

Caste, Mobilisation Processes and Political Power: A Study of *Kapus* in Andhra Pradesh

**A Thesis submitted during 2014 to the University of Hyderabad
in partial fulfilment of the award of a Ph.D. degree in Sociology**

By

Ch. Satish Kumar



**Department of Sociology
School of Social Sciences
University of Hyderabad
(P.O.) Central University, Gachibowli
Hyderabad-500046
Telangana
India**



CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**Caste, Mobilization Processes and Political Power: A Study of ‘Kapus’ in Andhra Pradesh**” submitted by Mr. Ch. Satish Kumar bearing Regd. No 08SSPH04 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology is a bonafide work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance which is a plagiarism free thesis.

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(Prof. N. Purendra Prasad)
Supervisor,
Department of Sociology,
University of Hyderabad,
Hyderabad – 500 046.

Head,
Department of Sociology,
University of Hyderabad,
Hyderabad – 500 046.

Dean,
School of Social Sciences,
University of Hyderabad,
Hyderabad – 500 046.

DECLARATION

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Acknowledgement

I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. N. Purendra Prasad who has instilled confidence in me right from my MA days. Without his continuous support both at the personal and at the academic level, I could not have completed the thesis. It is his constant encouragement and liberty; that let me venture into many of the themes, which are discussed in the thesis. I am very grateful for his insightful discussions and suggestions. He has not only been my supervisor but also my well-wisher and a constant support in everything. I am thankful forever to him and in a way I am short of words to express my deep indebtedness to him.

A special heartfelt thanks to a wonderful teacher, Prof. Sasheej Hegde, a constant learner, who has ignited me on many occasions, primarily in engaging me into the sociological discipline. He has boosted my confidence, especially during the 'methods workshop', which he actively participated and provoked me to engage in the discussion. As a teacher, he has laid many paths and allowed students to choose their own path.

I thank my Doctoral Committee members, Dr. Janardhan, Dr. Rajagopal, Dr. Vamsicharan and Prof Sasheej Hegde for their valuable insights, for providing directions, sharpening my work both conceptually and substantially.

I also thank Prof. K. Lakshmi Narayana, Dr. Aparna Rayaprol, Dr. Nagaraju, and other faculty members for their encouragement.

I also should thank, Dr. Balagopal, Aloysius, Gail Omvedt, for their uncompromising attitude, impeccable clarity towards many pertinent problems, which were on many occasions' provided alternative thinking for the existing social and political problems. However, I never had an opportunity to interact with either Balagopal or with Gail Omvedt, but then, I was fortunate to engage with Aloysius Sir, who influenced me, personally and academically. Their dedication is both un-matching and inspiring.

My classmates from MA days, Shilpa, who has been a constant support, Manjusha Meena, Harinath, Devaraj, Mamata, Illika, Ganesh, Stuart Raj, all were supportive throughout my stay on campus.

Dr. Sudarshan, Amit, Saravana, all accommodated me and gave me a space to express my ideas, which were on many occasions, incoherent, unorganised, yet they have listened and received them patiently.

A special thanks to Shilpa Anand, Saravanna for meticulously editing parts of the thesis.

The dining room discussions with Prabhu, Prem, Leny, Karunamurthi, Dilip, Tushar, has certainly sharpened my ideas, were always spirited and instilled enthusiasm. The weekly discussions with our 'Wednesday Reading Group' - Shilpa, Debapriya, Priyam,

Mangai, Afeeda, Lalatendu, Abhijeet, Chandrasekhar, Bhoopati and Rajesh has certainly given me the confidence to sharpen my ideas, vocabulary, precision, etc, whether it is in terms of my presentation or other's presentations.

DSU Ravi, Dr. Suresh Digumarti, Dr. Praveen Veluvolu, Dr. Vikram, Dr. Suresh Jagannadam, all have expanded the horizons of my thinking, allowed me to establish a link between academic and non-academic activities. In a way, they have reduced the gap between both these spaces.

Chandramouli, PV, Kiran, Rahul, Seenu provided the necessary tools for me to engage with my work more passionately.

I thank, Dr. Lenin Dhanisetty, Jinka Nagaraju, for their sharp spontaneous reactions, and their approaches to some of the societal problems.

My respondents, from East Godavari, Vijayawada, Hyderabad, all have contributed in unravelling the riddles in terms of the topic that I was researching.

My parents could not see my journey of the thesis process, but then, they laid a foundation for my education, which I am enjoying in this hour only due to their labour. My sisters and their families showed utmost concern in terms of both my health and work.

I also thank, Hari Prasad, Vadakkan for their help in shaping the East Godavari maps. Especially, Hari has given a proper visual shape to my conceptualizations.

I thank the office staff of the department of sociology- Tirupathaiah, Madhusudhan, Chandrakanth, Sreedharan- for assisting me on many occasions.

These past years have not been an easy ride both academically and personally, I thank all those who have been on my side.

Satish.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

A.P. Andhra Pradesh
AIADMK- All India Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
BC- Backward Caste
BPL-Below Poverty Line
BSP- Bahujan Samajwadi Party
BTK- Balija, Telaga, Kapu
CM- Chief Minister
CPI- (ML)- Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)
DMK- Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
DWACRA-Development of Women Children in Rural Areas
FCI- Food Corporation of India
GIET-Godavari Institute of Engineering and Technology
GO- Government Order
GSB- Gauda Sarasvata Brahmins
KV- Kontaikatti Velalar
LJP- Lok Jansatta Party
MBC- Most Backward Class
MGNREGA- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MIM- *Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen* (MIM)
MLA- Member of the legislative assembly
NCs- Nattukottai Chettiars
NTR- Nandamuri Taraka Ramarao
OBC- Other Backward Classes.
PRI- Panchayat Raj Institutions
PRP- Praja Rajyam Party
RJD- Rashtriya Janata Dal
SC- Schedule Caste
SEZ- Special Economic Zone
SMART- Smart, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent Government
SRMT -Sri Ramdas Motor Transport
ST- Schedule Tribe
TDP- Telugu Desam Party
TRS-Telangana Rashtra Samithi
UPA-United Progressive Alliance
VAMBAY- Valmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojana
YSRCP- Yuvajana Sramkia Rythu Congress Party

List of Translations and Transliterations

- Arogyashri*- A community Health Insurance Scheme in Andhra Pradesh
Beldars- construction workers
Coolies- workers
Dwija- Twice born
Endra gallu or *Kallu gese vallyu*- toddy tappers
Harithandra Pradesh -Green Andhra Pradesh
Indiramma- A housing Policy of Government of Andhra Pradesh.
Kapu Hakkula Porata Samiti -Kapu Association for protection of rights
Kapula Rajyam- Kapus state
kota goda-fort wall
Kulabojanalu – *Caste collective gatherings*
Lati- A long Stick
Maestri -middle man and supervisor
Metta- upland
Podu- Shifting Cultivation
Sanna or *Chinna*- Small
Swarnadhra Pradesh -Golden Andhra Pradesh
Teluguvari Atmagouravam- Telugu people's Self Respect
Vanabojanalu – *Socail gathering, used recently to mobilize caste members.*
Vetti- feudal labour
Zamindars- land Lords
ye kulaniki yenni votlo, a kulaniki anni seatlu -Seats should be proportionate with the votes.

Chapter 1

Caste and Politics in India: Introducing the Problem

Caste in India has always evinced serious research interest both within and outside the discipline of sociology. As Frank F Conlon, says that “[w]hether or not “caste” has shaped India’s society, it surely has shaped anthropology’s engagement with India’s society” (Conlon F 1996: 1047). It is true that the studies on caste have certainly influenced disciplinary contours from time to time. The diverse perspectives and disagreements amongst the scholars always provoked and demanded new studies and insights on caste. Recent discussion on caste and its significance in India in the magazine *Seminar* (2012) is yet another testimony to the diverse perspectives that were debated. The scholarship particularly has been deliberating on the ‘current moment’ of caste. While the scholarship on the whole is trying grapple with the new forms that caste is taking and have analysed either in terms of ‘continuity’ or ‘change’ or both. In these debates, one set of scholars emphasized the ‘difference’, in explaining the nature of caste (Gupta D 2004; Beteille A 2012), whereas the other set of scholars underlined the need to consider the importance of ‘hierarchy’ in the working of caste (Omvedt G 2011; Harriss J 2012). Our study finds its significance in the context of these academic debates on caste.

It is pointed out that caste is relevant in the present day context because of the rapid changes occurring in both rural and urban India. In terms of caste and kinship, which is an important indicator for both diminishing and consolidating the caste identities, Parry Jonathan pointed out, the significance of caste and kinship has increased rather than diminished in both rural and urban India (Parry J 1976). It is pertinent to know now why and how caste sustained or perpetuated deeper in contemporary India. Therefore, it is not only sociologists but also political scientists, geographers and economists have undertaken the analysis of caste more seriously in the recent past.

The discipline of sociology has engaged with the social cleavages such as, religion, caste and gender for a very long period. With the growing inter-disciplinarity in social

sciences, various categories have emerged, such as caste-occupation, caste-region, caste-religion, caste-class, caste-politics, caste- gender. The un-folding of caste in politics took a gradual ascendancy after 1970's in the writing of scholars such as Kothari R (1970) Manor J (2010). Many of the agrarian castes started taking active part in politics by using their caste alliances. The growing presence of these Agrarian castes in politics were attributed to the impact of green revolution, which took place in 1970s. By early 1980's, the Dalit groups started asserting themselves, primarily because agrarian castes exhibited violent behaviour as the number of atrocities increased across India (Balagopal 1986, 1987; Guru G 1995; Ilaiyah K 1995). These incidents of oppression have instigated the Dalits to be part of the political sphere to protect their rights and fight for justice (Omvedt 2011: 90).

There are significant number of studies on upper castes and a few on lower castes and Dalits. However, there are very few studies on intermediary or middle castes. It is in this context that the present study tried to select an intermediary caste called *Kapus* from Andhra Pradesh¹. Although *Kapus* come under the 'general category'² (a state terminology), for the purpose of this study we considered them as intermediary agrarian caste. We would explain the logic behind our intention to assign intermediary status to this caste in the following chapters. Deshpande and Yadav have defined intermediary castes as "non dwija and non-OBC castes" (2006: 2422). While agreeing with the proposition of Deshpande and Yadav in terms of intermediary caste, yet the study problematizes this category, primarily because of its varied nature, which is very fuzzy, hence, the present study dealt with it critically. *Kapus* are found largely in the East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh. The study has chosen *Kapus* primarily because of their assertiveness for equal political rights for a considerable period. The present study attempts to understand the different mobilisational processes, assertions of *Kapu* caste.

Having laid the context for studying *Kapu* caste by tracing the debates on caste, we would further qualify our intentions of resorting to perspectives generated within the realm of political sociology. Notwithstanding the focus, we are trying to analyse how

¹When we use the word *Kapus*, it is generally referred to Godavari Delta *Kapus* in this study.

² Castes, which are neither socially nor educationally backward, comprises of the category- General. The castes, which fall under this category, are not constitutionally entitled to avail the constitutional benefits, especially in terms of education, job and political positions. However, the debate persists to extend the reservation benefits even to these castes by considering the economic factor also as one of the indicator.

intermediary agrarian castes have been negotiating themselves in the political domain, which would mean tracing the working of the caste in a structure of power relations.

Section –I

The disciplines of sociology and political science engage with the complex processes of the society, yet these two disciplines possess very complex relationship with each other, primarily due to their disciplinary inclinations. In this backdrop of different inclinations, the sub-discipline of political sociology has emerged within the interdisciplinary purview. It lies primarily between the intersection of politics of sociology and the sociology of politics. While demonstrating the nature of political sociology, Wilfred Spohn says that the sub discipline is to

study the interrelations and interactions between the socio-cultural life-world and the political sphere, between social and political arenas, institutions and agency. Political sociology, in short, looks at the social bases of politics. Despite this common inter-disciplinary core, however, there are considerable tensions between both cooperating disciplines. Political scholars often raise objections that political sociology is too sociological in underestimating the autonomy and complexity of the political sphere, and sociologists critically emphasize that political sociology often narrows down the complexity of the socio-cultural life-world as basis of politics (2010: 49-50).

The four main theorists within political sociology—the (sub) discipline are- Marx, Tocqueville, Weber and Michels. These luminaries have certainly made their presence in laying the foundations for the subject of political sociology. Among the above four, it is Weber, who emphasized the importance of power and its relevance within political sociology through his writings, especially on ‘Bureaucracy’, ‘Politics as a Vocation’ or even the most celebrated essay- Class, Status and Party. A discussion on the dimension of power by Weber has been extensively dealt in the chapter-2.

Marx perceived power from the point of view of authority, who says, “the ruling ideas of an epoch are the ideas of the ruling class and thus interpreted that rulers consciously forced their views on a recalcitrant population” (Marx, K and Engels, F 1976). Whereas Weber stressed on the authority (legitimate authority) within the power, saying, “[t]he chance of a man or a number of men to realise their own will in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action” (Weber 1948a: 180). Both Marx and Weber certainly directed towards a path where the authority plays

a pertinent role in the modern societies. Although both the scholars have emphasized the role of power within the purview of authority, but as Harold Lasswell, one of the early political sociologists, says that the Marxist perspective was much concerned with the class resulting social change. However, it is later Marxists who extended this notion of class in a much broad sense (see for instance, the Frankfurt school (Gramsci A 2007; Bottomore T 2012). While differentiating between the two theoretical approaches (Marxist and Weberian), Lipset (1963), says that the Marxist approach engaged with the ‘cleavage and consensus’, whereas the Weberian school primarily concerned with the ‘bureaucracy’. However, the political sociology as a (sub) discipline is concerned with the analysis of the social conditions that make up for democracy.

The ideas of class and power have also found expression in the Indian scholarship. Dipankar Gupta says, “Indian (theory) therefore presents many features that have substantially altered received theories and conceptualisations in political sociology. It is true that the general concerns of political sociology such as authority and social bases of power, still hold good for India, as indeed they do elsewhere” (Gupta, D 1995:19). Expanding on this point, we have Scholars like Gail Omvedt (1982), Balagopal (2011), who tried to understand the power relations in Indian context. They have extended the notion of class to explain caste relations as well. Therefore, it is essential for any discipline to critically examine power that not only considers the ‘political’ but also the ‘social’.

In engaging with the caste and politics, the present study invokes the concept of ‘social power’ especially by Robert Bierstedt (1956). Along with Bierstedt, Michael Mann (1986) also contributed to the ideas of social power quite significantly. Bierstedt’s ideas were influenced largely by the Weberian philosophy, especially in understanding the sources for the structure of power. Taking into consideration various debates and perspectives, the following objectives have been formulated for the purpose of the study.

Objectives

- To critically review the studies on caste and analyse major trends within the purview of sociological discipline
- To explore the nexus between caste and politics with a special focus on Andhra Pradesh.
- To delineate the socio-political history of Kapus from East Godavari District and locate it with in a region (s).
- To analyse the mobilisational processes deployed by the Kapus in acquiring political power.

Sociologically speaking, how the consolidation of different castes that have taken place to ascertain political power is a larger question. This also implies that one needs to understand the significant strategies that these castes have adopted in undermining differences. In addition, the caste influence over the cultural dynamics and political positions in the wider political space has been investigated. Here the present study tried to understand the role of caste in the politics and the major shifts that took place mainly from mid 1980's onwards.

The present study is trying to understand historically the position of *Kapus* vis-a-vis other castes within social hierarchy of Andhra Pradesh. How certain castes attempted to move from one social position to other? What are the politics of state representation and self-representation of Kapus? Are Kapus attempting to redefine the *Identity politics* framework? These are, some of the questions that we would be attempting to address in the chapters that follow. The present study is not looking at caste, in general, not merely as a discriminatory or oppressive element, but how caste actually has become a driving force to mobilize politically the individuals and caste groups to consolidate their socio-cultural and political power. In the next section, we outline the methodology followed in this thesis.

Section III: Methodology

For the purpose of this study, East Godavari, a District in Andhra Pradesh was selected. The rationale behind choosing this particular district was primarily because of the

predominance of Kapus in the district. This predominance was in terms of both numerical strength as well as economic resources.

The East Godavari District is part of Coastal Andhra, which is a region within the state of Andhra Pradesh. The district plays an important role in different spheres, economically, socially as well as politically. In economic terms, Godavari delta considered as prosperous for its large-scale production of paddy, horticulture, aqua culture, apart from, its rich oil and natural gas, and other natural reserves. Kakinada and Rajahmundry, a port city and commercial city are also located within the District. Socially, this District went through a social reform movement that resulted in higher level of consciousness. Different agrarian castes, gained their social and political consciousness because of the economic prosperity and social reform movement. East Godavari is also the larger District with higher rate of population and higher representation (19 assembly constituencies). Given the diverse social composition of the District, in terms of different caste groups, (upper, intermediary and lower) tribes, occupations, rural-urban linkages, this District has been chosen for the present study.

The methods that were used to unravel certain critical sensibilities were primarily ethnographical, historical and sociological. Fieldwork was carried out in East Godavari district both rural and urban areas including Kakinada and Rajahmundry. In addition, Vijayawada city in Krishna district, and Hyderabad city have also been covered. Initially, a pilot study was conducted in Kakinada, East Godavari District and in the city of Vijayawada, during July and August in the year 2010. Later on, actual fieldwork was conducted in three phases. The first phase was during the months of September and October-2010, second was between February-April-2011, and the third was the in the months of April and June-2013. Altogether, 115 respondents were interviewed for the purpose of the study. The following table provides the profile of the respondents.

Table 1.1: List of Respondents*

S No	Professions	1 st Phase	2 nd Phase	3 rd Phase
1	Academics	1	6	13
2	Media (print, electronic & visual)	6	12	5
3	Politics	6	7	17
4	Activism (political, cultural, social)	0	11	15
5	Judiciary	4	2	2
6	Government sector	0	4	4
Total		17	42	56
Grand Total		115		

*While 115 respondents were formally interviewed, there were several conversations and individual interviews conducted in informal settings.

The study primarily used the qualitative methods to pursue the research problem. The techniques of data collection include random sample survey, snowball technique, in-depth Informal Interviews, open-ended questionnaire, a checklist (a copy attached in the appendix). The study respondents include, state level Kapu caste members who are actively engaged in politics, along with the media, (visual, print and electronic) personnel, bureaucrats, also the key respondents from different fields such as government, literary and entertainment sectors, apart from the *Kapu* respondents, several political activists, intellectuals who do not belong to *Kapu* caste from East Godavari, Vijayawada and Hyderabad have also been interviewed. The researcher supplemented the data collection by attending the caste gatherings held through caste association meetings, *vanabojanalu*, PRP party meetings. In addition to the above, secondary sources such as archival records, census, and newspaper reports; published and unpublished books/ monographs have also been relied upon. Another important source for the study is the sixty years electoral data of legislative assembly from Andhra Pradesh during 1956-2014.

The present study has identified three crucial events—one the formation of Kapunadu in the year 1988 and the second emergence of Prajarajyam Party in the year 2008 and thirdly, exploring *Kapumitra* magazine covering 10 years of its publication. These three critical events were analysed primarily to understand the caste mobilisational processes.

Methodological Questions

There is always the question of the methodological ambiguity in the social sciences. While doing the fieldwork, the researcher who is not a *Kapu*, encountered many of the

uncomfortable questions in terms of his social position. The researcher had to confront these questions time and again throughout the fieldwork, which left a deep impact on the researcher's subjectivity and the objective nature of social sciences. Social sciences is handicapped to handle such kind of questions, primarily, because of the social structure which has produced very unequal life among the individuals, secondly, due to the affirmative policies (reservation benefits), which took a steady leap especially after 1990's, has led to altercations within the intellectual sphere by expanding the horizons of the intellectual space. This has enhanced the ambiguity pertaining to the objective from a subjective point of view.

M N Srinivas (1979), T K Oomen (1993), and Yogesh Atal (2001) already addressed the above questions within the sociology through the debates 'insider' and 'outsider'. In recent times, Gopal Guru (2012), Sundar Sarukkai (2012), also articulated it. However, the problem was only analysed intellectually or conceptually, but its empirical grounding still needs to be explained. Studying the 'other' is always a difficult task within the realm of social sciences especially after 1980's. Of course, this predicament existed even for prominent sociologists in India, such as MN Srinivas, Andre Beteille during 1960s and 1970s or say Baviskar in 1980s and 1990s and of course by many researchers in the recent past. The above scholars also confessed that they have compromised on certain ethical-subjective concerns in order to gain access to the primary data. In-fact these scholars expressed their difficulties, by either disclosing or not disclosing their caste. The problem persists within the discipline of sociology and it has to address collectively.

At the apparent level, the question 'who are you', may seems to be directed towards the wellbeing of the subject, but deep down, it seeks the subjects social position. The researcher who is also probing the respondents' social position is inevitably had to confront the questions related to his own social position through a subtle, yet powerful symbolic gestures or sometimes through overt questions. However, it raises an important question here. Why is it that these questions were not perceived as constraints within the social sciences, or the intellectual space earlier? Is it because of the 'intrusion of the excluded groups' within the academia that these questions are getting raised now? Has the democratisation of the intellectual space thrown many of the challenges, which were not addressed, earlier in the intellectual space? These were

some of the methodological ambiguities the researcher had to face in pursuing research on the question of caste.

Structure of the thesis

The structure of the thesis is organised as follows. It is primarily divided into seven chapters along with the introduction. Chapter 2 has three sections, the first section reviews the sociological engagement with the studies on caste and analyses the epistemological shifts that took place over a period of time. Different theoretical approaches are explained in this section. The second section presents a comprehensive overview of the studies on castes termed as ‘biographies of castes’. Whereas the third section engages with the idea of ‘social power’ and makes effort to apply the concept of social power and political economy approach in understanding the caste and its nexus with political power.

Chapter 3 presents the nexus between Caste and Politics in Andhra Pradesh, during the period 1956 to 2014. It covers three different regions-Coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana³ (or two states now) by specifically focusing on how caste and politics intersect in these regions. The fourth chapter focuses on the political economy of East Godavari district and Coastal Andhra region, to understand the *Kapu* dynamics in its local, regional and supra-regional context. Chapter 5 presents social history and the *life world* of *Kapus*, and analyses the caste within the conceptual schema of Robert Bierstedt’s Social Power. An attempt has been made here to present the interplay between the *sociology of majorities*, the *processes of consolidations*, and *resources* proposed by Bierstedt with a focus on *Kapu* caste. Chapters 6 and 7 delineate the mobilisational process of *Kapus* through a magazine- *Kapumitra* and a political outfit- Prajarajyam Party. The final chapter presents a summary of the thesis and a comprehensive discussion on substantive themes.

³ Due to consistent struggle by the people of Telangana for a separate statehood both during 1969-1971 and 2001-2014, Telangana has become the 29th state in India from 2nd June 2014.

Chapter 2

Caste Studies: A Critical Sociological Review

“Subtler minds and abler pens than mine have been brought to the task of unravelling the mysteries of caste” (Ambedkar B R 1916: 2)

“[A]lmost every statement of a general nature made by anyone about Indian Caste may be contradicted” (Kosambi D D 2002:773)

Section: I-The Sociology of Caste

The present chapter is an attempt to understand the category of caste from the disciplinary background of sociology. In a major way, religion and caste have been influencing Indian society and polity. Without getting into the debate on the intricate relationship between religion and caste, here one is attempting to understand the ‘category’ of caste. Though several scholars explained the genealogy of caste, it was Dumont, a French sociologist, who brought caste as a subject into the forefront within the discipline of Sociology. Largely, the discussion on caste within sociology is analyzed as, ‘before’ and ‘after’ Dumont.

Introduction

The ‘idea of caste’ is a ‘spectre’ to most of the Indians; certainly, it is a spectre, as it cannot be detached, disassociated, ignored or even be dismissed. Caste is a totalitarian object, which inter connects the social life of individuals. For M N Srinivas, caste is the “fundamental category to understand the Indian Society” (1972:739). Whereas in Susan Bayly’s words, caste is “seen as a meeting ground between everyday Indian life and thought and the strategies of rulers and other arbiters of moral and social order, tends to provoke more heated debate than almost anything else in the specialist literature” (Bayly S 1999:1).

The term and its meaning is derived from the Portuguese term ‘casta’, broadly means, breed, race, etc., but the genealogy of caste is deeply-rooted in Indian society (Seth DL 1999: 2502). Caste was not a colonial invention; rather it existed prior to the colonial

period. During the pre-colonial period, caste representations were articulated more in terms of Varna system based on four-fold vertical system-*Kshatriya, Brahmin, Vaishya* and *Shudra*. Scholars such as Ambedkar have proclaimed that the origin of the caste system can be located in a Brahmanical text- '*manusmriti*'. He also asserted that it was 'endogamy', which has altered the mechanism of the caste system (Ambedkar 1916:18). Nevertheless, his contribution to caste studies was not recognised as much within the sociological literature.

During the later phase of Colonial regime, the caste system as such got fragmented considerably yet it was consolidated structurally. The collusion of elite, both external and internal, has camouflaged the system of caste, and was defined according to the requirements and convenience of interest groups from time to time. The British with the political power and the Brahmins with over-whelming presence in the administrative power have altered significantly the social structure of the Indian society (Irschick F Eugene 1969). A sociological review presented here to explain the discipline's perception by classifying it into three different perspectives – genealogical, consolidation, and politicisation¹.

