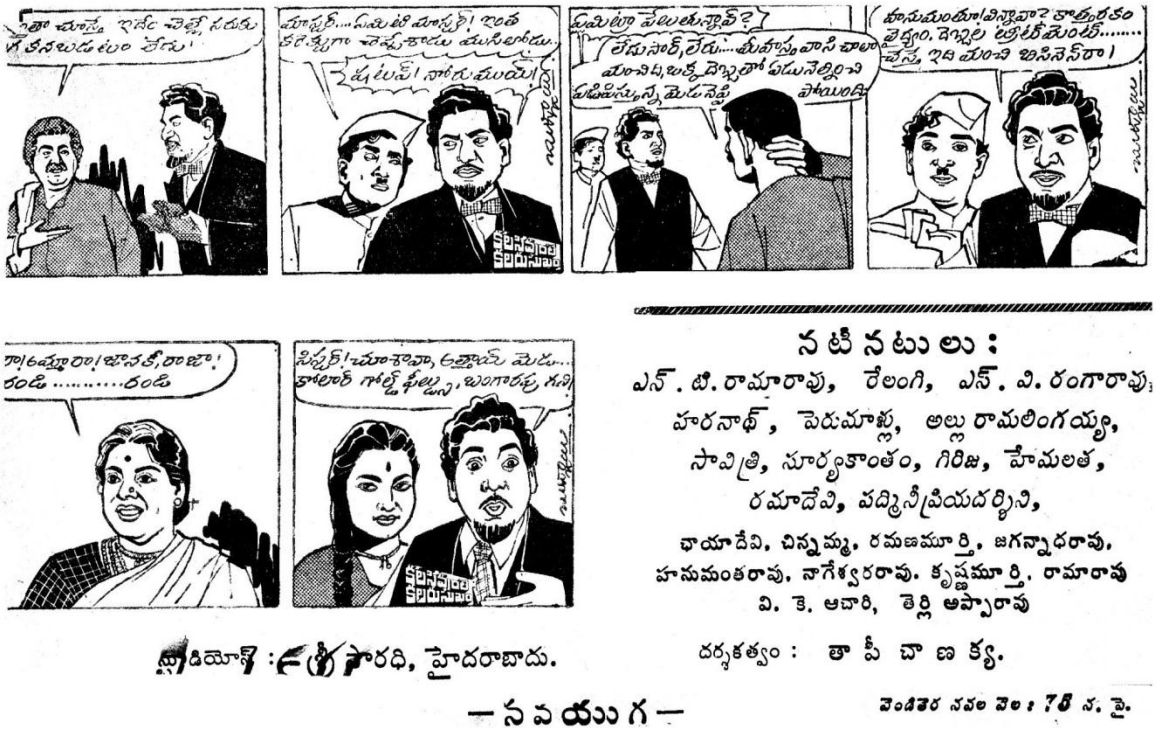
Lyrics: Arudra

Editing: C. H. Venkateswara Rao.

Playback: Suseela, Jikki, Swarnalatha, Ghantasala, P. Nageswara Rao, P. B. Srinivas, Madhavapeddi.

Cast: Girija, Jaggaia, Prameela, Ramanmurthy, Suryakantam, Ramanareddy, Hemalatha, Perumallu

Kalasi Unte Kaladu Sukhamu (1961)



Director: Tapi Chanakya

Production: Sri Saradhi Studios, Hyderabad.

*Dialogues:*Acharya Atreya

Music: Master Venu

Lyrics: Kosaraju, Arudra, Sri Sri

Editing: A. Sanjeevi.

Playback: Ghantasala, Suseela, Jamunarani, Satyarao.

Cast: N. T. Rama Rao, Relangi, S. V. Ranga Rao, Haranath, Perumallu, Allu Ramalingaiah, Savitri, Suryakantham, Girija, Hemalatha.

Kanyasulkam (1955)

Director: P. Pullaiah

Producer: D. L. Narayana

Writer: Gurazada Appa Rao (play), Sadasivabrahmam Vempati (screen adaptation)

Music: Ghantasala.

Lyrics: Gurazada, Basavarau, Sri Sri, Devulapalli, Malladi, Sadasivabrahmam, Samudrala.

Playback: Ghantasala, Suseela, Padmapriya, Madhavapeddi

Cast: Savitri, N. T. Rama Rao, CSR Anjaneyulu, S. Janaki, Dr. Subbarao, Gummadi, Vangara, Suryakantham, Chayadevi, Hemalatha

Kutumbagauravam (1957)

Kutumba Gouravam 1957

Director: B. S. Ranga

Producer: B. S. Ranga

*Dialogues:*Anisetti

Music:Viswanathan, Ramamurthi.

Lyrics: Anisetti

Playback: Ghantasala, P. Nageswara Rao, P. B. Srinivas, P. Leela, Janaki, Jamunarani, D. L. Rajeswari

Cast: N. T. Rama Rao, Savitri, Kannamba, E. V. Saroja, Rajanala, Padmanabham

Mangalyabalam (1959)

Director: Adurthi Subba Rao.

Producer: D. Madhusudana Rao.

