

## **SRI KANDUKURI - PIONEER OF WOMEN EDUCATION**

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### **Abstract:**

Sri Kandukuri Veeresalingam (1848–1919) was a visionary social reformer and a true pioneer of women's education in South India. Deeply inspired by the moral foundations of education, he believed that literacy among women was essential for building an honest and progressive society. His relentless efforts led to the establishment of the first schools for girls in Dowleswaram and Rajahmundry, breaking deep-rooted social barriers. Through his writings and speeches, Veeresalingam emphasized that "education without character is dangerous" and stressed the need for moral and ethical instruction alongside academics. He also fought against social evils such as child marriage and the neglect of widows, promoting widow remarriage and co-education. His vision and dedication sowed the seeds of social transformation, inspiring generations to value education as the cornerstone of equality and national development. This paper explores his pioneering role, educational philosophy, and lasting legacy in empowering women through education

**Keywords:** Sri Kandukuri Veeresalingam , Women Education, Social Reform, Dowleswaram and Rajahmundry, Literacy and Widow Remarriage

### **1.Introduction**

"Education without character is very dangerous" - as quoted by Gandhiji. Sri Kandukuri Veeresalingam also taught through his writings "Education with moral values is the need of the hour for the escalation of the society and country". He believed that, with quality education one can get wisdom, parting with foolishness and can gain a lot of benefits. Education is essential for every human being to inculcate qualities like endurance and courteousness and to lead a life of Ideal person in the society.

2. Personally Sri Kandukuri is fond of education. He believed that for efficient and smooth running of all the components of the society, the basic need is education. All through his writings, he inculcated in the students, the adoptable duties for uplifting society and the progress of the country. Mainly, the social evils prevailing at that time bothered him, and his contemplation is "the main cause of all these evils is illiteracy in women". There could be an honest society only when the women are educated. With this obsession, he established the first schools for girls in Dowleswaram, against all hurdles. Throughout his life worked for literacy in women and their upliftment. One can observe the, existing environment in education sector through his writings.<sup>1</sup> He denoted the importance of literacy in women by expressing "unless women are educated they are not free from evil feelings. And if the men look for their homes and heavens on earth, they should educate their wives so that there is no place for regretful and wicked thoughts in the minds of women".<sup>2</sup>

When Sri Kandukuri was working as Head master in Dowleswaram, Brahmasree Kokkanda Venkata Ratnam Pantulu and other writers in 'Andhra Bhasha Sanjeevani' discouraged literacy in women. Contradicting their arguments Sri Kandukuri expressed his ideas in 'Purushardha Pradayani' in favour of women education. Besides, at various meetings held at Dowleswaram Sri Kandukuri spoke about the use of literacy in women. Thus, he could influence the prominent

people of Dowleswaram on the importance of women education and established a school of girls in September 1874. On this occasion, Sri Kandukuri said, "In those days there was a little awareness of the Importance of education in men itself, launching a school for girls by donations is rather strange, but with cultural influence any thing could be possible".

Kandukuri's influence on the students was effective in those days. Adding to this in March 1881, Sri Pandita Sivananda Sastry came to Rajahmundry and delivered a speech denoting the Importance of education. All this motivated the students in forming "Pradhana Samajams" and in teaching poor people in the night.

In 1881 Sri Kandukuri sowed the seeds developing literacy in women by starting a school for girls in Innespeta, Rajahmundry. Students were always with Sri Kanduri on issues like 'widow marriages' and 'misbehaviour of the disciples of 'Kapata Swamulu'.

When Sri Kodanda Ramaiah came to Rajahmundry to marry a widow, he made a hue and cry of insufficient accommodation provided to him by Hitakarini Samajam. Some selfish and lethargic educated persons who came forward to marry widow, tried to grab as much money as they could to marry a widow. On these events, Sri Kandukuri commented 'the harm made by an educated person is hundred times more than that of made by the uneducated'.

Commercial education originated in those days itself. With propaganda of "best education", teaching high morals' and 'education to poor', some schools were commenced with attractive names. The teachers and organizers of these schools used to get aid from the then British Government, on the pretext of paying heavy salaries to the teachers. Sri Kandukuri felt that "when the teachers themselves embrace erroneous means, how could one expect morals from the student community". He worried, "because of these insinuate methods; there is not only the danger of losing good education but also ethics in student community".

Sri Kandukuri thought, as the minds of the children are not engrossed with opinions, it is proper to teach them theistic thoughts and service motive, at the tender age itself. On these lines, he commenced a theistic school in Rajahmundry. For efficient teaching in this school, he used to send two teachers for training in L.T. (Licentiate in Training). Later all the schools of Rajahmundry formed into a high school, under the organisation of Sri Kandukuri. His commitment for good education was rewarded like this. After completing his employment at Madras, Sri Kandukuri came to his native Rajahmundry. By that time, there were many changes in the society. As the enthusiasm for education being the same, Sri Kandukuri initiated a school for widows in January 1905 in his house. It was victoria girls school commenced with four girls and within a year, it enrolled 49 students and by the next year 150 students. In 1907, Veeresalingam established Hithakarini-High School. Maharaja of Pitapuram donated twenty thousand rupees to construct a building of theistic school, the construction was completed at a cost of sixty thousand rupees. With an endeavor to train boys and the good habit of respecting women, co-education was introduced in the school, and this was the first school in Andhra Pradesh to have co-education.

### **3.Conclusion**

In 1907, victoria girls school was shifted to "Ananda Gardens". To educate the widows, two male teachers were appointed and to train them in sewing, one lady was employed. Along with them Sri Kandukuri taught the widows. Besides, his wife Smt. Rajyalaxmi taught them music, ethics and made them optimistic, so that the downtrodden girls could face the challenges of life. She wrote some 'KEERTANAS' and taught the girls to sing them."

In total, the effort of Kandukuri couple was to promote education particularly in women, thus to create a resourceful and dynamic society. As the true followers of Sri Kandukuri, it is the moral responsibility of the forthcoming generations to carry the ideas and ideals of the pious couple for the benefit of the society forever.

**References:**

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