Genealogical or Indological perspective:

The sociological understanding of caste is largely derived from the writings of Louis Dumont, a French structural functionalist, with a book titled 'Homo-Hierarchicus' (1970). This classical work on caste was widely reviewed as well as deeply critiqued indicates the significance of the book. The discussion on caste in India was a continuous reflection both at the intellectual and political level. We will discuss in detail Dumont's contribution towards caste within the boundaries of Sociology in the politicisation section (Post-Independence), although his contribution figures in all the three perspectives.

Prior to Dumont, Caste was understood only as a mythical and historical category. Caste was presented or explained, mainly through folk stories, caste *puranas*, Sanskrit and Vedic texts (Das Veena 1968). As a whole, the articulations on caste depicted the perceptions of the Brahmins who controlled the intellectual space as the only educated

¹It can also be explained based on the political regimes, such pre-colonial, (genealogy) colonial (consolidation) and post-colonial (politicization).

class. These perceptions largely led to romanticization or glorification of caste. It was claimed that the origin or formation of the caste system was based on the occupations. This system was similar to the pattern of the 'occident' guild system. Groups were assigned to do a particular job, and gradually it turned from family to caste occupation and there was enforcement in the due course. This enforcement gradually led to untouchability, oppression, segregation, and exclusion of certain social groups.

Discussing about the origins of the caste system, Vivekananda Jha (1992) says that, caste as a system expanded during the later Vedic period, i.e. 1000 BC, mainly due to the development of agriculture, especially the settled agriculture, which provided the surplus. The accumulation of wealth began only after the use of iron tools for the agriculture. Along with it, there were several other factors such as, the stable village life, tax collections, bonded labour, the rise and decline of Buddhism and Jainism have influenced the caste system (CPI (ML), 1960). Thus, the document says that caste eventually evolved into a hierarchy based exploitative system. This process allowed Brahmins to privilege ritual status and make Varna system more prominent, thus transforming the caste status as the basis of social hierarchy.

It is not that there was no resistance to caste and its hierarchical impositions. For instance, several resistance attempts have been noted during the 14th - 17th centuries. Largely, these were termed as anti-caste movements, these articulations were spread in different pockets of India, although its nature was not homogenous. During the Colonial period, i.e., around late 1890's, this form of resistance was raised by Ramakrishna Paramahansa, followed by Vivekananda, Tilak (Rao Anupama 2009: 31). However, these movements could not sustain in the due course, which is explained by Ramakrishna Mukherjee in his book titled *The Rise and Fall of the East India Company* (1999), that these movements were suppressed by the British by enacting laws supporting the Hindu and the Muslim orthodoxies from the time of Warren Hastings in India (Mukherjee R 1999: 1772-86). It is evident that British were pro-active in terms of encouraging the caste differences. It was during the colonial period, the caste as a system was consolidated structurally. Nicholas Dirks (2002:9) also foregrounds his central argument around this point, but gives much emphasis towards the cultural sphere. In the next section, changes that occurred in terms of caste, especially in the occupational structure during the colonial period have been discussed thoroughly.

Consolidation- Occidental Perspective

In the process of expanding their economic horizons, the British have come up with several developmental initiatives. This form of colonial modernity, directly and indirectly affected the modernisation process in India. Prior to colonial period, caste was understood either through religious scriptures or from the oral narratives. However, the British intervention provided enough space to articulate it through different sources, such as, the British Administrators, the Colonial Anthropologists, and through the Christian Missionaries (Cohn B 1968). Also in terms of articulating the British interventions, M N Srinivas says due to

the building of roads all over India, and the introduction of railways, postage, telegraph, cheap paper, and printing-especially in the regional languages-enabled castes to organize as they had never done before. A postcard carried news of a caste meeting, and the railway enabled members scattered in far-flung villages to come together when necessary, while the availability of cheap news- print facilitated the founding of caste journals, whose aim was to promote the interests of their respective castes (1957: 530).

It is in this crucial juncture, the discipline of Sociology originated in the year 1919 to cater to the needs of the administrators, especially in terms of research². Gradually, there was much influence of the European Sociology, especially the British sociology and social anthropology on the Indian sociology. Even in terms of approaches, it was very much influenced by the British school, mainly Structural functionalism. Ghurye, the foremost sociologist in the department of sociology, Bombay brought several prominent anthropological debates into the discipline, for instance, discussion on Tribes and castes. There were many studies/monographs on individual tribes within the larger sociological spectrum.

Starting from 1871 the Colonial rulers introduced caste census all over India. This move raised several issues pertaining to the social structure of the society. Once the Census started throwing light on the castes, new alliances were forged; each caste started recognising their own social position and subsequently seeking upward social mobility (Bandyopadhyay S 2004: 25). The census provided stimulus for the castes to seek higher social status. The caste census has raised the caste consciousness among

² Lord Curzon played a great role in bringing the discipline under the clutches of the State. Please see, Manorama Savur 2011, in Sujata Patel, ed, Doing Sociology in India.

different social groups across the villages. The idea of 'jati' cropped during this period especially through the initiatives of British (HanumanthaRao BSL 1995). As a consequence of this caste consciousness, the Indian Society witnessed gradually several thousands of *jati*. The enumeration during the British period can be seen as the basis for the consolidating of different *jati*. These *jati* started consolidating themselves by coming out of the Varna system. In recent times, there was the extension of the *jati*, what James Manor calls it as *Jati* clusters, which will be explained in the coming sections (Manor J 2010: XIX-XXI).

After the end of Second World War, there was a shift of sociological moorings from European to American academic orientation. This shift did influence even sociology in India resulting in American theoretical and conceptual approaches (Ritzer G 2011: 205). Even within India, there were quite a few significant changes that occurred such as establishing new sociology departments in various universities in India; the A R Desai's contributions influenced the shift from Tribe or Religion to that of Village within the discipline. This laid the basis for continuing 'Village Studies' in 1950s that gave the discipline a distinct identity.

The Process of Politicization-(Indian Scholarship)

Sociology department which started in Bombay in the year 1919, as a discipline was largely engaged on issues of Religion and on Tribes. However, it was Dumont's intervention, which brought the issue of caste within the discipline starting with a monograph on *Kallars*, in 1957. Dumont had laid the foundation for the metamorphosis of caste in sociology. He also contributed conceptually with his seminal work titled 'Homo-Hierarchicus', which was first published in French, in 1967 and translated into English in 1970. Dumont introduced a perspective on caste studies by insisting on combining Indology with Social Anthropology. The source material used was largely the texts and comparing the 'occident' with 'orient' societies. For Dumont, the idea of 'Structure' is the most important concept in Social Anthropology. Along with it he tried to study the Indian caste system by emphasizing the 'Ideology' than the 'Politico-Economic' aspects (Dirks N 1989: 59). For him Ideology is the primary element, which comes from religion, and he analyzed religious texts. In understanding the caste system in India, Dumont gave secondary importance to Politico-economic aspects. Dumont's

binary understanding of Indian Social System, such as, pure/impure, inner/outer, holism/individualism, hierarchy/equality comes from the French Structural tradition, mainly Claude-Levi-Strauss's works.

Dumont says that in order to understand caste, one needs to explore it as a whole rather than as parts. For instance, in Rajni Kothari's edited book 'Caste in Indian Politics'³, and many such studies attempts were made to present the nature of the caste only as parts but not as a whole. Dumont attacked these kinds of works by saying that they will not address the inter-caste relations or the total system sufficiently. For Dumont, the caste is "a system of ideas and values, a formal, comprehensible, rational system, a system in the intellectual sense of the term" (Dumont L 1970: 35).

Dumont also says that there are three principal characteristics of caste system- hierarchy, separation and interdependence and all these three are based on ideological opposition. F G Bailey (1957) tried to understand the Caste system from the 'politico-economic' perspective⁴. Bailey also emphasized the role of hierarchy, which prevails in the caste system, but the difference was, for Dumont it is the purity and pollution, which determines the hierarchical relations, whereas for Bailey it is the nexus between the economic and political factors. Dumont's perception towards Caste was largely from the point of view of the Brahmins. In-fact Gerald Berreman, prominent reviewer of Dumont's work, points out that "[p]rofessor Dumont had been talking with, reading and believing Brahmins and their friends. That is not wrong, it is just inadequate to an understanding of Caste in India or anywhere else" (Berreman G 1971:515).Berreman expressed in a subtle way that Dumont's views on caste, was one sided.

Indian sociology was dominated by the structural functional model for a very long time which was carried out by Dumont and other scholars such as, M N Srinivas, Andre

³Published in 1970 by Orient Longman, edited by Rajni Kothari. Out of the ten chapters, five chapters were on specific castes and they are: Eleanor Zelliot worked on Mahars of Maharashtra; Rajni Kothari worked on Kshatriyas of Gujarath; Robert Hardgrave on Nadars of Tamilnadu and Carolyn Elliot on Kammars and Reddys of Andhra Pradesh.

⁴Bailey (1957) study in Orissa concentrates particularly on the relations among Caste status, economic positions and political power. He argues that in the past, when the village was more autonomous from the state, there was congruence among these three spheres. With the integration of the village into the wider economy and political administration, however, this congruence became attenuated in some cases as the members of some Castes of low status became wealthy and began to challenge the political power of the members of higher status Castes.

Beteille. M N Srinivas (1957) attempted to classify the social relations in the Indian villages as 'reciprocal', 'harmonious', and 'inter-dependent'. Along with M N Srinivas and others, especially, Michael Moffat (1979) also associated with Dumont's approach on caste. For the structural functionalists caste system exist primarily, through sharing the value system of the upper castes and replicating it among themselves. While justifying that the Indian caste system is not rigid; M N Srinivas brings in the mobility aspect and described the process as 'sanskritisation'. Srinivas justified the unequal social relations by citing the 'jajmani system' as a testimony for reciprocity, which was prevalent at that time. He also said that the caste does not operate at the national level, but mostly operates at the local level hinting towards two directions- 'Jati' and the Village studies.

Unlike Dumont, *Jati* was emphasized by M N Srinivas to indicate that Varna model of caste is an ideal-typical model and doesn't exist as a Pan-Indian category, thus opening up the debate between 'book view' and 'field view' (Jodhka S 1998). In brief, Srinivas argued that caste is dynamic, caste system provides an opportunity for every *jati* the upward mobility and therefore one could infer the possibility of caste disintegration in the end. Srinivas explores the above features within the social structure of Coorgs in relation to their religion. While doing that, Srinivas also traces family, marriage, kinship patterns of Coorgs. Srinivas justifies in choosing the village as a unit of the study by saying that it is a self-sustained and an autonomous place, secondly, according to Srinivas, the larger market does not have the stakes in the village, and hence it is difficult to alter or influence the village by the external forces. His views were contested eventually, in due course, especially during 1990's.

Analysing the village studies, Beteille, makes two pertinent points critically, one: in terms of 'holistic' descriptions of various social institutions, second was related to the theoretical approach, i.e. structural functionalism. While doing that, Beteille, proposes an alternative, in which he integrates both Marxist as well as Weberian approaches. In addition, Beteille, rather studying the village in a 'holistic' approach, specifically focuses on one aspect of the village- social stratification, where he traces, unlike his predecessors in the village studies tradition. In brief, Beteille brought the concept of power into the discussion on caste studies in India (Beteille 1969).

Prior to Srinivas, the caste system was articulated in terms of Varna by the Orientalists and Christian missionaries, especially during the 19th century. The caste was perceived as a set of normative prescriptions within the Brahmanical texts. The actual behaviour of people, as it is noticed, was explained as a corruption of these Sanskrit norms. However, missionaries' perspective questioned the textual norms and viewed as equally corrupt (Cohn B 1968: 17). Early anthropologists started focusing on the microcosm of the castes which can be measured through customs like endogamy, commensality, occupational specialization, ritual (Ames, M 1971: 81). However, Srinivas attempted to simplify the abstractness around the concept of Caste. For Srinivas, Village studies provided the opportunity to understand caste in its grounded and localised forms. Thus, his argument was that textual basis of Religion and its ideology do not provide the basis for defining and understanding caste rather only diverse *jatis* do.

Differing with the structural functionalist and Weberian perspectives, several scholars engaged with the caste emphasized on contradictions within the Indian social structure. It was largely the Marxist scholars based on empirical studies intervened by saying that the village is filled with the conflicts and tensions, unlike the structural functionalist's view that the Indian village is bounded with consensus. These scholars include: Kathleen Gough (1952, 1981), A R Desai (1969), Gail Omvedt (1978), I P Desai (1984) who attempted to present various forms of stratification at the village level. The Marxist perspective has changed the direction of the discipline of sociology, significantly, during 60's and 70's. Scholars such as Kathleen Gough through her study in Tanjore in Tamil Nadu explained the existing inequalities between different social groups. She also argued that the social relations, for instance wage exploitation (Gough K 1952: 584), structure the economic relations.

However, the apparent lacuna with the Marxist analysis was the overwhelming perspective of '*class*' which they perceived in the village, undermining the caste. Contesting the structural-functionalist, Weberian and Marxist perspectives, Dalit perspective emerged based on the complex ground reality and conceptual limitations. Scholars such as Gail Omvedt (1978), Rosalind Honlon (2002) were critical of the class framework and took up Ambedkar ideology as the framework to understand the caste and social relations.

It was only during the late 1980's or from early 1990's; the Dalit perspective emerged prominently by invoking the writings of Ambedkar and Phule. The central argument was that Indian society need to be understood from the below which was not done either by Dumont, M N Srinivas or other scholars. There are several political factors behind the emergence of Dalit perspective in its understanding of caste including the formation of BahujanSamaj Party (BSP), Mandal agitation etc. Also during this period Sociology as a discipline was forced to engage with this perspective to offer explanations for the existing discrimination, inequality and exclusion in Indian society.

Post 1990's: Changing Caste Relations

In the post 1990's, both the state and market played a significant role in terms of determining caste relations. The liberalisation policies, market reforms, by the Indian State and its shift from welfarist role contributed substantially in the changed social relations. These changes influenced caste relations both at the village as well as outside the village. The market relations have completely penetrated into every domain in the villages thus raising the very definition of what constitutes rural and urban in India. These altered relations in rural India raised questions within academia regarding various theoretical perspectives on caste. The liberalisation policies changed the face of India, but the impact of market relations has been different for different social groups. The protective and welfarist measures intended for the poor and lower castes was gradually withdrawn by the state. Whatever remained are largely populist schemes, and in fact, large-scale collusion between 'Corporate Capital' and 'State' reported during this period. This nexus further dispossessed and marginalised the people, especially lower sections of the society. Due to these substantive changes, it can be said that the Indian social structure has absorbed the liberal ideology, particularly consumerist culture⁵.

In the last two decades, the presence of subaltern and Dalit perspectives has been predominant within the discipline of sociology. Both the perspectives have attempted to explain the plight of the marginalised and excluded groups by reconstructing the histories of these groups. One stark difference between these two perspectives is that

⁵One can give many examples pertaining to the nexus between the politics-caste-market, these three co-exists and works according to or depending on the other, a kind of mutual co-existence. Carolyn Elliot has come out with interesting work in 70's exploring the relations between the caste and politics locating in Andhra Pradesh.

the former is more critical of the existing theoretical paradigms while the latter evolved from the contested empirical realities derived largely through the ideas of Ambedkar (Guru G 1993).

For a long period, Ambedkar was never considered as a sociologist, never included in the curriculum, but only in the recent past the discipline started considering Ambedkar's perspectives as one of the significant perspectives. Also some of the movements such as the 'Dalit Panthers' movement in Maharashtra, Adivasi movement in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Dalit movement in Andhra Pradesh also challenged the hegemonic ideas of the 'ruling class' impacting on the academic and policy spaces significantly.

In terms of change and continuity with the caste, James Manor (2012), who consistently, emphasized the 'change' within the caste system in India, says that after Independence, there were two pertinent changes- democracy and Caste. He attempted to classify the caste from *Jati* to *Jati* clusters. He says that the emergence of *Jati* clusters in this process is very recent. Social scientists carefully need to examine the alliances of different *Jati* in enumerating numerical strength in different states to enhance their influence within the political system. He was referring to *Vokkaligas* in Karnataka, and this probably is applicable to other *jati* such as *Jats* in North India, *Kapus* from Andhra Pradesh.

Manor has also classified the caste into hierarchy and difference. He says that 'hierarchy', is no more an issue at present only the 'difference' that is reproduced through caste (Manor 2010: XXIV-XXVI). Arguing further, Beteille (2012), explained the decline of caste hierarchy in terms of three factors: one, purity-pollution which is weakening; second, the regulation of marriages is much weaker and third 'Caste and occupation' have become more flexible. With the above explanation, he has attempted to deemphasize the caste and said that the 'Caste consciousness is dying'. Of course, Beteille also talks about the changes in caste relations due to demographic, technological and economic factors (Beteille 2012: 47). For Beteille, it is the media and politics, which are exaggerating the caste relations. Beteille's views are pertinent in understanding the phenomena of politicisation of caste intensely in the recent past. While political parties are certainly contributing to the widening of the existing

cleavages among the castes, but to attribute it only to the political parties and undermining the complex social structure probably is far from the grounded reality. Echoing similar argument, Jodhka says that it was the British and their policies towards the commercial agriculture which has contributed to the disintegration of the Caste system (Jodhka 2012: 7), whereas for Anirudh Krishna (2004), it is the education facilities in rural areas along with the government programmes, and intensified political competition which are the factors that brought new leadership from different sections of the society (Krishna A 2003: 1175).

However, the other set of scholars argued that the caste is still significant both in rural and urban India. Scholars such as Eleanor Zelliot (2004), Aloysius (2000), John Harriss (2012), Gail Omvedt (2010, 2012), Christophe Jaffrelot (2012), have attempted to present the contrary views pertaining to the Caste. Negating Manor, Harriss says that

While Caste today has much less strength than before as an hierarchical system, it has not lost, and may actually have increased, its salience in the public sphere in all sorts of ways, including in electoral politics-even though political identities have in general become more fluid than they were earlier (Harriss John 2012: 19).

Thus, Harriss negates Manor's views that the caste hierarchy is on the decline. Whereas Gail Omvedt (2012) argues that caste needs to be studied from the *continuity*, but not from *change*. She points out that even after 60 years of Independence; one can see that Caste is still perpetuating rather than declining in terms of inter-caste marriage, inter-dining or even in political sphere. She critically engages with the scholars who are presenting the caste from the *change* point of view.

These discussions on caste tell us how caste is further getting institutionalised. State and civil society are actively contributing towards this '*institutionalisation of caste*' in different ways even now.

Apart from the discussion on caste in terms of *change* and *continuity*, there are also attempts to study the caste in relation to other themes such as caste-democracy, caste-politics, caste-gender, caste-religion, caste-environment. Taking these conceptual debates into account, the present study has focused on two factors – one caste

communities (*jati* clusters) and second, caste and politics. While the first presents the review of studies on caste communities, the latter emphasizes the nexus between caste and political sphere today. A thorough review of literature on caste communities will be presented in the next section.

Section II: Biographies of Different Castes: A Sociological Review

An attempt was made in the previous section, to locate historically the understanding of caste and its shifts within the sociological literature. The present section is an attempt to review and explore the studies produced on specific castes.

Caste was and is the central subject both in sociology as well as in the social sciences since colonial period and its emphasis took new turn from late 1980's onwards. The scope of caste studies ranged from the kinship patterns, forms of marriages, cultural practices, untouchability, and mobility to that of political leadership. Caste was also analysed together with religion, politics, gender, and region. The sociology discipline in India gradually started accommodating the caste studies genre, by extending the scope of micro categories. The disciplinary concentration on the 'village studies', from late 1950's, and 1960s gradually got extended to analysing changes at the economic and political level.

This section tries to review the large body of literature produced on castes by calling them as 'biographies of castes', especially in terms of their approach, conceptual schema, and methodology. It could be argued that Louis Dumont's contribution to Indian sociology has been influential enough for the discipline to be classified into pre and post Dumontian phases. His influence was largely to do with the macro categories primarily to understand the microstructures of the society⁶. Gradually, around 1970's, perceptible change took place, by giving much emphasis on understanding the micro categories independently, without trying to impose the framework of macro categories. It was also clear that, the post-Dumontian approach (see for Chatterjee and Sharma U 2003) considered the relevance of the macro categories, and applied micro categories

⁶ The discussion on the macro and micro needs much more attention, but in the present context, the macro categories are considered as the State, Nation and other larger categories, whereas the micro constitutes of, especially, Village, Caste.

appropriately in its particular context. This particular shift at the methodological level was primarily due to Dumont's interpretations of Indian society, especially his dual categories, for instance, juxtaposing the East with the West, etc. Within these circumstances, a gradual shift has taken place where the discipline also started accommodating the microstructures, in the form of village studies, or in later period, through studying individual castes. Though, Dumont attempted to interpret the subject of caste from both the perspectives-micro and macro in his studies- *Homo Hierarchicus* (1970) and study on *Piramai Kaller* (1986), for several reasons, these two: micro and macro were not synthesized. However, a few attempts were made during 1980's in studying caste by synchronising both the micro and macro categories.

A general review indicates that there was much emphasis given to the study of castes either upper or lower undermining the intermediary castes. A voluminous work was been produced on upper castes within the realm of caste studies. Some of the significant studies include: the studies on *Brahmins* (Khare R 1970; Conlon F 1974, 1977) *Vaishyas* (Nandi A 1978), *Baniyas* (Barry M 1978), *Marwaris* (Timberg T 1978), *Parsis* (Guha A 1970 Sahani R 2003), *Reddys* (Elliot C 1970), *Kammas* (Upadhya 1988; Elliot C 1970; Keiko Y 2008), *Komatias* (Hanumantha Rao BSL 1995), *Sourastrian Brahmins* (Saunders 1927), and *Chettiars* (Rudner 1995).

Studies on the lower castes include *Chamars* (G W Briggs 1920; Rawat R 2003, 2011, 2013), *Mahars* (E Zilliot 1970), *Madigas* (Charsley S 2004; Still C 2009), and *Jatavas* (Owen Lynch 1969). The focus of these studies on lower castes has been on the aspects of endogamy, occupations, purity and pollution, social mobility, social change and the issues related to self-respect, representation, identity, and political leadership/participation. Recognising this gap on studying intermediary castes, the present study attempts to explore *Kapus* from Andhra Pradesh.

The caste system in India, according to Hindu Brahmanical order, was classified into four Varnas Kshatriya, Brahmin, Vaishya and Shudra. The present study is moving away from this Varna model to that of *jati* model, and analyses in terms of upper castes, intermediary and lower castes. Recognising that there are ambiguities in defining intermediary castes, attempt were made to analyse it contextually and here a review has been undertaken on the biographies of castes.

Studies on Upper Castes

An attempt has been made here to classify the biographies of upper castes. This classification is based on two main aspects- cultural and economic. It is also traced that the other important variable-political was not explored the way the other two-cultural and economic aspects were explored.

Cultural aspects

There was much emphasis given to the cultural aspects of caste during the colonial period (Dirks N 2002; Hanumantha Rao BSL 1995). Edgar Thurston, colonial administrator, has attempted to map the existing castes within south India through his voluminous work 'Caste and Tribes of Southern India' (1909). Although, Thurston has not focused on any one particular caste, but he provided description of many castes. Thurston with the assistance from a *Brahmin* scholar Rangachari, attempted to trace the social structure of South India. While tracing the existing social structure in South India, he provided a brief sketch of each specific caste. Much of his work on castes was related to the occupations, kinship structure, physical appearance, religion, food habits, and anthropometric features, occupations, dressing patterns, marriage and funeral rituals (Dirks N 1996: 279). This attempt was received well along with critical appraisals. Thus, Thurston certainly provided a basis for the caste studies in India, particularly South India. Many scholars later followed this approach of Thurston in studying castes, but in due course, some of them have slightly altered it by incorporating new dimensions into it.

Within the cultural sphere, there were different strands taken in studying castes. For instance, Leonard Karen (1970) in her study on *Kayasths* of Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh focused on the formation and the decline of sub-castes of *Kayasths*. The author also traced the *Kayasth* caste's marriage and inter-marriage patterns. *Kayasths* is a scribing caste migrated from the Northern parts of India during the Mughal period to the Telangana region. They were loyal to the Nizam, primarily working as the scribes and entrenched across the Nizam area by consolidating their caste people with some prominent administrative jobs.

Stephen Barnett (1976) while studying the *Kontaikkatti Velalar* caste (hereafter abbreviated: KV), applies the ethno sociological approach, to trace the cultural aspects of caste from Tamilnadu. KV is a non-Brahmin caste, which is trying to align with the Brahmanical principles. Barnett says that there was some serious consideration by the KV to be associated with the *Brahmins*. He also says that with the fall of princely power, the KVs aligned with the *Brahmins*, distancing themselves from the land, as well as ‘eschewing’ from ploughing. This caste is a vegetarian caste, which is unusual among the non-Brahmin castes, and their ideological unity is based on the ‘blood’ relations. Barnett says that, KVs attempted to expand their caste horizons, against the ‘Mailapura Brahmins’ in seeking the political power. This expansion was done primarily by focusing on the blood relations and also maintaining caste restrictions with little flexibility.