Story: (Based on Asapurnadevi' Bengali Novel *Agnipareeksha*) Screen Adaption by Atreya, Subbrao, Madusudan Rao.

Dialogues: Acharya Atreya.

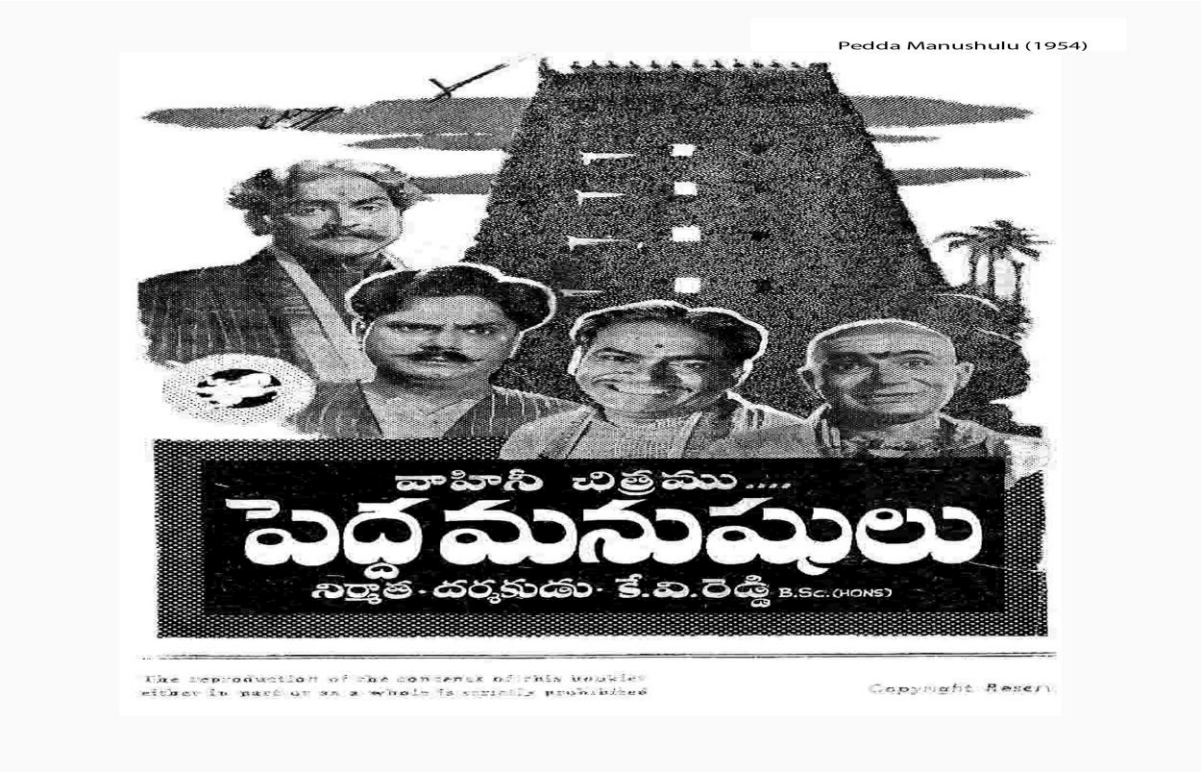
Music: M. Venu

Lyrics: Sri Sri, Kosaraju

Playback: Suseela, P. G. Krishnaveni, Leela, Jamunarai, Ghantasala, Madhavapeddi.

Cast: Savitri, Nageswara Rao, Rajasulochana, Relangi, Suryakantham, S. V. Ranga Rao, Kannamba.

Peddamanushulu (1954)



Director: K. V. Reddy

Producer: K. V. Reddy

Story: K. V. Reddy, D. V. Narasaraju, D. B. G. Tilak.

Dialogues: D. V. Narasaraju.

Music: O. Ramachandra Rao, A. Rama Rao.

Editing: Vasu, Money.

Lyrics: Vetukuri Satyanarayana Rao, Kosaraju, Raghava Rao.

Playback: Ghantasala, P. Leela, Krishnaveni, P. Nageswara Rao, Madhavapeddi, Varma.

Cast: Gawrinatha Sasrti, Relangi, A. V. Subbarao, Vangara, Ch. Kutumbarao, Ramachandra Kasyap, Gopal Pillai, Sri Ranjani, Hemalatha, Padmavathidevi, Seshamba.

Pelli Chesi Choodu (1952)

Director: L. V. Prasad

Producer: Nagi Reddy, Chakrapani.

*Story and Dialogues:*Chakrapani.

Music: Ghantasala.

Lyrics: P. Nagendara Rao, Ootukuri Satyanarayana.

Playback: Ghantasala, Leela, P. Nageswara Rao.

Cast: N. T. Rama Rao, S. V. Ranga Rao, Jogarao, Doraswami, D. K. Sivaramakrishnaiah, Kutmbarao, Balakrishna, G. Varalakshmi, Savitri, Suryakantam, Pushpalaha, Meenakshi, Padmanabham.

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Kutumbagauravam.

Mangalyabalam.

Peddamanushulu.

Pelli Chesi Choodu.

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