Similarly, Franklin Conlon’s (1974) work on Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmins (GSB) from Karnataka, also gives emphasis to the unification process among different *jati*. The way KV caste has made alliances based on blood, endogamous marriages. In addition, the GSB attempted to forge alliance or unite several related *jati*, based on “social intercourse, appropriate matrimonial linkages” (Conlon F 1974: 352). Whereas David Pocock’s (1972) work on *Patidar* from Gujarat is much different from that of the above studies. Pocock engages himself with a caste, which developed during early 20th century due to the economic policies introduced by the Colonial regime. Pocock brings the aspect of ‘imitation’ quite significantly in his study on *Patidars*. The author also clarifies that the

[A] non-Brahmin caste of relatively low status does not (or did not before the advent of books) imitate an *idea* of Brahmanism nor did it have *general* notions of secular prestige. For it the models of conduct are the castes higher than itself with which it is in the closest proximity (Pocock D 1957: 24-25).

Pocock continues by saying that these imitations are not at the level of castes, rather one local section of caste imitating another local section. Pocock’s work, at large, can be called as the intersectionality between the cultural sphere and economy. In his account of *Patidars*, cultural and economic aspects played a major role in terms of

marriages. Thus, these accounts of caste indicate how unification within each caste in different region was done based on marriage alliances or ritual or other cultural aspects.

Economic aspects

The economic aspect was given much priority in studying castes, both during the colonial period and after Independence⁷. For instance, the studies on *Banias* (1978) by Barry Michie, *Sourastrians* by Saunders (1927), Nandi A on *Vaishyas* (1978), Timberg on *Marwaris* 1973) *Nattukkottai Chettiars* by Rudner (1994), *Parsis* by Guha A (1970), *Nadars* by Hardgrave (1969), etc. These studies, tried to map different patterns and processes of accumulation of wealth, sources and the stages of their prosperity, narrated in this section.

The scholars working on caste emphasized on economic aspects during the colonial period because of the significance of colonial policies on commerce or trade. For instance, the *Vaishyas*, *Banias* of Gujarat, *Komatis* and *Kammas* from Andhra or *Parsis* from Western part of India, etc were studied. There was perceptible change during the colonial regime as the economic world of these castes changed drastically. These castes who were dependent on the business for their livelihood adapted quickly to the colonial trade policies and thus consolidated their accumulation of wealth. In this context, Arasaratnam S (1966) narrates an historical point, saying that the

European investment in Indian trade increased by leaps and bounds in the course of the 17th Century, it generated some developments in the mechanics of this trade and introduced a greater degree of regularity in the practices of Indian traders. Some of the methods that were already practised were extended to embrace the new situation and there were some innovations as well. The main feature of the new situation was the appearance of a number of Europeans, both private traders and officials of Companies, as buyers in the market, creating problems in the supply and delivery of goods in far larger quantities than were demanded in the earlier period. The investment by Europeans of large sums of money in the purchase of textiles no doubt gave ample opportunities of profit at various points down the line from the cotton farmer to yarn maker to cloth weaver to dyer and painter and, most of all, to middleman supplier at the factory of the European Company (1966: 85).

⁷ For general understanding of the economic aspects of castes, Please see, D R Gadgil, 1959, *Origins of the Modern Indian Business Class: An Interim Report*, New York, secondly, Damodaran Harish, 2008, *India's New Capitalists, Caste Business, Industry in a Modern Nation*, Palgrave Macmillan, India.

Along with Arasaratnam, some of the scholars also traced this phenomenon, especially the economic historians, such as Sanjay Subrahmanyam (1990), Tirthankar Roy (1999), and Dharma Kumar (1983).

The traditional mercantile castes, such as the *Chettiars* from Tamilnadu, or *Komatis* from Andhra, or even the *Parsis*, *Baniyas*, *Marwaris* from the Western part of India, were all entrepreneurs during colonial period or even prior to it. Especially, during the colonial period these castes got consolidated economically while also expanded their spatial horizons. This can be attributed to the opportunities provided by the British through their policies. Along with the opportunities, as indicated by Upadhyaya Carol (1997), Rudner David (1994), Hardgrave (1969), the nexus between caste and kinship also played a decisive role in enhancing their economic opportunities.

Rudner's work on *Chettiars* (1994) demonstrates the way the colonial regime played a significant role in shaping the economic prosperity of *Chettiars*. Rudner also emphasises on the anthropological as well as historical aspects of the caste. Even prior to Rudner, some of the scholars have studied *Chettiars*, for instance, J S Farnivall, (1948) by largely covering the social aspects.

David Rudner's study on *Chettiar* contributes to the literature available on *Chettiars* and provides another dimension to the study of castes; a study on *Nattukottai Chettiars* (hereafter NCs) which is certainly an important contribution to the corpus of work on castes. His work articulates the NCs mainly from the middle of nineteenth century and traces back to its history from 17th century onwards. It also attempts to explore the nexus between business and religion. There is a very stark difference between the economic growth of *Nadars* and that of NC's. The former utilised/invested their economic surplus in the political sphere, whereas the NCs remained in the business and re-invested the surplus with a strong affiliation towards their religion. There is also a similarity between the *Nadars* and the NCs, i.e., both were clearly products of the colonial intervention. Prior to 17th century, i.e. colonial regime, the *Nattukottai Chettiars* also called as *Nakarattars*, were "involved primarily in small-scale, itinerant salt-trading activities in the interior regions" (Rudner D 1995: 3). Rudner also asserts that the *Chettiars*, especially

after the opening of the Suez Canal, the Nakarattars were the major sources of finance for myriad agrarian transactions between Burma, Ceylon, Malaya, and the Madras Presidency. They dominated the role of mercantile intermediary between foreign British rulers and local populations by monopolising important components of the credit, banking, and agrarian systems of Southeast Asia, and by remitting huge amounts of capital from Southeast Asia back to their South Indian homeland for industrial investment and large-scale philanthropy (ibid: 3).

Rudner's book, which is widely discussed within the anthropological and sociological circles, centred on ethnographic and historical settings concentrating on the genealogy of caste and the caste connections with capitalism. Rudner also claims that, his work is an important contribution to the body of work on the Indian commerce and says that the contribution is to bring the caste element into the discussion, was an aspect ignored by the earlier studies.

From the Southern part of India, especially, Tamilnadu, there were many studies on castes especially focusing on economic aspects. Quite a few studies were conducted on Tamilnadu because Madras was the location of the British headquarters. This is true of other presidencies, like the Bombay and Calcutta. Primarily, the quest to know the ground reality of the Indian society has come from the colonial anthropologists, and then Christian missionaries primarily to cater the administrative needs.

Saunders J Albert (1927) for instance attempted to look at the economic nature of the *Sourashtrians* who had migrated from Bombay to the Madurai city. He also explored the traditional occupation of the caste and how they have retained it over a long period. Their occupation was weaving and dyeing. Saunders has presented a comprehensive history of *Sourashtrians*, in terms of caste origins, their religious background, their marriage patterns, customs, and more importantly their economic conditions⁸.

⁸ Researcher has learned about the presence of Budiga caste during his fieldwork in East Godavari. A comprehensive study on Budigas is essential, especially in comparison with the Sourashtrians by specifically focusing on their occupations. Unlike Sourashtrians, Budiga caste, whose occupation is also dyeing, has gradually lost its ground due to the cheap synthetic dyes which were imported from the European countries, especially from England and Germany. If one traces out the reasons for the decline of *Budiga* caste occupation, it was primarily due to non co-operation from the state. Secondly, there was much preference and support for the agriculture by the colonial state and in importing of cheap clothes from the European countries.

The *Sourastrians* adopted themselves with the synthetic dyes, which were imported from the European countries, especially from England and Germany. In-fact, they started controlling the silk industry in Madurai. The *Sourastrians* attempted to form co-operatives, a kind of self-sustained method, and they have accommodated or adapted the new culture. These were the only ways in which *Sourastrians* could operate, primarily because of spatial location-Madurai, which was the gateway for Germany from where 50% of the synthetic dye came from. Due to this, *Sourastrians*, rather than resisting to it, they have silently succumbed to the new changes. Along with these measures taken by the *Sourastrians*, the colonial state also eased the pressure by not levying heavy taxes. There was enough consent from both the local kings as well as the colonial administration.

So far, we have discussed about the traditional mercantile castes, whose occupation itself is business, but due to the colonial regime, gradually quite a few other castes to use Damodaran's phrase 'new capitalists', also turned towards entrepreneurship and subsequently these castes were also studied from the economic dimension. To mention a few castes, *Goundars*, and *Nadars* from Tamilnadu, *Kammas* from Andhra, *Khattris* and *Patidars* from Gujarat, got entrenched into the commerce/entrepreneurship (Upadhy C 2009: 21). Most of these castes were largely agriculture-based castes, but they have consolidated themselves after Independence they turned into industrial capitalists.

While pursuing the commercial entrepreneurship, few of the castes were able to do it within the purview of agriculture. The prime factors behind the emergence of new capitalists in India was, (a), agro-economic conditions of a region, (b), control of land or the social and political formation, (c), opportunities during the colonial period and due to the nationalist economic policies, (Damodaran H 2008; Upadhy C 2009: 2). Carol Upadhy also indicated that the above factors could not be generalised, for instance, in Andhra, *Kammas* gradual economic progression can be attributed to the colonial state investments (Upadhy C 1988; 1989; 2009). In terms of Syrian Christians it was the land reforms and land regulations, which have enhanced their economic opportunities, even the *Patidars* also got benefitted through the state interventions (Pocock D 1972).

Therefore, the story in Andhra Pradesh is much similar to that of Tamilnadu. Many castes developed due to colonial policies both economically as well as politically. Few of the castes also consolidated their social power during this period. The *Kammas* from the upper castes and the *Malas* from the lower castes gained caste consciousness. The *Kammas* also progressed in other spheres, such as economically and politically while the *Malas* did not. The other castes tried to consolidate themselves with the impact of caste consciousness.

Many researchers have focused on the *Kammas* and their growth and development in different ways. The *Kammas* were primarily a peasant caste, but then they turned out to be an entrepreneur caste by taking advantages of colonial policies. Scholars like, Selig Harrison (1956), Carolyn Elliot (1970), Carol Upadhya (1989), Harish Damodaran (2008) Yamada Keiko (2008), and Anne Vaugier Chatterjee (2009) have all interpreted the *Kamma* caste from multiple points of view. In short, Harrison attempted to locate *Kammas* within the communist movement; Elliot tried to see their mobilisational patterns in accumulating and consolidating the political power, Chatterjee tried to capture the *Kammas* political presence whereas Carol brought the economic issue, and Keiko emphasized the *Kammas* historiography.

The works of Carol Upadhya and Harish Damodaran are much similar, especially in emphasizing the economic prosperity of *Kammas* historically. Though their approach might be different from each other, both of them have concentrated on the economic aspect of the caste. Damodaran classifies rise of *Kammas* prosperity into phases: first phase took place largely around pre 1980's , where cinema, tobacco, and importantly the trade and money lending during the great depression was rampant and the second phase was pertaining to the formation of TDP by NTR. (Damodaran H 2008: 98-105). Harish's work can be classified into two: economic and political. Among the works produced on *Kammas*, Yamada Keiko classified the *Kammas* historiography into three - through the personalities of Rudrayya Chowdari, Tripuraneni Ramaswami Chowdari and Bavayya Chowdari and she has traced how their writings contributed significantly in reconstructing the caste narrative. In recent times, there was one more study on *Kammas* by Xiang Biao (2006), who presented on the body-shopping industry by examining the labour relations in the high-tech sector and their migratory patterns in recent times. He sums up the presence of *Kammas* in the body-shopping industry by

saying that *Kammias* “[H]ave Lands in Andhra, Have a House in Hyderabad, and Have a Job in America” (Biao Xiang 2006: 30).

The story of *Parsis* is much different compared to the *Kammias* from Andhra. *Parsis* are concentrated in the western part of India, specifically in Maharashtra and parts of Gujarat. They are a religious community, which controls the Indian economy. While the proportion of *Parsis* (56,000) in the total population is miniscule, but their economic presence seems to be overwhelming (Guha A 1970, 1984; Harriss-White B 2003:264). The scholars understood *Parsis* from many vantage points; say for instance religious work ethic, the spatial minority position, the production-oriented peasant-artisan background and their presence in the British administration. Guha Amalendu (1970) attempted to understand *Parsis* from the point of view of urban migration, and their early move towards commercialisation, and explored diversification of their investments. He says that the above three aspects were closely related to each other. *Parsis*, though commercialised, attempted to occupy the urban space through business by focusing on trade and banking. He points out *Parsis* continued to hold the land in the rural areas (Guha A 1984).

So far, we have traced economic and cultural approaches within the studies on upper castes. While tracing the economic aspects, the studies have brought out two different forms of consolidations during the colonial regime. The colonial economic policies have face-lifted the traditional mercantile castes, as well as, to use Harish Damodaran phrase ‘new capitalists’ (2008). But, the significant lacuna within these studies is the complete absence of the *political* aspect. There was much emphasis given to the economic and cultural aspects of castes. Keeping the above factors into consideration, the political dimension of *Kapus* in Andhra Pradesh has been focused. The next section deals with the studies that have focused on the intermediary castes.

Studies on Intermediary Castes

If one attempts to explore the studies on the intermediary castes, one finds very studies on them. These studies have focused on multi-dimensions i.e. economic prosperity, identity formations, and their social sphere. Even then, the focus of these studies was much on the non-political aspects. For instance, David Pocock’s study on *Patidars*

(Gujarat) or studies on *Maratha-Kunbi* caste (Deshpande P 2004) were few among them.

To elaborate on the 'Maratha-Kunbi' caste, which comes from Maharashtra, drew much attention from both the 'occident' and the 'orient' scholars for a very long period. Many scholars have attempted to explain the dynamics of this caste from multiple perspectives. For instance, historically Steven Gordon (2008) attempted to trace, while Anthony Carter (1974) attempted to present the "descriptive analysis of political stratification and political alliances" (Carter A 1974: 3), and Prachi Deshpande (2004) presented the construction of *Maratha* caste identity.

Gordon (2008), a Cambridge scholar, attempted to present a picture of everyday life of *Marathas* from the period of 17th century to 18th century. One can say that, his attempt is *the* most important contribution in tracing the historiography of *Marathas*. While tracing the historiography, he does it through a chronological order beginning with the geo-politics of the *Marathas*. He also locates the *Marathas* within the sphere of Muslim rulers (Mughal Empire) and traces how the *Marathas* have situated themselves within these circumstances.

An inherent limitation of the Cambridge historiography had its own impact on Steven Gordon. This limitation was in terms of the imperialist perspective. Secondly, author has only focused on the pre-British period, thus undermining many other changes, altercations that took place during the colonial period. Prachi Deshpande's (2004) study on *Marathas* is of recent contribution, which tried systematically to trace both the occident and the orient views in terms of defining the *Maratha* caste and its origins. The author has traced and classified the caste identity into three phases: pre-colonial, colonial, and the post-colonial. Prachi focuses on the historicity of *Marathas* by bringing both the pre-colonial and colonial archives to see the origins of the caste. Her major argument is "that the caste-based register of 'Maratha' that came to dominate by the late colonial period was shaped through a complex, interactive process both by colonial policies of classification and representation" (Deshpande P 2004: 8). Her significant contribution to the body of work on caste was to locate the "modern history of caste and its encounter with colonialism in regional and local contexts" (ibid: 8). The

author was able to combine both the present and the past narratives without moving away from the caste's spatial context.

In the pre-colonial period, primarily between 14th and 17th C the *Marathas* were Marathi speaking units in the states of Ahmednagar and Bijapur. Thomas Broughton (1977:22), a colonial administrator, classifies *Marathas* into two classes: *Aheers* and *Koormees*. Over a period, i.e. around late 17th century, several of them who served in the *Maratha* army until then, started claiming the *Rajput (Kshatriya)* status.

The claim for the *Rajput/Kshatriya* status is not a new phenomenon, especially from late 16th century onwards. In many parts of India, several castes attempted to mobilise their castes at the social level by claiming the *Kshatriya* caste status from that period. Even in terms of *Marathas*, especially after the demise of Shivaji, these attempts were consolidated structurally. There was mobilisation of the Marathas during the pre-colonial and colonial period through the Non-Brahmin movement and continued in the post-Independence period through co-operative societies. It is indeed necessary to state that to be a dominant caste in India, one of the prerequisites is to hold the land. That is to say, the elite status in India can be acquired effortlessly by possessing land (Neale W 1966)⁹.

While classifying the studies on Marathas into two, one can sum up by saying that the consolidation process, which has taken during the colonial period, was primarily based on the linguistic basis, complete control over land and numerical strength. Whereas in the later phase, especially in the post-Independence period, it was primarily due to the co-operative societies, especially in the regions like South-West Maharashtra (Dahiwale S M 1995: 336).

Whereas, the studies on *Patidars/Kanbis* presents a completely different trajectory compared to that of Marathas, though there are many similarities between these two castes. Haimendorf F (1974) says that,

⁹As Walter Neale says that Land in India not only reflects the economic power, but it is also political power, Please see, Neale, Walter C, 1996, Land is to Rule, in Frykenberg, Robert Eric, ed, Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History, The University of Wisconsin Press, London.

Kanbi is the name of a large agricultural caste, and Patidar is the designation originally claimed by those section which were holders of land-rights (i.e. possessing patta), but gradually the name was applied to families of superior economic and social standing in much the same way as in Maharashtra the higher sub-sections of the Kunbi caste describe themselves as Marathas (1974: 14)

Pocock (1972) also traces the *Kanbi* 'caste movement' which begins from the lower castes, i.e., from *Kanbis* to *Patidars*. According to Pocock, *patidar* is a designation during the colonial period. Later on, they have started claiming themselves as warriors, especially during the Mughal period; they were collecting the taxes by using the title-*patidar*. It is to be noted that the *Patidars* were chief beneficiaries during the colonial period due to their proximity with both land and with the business (had tobacco related business contacts with both East Africa and Persian Gulf). When there was famine, during late 19th century, several of them moved from their hometown to East Africa and became prosperous. While studying the internal social structure of *Patidars*, Pocock (1972) focuses much on their ceremonial relations, marriage circles/patterns, kin and affinal groups, etc. Primarily the means for this transformation was the, cultural aspects, such as establishing marriage circles to strengthen their economic position, which further stabilised their political strength.

Pocock also says, "In 1931 the Kanbi formally insisted on changing the name of the caste to Patidar from Kanbi" (Pocock D 1972: 61). Over a period, they were on par with the economically dominant caste in Gujarat- Baniya and religiously dominant Brahmins. They could do it primarily because of their economic diversification and the numerical strength. In the course of time, with the assistance of the British, *Patidars* challenged the Brahmanical practices/values such as widow marriage, sacred thread, etc., and maintained their superiority economically. In the next section - biographies from lower castes have been discussed.

Biographies from Lower Castes

Much of the literature produced during colonial regime gave emphasis to the cultural aspects. The spill over effect can be seen even after Independence during the first three decades (Desai I P 1984). However, a major shift from cultural to political aspects happened in 1980s largely due to Dalit and other identity movements. Some of the issues like social exclusion, marginalisation, social justice, social inequality, hierarchy,

social representation, were dealt in these biographies. Louis Dumont (1986) studied the forms of kinship among the *Kallars*, and their filial and familial relations, as well as the primary and secondary relations. This can be seen as a result of the influence of the British Structural Anthropology on Indian sociology in the formative years. Dumont introduced a tradition within the Indian sociology by studying a particular caste, then exploring it with a nuanced ethnographic study. As Pauline Kolenda says “Dumont describes in exact detail house and well construction, and agricultural tools and techniques, reminds one that such careful description is rare in contemporary ethnography” (Kolenda P 1988: 463).

Dumont has viewed the *Paramai Kallar*, a sub-caste of *Kallar*, recognised as the ‘Most Backward Class (MBC)’ by the Tamilnadu government, primarily from three aspects- kinship, caste and religion. A few scholars critiqued Dumont for various reasons: Firstly, for his focus on rituals; secondly, for his observations on caste from a structural functional model, (Levi-Strauss’s influence), by bringing the ‘comparison’ element as an important model. For instance, purity and impurity (established much in his later work-*Homo Hierarchicus*), comparing the rituals, practices of *Brahmins* and the *Kallars* and also the *Kallars* and other Hindu castes, comparing the occident and orient; and thirdly, emphasis given to the ‘Indic texts’ to construct the story of the *Kallars* (Raheja 1989). It is this approach, which drew much attention from sociological scholarship quite critically. Even Moffat (1979) work also can be considered in similar line with Dumont’s work, specifically focusing on the ‘consensus’.

Apart from the study on *Kallars*, there are many studies that have traced the socio-cultural aspects of the lower sections of Tamilnadu society, for instance, the studies on *Vanniyars*, (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1984), also contributed to the larger spectrum of the literature. Whereas, much of the literature has come during the post 1960’s, mostly exploring the political aspects of the individual castes, for instance, importantly, the studies on *Nadars* by Hardgrave (1969) and Templeman (1996) also indicates this point. Prior to them (Hardgrave and Templeman), Robert Caldwell (1849) also contributed immensely to understand the *Nadars* and their life history. In fact, Caldwell has taken the position of reformer, or to use George Marcus phrase ‘circumstantial activist’ (Marcus G 1995: 113). Though there are certain differences in their approach to study the *Nadars*, there are also similarities in the way they have understood the

Nadar caste. Hardgrave narrates the complex caste relations of *Nadars*, in a detailed manner, by focusing from the village level to the city and covering the history of the *Nadars* from 19th century. He also focuses on the inter-caste relations, caste and class affiliations among the *Nadars*, as a whole. Hardgrave's attempt was to understand, in Templeman's language the 'official' understanding of the *Nadars*.

Templeman (1996) has taken a different position compared to Hardgrave, both methodologically as well as conceptually. Templeman, focus on the northern part of Nadars, comprising of the present districts- Kamrajnagar, Ramanathapuram, and Sivaganga in Tamilnadu¹⁰. The author has focused mainly on the conflict and on the competition, along with the intricacies involved in attaining the political power. He also focused on the marriage and kinship patterns of *Nadars*, which is dealt largely by the Anthropologists. Along with it, he also traced the intra-caste (*jati*) relationship between the *Nadars*. Templeman says that it was this conflict that has changed the 'structure and the effectiveness (of the *Nadars*) during the course of the twentieth century' (Templeman D 1996). Together, these attempts were to capture the changes at the 'culture and social structures associated with the Northern *Nadars* in order to up-hold their economic security and political power. Methodologically both Hardgrave and Templeman have taken four diverse settlements to study the caste. Templeman took four settlements- a city, (Madurai), a large town (Aruppukottai), and two different villages- Palyampatti, and Pattiveeranpatti, by considering the numerical and the organisational strength of the caste respectively. Hardgrave has also taken four settlements- Village (Tiruchendy), Town (Kamudi) in Ramnad district, City (Madurai) and Madras city as his settlements, primarily to synchronise the information pertaining to the *Nadars*.

Methodologically, both Scarlet Epstein and F G Bailey encouraged the comparative perspective¹¹, which influenced Templeman. Also, certain methodological tools deployed by Templeman were unconventional to the anthropology/sociology, for instance, while interacting with his Nadar 'informants', he has taken the tool of

¹⁰ The southern part of Tamilnadu constitutes of Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts.

¹¹Epstein undertook a research on two villages from Mysore, primarily to explore the commercial and urban influence and their influence on the social processes, while Bailey demonstrated the social organization and politics of Orissa region; he says that there are many pitfalls in taking one caste, one tribe or a particular community.

‘confrontation’. He also justifies it by saying, “regular anthropological methods were neither ‘educative’ nor ‘socialised by the informants” (Templeman D 2004).

The study on *Nadars* by Templeman and Hardgrave is interesting primarily for two reasons. One, for tracing the history of *Nadars* and their transition from lower caste, toddy tapping occupation, to that of trading caste and finally their political aspirations. Two, both the scholars tried to present the mobility aspect of *Nadars* from a different perspective, which moves away from MN Srinivas’s Sanskritization. The social mobility among *Nadars* has taken the direction towards political and economic, mobilisations. Although, at one point of time, *Nadars* attempted to claim themselves as *Kshatriyas* but they either could not sustain it or did not continue it for many reasons. It is indeed difficult for the social mobility in Indian context especially to ‘move’ or ‘migrate’ from one status to another, that too, from the lower to that of upper. Within this discourse, studies capture how the *Nadars* have accommodated and adopted themselves to the external and internal changes and how they have used their numerical strength and organisational power in promoting their caste members¹².

From South India, the study on *Madigas* from Andhra Pradesh brings another dimension, which substantially moves away from the either *Nadars* or *Kallars* or even from other biographies. There were many interpretations on *Madigas*, for instance, Simon Charsley attempt was to explore the ‘exclusion, discrimination and exploitation’ aspects (Charsley S 2004: 268). He also attempted to present or narrate the story of *Madigas* from their point of view, i.e. caste *purana* (explaining the history through performance or through the self-representation). It is also a kind of an attempt by the *Madiga* caste for upward social mobility and seeking dignity. Largely, his attempt was towards presenting from a folklore perspective. There is one difference between Dumont and Charsely, especially in terms of bringing the caste *puranas*, Dumont has

¹² In terms of uplifting the Nadars, Robert Caldwell has played an immense role. Please see, Caldwell, Robert, 1849, *The Tinnevely Shanars: A Sketch of their Religion, and their Moral Condition and Characteristics, as a Caste*, Christian Knowledge Society’s Press, Madras and recently MSS Pandian mapped the Nadars in three articles in EPW. (I) Caste in Tamil Nadu – A History of Nadar Censorship, (II) Caste in Tamil Nadu – Slipping Hegemony of Intermediate Castes, and (III) Caste in Tamil Nadu – Denying Difference

emphasized the Brahmanical texts, or emphasized the textual analysis, whereas Charsley attempted to study the subjects from within their perspective. While Clarinda Still (2009) attempt was to present the *Madigas* perception towards their caste and the institutional benefits provided by the state in the name of caste. The author studied the Dalit assertion in general, particularly the *Madigas*, and in doing that author presented the internal conflicts within the Dalit category. At the end author also problematizes the category of 'Dalit' and its relevance in the present context.

Many more studies have appeared on lower castes, from North India in the last decade or so. For instance, studies on *Yadavas* by Milucheti (2004) or on *Chamars* by Rawat (2003, 2011, and 2013) indicates that there was much emphasis on the political aspects. North India, has facilitated multitude of studies on castes, the rise of agrarian castes is the predominant aspect in the post-Independence period. One can attribute this development to the Green Revolution and its aftermath. *Jats* who are dominant in the states of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana respectively wielded much political space after Green Revolution, as they were able to sustain the agitations even after Mandal Reservations struggle. Primarily, *Jats* are agricultural castes and dominant in both Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. Different standpoints were taken by the sociologists, especially in terms of presenting the changing nature of the caste identity over a period of time. For instance, Dipankar Gupta (1997) studied *Jats*, situating them within the Bharatiya Kisan Movement, Richard Sission (1969) traced their political and Nonica Datta (1999) has situated them within the discourse of Arya Samaj. Author also traces the socio-political developments in relation to the formation of 'Jat' identity.

While searching different trajectories within the caste studies, the historical aspects were also quite evident. Many of the historians attempted to trace the genesis of castes and their formation. These attempts can be classified into three: Cambridge school approach, secondly Canberra and the Sussex school approach and thirdly, very recent subaltern studies. The historical approach in general concerned with or concentrated much on the micro categories, focusing on some of the broad research spectrums, for instance, nationalism, or the impact of colonialism, or even juxtaposing colonialism with imperialism. The Canberra and Sussex, initiated by DA Low (1991) attempted to understand the historicity through studying the regions and its influences on different spheres, which includes the castes as well. The subaltern studies, which emerged as a

critique to the nationalist perspective focussed on the history from below. In the due course, the scholars within this approach have undertaken studies on several castes and tribes, most importantly, David Hardiman. The three sets of historiographies, which presented, in India were articulated by scholars such as, David Washbrook, Baker, DA Low, Robin Jeffrey, David Hardiman, etc.

To sum up this section, a review of biographies of castes has been presented in this chapter. The existing studies have been classified into upper castes, intermediary castes and lower castes for analytical purposes. The studies on -upper castes and intermediate castes, indicates that there were lot more studies on upper castes compared to the intermediary castes. Even if there are very few studies, the effort was to trace the 'movement of caste' from the lower to the middle or from the middle to the upper; i.e. the social mobility aspect. For instance, if we see the *patidar* from Gujarat, or *Maratha* from Maharashtra, they all have moved from one status to the other. Interestingly, the studies, which concentrated on the intermediary castes, have come from the western part of India. The reasons for it can be attributed to the intervention of British, and state policies that gave rise to entrepreneurship in west India. Therefore, it is quite evident that the colonial economic policies altered the economic conditions of castes. Secondly, there was much emphasis on the cultural sphere by the studies on castes. What becomes apparent is that studies on caste completely undermined political dimensions whether it is to do with upper or with the intermediary castes.

The studies on the lower castes indicate that the emphasis was more on the political dimensions of the caste particularly from 1980s. One important finding from the review of biography of castes was to locate the economic characteristics of particular castes. Many studies focused on castes such as *Parsis*, *marwaris*, *chettians*, *baniyas*, *nadars*, *Kammas*, etc. Tracing the economic dimensions is important to understand how intra-caste and inter-caste relations have been structured within the social realm.

Similarly caste studies that focused on cultural dimensions had different set of insights, The whole 'colonial ethnographic discourse' was concentrated much on the cultural realm; as it can be attributed to the British structural functional model and the anthropological perspectives. These studies have focused much on the kinship, marriage, ritual patterns of castes and few of them traced the economic history as well.

The emphasis on non-economic or cultural aspects is in tune with the Weberian perspective of analysing capitalism in cultural perspective. The insights from the cultural dimension of castes indicated that it is a kind a 'self-representation, what in other words is talked about it as, the 'politics of recognition'¹³. The Studies focusing on political dimensions of a particular caste is a recent phenomenon. One can trace it primarily from late 1980's, mainly since the Mandal agitation (see for instance Balagopal 1990: 2231-2234). The post 1990's period considered as the phase of 'Identity Politics', where many of the biographies written focusing on the lower castes.

The analysis of upper caste biographies, indicate that the emphasis is more on the already well-authored or economically developed castes. For instance, studies on *Nadars*, *Chettiars*, *Patedars*, *Kammas*, *Gounders*, *Kunbis*, etc indicate this point. To elaborate it further, both Hardgrave and Templeman for instance attempted to reconstruct the story of a successful caste in the form of *Nadars* in Tamilnadu. These two scholars interpreted the transition from Shanans to the *Nadars* in two different periods. By the time these two scholars studied *Nadars*, they were already economically well established with stabile political power. To substantiate the *Nadars* economic and political power, Kamraj Nadar¹⁴, one of the important leaders from this caste played a decisive role in both Congress party and in national politics for a very long time. The point we are making here is that most of the studies focused on the castes, which were economically and politically more stable and very few studies on the mobilisational processes.

A scrutiny of the studies on lower castes or OBCs, indicate that it is within the framework of 'identity' the biographies have made its mark. These studies can be divided into two: colonial period- which have concentrated on the cultural aspects of these castes, for instance, the *Kallars*, *Paraya*, etc, and the second transition is more recent, mostly from late 1980's and from early 90's. These studies include *Chamars* from UP, *Mahars* from Maharashtra, *Madigas* from Andhra Pradesh, and on Backward Castes, mostly comprising of the artisan castes across the country. All these studies more or less emphasized on the plight of those castes, their oppression against the

¹³This phrase, the politics of recognition, is Charles Taylor's usage (1992)

¹⁴Kamraj Nadar who hails from Tamilnadu is an important Congress political leader. During Indira Gandhi's time, he has played a crucial role.

social hegemony, poverty, backwardness, etc. In the realm of caste studies, there seems to be an epistemological shift, which has taken place especially after 1980's. Dirks (2002) also traces this shift by saying that, in general, the category of caste has shifted its base from political (during pre-colonial period) to the cultural (during colonial period), and again to the political from cultural after Independence. He attributes this shift primarily to the Mandal agitations; but one can also bring in the impact of Green revolution and its distributive effects on different social groups as another factor.

The studies on intermediary castes also emphasised on the castes, which sustained in multiple spheres, castes such as *Patidars* in Gujarat, *Maratha Kunbis* in Maharashtra, but overall there are very few studies on this category of castes. The present study is an attempt to fill this void within the given literature. For the purpose of this study, *Kapu* caste from Andhra Pradesh was selected for the present study. The 'sociology of caste' section presented the two dominant paradigms: one is 'caste-politics', second one is on caste histories. Attempting to synchronise these two paradigms, the present study attempts to explain certain sociological ambiguities pertaining to caste studies in India.

Section III: Caste as Social Power

An attempt has been made here to interpret caste as 'social power'. The social power is associated with Robert Bierstedt (1950) and later on Michael Mann (1986) who contributed immensely to this subject. Max Weber influenced both the scholars. Although, social power is itself, grounded within the larger sphere of power, but the attempt here is not to delve much on power, rather to see how caste can be interpreted as social power. In the process of engaging with the concept of social power, the present section also explores certain limitations and constrains of power.

The discourse of sociology is largely concerned with stratification, precisely social stratification. It is the power which is the central instrument that operates within the sphere of social stratification. The power determines the relations both at the macro and the micro level as well as at the group level and at the individual level. The power as a concept is always contested within the realm of social sciences or specifically in sociology, both in 'occident' as well as in the 'orient' literature.

Many philosophers interpreted the concept of power from different theoretical approaches for a very long period. However, within sociology, Weber emphasized the significance of power. Subsequently, many scholars elaborated and threw light on the role of power in the larger social life. Among different approaches, one can see the role of Weberians, Marxists, Post-Structuralists, Pluralists, Anti-Pluralists and more recently Radical theorists, on power.

Weber's Analysis of Power

Weber's most important contribution was studying the structures of power and its sources. While searching for the sources of power, which determines the societal relations in any given society, Weber points out three sources: class, status and party. Weber proposes three postulates, while articulating the class: (1) group of people who have some specific causal component of their life chances, (2) they are exclusively represented by economic interests, in the possession of goods and opportunities for income and (3) they are represented under the conditions of the commodity or labour markets. As a whole, for Weber, the category of class is constituted by property and property-less categories (Gerth and Mills 1991: 181).

For Weber, Classes does not constitute a community. For him, Classes and Communities are different. They merely represent the possible and frequent basis for communal action. He defines it as "a man or a number of men to realise their own in a communal action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action" (ibid: 181).

Communal action for him is "an action which is oriented to the feeling of the actors that they belong together", he also classifies actions particularly into three: communal, societal and mass. This communal action that brings forth the class situations however is not basically between identical classes but between the members of different classes, e.g., worker and entrepreneur. The class gets constituted based on the economic interests, where the market interests play a major role; it can be said that the class interests are nothing but market interests.

This class situation-is certainly determined by the power, but primarily to generate the income. While concluding the discussion on class, Weber says that it has shifted

progressively from 'consumption, credit' towards: competitive struggles in the commodity market and price wars in the labour market (ibid: 185).

For Weber, 'status' is the second source in articulating the power, which is also an important category for the present study and is explained thoroughly in this section. For Weber, it is the status groups, which constitute the communities and not the class, yet they (status groups) are very amorphous in nature. He contrasts the 'status groups' which are determined by the 'social honour' with the economically determined 'class situations'. While comparing status with class, Weber says that, if economic order is the criteria for the classes, it is the social order for the status groups, that too within the sphere of social honour. He also emphasizes certain distinctions between class and status, primarily in terms of property. Though he does not consider property as an essential qualification to have status, he states that in the long duration, one needs to count and consider the property, only when there is consistency in holding the property.

Weber also classifies the status into two, which constitutes both modern and traditional forms- the chieftain is the richest person in the subsistence economy, but then it is only an honorific preference, secondly in the modern democratic form, group of people who pay taxes, comes under one roof and dance together, etc. Secondly, Weber also gives another example in terms of status honour, i.e. groups who have 'a specific style of life' comes together and forms a circle and belong to that particular circle.

Though he compared the status with class on few occasions, he is also clear that the status honour cannot be linked with the class situation because on many occasions, they are placed in stiff opposite competitive positions. This opposition, or the specific style of life comprises of many restrictions, especially on the social interaction and Weber says that this interaction cannot be equated either with the economics, political or even business terms. Because of this social interaction, which is based on marriages, where the circle will form based on the status and leads to form a complete endogamous closure groups. Weber calls this particular process as stratification, status stratification, and locates it in India and in the west. He locates this particular status stratification within the caste in India and in the West; he locates it among the Jews. This stratification is guaranteed not only by conventions, laws but also, for Weber, by the rituals (ibid: 187-188).

Weber also distinguishes between caste-ethnicity and race. While comparing caste with the ethnicity, Weber says that the caste is the normal form of ethnic communities who live side by side in a *societalised* manner. These ethnic groups, believes in blood relations, excludes the exogamous marriages and social intercourse. He gives the example of Jews, who lived separately, had separate occupations, and the way they segregated themselves from others even at the personal level. Though he compared caste with race, he also emphasizes the difference and distinction between each other by classifying them as status segregation and ethnic segregation by providing two distinct features of caste and race. One, caste is the vertical social system of super-subordination, whereas the race is the horizontal unconnected co-existence of segregated groups. Secondly, though the ethnic groups are segregated, divided, yet there is some comprehensive societalisation which integrates them and provides space to consider each other's own honour as the highest. But in caste, the social subordination only gives/acknowledges more honour in favour of privileged caste; here the dignity plays a crucial role. By exploiting their past, the privileged sustain their dignity in the present, whereas the under-privileged struggle to survive in the present and hopes for the best in the future. Weber says, that these privileged groups who are attached with the status, primarily monopolises the material goods for themselves. Although, Weber is not discounting the role of economy but he emphasizes the role of status in terms of accumulating the power.

Whereas, the third source for Weber is party, and he classifies parties into three: ancient, medieval and modern forms and he says these three forms are structurally different from each other. He also says that a common thread among all the three forms is, striving for the domination, to sustain the domination, to organise themselves in a strictly authoritarian way.

Weber also suggests that, if one wants to understand the structure of any party, one needs to analyze the structural forms of social domination of that particular period and all their (parties) actions are primarily oriented towards the acquisition of social power. Their means of attaining power varies, as Weber says, they can be through violence, or it can be through democratic forms, money, or even through social influence. These

actions (parties) are possible only when the communities are *societalised*- who possess some rational order, and the staff who can work or who can enforce its actions.

To summarise Weber's- class, status and party, it is the 'social honour', which is the basis/source for both economy and political power. Weber also considered law as an important category, primarily, because the structure of every legal order directly influences the distribution of power, but then Weber also indicates that law cannot be the primary source in obtaining the social honour, it can only give guarantee or it can only enhance the social honour. This social honour is distributed among the groups and Weber calls them as 'typical groups, this distribution is called as 'social order'. At the end, even parties by not confining to either class or status, they represent the interests of both class and status groups.

Power: Post Weberian Analysis

Post Weber, many approaches made significant presence in terms of understanding the concept of power, mainly Marxist approach, post structural, pluralist, anti-pluralist, radical approaches, etc. While attempting to understand the existing unequal power relations, the Marxist approach saw the conflict between 'haves' and 'have-nots'. The Marxist school has attributed much to the economy, and it was on this vantage point, they have tried to analyse the power relations in the society. The post-structuralists emphasized the role of subjectivity in terms of understanding the power, especially through the writings of Foucault. Foucault articulates four points in terms of understanding the power. Firstly, the relations of power are not something that operates outside of other relations. It is immanent to the effects of divisions that occur in these relations, and conversely, they are also the internal conditions of these differentiations. Secondly, power comes from 'below' and not from 'above'; thirdly, it is about global domination, and lastly it is about resistance. By rejecting both the radical and Marxist theorists, Foucault said that individuals also affect the power relations, they are vehicles, but not origins, and the intentionality of power is not the individual though it is articulated through the individual (Foucault 1982; Phillip M 1983).

Steven Lukes (1974) as One Dimensional, Two Dimensional and Three Dimensional called the rest of the approaches-pluralists, anti-pluralist and radical. Robert Dahl (1961) is an important scholar who has articulated in terms of one-dimensional, which

has focused much on the American bureaucracy and the power relations within the realm of American administrative system. The main objective of this approach was to analyse the decision making process of the actors in the concrete situations. While negating the one dimensional (pluralist view), Baratz and Bacharach (1963) (hereafter B&B) offers another perspective which distinguishes between power and influence. They say that, pluralist approach has only considered the front stage decision-making process; instead, they assert that power also operates at the backstage level. Lukes negates both the above perspectives by saying that power needs to be seen from a radical dimension. He (Lukes) opines that there was much preference towards studying behaviourism, that too actual behaviour, i.e. overt action of the individual. By not focusing on the covert behaviour, the other two dimensions of power (Plural, anti-plural) are missing the potential issues, which would not constitute overt behaviour. He also says one also has to consider the covert behaviour, where it would not be anything explicit, but the effects will be certain and in many occasions, marginal people will be affected.

Lukes locates another lacuna among the early theorists, where they did not give importance to the non- decisions, they have focused mainly on the decisions, which are taken directly in the front stage. This third dimensional view says that when the actors don't have the grievances about the domination of power, then there is no problem for the actor, who is forcing the others to obtain the actors interests but not letting the others interests. The main concern of the third dimensional view is to bring the potential issues into the front stage, which can hamper the individuality of actors, his position in the society. The focus of this theory was to locate the actor's behaviour on his 'off stage', and to look at the actors decisions which also cannot be direct, but only in an indirect manner. So far, an attempt was made to present the concept of power, briefly, whereas, social power will be articulated in the coming section.

A Neglected Variable in the Realm of Power

The earlier studies which focused on power, largely concentrated on the 'political'. The variable of political is largely constituted with the macro categories of state, government, institutions, etc. It is through these macro categories, the scholars, articulated, interpreted societal relations. On many instances, these macro categories imposed to analyse the micro level structures, especially at the individual, or in terms of

primary relations. This approach was challenged thoroughly by the Marxist scholarship by giving much emphasis to the economy. The Marxist theoretical approach, which revolved around Karl Marx, brought the new perspective-political economy-to understand the social and societal relations. This theoretical approach has brought the aspect of economy into the forefront, which was otherwise ignored or neglected by the preceding approaches. This particular intervention sustained for a very long time, certainly altered the discourse of power and its relations both at the micro and macro level.

Although the Marxist approach never really moved away from the political, rather, it has accommodated the economy aspect to understand and unravel existing power relations. It has attempted for a synthesis of 'politico-economic' in the name of political economy, which is much celebrated approach in the academia. It is certain that, the political economy approach has really made significant contribution in understanding the societal unequal relations, yet this approach has few limitations, especially by undermining the *social* aspect in terms of understanding the power. The present thesis is an attempt to emphasize the limitations within the study of power, by emphasizing on the variable of *social*. In a way, it departs substantially from the larger discourse of power, by only emphasizing on the social variable. This particular section engages with it by also interpreting caste as social power.

The emphasis of social did not confine just to the power, but also in other realms. For instance, the subject of History also was dealt from the *political* point of view. Few scholars, such as Ferdinand Braudel (1980), Peter Burke (2005), challenged this over-emphasis on the political while narrating the history. These scholars have brought and tried to attach another dimension in understanding the historical elements. For them, the primary concern was that history needs to be interpreted from the *social* perspective and not only from political point of view.

In the realm of power and its analysis, there was much emphasis on the *political*, but with due efforts from Weber and others, the variable of *social* was gradually attached. It was argued that, power essentially lies and is largely influenced by the state and its apparatuses. It is argued that studying power from within the sphere of political is very much required, but, Bierstedt (1950), while engaging with it says that, though power

may lie within the state and its apparatuses, the roots of power essentially lies within the community or groups, or even among the individuals. Bierstedt, agrees to some extent that the Power, though is a universal political phenomenon in all human societies, but then, he asserts by saying that power is visible in all social interactions, in-fact he also says that the society is full of power relations, power operates in many layers. But then he excludes groups such as, the primary social groups (personal identification-Hiller) and secondly ‘polite acquaintance’ (Simmel) from the purview of power relations (Bierstedt R 1950: 730)

The idea of social power was articulated primarily from the two approaches: psychological (Tedeschi J 1974; Cartwright D 1960)¹⁵ and sociological (Bierstedt R 1950; Mann M 1986). The psychological approach predominantly saw the power between individuals, especially between the patient and the psychiatrist. The psychological approach, while articulating the social power, emphasizes the issues, such as ‘aggression, attraction, social perception and also much on the influence’ (Seligman 1977: 489). Particularly, the social psychologists explored the category of ‘influence’, from an institutional point of view, i.e. subordinates will work primarily based on the orders given to them. The scholars such as Kipnis (1974) and others perceived that it is through the ‘influence’, that the subordinates will engage with the orders of the top officials. The social psychological approach also attempted to classify their research into two: power relations perceived by the subjects, and power relations observed by an outsider (Dahl R 1960). This debate is very much in tune with the debates related to ‘outsider and insider’ which took place in India during 1990’s (see for instance, Oomen T K 1993; Atal Y 2001).

While commenting on the social psychological approach in understanding the power, Bierstedt says, “power is a sociological, not a psychological phenomenon” (Bierstedt R 1975: 523). Bierstedt makes it clear by saying that the scholars who have attempted to theorise the power from psychological approach, in fact emphasized the ‘influence’ rather than the power.

¹⁵ Cartwright introduces an approach to understand the role of social power in social psychological approach, i.e., ‘Field theoretical position’. Please see, Cartwright Dorwin, 1959, Ed, Studies in Social Power, Research Centre for Group Dynamics, University of Michigan.

Sociologically, Bierstedt and Mann articulated the concept of power. They both had different views pertaining to social power and its sources. Mann has located the social power to four sources-Ideology, Economy, Military and Political relationships. For Mann, these four sources, interact with each other while articulating the social power. Mann specifically says, “[t]he four sources, (in many instances) are overlapping networks of social interactions” (Mann M 1986: 2). Through his scintillating four volumes, he has attempted to present a social history of power, a kind of macro picture, which covers the important pillars in constructing the human history both during the ancient and in modern times. For him the most important events in the history of humankind were the two World Wars and the Great Depression, which he thinks, has certainly altered the discourse of power relations at the global level.

To sum up the work by Mann, his attempt was largely to present a social history of power of human relations, primarily tracing the fascist, Leninist and welfare states. (Moore B 1988). But, there are few criticisms against Mann primarily directed towards his over emphasis on the European history (Moore B 1988: 169-177), secondly for presenting a macro history of social power analysis.

Whereas Robert Bierstedt (1950), an American sociologist, has emphasized the relevance of the social power during 1950s has and brought it under the purview of sociology. He has defined the concept, discovered the locus, and found the sources for social power. The efforts of Bierstedt in terms of analysing the social power paved rich dividends to the subject of sociology during the 50’s.

Bierstedt, a Weberian, proposed three essential sources in terms of articulating the social power: *sociology of majorities, organisations and resources*. Bierstedt brings several of the important variables, which are closely attached to power on many occasions. The variables are, prestige, influence, eminence, competence or the ability, knowledge (Bacon), dominance (which is an important concept for Weber: rational/legal, traditional and charismatic), rights, force, and authority.

While clarifying certain terminological ambiguities related to power, Bierstedt begins with the term ‘prestige’, which was articulated by earlier scholars (Rose 1916) that the prestige can be immediately located within the realm of power. He also negates the idea

whichever class has more prestige will have more power. He says that, prestige can be seen as the consequence to social power, but not as the determinant factor, because it (prestige) only accompanies the power. He gives the example of Einstein and police Constable, by saying that, he (Einstein) had more prestige but not power, whereas a police constable will yield more power, because of his position, but he may not have prestige (Bierstedt 1950: 731).

Bierstedt also attempts to distinguish between two variables- influence and power-by saying that power is more coercive, whereas influence is persuasive. We submit ourselves voluntarily for the influence, but power requires submission. Bierstedt demonstrates his analysis through an example of Marx and Stalin. He says that Karl Marx has influenced the 20th century for his path breaking works, (the ideas are influential but not the person) but he is having very less power, whereas Stalin is the most powerful person, through his power he could influence many more. Plato, Augustine, Socrates, etc were most influential persons, but then, Lincoln, Napoleon who were both powerful as well as influential persons (ibid:732).

Another important variable, which is attached to power, was ‘dominance’. Bierstedt says that power is sociological whereas dominance lies within the individual, hence psychological. While here, Bierstedt slightly deviates from Weber who also emphasized on dominance. While articulating the power, Bierstedt says, “the locus of power is in groups and it expresses itself in inter-group relations; the locus of dominance is in the individual and it expresses itself in inter-personal relations”, therefore, he says, “dominance, is a problem in social psychology; power a problem in sociology” (ibid: 732).

After distinguishing the variables such as, prestige, influence, dominance, Bierstedt tries to distinguish the other two important variables, which are also closely attached with the power. They are ‘force’ and ‘authority’, while distinguishing them, he says, “power is not force and power is not authority, but it is intimately related to both and may be defined in term of them”. Bierstedt says that the concept of force, in sociological sense is the “application of sanctions”, and “power itself is the predisposition or prior capacity which makes the application of force possible”. Further,

he explains, that “only groups which have power can threaten to use force and the treat itself is power” (ibid: 733). While concluding the three variables, Bierstedt says “power symbolises the force which *may* be applied in any social situation and supports the authority which is applied. Power is thus neither force nor authority but, in a sense, their synthesis”.

So far, an attempt has been made to present how different scholars, especially Michael Mann and Robert Bierstedt, expressed social power. Some of the terminological ambiguities were also addressed in the due course especially through Bierstedt. Whereas in the coming section we will be discussing the idea of social power proposed by Bierstedt.

Bierstedt Social Power

Bierstedt locates three important sources, which play a significant role in articulating the social power. They are *numbers* (sociology of majorities), *organisation* and *resources*. Majority is the residual locus to operate social power, Bierstedt says that the majority always can rule the minority, but then, he makes it clear, if the majorities suffer economically, as well as politically, they may not be in a position to determine the power relations. He also says that historically, the majorities who were neither organised nor acquired the necessary resources couldn't determine the power relations quite significantly.

There is a clear indication in the articulation of Bierstedt that the ‘majority’ or the ‘number’ alone cannot be a determining factor in executing the social power, it (majority) also needs necessarily the organisation, a kind of social organisation. Many of the groups, historically, could not make their presence, primarily because of their inability to organise themselves. If the majority of people or the groups are not united or not consolidated, then seeking or acquiring power will be a mirage. Bierstedt's analysis negates the classical mainstream Elite theory, which is established on the notions of “organised minority which rules the un-organised majority” (Bellamy R 2001). He demonstrates this with an example of the army and the police- who despite being numerically less, yield enormous level of strength or force in the process of implementing or determining their actions. He says that apart from the organised nature, one also needs to consider that even possessing the weapons and their presence

within the state structure also give much power to the army. This example also can be extended to the formation of associations/organisations. The establishment and the sustenance of any organisation primarily depend on their number, and on the collective voice. The nature of these associations vary, whether in terms of class, caste, gender, disability, or even on occupations, etc. Hence, Bierstedt concludes that “the organised majority will be the most potent social force” which slightly alters the theoretical approach proposed by Elite school- “organised minority which rules the un-organised majority” (Bellamy R 1987).

About the second source-organisation, Bierstedt raises the question, as to what if two groups are organised and as well possess numbers? To which he answers by saying that, if such a situation arises, then one needs to consider that it is the accessibility of the resources which determine their chances in executing the social power. This ‘resource’ is the third source for Bierstedt in terms of articulating the social power. For him, resources also vary quite significantly, for instance, one may control the natural resources, in another instance, and one may have control over the super-natural resources, or even have control over both the material (property, land in Indian context, etc) as well as the intellectual resources, such as knowledge (Bacon).

So far, we have discussed the nature of social power, and its articulations, and the basis and sources for its articulations. In the next section, we will try to apply the concept of social power to the concept of caste. We will also discuss how caste itself can become social power.

Theoretical Application:

The first among Bierstedt’s three sources- sociology of majorities (Bierstedt 1948) can be located in India in many instances. Time and again, this dimension has come up but has been either ignored or bypassed by the scholars within the sociological discipline. Especially if we take the issue of Mandal reservations (1990’s) and adult franchise i.e. reducing the age of voting from 21 to 18 years during Rajiv Gandhi’s tenure¹⁶, has

¹⁶ In the year 1988, through the 61st constitutional amendment, the Supreme Court of India, reduced the age limit from 21 to 18 to exercise vote, citing the increase in the literacy rate in India. Rajiv Gandhi was then Prime Minister. In 1979, the Mandal Commission was appointed, primarily to identify the social and economic backwardness of several castes and the commission submitted its report in the year 1980 to the then PM Morarji Desai(Janata Party)

made the difference in terms of approaching the political sphere. In the due course, the societal dynamics have been altered quite drastically. Most importantly, from then onwards, the numbers became very crucial and more vocal. The numerical strength started taking a centre stage gradually in the political realm. Thus, 'sociology of majorities' took a steady leap during the time of political assertions of Dalits. These changes, which took place at the political realm, made significant impact on the sociology of majorities.

The political scenario in India, quite significantly indicates the significance of numerical strength as a potential tool through different means. To attain social power, it is essential to have numbers, but that not adequate. These numbers needs to be consolidated, organised and it is only through organisation one can avail the resources and these resources vary accordingly.

Bierstedt posits the majority by juxtaposing with the minority. In the due course, he problematizes the 'sociology of groups', genre by saying that,

There are open groups and closed groups, organized groups and unorganized groups, primary groups and secondary groups, "A" groups and "B" groups, in-groups and out-groups, "real" groups and "nominal" groups, horizontal groups and vertical groups, voluntary groups and involuntary groups, large groups and small groups, long-lived groups and short-lived groups, "unibonded" groups and "multibonded" groups, and many others in terms of sociological form, and others still, such as age, sex, ethnic, occupational, economic, educational, class, religious, linguistic, territorial, and so on, in terms of sociological content. In all these classifications, the majority-minority distinction is conspicuous by its absence (1948: 700-701).

However, the thesis is attempting to explore the 'sociology of majorities' in a much broader level specifically by locating it in the concrete reality. Firstly, it is the large empires, which have determined the socio-political as well cultural and economic factors of individuals or the groups/communities. During that time, the role of individual was very scanty. The Empires, such as Roman Empire, or the Byzantine Empires played a deterministic role in maintaining their empires. In the due course, the Empires have brought religion under the state purview. In the name of religion, there were many successful attempts by the state in crushing the individuals whose voices were slightly against the dominant religious views which were mostly state sponsored; to name a few, it can be Galileo, Socrates, or even some of the philosophers. Even in

India, if not during that time, much later, the rise of Maurya Empire or the rise of Mughal Empires indicates the relevance of the numbers.

At the second stage, religion was replaced by the advent development of science and technology. Along with them, the role of rationality played a pertinent role; it was the period of enlightenment, and the period of industrialization. Due to all these changes at the macro level, such as, drastic increase of industrialization, mechanization, rationality, the number as such started losing its relevance, status, and the way it has enjoyed during the first stage. These changes were capitalized properly by the developed countries, especially countries like England, which started determining the geo-politics. But then, they didn't do it with the assistance of religion, but with the rise of science and technology. England, as a country with its limited geographical space, despite that, it has attempted to conquer the world, and they could realize it only through the advent of technology.

In a similar way, in terms of only numbers, even in India, the *Brahmins*, a caste who were numerically small also determined the social relations for a very long period by propagating a particular ideology. They did it much the similar way as the Romans, during Byzantine Empire's period. In India, Brahmins have used religion, as status and wielded much power-a kind of social power, in Weberian terms.

In the third stage, India has witnessed the presence of numerically weak castes, primarily who are engaged with agriculture, or who were engaged with the British state. Due to the interventions of British economic policies and the policies introduced after Independence, such as Green revolution, several castes, mostly upper castes, which were attached to the land got developed, economically in turn also increased their status. These upper castes also contested the Brahmins in terms of sharing the social status, though not ritual status, but to retain the secular power in juxtaposing with the ritual power. One can cite the example of Non-Brahmin movement in South India. This third stage largely began from the early 20th century and sustained till 1970's.

Whereas the fourth stage, has taken shape during 1970's, due to the politicization process largely revolved around the Dalits. From this period onwards, the term Dalit or Ambedkar became a rallying point for both Dalits as well as non-Dalits. There were

attempts to mobilize the Dalits both by the outsiders as well as insiders. Outsiders, who are Non-Dalits- who are also organized minorities started mobilizing the majority of unorganized Dalits. It was primarily to appropriate them as mere vote bank; secondly, there was assertion among Dalits, who also attempted to organize themselves, but on the basis of their agony, discrimination which they faced for over a long time. Due to all these aberrations, there was certain consolidation process took place among Dalits, in the form of Mayavati, Kanshiram, or even among Bahujans, like Yadavas, Kurmis, etc. After 1980's, consolidation process came through organizational mechanisms to the forefront primarily based on two factors: one, to avail the institutional benefits (say reservations for education and employment) and two, to acquire the political power and uphold the status by using these two factors.

To sum-up, the consolidation processes among the Dalits during post 1980's, and the consolidation processes by the upper castes during the same period primarily indicates the rise of Identity Politics in India, but the processes adopted by the two groups varied. Prabhat Patnaik (2014) classifies the Identity Politics into three: Identity bargaining politics, Identity resistance politics and the Identity fascist politics.

An attempt was made through the thesis to explore the *Kapu* politics in Andhra Pradesh, who are attempting to assert themselves at the political level by using the numerical strength. The thesis is also an attempt to present why numerical strength argument assumes its significance in social and political domains? In the next chapter, an attempt was made to trace the nexus between caste and politics in Andhra Pradesh from 1956-2014 also by emphasizing the role of three regions- Telangana, Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema- in Andhra Pradesh.

Chapter 3

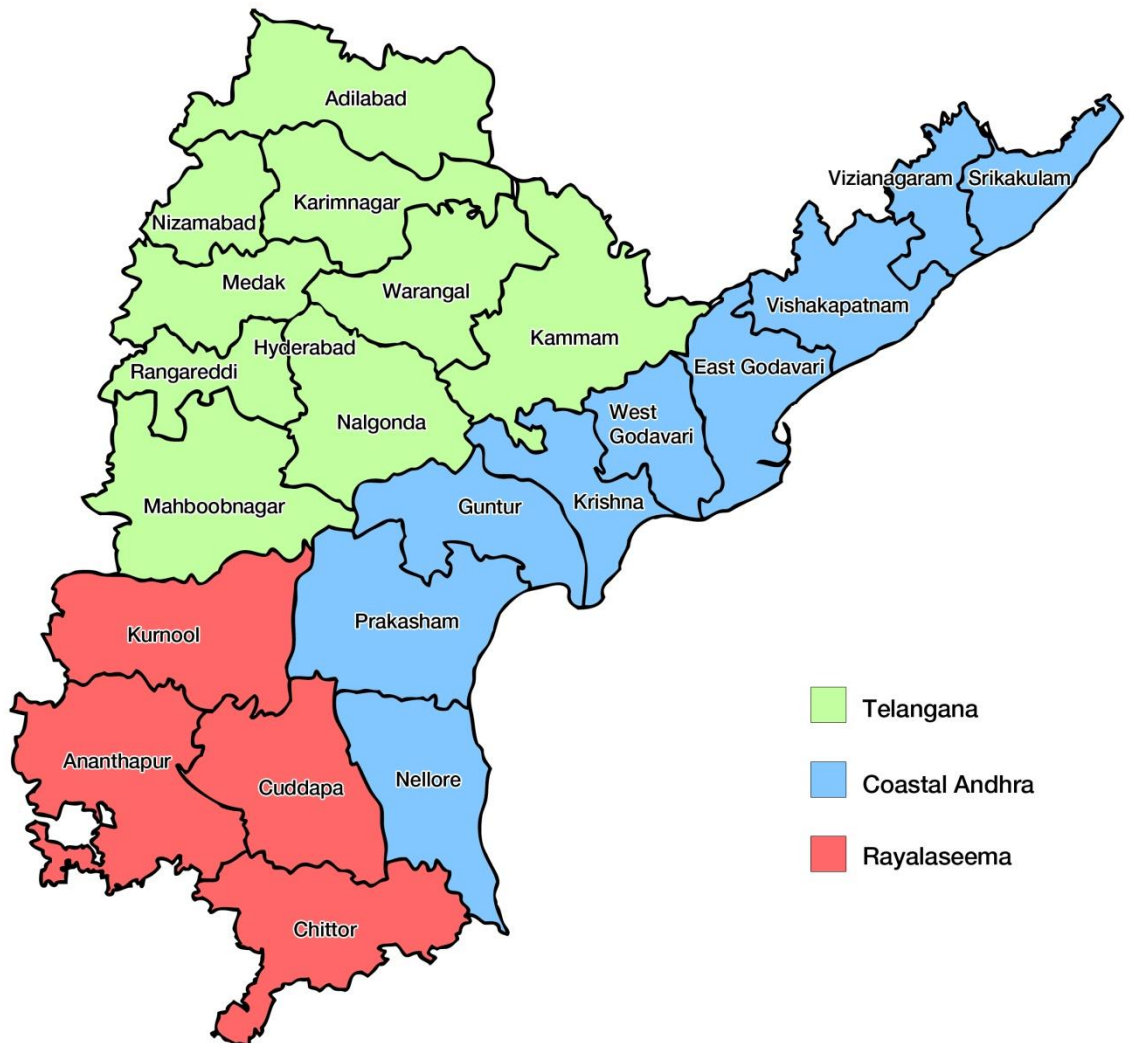
Changing Caste and Power Relations in Andhra Pradesh, 1956-2014

Caste as a social institution is significant in understanding the changing social relations in political structure of Andhra society before and after Independence. The impact of modernity has not been as substantial in altering the caste relations and caste identity in the political realm. Although different political parties contest elections based on ideology and principles, caste of the contested candidates in elections has been an important variable right from 1950s until date. Hence, this chapter tries to provide a historical account of changing caste and power relations in Andhra Pradesh (hereafter A.P.) during 1956-2014.

By mapping the caste, class, power matrix within A.P, this chapter tries to examine the implications of these changes on the socio-political and economic structure of Andhra society. This chapter divided into three sections. First section provides a brief account of the socio-economic profile of the three regions in A.P. The second section provides a sociological narrative of all the castes including tribes in A.P. Third section attempts to analyse the caste, power and economic relations, followed by a brief conclusion.

This chapter largely follows a historical mode of narration. Documentary sources have been used to construct the specificities of the three regions. Apart from using government documents, secondary sources in the form of literature produced by scholars have been consulted.

Map 3.1: Andhra Pradesh with three Regions



Section I: A Brief Description of the Three Regions

When India became Independent in 1947, the Telugu speaking population was scattered in the Madras presidency (12 districts) and Nizam's dominion (9 districts). Andhra state was formed on 14th September 1953 by merging 11 Telugu speaking districts of the Madras Presidency with Kurnool as the capital. Later the state of Andhra Pradesh was formed in November 1956; by merging Telangana (a region of nine Telugu-speaking districts of the erstwhile Hyderabad state) as well as the 11 districts from the Andhra state (Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema regions). Andhra Pradesh is the fifth largest state in the country both in terms of area and population (above 8 crores as per the 2011 census).

The Geographical Area of the State, according to 2011 Census is 275.05 Thousand Sq. Kms, whereas the density of population is highest in Hyderabad district with 18,480 persons and lowest in Adilabad district with 170 persons per Sq. Km. The total literacy rate of the state is 67.66. The state (prior to bifurcation) assembly had 294 constituencies of which 39 (13%) are reserved for scheduled castes and 15 (5%) for scheduled tribes.

Coastal Andhra

Coastal Andhra region covers about one-third of the area of the state and substantial part of it is made highly fertile by the two important rivers, the Krishna and the Godavari. The anicuts over rivers Godavari and Krishna in 1847 and 1853 respectively along with the construction of railways in 1862 lead to the relative prosperity of the coastal Andhra region. Several scholars pointed out that the Krishna-Godavari anicuts qualitatively influenced the dynamics of Andhra's economy and politics (G.N.Rao 1985; Upadhya C 1988; Ram Reddy 1989). The construction of the anicuts by Arthur cotton made a major influence on the agricultural activities in this region. The construction of the Anicut meant mobility of the caste groups in the Krishna-Godavari delta. Spatially speaking, Guntur, Vijayawada, Eluru and Kakinada, grew very fast into cities. The advancement of commercial agriculture set in motion the process of economic differentiation in the agrarian sector, which gave rise to a new middle class among the Agrarian castes in Coastal Andhra. It is this new middle class within the

Agrarian castes that was at the forefront of the Coastal Andhra politics, overseeing changes in the inter-caste relations, hierarchy in socio-political realms. However, North Coastal Andhra is much backward compared to other districts in the region. The social differentiation between classes, castes and tribes is a serious issue that needs attention. We would address these issues at the later part of this chapter. A much detailed description of the socio-political scenario of the region would be covered in the Chapter 4.

Rayalaseema

Rayalaseema region has an area of about 73,495 sq kms and constitutes 24.46 per cent of total area of A.P. According to 1991 census, Rayalaseema accounts for 17.6 percent of the total population of A.P. (Census of India, 1991:85). The region is historically known as ‘stocking ground of famines’ (cited in Prasad Purendra 1998: 56). Anantapur district, located in Rayalaseema is the driest among all the districts of A.P. and is drought-prone. The soil of the region is rocky and unyielding and it receives less rainfall. As a result, the region has low level of socio-economic development. Because of its historical deprivation and underdevelopment, the region has witnessed several political mobilizations and movements revolving around the issues of land, water, droughts¹. These political mobilizations/movements though were phenomena of the post-state formation, had their base in the developments during the 19th century. The land-owning upper castes, *Reddys* and *Kammars* have always wielded power in the region which also gets reflected in the electoral politics.

Telangana

On the other hand, the conditions in the Telangana region, which was part of Hyderabad state during the 19th century, were entirely different. The state was under the Nizam’s feudal rule, being virtually bankrupt, with depletion in the resources as the more affluent districts were transferred to the British. Besides this, the agrarian structure was particularly oppressive. The *jagirdari* system of land administration was the feature here. The *jagirdars* were so powerful that they could grab land by fraud,

¹ A movement for separate state was also made during 1981-83 in the name of Rayalaseema *vimochana samithi*. This demand was supported by dissent political leaders from the mainstream political parties including Congress and radical left groups. The movement articulated concerns related to several issues such as unequal distribution of water resources, lack of efforts for rightful share of Tungabhadra water and uneven development, a package for the region. Please see, (Rao K V Narayana and Ram D Sundar 1990: 552).

which in countless instances reduced the actual cultivator to the status of a tenant at will or a landless labourer. Moreover, the *jagirdars*, zamindars and *Deshmukhs* exploited their tenants and labourers through such pernicious practices as *vetti* or feudal labour. The disappearance of virtually any distinction between tenants and agricultural labourers led the communists to build a peasant resurrection during the 1930s (Ram Reddy 1989: 276). The events that led to Telangana movement, particularly the ‘armed struggle’ by the working classes did influence development policies of Andhra Pradesh in post-1956. For instance, land reforms were taken up seriously because of the pressure from below. It is a different matter that once the middle and upper peasant groups (particularly *Reddys*, *Velamas*) got ownership of land from the state, the demands of agricultural labourers, tenants and landless were completely undermined. Thus, it resulted in the wide disparities between social groups. There was serious neglect of educational and employment opportunities, distribution of water resources and overall development of the region, leading to the demand for separate state during 1968-72. The tendency for separate Telangana state re-emerged in the context of the post-1990s period under different leadership, leading subsequently to the formation of the separate state.

Section II: Thinking through Caste, Class nexus in the Three Regions

While commenting on the Congress system in the post-independence period, Bhambri argued that during all the elections in India, the Congress party nominated its candidates based on caste arithmetic (Bhambri 1986). One could argue that Congress was able to understand the regional dynamics in the Andhra region. The party was consistent in using caste loyalties to win elections by contesting members of the numerically predominant castes in specific regions. The leadership of the party judged the capacity of a candidate to win based on the support he/she was likely to receive because of caste loyalties. After nominating a candidate, it used the caste arithmetic to mobilize voters. It tried out all types of permutations and combinations of caste groups to ensure the electoral victory of its candidates. Even after winning the elections, the Congress chief ministers and ministers both at the central and state level continued to operate based on caste.

The caste factor thus linked the party, the government and the elections. Caste thus became a ladder by which one rose to the heights of power in politics. All other democratic parties have followed the path shown by the Congress. The reason for this is that the Congress was the first school of political training for many of the leaders of the democratic parties in India and the leaders who were not part of the Congress platform followed the model of Congress in competitive politics. This strategy of the Congress and other political parties led to two consequences in India. First, it strengthened caste consciousness as a result of which it increased the bargaining power of the caste groupings in politics. Secondly, the development of caste consciousness in politics created intra-caste and inter-caste competitiveness, so much so that in every election, new caste arithmetic had to be evolved in every constituency by the political parties. Thus, Harold Gould argues that Congress and other major Indian political parties though in principle condemned the persistence of caste but adhere to caste arithmetic in their politicking (Gould H 1991).

Andhra society like other societies is also ordered hierarchically based on different castes and sub-castes. Brahmins are supposed to be at the apex of this social hierarchy by virtue of their high position in ritualistic hierarchy. They were an important segment of the landed gentry of the countryside in 1930s and 1940s. Later, they moved out of villages and gained access to government jobs and other employment avenues in urban areas. The proportion of *Brahmins* in Coastal districts is more than twice compared to that in Rayalaseema. According to 1931 Madras census, the *Brahmin* population was 3, 26,610 in coastal Andhra and 96,637 in Rayalaseema.

Rajus are concentrated predominantly in West Godavari, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam districts in coastal Andhra. *Rajus* enjoy elite status in these districts by virtue of their traditional authority and culture. In the whole of Rayalaseema, they are less than 8 to 10 thousand and in the Telangana, their number is almost inconspicuous. In state politics, few individual *Rajus* played a prominent role but as a caste group their role has not been as significant².

² Kanumuri Bapiraju, Ashoka Gajapati Raju, Krishnam Raju, etc.

The *Komatīs* (also called *Vaiśhyas*) come next in the hierarchy. Their position in the ritualistic hierarchy is not very much higher than that of the *Sudhras*, in spite of their claims for *dwijas* status. Like *Brahmins*, they perform all rituals scrupulously, prohibited widow remarriages, and permitted infant marriages (Census of India 1891 Vol. XIII: 274). They constitute the wealthy business caste, traditionally carrying on all the trades – textile, grain, banking, money lending, grocery, shop keeping, pawn-broking and other entrepreneurial activities. The *Komatīs* are more or less equally distributed in all the districts, though Visakhapatnam, Krishna and Nellore districts in Coastal Andhra and Kurnool district in Rayalaseema and Warangal, Medak, Nalgonda and Mahaboobnagar districts in Telangana have greater number of their population. Their interests are commercial and some of them entered service sector and other professions and took less interest in electoral politics (Washbrook David 1975: 151-158; Keiko Yamada 2008: 358).

Next in order are the peasant castes such as *Reddys*, *Kammas* and *Kapus*. The *Reddys* are prominent in the Rayalaseema areas while *Kammas* in the Circars (Irschick 1969:7-8). The *Reddys* had an initial advantage over other castes and communities, which indeed was one of the decisive factors in their political dominance in A.P. They are distributed in all the three regions of the state particularly in the four Telangana districts of Nalgonda, Warangal, Mahboobnagar and Karimnagar, the two coastal districts of Prakasham and Nellore and in all the four Rayalaseema districts of Kurnool, Cuddapah, Anantapur, and Chittoor. Scholars note the important position *Reddys* had acquired in the *Andhradesa* due to their control over land and political power. They ruled in the past in many parts of *Andhradesa* (Sharma S 1948; Irschick 1969; Hanumantha Rao 2007). As a matter of fact, the term *Reddy* comes from the root word ‘*Radu*’ which in native Telugu means ‘*Raju*’ (ruler). In Telangana, the *Reddys* landed gentry were masters of many taluks and villages under the Nizams of Hyderabad (1914-1948). In Rayalaseema for generations, the *Reddys* have been so integral to the area as proprietors of land that in popular Telugu parlance the region is called ‘*Reddy seema*’ (Balagopal 1986). Because of their historical importance and economic strength, the *Reddy* caste has been playing an important role in the politics of A.P.

The *Kammas* are mainly concentrated in the three coastal districts of Guntur, Krishna, partly in Prakasham. They count for practically nothing in Telangana except in

Khammam and insignificant number in Rayalaseema. The *Kammas* constitute the second dominant land-proprietor caste in A.P., “who own an estimated 80 percent of the fertile delta land of the four mid-circar districts of Guntur, Krishna and the two Godavaris” (Harrison S 1956: 381). Next to *Reddys*, this caste gained prominence in Andhra politics because of their economic position.

The *Kapus* are said to be the numerically larger caste group in the state. They are engaged mainly in agriculture and allied activities. Scattered both in rural and urban areas, they constitute 17.6% of the state’s population (Reddy R 1989: 269). The Madras District Gazetteer refers “the *Kapus* are the largest caste in the Madras presidency numbering more than two millions, and the caste of cultivators, farmers and squireens in the Telugu country” (Madras District Gazetteer, 1897:9).

The *Velamas*, often as rich as the *Reddys* and *Kammas* are concentrated in the Telangana region, particularly in Karimnagar and few other districts. *Velamas* are essentially a land-owning and cultivating caste. Historically speaking, they are said to have once borne, as a very high character as soldiers and filled the armies of the kings of Kakatiya and Vijayanagara dynasties and when those great kingdoms fell, the disbanded soldiers appeared to have taken to different occupations. Though the caste is numerically less predominant among the Andhra population, they number significantly in the Telangana region. The role of *Velamas* in politics is relatively less compared to other upper castes in the Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema regions.

The category of Backward Classes defined by the Andhra Pradesh Government consists of 146 (includes 86 from Andhra and 60 from Telangana) castes. The principle criterion for the determination of the backwardness should be the lower social position is their traditional caste hierarchy of the Hindu society. The Commission also suggested certain other criteria such as

...lack of general educational advancement among the major sections of caste or community, inadequate representation in the field of trade, commerce and industry, communities consisting largely of tenants without occupy rights and those with insecure land tenancy and communities consisting of large percentage of small land owners with uneconomic holdings (Rao Muralidhar Commission 1982: 4-5).

Based on the above, the Commission has adopted criteria for determining the backwardness: poverty, low standard of education, low standard of living, place of habitation, inferiority of occupation and Caste. The commission, among many castes, included *Chakali* (washerman), *Gowda* (toddy tappers), *Padmashalis* (weavers), *Mangali* (barbers), and *Vadderas* (stonecutters) in to the backward classes list. These castes are found in all the three regions of Andhra Pradesh. All the backward classes of the state have not been united so far and each caste is separately clamouring for political concessions.

The next social group those that come under the state category of Scheduled Castes (predominantly, *Malas* and *Madigas*) are at the bottom of the social hierarchy. They are segregated in the village social organization and are the most oppressed groups. In the medieval period, they were known as *Gasangulu* or *Gasagallu*, and their status was denoted by the word *lenka*, which has been translated as 'serf'.

The *Malas* are considered a sub-caste of menials and servants. In the villages they work as farm labourers, messengers and live on the outskirts of the villages. Their proportion in the population is considerable in the four delta districts and in Chittoor and Nellore districts. In the Telangana, they are fewer than the *Madigas*. The *Madigas* in terms of caste hierarchy are the lowest. In brief, *Madigas* were considered as the wretched of the land, who lived in misery for centuries under the bondage of caste oppression. They are sometimes referred to as *vettivandlu*, that is those who do the *vetti* or beggar (forced work), *chamar* (leather work), *kamati* (menial worker) and *gasangi* (cow-killer). They have a larger population in Rayalaseema and Telangana. In Telangana, the population of *Madiga* to *Malas* is almost double (2:1). In smaller numbers, they are found in all the districts of the state. Both the *Mala* and *Madigas* are economically poor.

According to 1931 census, the *Brahmins* accounted for 3 percent of the total population of A.P. *Kapus/Reddys* constituted the largest component at 29 percent of the total population of the state, out of which *Kammas* totalled 4.8 percent. There are other sections of non-Brahmin peasant castes present in disproportionate strength in the advanced coastal districts, although they are smaller in total numbers than the *Reddys*

and *Kammas*. The backward castes constituted a very large proportion of the population at 46 percent. However, they were unevenly distributed, and divided into a large number of small groups. Among the scheduled castes, the two caste groups together constituted 17 percent of the population – the *Malas* (7.3%) and *Madigas* (9.7%). They are, however, divided by caste and sub-caste distribution. Muslims and Christians constitute another 7% of the population (Census 2001).

A brief mention has been made here about the tribal population of A.P. although they are outside the caste system. The total tribal population of A.P according to 2001 census is 50.24 lakhs constituting about 7 percent of the state's population (Directorate of Census Operations Hyderabad 2014). The scheduled areas extend over 31,485 square kilometres distributed in the districts of Srikakulam, Vijayanagaram, Visakhapatnam, East and West Godavari, Khammam, Warangal, Adilabad and Mahboobnagar. The tribal's of A.P. include *Koya*, *Yanadis*, *Yerukulas*, *Gond*, *Lambadi's*, *Konda Doras*, *Savara*, *Jatputs*, *Bagata*, *Konda Kapus*, *Konda Reddys*, *Kondhs*, *Kammara*, *Valmiki*, *Kolam*, *Gadabas*, *Chenchu*, *Kukha Dora* and *Porja*. The political participation of the tribals has been less investigated in A.P. and reported.

Locating Classes among Castes

In terms of social structure, Brahmins the educated class were the first caste group which moved out of rural Andhra in all the three regions. The peasant castes *Kammas*, *Rajus*, *Reddy*, and *Kapus* constituted the upper class while *Settibalijas*, *Gajula Balijas*, *Gollas*, and other artisan castes are the middle classes and Dalits (large majority of *Malas* and small proportion of *Madigas*) constituted the lower classes in coastal Andhra. In Rayalaseema region, it is *Reddys*, *Kammas* who constitute the upper classes while *Balijas*, *Boyas*, *Gollas* and other artisan castes were the middle classes and Dalits (*Mala* and *Madigas*) were the lower classes. In Telangana region, *Reddys* and *Velamas* constitute the upper classes while *Yadavas*, *Gowds*, *Mudiraj*, *Munnuru Kapus*, and *Padmashali* constitute middle classes and Dalits (large majority of *Madigas* and a small proportion of *Malas*) are the lower classes. In both coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema, the upper castes have retained the land ownership and control whereas in Telangana region, the land ownership shifted significantly to backward classes. The agricultural surplus generated in all the three regions was primarily reinvested in the urban sectors

and that's how the peasant castes particularly *Kammas, Reddys, Rajus* and *Velamas* got entrenched themselves as urban entrepreneurs.

Section III

If we look at the Congress in the pre-independence period, particularly in its working in at the national level, we would find Brahmins predominating the structure of Congress party. In the words of Kothari, this entrenched caste had dominated the political platform while the transfer of power from the British meant the ascendant castes (the non-Brahmin castes) coming in to political actions. (Kothari 1970). In Andhra Pradesh, Congress influence was confined mainly to urban educated middle class and the upper caste *Brahmins* until independence. The middle peasant castes and landless labourers were under the influence of the Communist Party (Carolyn E 1970:170). However, over the years the Congress structure came under the influence of the dominant agricultural castes with many non-brahmin castes staking claims for top leadership. This was the first shift in the social base of the Congress party in Andhra. The party leadership gradually shifted in the late 1950s and early 60s from the urban centres to the rural periphery, from the educated middle class in the cities to the rural elite, from the higher urban based caste to the middle peasant caste (Sharma and Reddy M 1979:475-77). The lower castes and backward classes, during this period were either completely left out of mobilization or their support (in terms of leadership) was taken for granted by the political parties.

Among the principal agricultural castes in A.P. *Reddys, Kammas, Kapus, Rajus,* and *Velamas* are the most important. By manipulating the policy instruments of accommodation, the Congress party began to attract support from these groups (Reddy R, 1989). Introduction of adult franchise, benefits of state patronage and most importantly, the adoption of agrarian reform policies are some of the determining factors that led to considerable increase in popular support of the Congress party among the rich and middle peasantry. In the rural areas of the state, the politics of adult franchise has raised the influence of non-Brahmin middle peasants who are at once numerous and economically developed. Thus the introduction of democratic politics opened up opportunities for the rural middle peasantry and they were quick to realize

the importance of political office for the maintenance and enlargement of their prestige and economic interests (Bernstoff D 1973: 1159:79).

According to Carol Upadhyya, the dominant peasant castes have expanded their base from land owning to other areas such as business, transport, Contracts, Cinema industry etc, of course, without losing the control over the land (Upadhyya C 1988: 1379). These dominant peasant castes like *Kamma*, *Reddy*, and *Rajus* are comparable with *Velamas* and a small proportion of *Kapus*. Whereas *Brahmins* played a crucial role at the time of Nationalist movement but in the course of time, they have moved on to the urban spaces and the vacuum at the village level was filled by these dominant peasant castes. Apart from moving from the villages, *Reddys* have superseded the *Brahmins* at the political level, mainly holding the Congress whereas *Kammas* have economically dominated the state but numerically they are weak.

The *Kammas* were among the early non-Brahmin rural communities to take to modern education. According to the 1931 Census report, the literacy rate in the deltas ‘grew faster than anywhere else in the Presidency’ (Baker C 1976: 196). Extending this point, Harish Damodaran would see the important role played by education in sharpening entrepreneurial skills among the *Kammas*. He further argues that the *Kammas* were able to extend their influence beyond the village with the process of integration of the town and countryside. While noting these developments he also acknowledges the fact that the traditional merchant castes in the region had a weak hold over business, which would have been an impetus for the *Kammas* to excel in business (Damodaran H 2008: 97-98).

As long as the Congress was in power, the *Reddy* elites had the upper hand, while the Congress undermined the *Kamma* elite. Hence, *Kamma* elites always resented the fact the *Reddys* dominated the state’s politics (Kohli A 1988: 996).

The most important reason however for shifting loyalties of the rich and middle peasant castes, from the communists to the Congress party is the introduction of land reforms in the state under the Congress government. With the abolition of *zamindari* and *jagirdari* system, the rich and the middle peasantry acquired full rights on their land. They were also benefitted by the irrigation facilities and other concessions such as bank

loans and subsidies offered by the Congress government. Thus, the landed gentry got accommodated in the Congress party. With the introduction of Panchayat raj institutions (PRIs), the *Reddy* caste representatives became more powerful in the Congress party. Not only the chief minister and legislators, but also most of the Panchayati raj functionaries and heads of cooperative bodies were from the *Reddy* caste.

The question of ascendancy of one particular *Sudhra* caste (*Reddy*) compared to the other (*Kamma*) within Congress party and Andhra politics needs to be explained. One of the explanations is that a large number of *Reddys* came from Rayalaseema and Telangana while *Kammas* came from the Coastal Andhra, particularly the delta region. The political activity of every stride was greater in the delta region compared to the other two regions. From the time of the Independence movement, Congress leaders found their liveliest Andhra response in the delta rice trading towns of Vijayawada and Guntur (Harrison S 1956: 384). The Coastal Andhra region was the center of intellectual and political ferment. Thus, just as the then Brahman-dominated Congress drew its leadership from the delta, so the challenge to this leadership also emerged within the same region, from the non-Brahman caste group (*Kammas* in particular) in the delta (ibid: 383). The young *Reddy* intelligentsia in the Rayalaseema hinterlands was politically quiescent in comparison with the *Kammas* of the delta region. Thus, while Congress patronized and encouraged *Reddy* caste elites into its fold, the *Kammas* who were articulate and involved in the anti-Brahmin movement, came under the influence of non-Congress parties such as Justice Party and Communist party.

As Balagopal pointed out

[t]his process was also congruent with the sociological fact that in the backward and undeveloped regions, the unity between the Brahmin and Sudra elites as the principal exploiting groups of pre-modern India has not been fully shattered whereas in the developed regions, that unity had been breached even by 1947, for both economic and political-cultural reasons. In Andhra Pradesh Congress politics, for instance, the brahmin leadership has had a more or less cosy relation with the Reddy landlords of Rayalaseema and Tclangana, whereas in coastal Andhra the Kamma community's rise, in social and political terms, took place in an anti-Brahmin ambience, represented explicitly by non-Brahmin self-respect type of movements, and implicitly by the rationalist, atheist and communist movements. It was this Kamma community that developed a very able and talented middle class and a powerful entrepreneurial elite taking advantage of the positive material conditions prevalent in the region watered by the Krishna and Godavari rivers, which conditions became even better after the green revolution. And yet, the rise to

political power of this elite commensurate with its tremendous dynamism was blocked by Congress strategies... (Balagopal 1995: 2482-3).

The upper caste dominated Congress party received vital support from the scheduled castes and minorities and these groups were also given adequate representation in the party. While they were accommodated in the party hierarchy, they did not wield any real power in the party or outside it. The reservation policy strengthened the Congress support among them. This group is called, to use Vakil F D (1984) phrase as “the support structure”, and played an important role in stabilizing the support base of the Congress party, particularly in rural areas (Vakil F D 1984: 61; Manor J 1978: 796)

While the first shift in the social base of the Congress party took place in the initial years after independence, the second shift in Congress support base took place after 1969 split in the party. Indira Gandhi, the then president of the Congress party faced severe challenge within the party at the national level, while the *Reddys* led by Kasu Bramhananda Reddy, posed a problem in Andhra Pradesh. This subsequently led to the formation of a party called Congress (R) or Reddy Congress. Following the split, Indira Gandhi made a deliberate attempt to restructure the party support base. She tried to reduce the dominant caste representation and raise that of the lower castes in order to supplement the traditional Congress support among the customary landed castes. Thus, there was a conscious effort to change the social base of Congress party from the customary landed castes to the dispossessed groups.

The 1971 elections in the state saw the Congress government initiating public policies aimed at mobilizing other socio-economic interests in order to broaden the support base of the party. The party leadership sought to break the *Reddy* and *Kamma* hold on power through a skilful exploitation of conflicts among and within these groups. Accordingly, P.V. Narasimha Rao, a Brahmin and Jalagam Vengal Rao, a *Velama* both from Telangana region were appointed as Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh in succession during 1971-78. P. V. Narasimha Rao during 1971-73, curtailed the powers of zilla parishads which were dominated by the *Reddys*. Steps were also taken towards the implementation of land reform measures in order to weaken the powerful hold of the landed gentry i.e. *Reddys* and *Kammas* (Vakil, F D 1990:89). However, Rao was forced to quit within a short period due to a violent agitation in the state on the Mulki

rules issue. It was widely believed that the dominant peasant castes had played a key role in the agitation (Reddy R 1989:282).

The internal emergency proclaimed in June 1975, the national policies such as the nationalization of banks, and state government policy of land ceilings helped Congress further consolidate the lower caste support base for the Congress. This is well reflected with the 1978 elections in the post-emergency period. The Congress party won 175 out of 189 seats it contested. The party also has won 41 out of 42 seats with 57% (Manor J 1978: 786). However, by early 1980s, Congress party caste arithmetic and its strategy ran into serious trouble with the formation of new regional political party headed by a charismatic, upper caste (*Kamma*) leader called *Nandamuri Taraka Ramarao* (popularly known as NTR) and the alienation of *Kammas* and backward castes from that of Congress party.

A significant development that led to the erosion of Congress social base is due to the shift in focus by Congress from upper caste to that of backward classes consisting of a large number of heterogeneous castes comprising artisans, tenants and poor peasants. After having experienced relative social mobility as a result of changing agrarian relations and the benefits flowing from the various welfare measures adopted by the government for them in the sphere of education and employment, backward castes (BCs) slowly emerged as an important political force in the state. Significantly, some of these castes increased their share in the ownership of land over a period of time. According the Francin Frankel, the backward classes were hitherto playing a subservient role to the dominant castes and for the first time during this period acquired their independence from the dominant castes (Frankel F 1978:76).

The Congress party maintained its coalition of various castes and groups in the state through a network of various welfare schemes, patronage, and reservation and accommodated the emerging elite among the backward castes. However, it failed to sustain the alliance in the face of increasing demands for more benefits by the backward castes. The welfare policies introduced by the Congress party such as the distribution of government lands, house sites for the landless have bypassed the backward castes and appeared to have benefited the scheduled castes disproportionately. Kohli in his understanding of the emergence of a complex political

scenario point that the disproportionate treatment meted out to the backward castes created resentment among them for the Congress. This segment gradually crystallized politically against the Congress party and their support was successfully tapped by NTR in the early 1980s. He avers that the competition between the scheduled castes and backward castes for the limited welfare benefits of the state led to the shift of the latter away from the Congress and rally their support behind Telugu Desam with the hope that it would take care of their interests (Kohli A 1991:69).

Kohli points out two factors that were at work throughout the 1970s that changed the nature of these caste rivalries and the castes' relative power positions in the state. First, the *Kammas* proved more enterprising than the *Reddys*. They utilised their land wealth to bankroll expansion into numerous commercial activities such as rice milling, sugar production, tobacco processing, hotels, newspapers and the film industry. The wider economic base strengthened the power potential of the *Kammas*. Although some of that new economic power found expression in the increased number of ministerial positions to which they were appointed, they continued to resent the failure of Congress party to appoint a *Kamma* Chief Minister in A.P. The increasing disjuncture between their economic power and their failure to capture the highest political offices alienated the *Kammas*. As a result, they aligned their financial and political support behind NTR. Secondly, throughout the 1970s, in addition to losing financial and electoral support of one of the most important social groups in Andhra, the Congress lost significant electoral support among the backward classes. Thus, the Congress party remained as a party of an alliance between the *Reddys* and the scheduled castes. The support of these two sections was not enough for the Congress to remain in power and hence it lost its uninterrupted sway in A.P. in 1983 (Kohli A 1988: 996).

Commenting on the 'politics of confrontation', with the emergence of TDP, K C Suri (1994) says that although a majority of the *Kammas* sided with the TDP, no party based on the electoral support of a single caste can ever win power in the state (Suri K C 1994: 199-200). A majority of the Backward Caste voters, who constitute a vast chunk of the state's population supported NTR, primarily because of their perception that the politics of Congress were aimed to capture the votes of the scheduled castes and not much was done by it for the welfare of the backward castes although the proportion of poor among the backward castes was considerably high. Therefore, a more plausible

explanation of the TDP electoral sweep was due to its support base among backward castes. This was a tactical strategy of TDP to accommodate the backward caste elite in order to capture power.

Similarly, Narendra Mohan (1995) also argued that A.P. politics revolved around the *Reddys* and *Kammas*. The author characterizes *Reddys* of Telangana and Rayalaseema as ‘feudal’ and *Kammas* of coastal Andhra as ‘capitalists’, also says that

The rich peasant and ‘capitalist landlord’ class-caste that emerged in the fertile coastal Andhra region over a period of time and crystallized into a *nouvean riche* stratum with multiple economic interests in cinema production and distribution, agro-industry and the tertiary sector but denied access to corridors of power during the three decades of Congress rule found in NTR a general who could rally the masses in the electoral battlefield and further the political interests of this class (Mohan Narendra 1995: 124).

Apart from allotting more number of assembly seats for the backward castes to contest elections, “NTR tried to woo them by declaring 43% reservation in educational institutions, jobs...” (Innaiah N 2009:169). The administrative measures of NTR government particularly the abolition of village officers system (a feudal remnant that helped *Reddys* and *Brahmins* control the land and lives of rural peasants and workers), Rs 2 a kilogram of rice to the poor, mid-day meal for the school going children, a slab rate of electricity for the farmers, sale of *dhotis* and *sarees* at half the price, co-opting the backward castes into its fold hit the Congress party’s support base and patronage that was systematically built up over the decades. The electoral outcome of 1983 and 1987 assembly elections in terms of political success of NTR and the subsequent consolidation of TDP’s social base is largely accounted by his populist policies, which accommodated different social groups.

By 1989, the Congress came back to power in A.P assembly elections by winning 180 seats out of 294 seats. The main reason behind the shift of power from TDP to Congress attributed to the caste-based conflicts that took place during TDP rule. These conflicts include atrocities on Dalits in *Padirikuppam* (1983), *Neerukonda* (1986) and *Karamchedu* (1986). These three major incidents led by the upper caste *Kammas* who inflicted the violence (Balagopal 1987). This was because every *Kamma* felt during this period that each one of them is the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh (Innaiah N

2009: 140). Secondly, the murder of Vangaveeti Ranga a *Kapu* leader in December 1988 and subsequent violence that erupted between *Kammas* and *Kapus* in coastal districts in 1989 came in handy for the Congress to mobilise the *Kapus*, numerically the largest caste group, in its favour.

With the Congress back in power in 1989, Casteism and factionalism came to the fore again. The upper caste *Reddy* elites rallied behind Congress and provided the leadership yet again. However, during this period, when Marri Chenna Reddy was Chief Minister, the state was rocked by anti-Mandal agitation cracking the backward caste support base of the Congress party. In the 1994 state assembly elections, when there was demand for more number of candidates from the backward castes and *Kapus*, the Congress high command ignored it. As TDP accommodated backward castes, it scored a massive victory winning 219 seats out of 251 it contested. TDP got three-fourth majority on its own and more than four-fifth, if the seats of the allies are added. TDP and its allies swept the polls in all the three regions winning 120 (out of 133) in coastal Andhra, 42 (out of 52) in Rayalaseema and 91 (out of 107) in Telangana (Suri K C 1994: 205).

There has been a long history of conflicts between *Kammas* and *Kapus* in Krishna district even prior to the formation of TDP in A.P. After NTR led, TDP came to power in 1983, this rift got further widened and it turned into intense caste violence. The family feud between two families one led by 'Devineni', a *Kamma* supported by TDP while Congress supported Vangaveeti, a *Kapu*³. In 1987, a new caste organisation called the *Kapunadu* formed primarily to consolidate different sub-castes under the umbrella of *Kapus*. The purpose of this organisation is to mobilise different sub-castes in order to challenge the hegemony of *Kammas* in A.P. The identity formation of *Kapus* felt necessary now because these conflicts were not seen merely as local and regional. In order to become a counter force, *Kapus* made efforts to mobilize at least 39 sub-castes and several sub sub-castes in A.P. However, *Kapunadu* did not succeed in emerging as a major political force because of its wider social and economic

³ In 1972 chalasani Venkataratnam, a *Kamma* belonging to Communist Party of India (CPI) was killed by Vangaveeti Radhakrishna, a *Kapu*. In 1974, Vangaveeti Radhakrishna was killed by CPI. This feud continued with Vangaveeti Radhakrishna's brother Vangaveeti Ranga and Devineni Nehru in the 1980s. After the emergence of TDP, these caste dynamics came to the fore undermining the financial and other issues.

diversity, lack of inter-regional cohesion, charismatic leader, and organizational limitations.

In the early 1990s, *Mudragada Padmanabham* a *Kapunadu* leader mobilised this heterogeneous *Kapus* by bringing a new unifying factor into the political agenda. The agenda was articulated in terms of a demand for representation of these sub-castes under the rubric of backward classes. Clearly, the *Kapunadu* as a movement was striving on this agenda. The calculation behind this strategy was that apart from providing reservations in employment and education for the numerically dominant castes, it could become a formidable political entity. This movement helped certain individual *Kapu* leaders to ascertain themselves within each political party and few were able to bargain positions of power, but it could not sustain as a political force beyond four to five years.

One of the explanations for the failure of this movement was that several sub-castes from delta region (Godavari districts) did not want to be included in the list of backward classes as including in the list would mean equating themselves with the social status of inferior castes like the *Settibaliya*. On the other hand, the *Munnuru Kapus*, *Telagas* and other economically backward sub-castes within *Kapu*, also felt threatened that advanced communities such as delta *Kapus* might garner major share of the cake if reservations are provided to all sub-castes under the generic name '*Kapu*'. This political demand for inclusion of castes and sub-castes in the backward classes was a direct reflection of the national politics particularly the Mandal commission (1989) and its related agitations.

The 1990s in A.P is also marked with numerous caste conflicts, atrocities on Dalits and rising caste violence, which inaugurated new phase of politics that has given more space to the Dalit issues. Balagopal says that the resistance by the educated Dalit students against the upper caste feudal lords is the major trend in the 1990's. The organised nature among the Dalits has increased after the *Karamchedu* (1985) *Chundur* (1991) and other violent incidents. Political mobilisation of Dalits also began during this period in a much-organised manner. Commenting on the organised nature of violence against Dalits, Balagopal, says that it is nothing but a reaction to the articulation of Dalits who have risen their voice against the hegemony and feudal

tendencies of the upper castes at the village level. Dalits entry into the government institutions through reservations also made them to raise their voice. Religion especially Christianity played a crucial role in stimulating the Dalits to fight against oppression (Balagopal K 1987; 1991).

Generally, *Malas* in coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema are better educated, assertive and identity-conscious compared to *Madigas* in this region, while in Telangana region, *Madigas* are better educated and otherwise compared to *Malas*. Balagopal says that by 1990s the Dalit communities, particularly the younger generation started rejecting the social and political subordination to the upper castes. Consequently, they also started rejecting the submission to one or the other of the ruling class parties, a submission that was structured through the traditional caste-domination. It is this socially and politically effective advancement and assertiveness of the *Malas* and *Madigas* that the upper castes find it intolerable, which lead to assaults such as *Karamchedu* and *Chundur* (Balagopal K 1991: 2399).

Section IV: Politics of caste in Andhra Pradesh during 1996-2010

The economic reforms and neo-liberal agenda in the post 1990s has significantly influenced the economic domain as much as social and political sphere. The extent to which market relations transformed socio-political relations has been discussed below. This section deals with the three prominent phenomenon – NTR, Chandrababu Naidu, and YSR (Yeduguri Sandinti Rajasekhara Reddy), as they have mapped out different trajectories in A.P politics during this 15 years period.

Chandrababu Naidu: (1996-2004)

NTR phenomenon in A.P politics can be analyzed through three major issues. One articulation of the region and its under representation within a nation state (Naidu R 1983). Secondly, advocating populism through welfare schemes-Rs. 2kg Rice scheme, mid-day meal (Olsen W 1989: 1597). Third important assertion was through social structural and political change (abolition of traditional social power at village level and ban on sale of arrack).

Pride of the region and language provided the platform and justification for a regional party. The slogan *teluguvari atmagouravam* (self-respect of Telugus) mobilized people

across the state. At the time of his entry into politics, NTR was the highest paid actor in *Tollywood* (Telugu cinema world) and therefore was able to persuade the people that his entry into politics was only to serve the people having sacrificed his comforts and high remuneration. Inspired by the then politics of populism in Tamilnadu, NTR also emphasized certain welfare activities such as Rs 2 Kg Rice scheme, mid-day meal and several such schemes which had significant impact on the votes of the poor, Thirdly, the abolition of traditional village officers (*Karanam, Reddy, Patel, Police Patel* etc) offset the social power of the *Brahmins* and *Reddys* while the ban imposed by the state government on sale of arrack because of anti-arrack movement by the women helped TDP get the support of different social groups.

There is a clear shift of politics that one notices with the entry of Chandrababu Naidu as chief minister of A.P in 1996. The Economic reforms and structural adjustment programmes in early 1990s had created a changed political atmosphere in India. Chandrababu Naidu championed the neo-liberal agenda by inducing a paradigm shift from NTR phenomenon. Chandrababu Naidu brand of politics was more inclined towards gradual withdrawal of state, prominent role for non-state actors (Water User Associations, Women's Self-Help Groups, Vidya Volunteers, Joint Forest management committees, SMART⁴) in governance structures⁵, urban development and growth through service sector particularly Information Technology, Biotechnology and Knowledge parks, real estate by implication rise of fictitious capital.

These neo-liberal reforms of Chandrababu Naidu brought him recognition at national and international level⁶. In fact, several Congress and BJP ruled states were provoked to follow his path of developmental administration. While Naidu became the darling of the business class, bureaucrats, media and political class, he alienated the farmers, tenants, agricultural workers, and urban poor. As K.C Suri (2004) points out,

In reaction to his reforms, there was the accentuation of poverty, growing income inequalities, unemployment and unabated farmers' suicides. His

⁴ SMART is an acronym of 'Smart, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transperant Government'.

⁵Centre for Good Governance was started in 2001 during Chandrababu Naidu's Chief Ministerial

⁶ Time Magazine from New York City published his photograph on the cover page and referred to him as the CEO of Andhra Pradesh. Bill Clinton, the then President of U.S.A, Bill Gates, from Microsoft, several of the top World Bank officials made a beeline to A.P and publicly acknowledged him as the greatest leader and administrator of the times

market friendly, global capital-friendly reforms might have endeared him to certain sections, but they resulted in greater hardships and misery for many. His style of functioning within the party and government might have won accolades from those who were close to him and those who received benefits, but alienated several traditional party supporters and members of various social classes and groups (2004: 5493)

Chandrababu Naidu's nine-year rule was markedly different from that of NTR's in A.P. NTR used his charismatic authority, tactical co-option of Backward Caste groups into TDP's fold including the leadership positions, introduced populist welfare programmes targeting rural poor, women, aged etc. Using the political capital generated by NTR, Chandrababu Naidu embraced neo-liberalism accelerating the development through technological modernization. His policies highlighted the primacy of Hyderabad (its growth and development) and de-emphasis on agricultural and rural sectors.

YSR Regime: (2004-2010)

Y.S Rajasekhara Reddy (YSR) brought back the Congress party to power in 2004 elections with the emphasis on agriculture and rural sector along with the rhetoric of anti-globalization. Through the manifesto, the Congress party has committed itself in providing free power (electricity) to farmers, initiation of major irrigation projects, subsidies on crop loans, relief package to the families of suicide victims, loans to women self-help groups at 12% interest per annum, sanction of revolving fund to all DWACRA groups which completed six months, 2.5 lakh jobs for the youth by lifting the ban on recruitment in government services, enhancement of old-age pensions, and revival of subsidised cloth schemes. In fact, YSR promised in his election campaign that the first decision will be on the free electricity.

YSR conveniently pitched in at all the available contradictions that were played out in the political sphere – rural vs. urban, united state vs. separate Telangana (forged alliance with Telangana Rashtra Samiti), caste identities (*Reddy vs. Kammas; Mala vs Madigas*; Alliance with MIM and Christian support groups), and populist welfare measures vs Neo-liberalism to win the elections⁷. As Balagopal (2004) points out,

⁷ If we map the trajectory of 'populism' in India, it is moving in different directions continuously. The dominant within that discourse comes from Indira Gandhi, with her *Garibi hatao, roti, kapada, aur makaan*. With these populist slogans, Indira Gandhi wooed large chunk of the masses in India. She also attained a cult status after these slogans. In terms of Andhra Pradesh, the three popular leaders, NTR,

The Andhra Pradesh countryside was experiencing an unprecedented agrarian crisis at that time, with a large number of suicides among the weavers and farmers being symptomatic of its gravity. It was this crisis that YSR tried to articulate through his padayatra. In alliance with the Left and the Telangana Rastra Samithi (TRS), the Congress' election pitch promised to address this rural distress. The added promises of sympathetically addressing the Telangana state issue and of peace talks with the Maoist groups saw the Congress back in power (Balagopal K 2004).

YSR as chief minister implemented free power scheme, negotiated huge loan with the World Bank for irrigation projects, introduced several welfare programmes, particularly Arogyasri, a community health insurance for BPL population, *Indiramma*, housing scheme for the poor, fee reimbursement for the economically backward students to pursue their education in private colleges. Despite the rhetoric of anti-globalization, loan from the World Bank for irrigation projects did not create a negative image for the government. In fact, this loan helped the political class to distribute huge contracts to followers of the ruling party. Similarly, SEZs in terms of mining (contracts with ANRAK, JINDAL companies), power projects (coastal corridor by Reliance), helped massive promotion of private capital. Along with these measures, YSR regime justified legal violations by some companies even by issuing Government Orders (GOs) - the mining company owned by Gali Janardhan Reddy from Bellary being a classic case. This provided the basis on which ruling party particularly YSR mobilised lakhs of crores of rupees in five year period. As Srinivasulu (2009) puts it

...the populist image of being a munificent provider of succour to the poor and needy helped YSR's government gain legitimacy among the masses, then its developmentalist image, built up by pumping massive investments into irrigation projects, roads, bridges, flyovers, etc, catered to its support base among the rich and powerful. These helped the regime build and strengthen its networks with contractors, builders, real estate developers, corporate operators of various hues and they became the support structure of the regime (2009: 8).

Briefly, free power to farmers, housing scheme to the rural poor, Arogyasri and MGNREGA⁸ (central government scheme for employment) created substantive support base for YSR although he also pursued neo-liberal policies (Reddy Krishna 2002;

Babu and YSR, have used this discourse very effectively. They tried for their brand of populism, which is distinct from the broad definition of the concept of populism.

⁸ Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

Prasad Purendra and Raghavendra 2012). This constructing of populism with neo-liberalism ensured congress government coming back to power in 2009. These policies continued during 2009-12. The demise of YSR in 2010 raised questions of political stability for the last two years but policy framework did not change much.

Politics of Caste Classification in Representative Democracy:

Politics of caste took a different spin from the time of NTR's entry into A.P politics. The TDP, a regional party had to take on a national party like Congress, which was formidable in the local context due to its caste matrix (*Reddy-Dalit-Muslim-Brahmin* combine). Therefore, TDP with its 4% *Kamma* support base worked out a strategy of co-opting Backward Castes into its fold and it worked.

As soon as NTR came to power, the issue of reservation to backward castes came to the centre stage. Working out the income differentials as a basis, most backward among the backward castes were classified and accordingly reservation policy was implemented by TDP government. This inclusive policy of BCs into political and institutional spaces received wide support from the BC constituency. There was also wide perception among BCs that it only Dalits who got benefitted from development /welfare schemes of the central and state government and this classification helped them gain access to those schemes.

Building on this strategy, Chandrababu Naidu proposed classification of Dalits (mainly *Malas* and *Madigas*) in order to split the Dalit support base for the congress party. He supported the argument that among 59 castes in the broad SC category, it was only the *Malas* who were able to garner the reservation benefits and others were left out in this process. The organised protests by the other castes within the SC's led by *Madiga Dandora* movement became the ally of TDP. The congress party resisted all attempts of classification of *Dalits*. The debate on classification is still going on as political parties and *Dalit* groups are divided on this issue.

In continuation with this trend, YSR proposed 5% reservation for the below poverty Muslims in the state of Andhra Pradesh. This has brought Muslims and MIM closer to congress party although the decision is now entangled in the legal courts. Similarly, the

efforts are being made in the last few years to mobilise *Kapus* based on the classification of most backward among them and seek reservations. These are some instances how caste has further consolidated itself within the representative democracy framework.

Conclusion:

There was considerable shift in land ownership from absentee landlords (*Brahmins*) to that of tenants (such as *Kammas, Reddys, Rajus, Velamas*) in mid-1950s due to land reforms. With the large-scale irrigation projects in late 1950s, some of the upper castes who became the new landowners consolidated their economic base. By mid-1960s, the technological modernization of agriculture, particularly the green revolution accelerated the pace of growth that helped these Agrarian castes to reap the economic benefits. Subsequently, these caste communities further invested and expanded their surpluses to become the provincial propertied classes⁹. Of course, the green revolution technologies also created more disparities between the upper caste land-owning classes and that of small, marginal farmers, agricultural wage labourers. In their eagerness to catch up with the cash-intensive crops, the tenants and sharecroppers forced to rely on the non-institutional credit. The rich upper caste landowners, absentee landlords and urban trader class belonging to the dominant upper castes became the moneylender class. Cheap labour came from the dry lands to work in the irrigated and wet lands in order to earn their livelihood. Modern transport and communication helped to maintain the competition among the labourers to provide cheap labour. Thus, these caste and class disparities constituted the basis for the social rupture and contradictions in A.P.

Party politics and ideology is supposed to guide each political party to fight elections and capture power. However, the ground reality was that political parties captured power largely by manipulating the caste arithmetic based on the social structural conditions that prevailed in A.P. Behind the formal list of the party candidates nominated for the electoral contests, there is probably an inside story of careful caste calculus in terms of political appeal. This was quite evident when one analyzes the nexus between caste and politics particularly that of Chief Ministership, the highest political office. With the exception of Damodaram Sanjeevaiah, a Dalit who became

⁹ A number of large-scale plants- sugar, cotton spinning, cement and fertilisers-appeared in the delta region. Many of these were established by large companies head-quartered outside the region, but some were based on local zamindar/landlord capital (Upadhyaya C 1996)

Chief Minister for two years (1960-62), all the Chief Ministers during four decades belonged only to the dominant upper caste – *Reddys, Kammas, Brahmins, and Velamas*. By occupying the political office, it became easy for the upper castes to dominate and control the other social groups in economic and social realms.

Politics of caste can be analyzed through three distinct periods. The first phase being 1956-1982, during which period party-based politics and its leadership primarily revolved around land owning classes in terms of *Brahmins, Reddys, Kammas* and *Velamas*. Intense competition among these upper classes and upper castes within the representative democracy ensured that economic and social power was retained only amongst these groups. In the second phase, during 1982-1996, backward caste communities were politically co-opted by TDP, which opened up the political space for OBC representatives. In the third phase during 1996-2010, neo-liberal market reforms in fact strengthened the role of caste in economic and political sphere rather than undermining it. Both Chandrababu Naidu and YSR used caste, kinship and patronage as important elements to champion the neo-liberal reforms. The accumulation of economic capital relied on the manipulation of market principles by incorporating caste into it rather than eliminating it. Thus, the conditions during 1956-2014 created new forms of casteization of politics and politicization of caste.

This chapter foregrounds the caste and politics in relation to the three regions of Andhra Pradesh. In the next chapter, discussion on one region of Andhra Pradesh i.e. Coastal Andhra, with a focus on East Godavari District, is presented.

Chapter 4

The Political Economy of Coastal Andhra

This chapter is an attempt to analyse the political economy of East Godavari District. It primarily explores the relationship between caste and politics in coastal Andhra region. It attempts to analyze certain crucial issues pertaining to the social power (discussed in the 2 chapter) and how circulation of power happened during different political regimes. To understand the relation between different castes, it is essential to capture the mechanisms of social power involved during the regime changes at the political level.

Many scholars have attempted to map region as a unit of the study mainly to understand the micro and macro level social, economic and political implications of the region¹. Most of them have written extensively emphasizing historical, as well as economic aspects. Methodologically it has yielded some scintillating and rich information pertaining to the region. It is in this context, the present chapter explores the ‘unintended consequences’² of the development of a particular region, here Coastal Andhra and its implications on the East Godavari district. It also explores certain complexities pertaining to intra and inter caste relations and their influence on the political sphere. Although this chapter maps pre-colonial and colonial narratives, it in fact emphasizes post-Independent period.

David Washbrook (1973) classified the then Madras Presidency into three regions, based on the ecological variations and geographical features: **Cauvery** region, **Dry** and **Wet** region (Washbrook D 1973: 476). Dry and Wet regions are part of the present Andhra Pradesh whereas the Cauvery delta region is situated in parts of Karnataka and

¹The works of Paul Brass (1965), Irshick (1969) Robin Jeffrey (1976), James Manor (1977), Brenda beck (1979), David Hardiman (1981), John Harriss (1982), David Ludden (1985) etc, have contributed to the field respectively. For a preliminary understanding on region, please see, Saberwal, Satish, 1971, Regions and their Social Structures, Contributions to Indian Sociology, 5, pp. 82-98.

² Expression used by Robert K Merton (1936).

Tamilnadu. The focus here is to understand the wet region and specifically the Godavari delta. The wet region comprises of places from Ganjam to Nellore, whereas the present Rayalaseema was classified as the Dry region. As I have noted elsewhere in the thesis that geographically the present state of Andhra Pradesh is divided into three regions: Coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema, and Telangana - but for every 100 kms there are distinctions within each of the above regions, both during present and preceding times.

The irrigation and land revenue policies adopted by the colonial government had altered the boundaries of the wet region frequently, especially after 1850's. These alterations can be attributed to the construction of the dams across the Krishna and Godavari River. The population of the region has drastically increased. The employment opportunities have expanded after the dam construction. The business also flourished gradually due to higher utility of land or through the reclamation of land. With these new developments, the presence of new people, new goods, and new cultures have influenced the social and political factors. Immediate and visible change was the 'in-migration' mostly from the North Coastal Andhra, either for dam construction work or for the business³. The construction of the dams indicated the rise of *mofussil* towns in the Coastal Andhra.

Before 1859, there were three districts-Guntur, Machilipatnam, and Rajahmundry. In 1859, these three were reduced to two-Krishna and Godavari-each containing the river Krishna and Godavari canal systems. In 1904, Guntur District was formed out of a part of Krishna district. In 1925, Krishna was bifurcated into Krishna and West Godavari, and the old Godavari district became known as East Godavari. Although minor adjustments of boundaries also carried out subsequently, the last major re-organisation effected in the region was the carving out of Prakasham district from Guntur, Nellore and Kurnool Districts in the year 1970. It can be observed that the district boundary has altered within the coastal Andhra mainly due to the canal irrigation system during the British time and the impact of Land reforms and Green revolution during post-Independence period.

³The workforces from Godavari and Krishna districts have not evinced interest in undertaking anicut work due to the low wages being offered by the British. Therefore the British administration employed forced labor from other districts such as Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and also Ganjam. This in fact opened up entry of new castes into East Godavari, as a small proportion of these labourers settled down permanently.

Leaving aside the administrative changes of Coastal Andhra during the Madras Presidency, the present coastal Andhra can be classified into four sub-regions based on its social composition. Firstly, The North coastal Andhra, which includes Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, dominated by the Backward Castes, mainly *Toorpu Kapus*, *Kalingas*, etc, whereas Vishakhapatnam was largely developed by the British and aftermath especially due to the ‘in-migration’ from the nearby districts, and its economic prosperity largely can be attributed to the surplus generated from the Godavari and Krishna Deltas. The *Kapus* and *Rajus* mostly dominate the Godavari Delta; Krishna and Guntur districts dominated by the *Kammas* and down south, i.e., Prakasham and Nellore are mostly by the *Reddys*. The focus here is not on uniformities across the region; certainly, there are variations from one to the other sub-region. In some sub-regions, economic factors determine changes, while in others it may be the numerical dominance in terms of caste, which becomes decisive. This dominance, in any form, inevitably draws the attention of tensions, conflicts, which indeed took place in many parts of Coastal Andhra⁴. However, the numerical dominance assumed significance during the identity politics phase in the late 1980s. This phenomenon provokes or in a way revisits the idea of ‘Dominant Caste’ conceptualised by M N Srinivas, which gradually took a different form with the changing socio-political context. Over a period, this concept acquired different meanings, in a way, broadened, deepened and expanded, as much as it shrank in scope⁵.

Every sub-region has its own history, which can be regarded as coinciding well with the macro history; however, these regional histories could also be seen as evolving independently of the external influences. Godavari delta is no exception to this and has certainly evolved due to the external influences and yet developed its own history over a period of time. It has a rich history but most of the literature available is primarily

⁴ These conflicts, whether between the peasant castes or between the Dalits and the peasant castes has taken place across the coastal Andhra. Most prominently, the conflict between Kammas and Kapus, or between Kamma and Madigas in Karamchedu (1985) or between Reddys and Malals in Psundur (1991) and recently between the Toorpu Kapus and the Malas in Laximpet (2012). The above conflicts drew the attention of the world, only because of the magnitude of the problem. Please see, Balagopal on Karamchedu (1987) and on Psundur (1991) in EPW.

⁵ For M N Srinivas, Dominant Caste forms due to the combinations of several factors, such as numerical strength, economy, political power, and also high caste status. But within the given context, in Coastal Andhra, these factors are present in any of the caste, as it is indicated in the main text that, in some sub-regions, it is numerical strength, in some sub-regions, it is the economy. The definition of Dominant Caste needs to be expanded, for instance, when an upper caste doesn't have number, but prosperous, they will align with the lower sections.

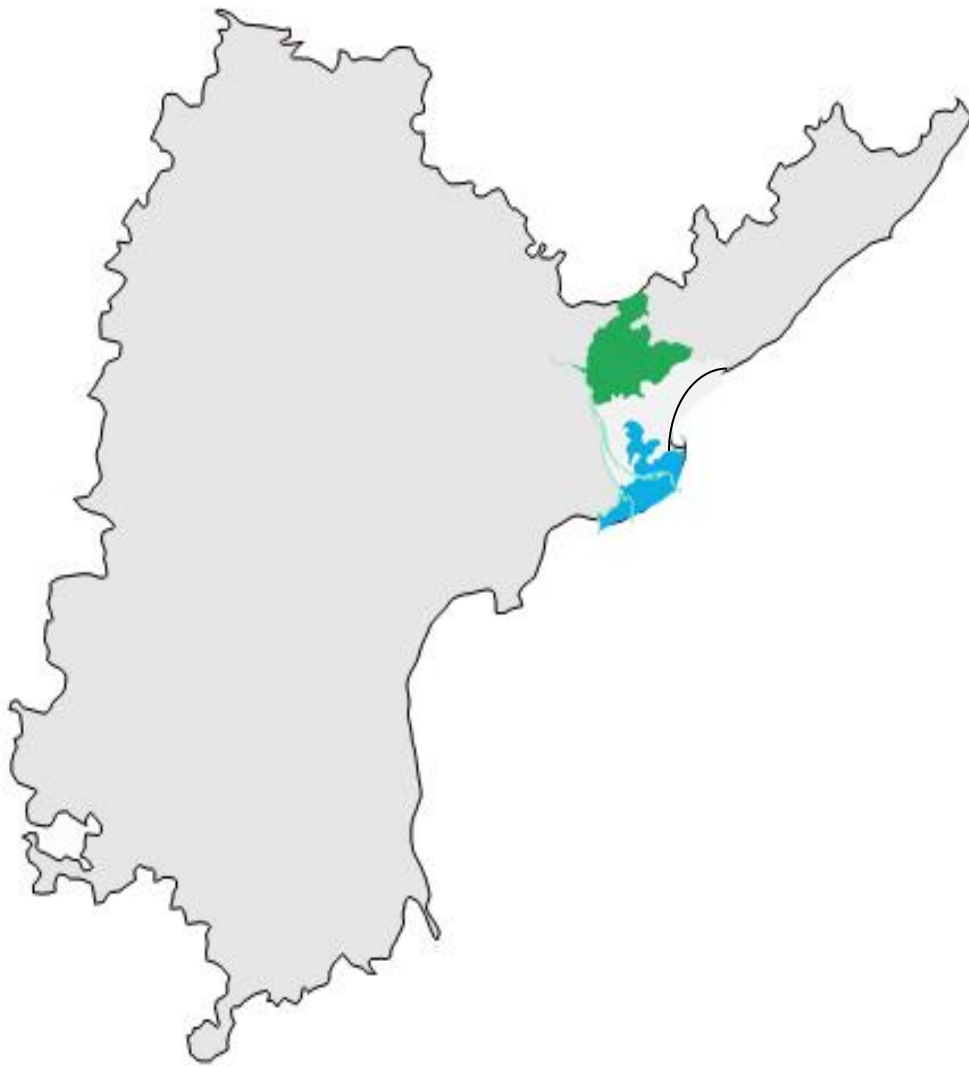
only from the British period⁶. This chapter tries to present a comprehensive analysis of the East Godavari district primarily from mid 18th century till the present. In the process of doing that, it explores the historical contours that existed during the British period, relations between the British state and the local people, nexus between caste and land and related matters. As a whole, it traces 'inter and intra caste dynamics' in East Godavari for about two centuries.

One can see Godavari delta as a place of paradoxes, and contradictions. Despite having the natural advantages in terms of transport facilities, sea and river, for centuries, its structural and systematic growth took place only during the British period. The trade and commerce was at its peak even before the British obtained control over this delta (Subrahmanyam S 1990: 85-86), but historians have a broad consensus that the trade and commerce during the British period effectively encouraged cultivation for its own purposes (Rao G N 1988). There were several port cities such as *Korangi*⁷, *Bendamurlanka*, *Tallarevu*, but the Company and the Crown either neglected or disbanded old ports and constructed new ones, such as Kakinada. Historians bring another dimension about the old ports, saying that these ports might have become inundated over a period of time. Hence, it is hard to attribute to the British the development or the underdevelopment of the Godavari delta. But the present historical narrative (the present study) will allow us to see the impact and significance of the colonisation process from the point-of-view of the contemporary period.

⁶Despite the French, Dutch and Portuguese presence in these areas for quite some time, there are several constraints in obtaining the information. Secondly it is also the problem with the language barrier. However there are attempts by the economic historians such as Sanjay Subrahmanyam (1986; 1988; 1990), Prasanna Parthasarathi, etc, to unravel the criticalities during the period.

⁷Sadhu Subramanya Sharma wrote a novel based on *Korangi* with a title '*Bancola*' means lighthouse in Telugu.

Map 4.1: East Godavari District in Andhra Pradesh



This chapter is concerned broadly with the following periods- Pre-British, British period and that of Post-independence. A brief sketch is outlined below indicating how the peasant castes got constituted in different regions differently. However, the effort here is not to justify one or the other version of caste history narrated locally in each region/sub-region, but to take into consideration a broader peasant caste history:

Section: 1-The Pre-British Period

For the management of the revenue administration the Company created new unit called 'The District' with the collector as its chief agent. Within the territoriality of the district, the collector either directly or indirectly controlled every department, except the Judicial. (Swarnalatha 1991:49)

Historically, East Godavari district can be traced back to Ashoka, in early 260 BC and then the *Andhras (Satavahanas)* 110-210 AD, the *Pallavas*, 200-615 AD, the *Chalukyas*, the *Cholas*, Kingdom of *Vengi Desham*, the *Kakatiyas*, and importantly the *Vijayanagara* Empire, from 14 Century to the early 16 Century. In the mean time the Muslims also have ruled this region from 1572-1687 (Richards J F 1978: 50; Farooq A Salma 2008: 82). Throughout this period, the development of the region was mostly dependent on trade and commerce. From the beginning of the 10th century the political power gradually shifted to the *Nayakas* who were deployed as army personnel for *Kakatiyas*. The gradual decline of the *Kakatiya* kingdom allowed the *Nayakas* to be free and established their own dynasties. Several of them gradually established their dynasties which were based on their caste, for instance, *Reddys*⁸, *Velamas*⁹, and *Kammas*. These *Nayaka* dynasties were extended to several centuries. This change at the political level has invariably altered the existing power centres, which were controlled by the nexus of *Brahmins* and the *Kshatriyas* (Hanumantha Rao BSL 1995). These changes at the political level had certainly initiated structural changes even at the

⁸Mallampalli Somasekhara Sharma, (1948), 2001, Reddy Rajya Charitra, Potti Sriramulu University, Hyderabad

⁹The famous Palnati Brahmanaidu comes from this region. The Bobbili Zamindari also is part of this region. But over a period of time, several of the Velamas have migrated mainly to the Telangana region, except in few pockets, such as Venkatagiri, Nellore district; Velamas presence in both Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema is insignificant. Please see on Velamas by Katten, Micheal, 1999, Making Caste In Nineteenth Century India: A History of Telling the *Bobbili Katha* & Velama Identity, South Asia, n.s. 22, No.2, Dec, pp. 1-36.

social level. This can be considered as the *first transition* at the political level in East Godavari district. This transition had its impact even during the British period also.

The Europeans changed the discourse of the region mostly at the social and economic level. The Dutch were the first among the Europeans who conducted Oriental commerce with the newly discovered route, the 'Cape of Good Hope'. In the year 1602, the Dutch East India Company came to the Northern Circars and started a factory in the year 1611 in *Machilipatnam*, then *Masulipatnam*. Portuguese were also present during the time. English East India Company started controlling the region from the year 1765. Despite coming late into the business, the French traders were still able to manage the region with a strong military power, but their power was limited to certain places and for a very brief period. It was the British who influenced the political field along with the social and economic spaces, unlike the Dutch and the French.¹⁰ Hemingway (1915), the then collector attempted to classify the British rule into three phases which is particular to this region-1785-90, 1790-1800, and 1858. If we carefully observe his classification, we find that there is a close connection to the conflicts or turmoil with the local *Zamindaries* (Hemingway F.R 1915: 35-37).

East Godavari district, which is part of the Coastal Andhra, is distinct in several ways. The Europeans, such as Portuguese, Dutch, French and British played a pivotal role in several ways, especially in terms of economy and cultural aspects. The European presence certainly gets reflected at the cultural realm in the district, in terms of language, food habits, dress and so on. It is a place where two-thirds of the entire paddy in the state of Andhra Pradesh is grown. The river Godavari which merges in the Bay of Bengal is an integral part of every individual's life. The colonial irrigation system was well designed and organised in terms of water distribution and continues to function even under the present governments. It is because of this, that the district is able to produce such a great quantity of paddy¹¹. These two entities, water and land influenced culture, politics, social sphere and the economy in the early years of the East Godavari

¹⁰From 1604 till 1816, the French controlled parts of the coastal Andhra while in Yanam they ruled till 1954. Please see, Devadanam Raju Datla, 2007, Yanam Charitra, self published.

¹¹ The district alone has produced more than 10 Lakh tonnes in the year 2009-10 against the total state production of 105.38 Lakh tonnes. Please see, Hand Book of Statistics, East Godavari District, 2010, Chief Planning Officer, Kakinada and Directorate of Rice Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India. <https://www.google.co.in/#q=rice+production+in+andhra+pradesh+2009-10>, accessed on 26-04-2014

district. These factors continued to play a crucial role even when this region was considered as part of the Madras Presidency (Washbrook D 1976).

Historians say that the formation of the East Godavari can be attributed to the Eastern *Chalukyas* who ruled this place during the early 10th century. These rulers moved their capital from the plains (West Godavari) to the more protected space in East Godavari which was naturally covered by the Eastern Ghats, Bay of Bengal, Godavari and *Tandava* Rivers (Patanjali T 2008: 2). The district was covered with thick forest and mountains; hence, it was not suitable for cultivation or even sustainable livelihood. But, there were several port cities which were well connected with the Arabs, Romans in terms of trade for several years, mostly from the *Satavahana* period. One of the social activists who was a resident of Rajahmundry says that, “the development during the British time was different in several aspects. One can say that it is the unique feature of the district, because it had rapid development compared to the other districts in the state. Within a short period there was enormous migration and urbanisation”¹². He adds that “even though there was rapid development of East Godavari during the British period, yet the development initiated by the British was neither intentional nor altruistic, but only opportunist development” (ibid). The above statement indicates that the British interests lay not in the people and their perceptions, rather their interests were only focused on certain developmental programmes, which would accrue benefits to themselves.

The presence of the Europeans: The Trading Economy from 15th to 17th century:

The political power and the control over the state gradually shifted from the *Brahmins* and *Rajus* to that of peasant castes, initially to the *Reddys* and *Velamas*. It was mainly because they had control over the land and due to external political turmoil, such as the fall of Mughal Empire and the fall of Vijayanagara Empire. The *Reddys* and the *Velamas* ruled the Godavari region from the later medieval age i.e., from 14th century onwards till the early 18th century. *Reddy Rajus* had ruled this place from the middle of the 14th century, but it was only for a very brief period. There was a serious dent to their political power after the Portuguese discovered the Cape of Good Hope in the year 1498. There were a slew of European traders who had captured the route for trade and commerce with India and other Asian countries without seeking help from the Arabs.

¹²Interview with Sashi in Rajahmundry, East Godavari District on 23-May, 2013.

Eventually they controlled the sea route and took control over the trade. While explaining about the social mobility, BSL Hanumantha Rao (1995) makes a point by saying that this transformation had serious implications on the local leadership, especially for the peasant castes and their economy. The trade between the Godavari and the European countries was very frequent.

Whenever there was a change at the political level, the economy also underwent several changes. The Coromandel Coast was famous for the transport of textiles, especially the northern part where the East Godavari lies. Primarily, cotton, textiles and indigo dominated the production during the 15-17th century. The agriculture did not evolve as an export or as a commercial crop yet. Most of the European countries except the British concentrated on the raw products of cotton and textiles for the export. They were not interested in processed items unlike the British. That phase, prior to British, belonged largely to the weaving castes who had played a significant role in the process of trading with the Europeans. Weaving as a whole was performed by several castes irrespective of their social ladder but was based on their respective occupational role in the weaving process. For instance, the *Devangas* removed the yarn from the cotton, the *Goon Chakali* did the *addakam* (printing on the cloth), *Vaddera* did the designing because they were also involved in designing the idols in the Hindu temples; another caste, *Budigas* did the colouring through vegetable dyes, the *Gollas* supplied the vegetable oil, the *Maddi* caste which is sub-caste to the *Besta* caste dye the cotton with the bark of the *maddi* tree (*Morinda citrifolia*) and finally the *Padmasalis* give the final processes in making the cloth (Thurston E 1909).

The 'integrative village economy' played a crucial role in the above process. The discursive economy operated through the nexus between caste and occupation, but there were many constraints. For instance, as part of economic diversification, several castes had very little choice but to be together for their occupational purposes. While in the economic domain there appeared to be co-operation between these castes, relations of dominance and discrimination were not uncommon in the social domain. Secondly, though weaving as a profession was overwhelming, one can imagine that the weavers were not economically secure. For instance, several of the historians, for instance, Sadu Subramanaym concur that prior to the arrival of the British in the district the weavers

were relatively independent in terms of money as well as their work (Sharma S S undated)¹³.

The economic relationship between religious groups particularly Muslims and Hindus was visible within the weaving profession¹⁴. For instance, most of the weavers used to take loans from the Muslim families for two reasons, one: Quran does not allow them to take interest, and secondly the Muslims had wider connections with the Arab world especially during 16th, 17th centuries and part of 18th century. These wider connections have helped the weavers to expand their business opportunities (Aloysius 1997).

Though the presence of artisan castes is visible in the trading domain, politically their presence is insignificant. It was the *Reddys* who were still strong primarily because of their control over the political space, due to the legacy of *Prolaya Vemareddy* in the year 1323. Along with *Reddys*, even the *Velamas* were present. All these local dynasties (*Reddys*, *Rajus* and *Velamas*) either were under the control of the Mughals, the Kakatiya rulers or in later period, the Vijayanagara Empire (Hanumantha Rao BSL 1989). Eventually the above empires had collapsed and the local leaders or the military heads had declared their independence (Sastri N 1995). There were several horizontal conflicts within these groups (*Reddy*, *Velama* and *Kamma*) mainly in terms of controlling the land.

According to the Hindu Varna system, all the above castes are called *sat-shudras*, yet all the above castes gradually closed their cultural ties with the other *shudras* and among themselves. It is likely that during this period, the idea of *jati* has emerged and all these local kings fought with each other to sustain their *jati* power against other *jatis*. This '*jati* centric politics' continued and in-fact made a steady rise during the British

¹³ Sadhu Subramanyam Sharma based on Kakinada, East Godavari District wrote a novel titled *Korangi*, undated, self-published, Kakinada.

¹⁴ Except few families, the majority of the Muslims were into negligible occupations, such as tanning, etc, and also they were involved in the newly arrived jobs brought during the colonial period. As Mahakavi Ibrahim says that 'there are many villages where there won't be a single Muslim family'. This also can be understood in another direction that the Muslim population in India, in general specifically to East Godavari district is that they are largely concentrated in the towns, both the Muslims who have come from outside and the Muslims who were converted during the Muslim period in India. In East Godavari, Muslims presence can be seen primarily in Kakinada, Rajahmundry, Amalapuram and also in Nagaram. Most of them are shia Muslims. Pre-dominantly, the elite sections are educated and are into the government and private jobs, whereas the middle classes are into the port business, though the recent one, but are playing a key role communicating between the Arabs and the local traders and the lower sections are mostly into the small scale self-employed businesses, such as, skin tanning, cart-pullars, tailors, bed-sheet business. Interview with Ibrahim in Kakinada, East Godavari on 19-05-2013.

period. It is in this context that David Ludden's remarks are significant: "Vertical conflicts in the social relations of inequality and hierarchy generated patterns of social subordination. Horizontal conflicts among social groups created schisms, partitions, fragmentations and segregations among groups" (Ludden D 1996: 109). During the later stage, the British, encouraged and promoted both through humane interventions and through infrastructural development, but one observation that needs to be emphasized is that these initiatives from the British had 'un-intended consequences' such as the development of infrastructure in Coastal Andhra. The British tactfully used these horizontal and vertical cleavages later.

The '*first transition*', which occurred prior to the arrival of the Europeans, continued even during the European period. The East India companies, which belonged to several European nations, did not directly intervene into the affairs of the local kingdoms. Even the local kingdoms did not get involved in their trade seriously. These local kingdoms were busy in fighting with other kingdoms and defending theirs. However, during the middle of the 18th century, the Europeans started interfering in the political and family affairs of the kingdoms. Therefore, Godavari delta had a very rich history in which trade played a significant role in altering the social relations and promoting certain interest groups. Especially the *Komatīs*, a mercantile caste consolidated quite significantly during this period (Washbrook D 1975: 152-158).

Due to the proximity with the political power, the *Reddys* especially in East Godavari district, either owned or controlled large tracts of land in the district, whereas the weaving castes, which included the artisan castes, became dependent on trade and commerce. The trading caste in Andhra Pradesh, the *Komatīs*, in the district established and consolidated their business networks during the British rule. Then, it was only during late 19th century, especially through the 'revolution in communication' provided both the means and the reasons for the *Komati* caste re-integration (ibid: 153). This re-integration, of course, was both in terms of sustaining the economic interests as well as the strengthening the ritual and status affairs. Families like *Pyda* from Kakinada, or *Nalam* family from Rajahmundry, have dominated trade for a very long period. In-fact, *Nalam* family "had major banking interests as far north as Ganjam and south as Madras city (ibid: 157). Predominantly, *Komatīs* are traders and moneylenders by occupation and they used kinship and local caste institutions to organise their business. Their

expansion took place only second decade of nineteenth century, unlike their counterparts in the Madras Presidency, for instance, the *chettians*, or *marwaris*.

So far, in the above section, we have attempted to present the political and economic dynamics or the pre-determining norms that preceded British colonial rule in relation to Coastal Andhra and specifically East Godavari. We also have presented how, there was a shift at the political level because of the shift of power at the social level. The nexus of the Brahmins and the *Rajus* was replaced by the rise of peasant caste domination, both at the social and political level with firm economic support in the later period, i.e. during colonial period.

The next section traces the role of the British, their presence in the East Godavari especially in terms of economy, polity and critically presents how the peasant castes consolidated their political and social power with the policies implemented by the British in the due course. While tracing the presence of British empire, this section classifies the role of British into five sub-sections: the East India Company, transfer of power from the Company to the Crown, the role of the Permanent Settlement Act, the impact of Anicuts and finally a section that traces the global changes and its influences on the region: consequences of the Great Depression, World I and II.

Section: 2-The British and its Agrarian Economy

The British had control over the region roughly for about 200 years. Six major landmarks have been identified during this period to analyse the consolidation of different castes.

East India Company (1757-1857)

To begin with the East India Company, the hundred years of the Company's rule can be divided into two phases- the first (1757-1800) and the second one from 1800-1850's, primarily to emphasize the policy interventions and the infrastructural development initiated by the Company in Coastal Andhra.

The gradual decline of the Mughal Empire during the mid 18th century provided space for several local dynasties to declare independence, this in-turn allowed the formation of multiple power centres in India (Rao Kameshaswar 2008: 94). Taking this decline as

an advantage, the British East India Company, intervened in local political affairs and attempted to control them. The British intervention was mainly to extract natural resources and to continue to export them with no cost involved to their own country. The British intention was not to administer the country; rather it was only to extract the surplus, however they later realised the importance of political power to control the resources. Prior to the British presence in the region, there were already well-established Zamindari families¹⁵ who had control over the land as well as private armies. These Zamindars were either the residue of Vijayanagara Empire or the *Reddyrajyam* kingdom. In-fact some Zamindars had started claiming that their Zamindari system was centuries old. This was one among several reasons for the British not to intervene in any of the administrative or revenue issues for a very long period.

Even though, the Company had controlled for about 100 years, the company did not substantially alter the existing social structure of the Indian society (see for instance Washbrook 2003)¹⁶. In order to communicate with the local people, administer, or to learn the local languages, cultures, and know the local dynamics, the British had heavily relied on the local elite such as the Brahmins in Coastal Andhra. In Coastal Andhra, *Brahmins* were divided into two sub-castes: *Vaidikis* and the *Niyogis*. The former traditionally engaged with teaching the Vedas, performing and superintending sacrifice, and preserving the moral principles of the people and the latter- *Niyogis*, traditionally used to advise the Hindu kings in matters of justice and administration (Irschick F E 1969: 13).

A pattern of mutual alliance had existed between the British and the *Niyogi Brahmins*, primarily because of monopoly of traditional learning as well as the English education. These *Niyogis* also acted as *dubashees*/intrepretators to the colonial rulers. Among

¹⁵Due to the reforms at the revenue level, the Zamindari system (*sashwata sistu vidanam*) was introduced by the British in 1802 in the Northern Circars in which East Godavari district is also part of it. The primary intention behind introducing these reforms both at the administrative and revenue levels was primarily to collect the taxes more efficiently. In East Godavari district, the British has recognized 16 Zamindaris during that period, interestingly among those 15 none of them were Kapus. Please see, Satyanarayana, Adapa, 2008, *Zamindarilu-Zamindarulu*, in Chiranjeevini Kumari, ed, East Godavari: History-Culture, Kakinada, Sudershan Rao, Y, 1991, Andhra Between the Empires, Sulekha Publishers, Hanamkonda and Dhonappa, Tumati, 1986, Andhra Samstanalu-Sahitya poshana (Andhra's Estates and their contribution to the field of literature), Hyderabad.

¹⁶ Washbrook traced multiple approaches while tracing the presence of British in the South India. Please see, Washbrook David (2004).

them, importantly, *Enugula Veeraswamayya*, *Vennelucunty Soobrow* (subbarao), and *Kavali Brothers* (Rao D 2003: 5; Mantena S R 2012: 87-90). Much debate has taken place in critically examined this alliance and the factors that led to the nexus between them. Though the Company started ruling different parts of India from 1757 itself, it was only in 1765 that they acquired political control over the Godavari delta region, and from then onwards the British intervened in the administrative affairs of the region. The British had initiated this process through the tax system: lease or tenancy (Dhonappa Tumati 1986). The Northern Circars¹⁷ were the main source for the commercial activities since 1611, the year in which the British acquired permissions for trade.

Gradually from 1757 onwards, the company's priorities in terms of trade and commerce were significantly altered due to several reasons¹⁸. First, it was the Industrial Revolution, which had begun since the 1760's in Europe, especially in England. Second, instead of using or buying Indian cloth, the local population started buying cheap European cloth¹⁹. Third, as Swarnalatha (1991:20) says, "by 1829-30 the Company had decided to close its factories and quite soon thereafter, British manufactured textiles began to flood the Indian Market"; fourth, after acquiring control over the lands, the Company in-turn developed them and started accumulating the surplus from the lands. Finally, the source of economic and political power shifted from commerce to that of land (Stoddart B 2011: 2).

Permanent Settlement Act-1802

The second phase of the Company's rule begins from 1800 and continued until the *Sepoy mutiny* took place in 1857. Despite controlling the district or the region roughly for fifty years, the Company never altered the existing revenue systems in the district. It was only around 1800, they initiated certain administrative, social and economic changes, which influenced the political discourse of the region (Walter N 1969; Dirks N 1986). Among them, the crucial one was the 'Permanent Settlement Act' introduced

¹⁷ India's coast is divided into two: Eastern Coastal Plain and Western Coastal Plain. Eastern Coastal Plain is divided into two: Northern Circars and Coromandal (Southern Circars). Northern Circars begins from the northern part of Krishna River to till Orissa.

¹⁸ Swarnalatha, Digavalli Siva Rao, Sadhu Subramanyam Sharma, Malsani (2008), etc also have indicated this point.

¹⁹ Presuming Gandhi's non-cooperative programmes such as *Swadeshi* and *Khadi* (Cotton) movement might have its origins here during this period.

in the year 1802. This period can also be marked as the ‘pre-anicut period’. In their fifty years of the Company’s rule (1800-50), several local industries and artisan occupations were neglected, there was consistent increase in the fragmentation of human labour and a general sense of anarchy prevailed. The British initiated administrative changes albeit with a narrow outlook and focused only on certain areas which benefit them. The result was the decline of artisan professions and a drastic fall in the export, trade and commerce. This was also a period where the local economy was in flux because as it was going through autonomous changes due to its incorporation into the world economic system (Swarnalatha 1991: 16).

The social conditions of that period had their impact on the economic and political conditions of the district. The gradual decline of the weaving occupation had impacted several of the ‘artisan castes’ both in terms of livelihood and at the social level. The shift of focus from trade to agriculture occurred during this period. The rise of peasant castes under the tenancy tenure of *Brahmins* started promoting the agrarian economy rather than trade under the guidance of state support, or it can also be understood that the British state actually prioritized the agrarian economy. For instance, families like *Pyda*, a *Komati*²⁰ from Kakinada had moved to agriculture from trade during this period. There were several families like *Pyda*’s who have given up their traditional occupations and moved to new occupations, mainly agriculture. These occupational changes were neither voluntary nor enforced but by ‘persuasion’, to use Gramsci’s phrase, of the British state. There was much state support given to agriculture and most of the non-agricultural occupational castes were under immense pressure to pursue agriculture as an occupation, due to the priority it had gained. Such pressure may have also led other ‘non-agricultural castes’ such as *Padmasalis* and *Settibalijas* (toddy tappers) to enter into agriculture. Despite the difficult situation, few families were successful in continuing their traditional occupation. As stated it earlier that this gradual shift of occupation from weaving to the land and land-related economy had serious implications on the trading communities and their dependent castes. Largely, this can be called as the *second transition* period of the district.

²⁰ Pydas are Komati’s and also Zamindari family hailed from Kakinada played a prominent role during the colonial period and their presence is visible even in the contemporary period.

Shift of power: from the East India Company to the Crown:

There was a shift of power from the Company to Crown in 1857 mainly due to the Indian *Sepoy mutiny*. However, the Crown continued several of the programmes initiated by the Company. The shift from a weaving economy to an agrarian economy was a meticulously articulated and executed by both the British (Company and the Crown). The external factors such as the industrial revolution, protest against Indian cloth in European market and internal factors such as control over large tracts of land by the British led to rigorous promotion of agriculture. As a consequence, the social and economic conditions drastically changed. With no proper communication, and the recurrence of droughts and famines the economic conditions of the district had been severely disturbed (Rao D 2003: 13). The economy pertaining to the artisan castes gradually deteriorated, thus forcing the affected people to move to newer jobs, mostly sanitation or health-related jobs and in some cases, anicut work. Though the district was under the control of the British from 1765, officially the name of the district was changed only in the year 1859. The British control over the district was absolute and at this stage, boundaries were re-organised, the name of the district changed primarily to consolidate and strengthen the tax collection.

The impact of Anicut: during 1850's

The economic and social conditions of Godavari district changed only after constructing the anicut or barrage across the river Godavari in 1852. The dam was constructed due to the foresight of the famous British engineer Arthur Cotton who still remains a revered figure in this region in particular, and in all entire Andhra Pradesh in general (Damodaran H 2008: 92-95). Sriranjini Subbarao (1989), says that the Godavari River, though, watered the Godavari region, largely, remained un-irrigated. According to the figures given by Cotton, that, out of 13 lakh acres of land available, irrigational facilities were available only for one lakh acres. The Godavari district's irrigation area was less than the district average in the Madras Presidency (Subbarao S 1989: 4). Apart from the non-irrigated conditions, the area was subject to frequent floods, tidal waves and alternatively, droughts. There was a flood in 1831, a hurricane in 1832, a tragic drought just after a short break of few years from 1836 to 1838, and in the year 1839 there was the historic tidal wave and typhoon at Kakinada (ibid: 4). Swarnalatha points out,

the climatic upheavals and the disequilibrium caused by the seasonal fluctuations resulted in the decline not only in the agrarian economy but it also affected the socio-demography of the region, for instance, density of population reduced from seven to five lakh population between 1821-1840. Between 1750 and 1850, famines visited the region so frequently that the famines became incorporated into the economy of the region, where the suffering was pervasive among all the groups (1991: 42).

To avoid this tragedy of social distress, Sir Arthur Cotton, who was in-charge of irrigation works on tanks and canals in Madras Presidency, prepared and submitted a report in the year 1848 on Godavari and it was approved and completed by 1852. Cotton said,

...the unfailing river, an immense expanse of the richest soil, a safe and accessible port, a complete internal water communication with teak forest, and abundance of labour at only three-half pence a day, form such a combination of advantages as, I suppose, cannot be found in the world, and certainly not under such a Government as ours (cited in Hope 1964:88)

Due to these interventions, almost fifteen lakh acres of land (11/2million) had come under cultivation. Sir Arthur Cotton estimated that the irrigation works in the Godavari would increase the agricultural production yield to an output of Rs. 1, 24, 000, 00, and revenue of Rs. 24 lakh per year on government land. The project was finished within the estimated 24 lakh rupees. A few decades after the construction of the barrage, the total irrigated area increased from 1 lakh acres to nearly 4.5 lakh acres. Further, the revenue of the Godavari District leaped from its original place 13th to Second place among the 22 districts of the Madras Presidency (Subbarao S 1989: 4).

The canal irrigation and the anicut have substantially changed the face of the agrarian sector, vis-a-vis the district. First, at the level of economy, there was a drastic leap in the district economy because of agriculture, second, agriculture got commercialised and third, expansion of the market took place due to transport facilities (Rao GN 1988: 25). Agriculture was not a commercial crop earlier; it was only a subsistence activity, but due to drastic increase in the output or surplus generated, the economy became diversified, especially the agrarian economy²¹. Along with the roads, a railway line was

²¹ Upadhyaya, Carol, 1988, The Farmer-Capitalists of Coastal Andhra, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.23, No.27, July, 2, pp.1376-1382. Even at the global level, there was a transition taking place towards the industrial-capitalist expansion from that off military. Some of the countries were completely industrialized and some of them were balancing between the agriculture and the industry. Secondly, even agriculture also got commercialized during this period. Please see, especially Hall A John and Schroeder

also laid in the year 1890 in coastal Andhra. (Rao GN 1977). Hence, a space for the local peasants to sell their surplus products in nearby towns was created. One can also see the rise of *mofussil*²² towns during this period. The trend of ‘town culture’ also began during this period.

The origin of the wider current disparities between the rural and urban can be traced to the British period. All the above initiatives certainly changed the face of Coastal Andhra substantially in several spheres. Especially at the social level, this resulted in the consolidation and significance of peasant castes in the Madras Presidency including Coastal Andhra. *Kapus* and *Rajus* emerged as strong players in the Godavari delta, *Kammas* in the Krishna delta and land owning castes like *Vellalas*, *Nadars*, and *Chettiars* in the Cauvery delta region such as Tanjavore, Coimbatore, primarily due to the interventions of British. These castes further consolidated themselves not only with the agricultural policies of the British but also agrarian economy²³. It was during this period, the land and caste nexus acquired significant amount of attention, which, in the due course became an impetus for articulating the social power²⁴. Thus, the landowning caste of the *Kapus* in Godavari delta became prominent by replacing earlier dominant castes such as *Brahmin* and *Reddys* in the district. This *third transition* witnessed the ‘circulation of power’ at the social level, which subsequently reflected at the political level as well. The caste census that British administered in the Madras Presidency in the late 19th century further contributed towards the identity formation and consolidation in due course of time (Dirks N 2002; Samarendra 2011).

Srinivasa Iyengar (1893) presented post-anicut consequences in a meticulous manner with statistical data, especially the rise of middle classes due to the construction of anicut. These middle classes acquired modern jobs such as lawyers, administrative officers and revenue officers. Although he seemed to be presenting a rosy picture, it

Ralph, 2005, ed, An Anatomy of Power, The Social Theory of Michael Mann, Cambridge University Press, London.

²² ‘The provinces’, - the country stations and districts, as contra-distinguished from ‘the Presidency’; or, relatively, the rural localities of a district as contra-distinguished from the *sudder* or chief station, which is the residence of the district authorities. Please see, Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo-Indian Words and Phrases, edited by Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell, first published 1886; new edition 1985, p.570.

²³ The difference between Agriculture and Agrarian is, agriculture is specifically related to farming whereas the term agrarian encompasses the agriculture and its related sources.

²⁴ For the discussion on land and caste nexus, please see Dharma Kumar (1968), Gail Omvedt (1982) and C V Subbarao (1982), whereas on the land and water, please see, Stoddart Brian (2011).

could be seen as a painstaking attempt in understanding the rise of the middle classes (Iyengar S 1893: 132-33). David Washbrook (1973) also recorded the consequences of post-Anicut period stating that the Indian educated classes joined the British in the highest offices of the state, the government greatly increased its activity through legislation and through the trebling of taxation, elective institutions and legislatures steadily replaced the discretionary rule of bureaucrats, a nationalist movement of great size and force appeared, the means of communication-through road, rail and press-improved beyond recognition to bring together for the first time the diverse people of India. Most of these external factors contributed to the reorganisation of caste relations into different sectors, which resulted in staking the claim for political power at the district level. East Godavari like other delta regions in Madras Presidency witnessed and absorbed most of the above changes.

The Great Depression and its aftermath (1920-1940s)

During the early 20th century, there were many changes, which influenced the social relations in Andhra and elsewhere in India. In Godavari region, one could analyze the consequences of the construction of the anicut in terms of the accumulation of the agrarian surplus, which influenced social reforms as well as the development of English education in the district. (Rao GN 1988; Balagopal 1988, 1989; Upadhya C 1989; Ramakrishna V 1993; Mangamma 1973). This led to the peasant castes to participate actively in politics, created a space for cultural renaissance, as well as enhanced the socio-economic conditions. Apart from administrative reforms, the system of two crops a year was introduced in the district during this period. Even though the canal irrigation method came into practice in the 1860's, it was only after the 1920's that the second crop, i.e. the *rabi* was introduced in the region.

The crisis at the global level, such as the world wars I and II (1914-1918 and 1939-1945) and the great depression, had significant influences on Coastal Andhra, especially the Godavari region. During the Great Depression, in the post World War I period, the British levied heavy taxes on agriculture which had a great impact on the economy of the region. These factors certainly influenced the economic direction of Coastal Andhra in two ways: one, India became a part of the supply chain in the British economy and it was the Krishna and the Godavari deltas which contributed immensely in exporting rice. Two, the peasant castes in the two delta regions played a prominent

role in the district's economy both in terms of becoming moneylenders, and diversifying their economic activities. This allowed the castes, such as the *Kammas* from the Krishna delta to strengthen their economic position in a concrete manner by migrating to other regions such as Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu, Rayagada in Orissa. However, the *Kapus* in the Godavari delta also attempted to strengthen their economic position but by remaining within the Godavari delta region and utilising the available economic avenues. It was during this period that the farmers in the Godavari delta started cultivating the second crop (*rabi*) in a year. Although the anicut was constructed during the mid 19th century, it was only after the formation of East Godavari district, i.e.1925 that the agrarian castes in the district started cultivating the second crop (Malsani Srinivasa Rao²⁵, Prabhu Addepalli). The development of Kakinada port itself provided many economic avenues for *Kapus* to remain within the Godavari delta region.

Going by this premise, one could interpret the rise of the peasant castes and their competition with the already established castes, such as *Brahmins* at the political level. Therefore it is not the social reform process but the economic factors particularly - the accumulation of wealth in a region - that played prominent role in determining the socio-political relations at the district level. This resulted in expansion, primarily at the level of agro-based small scale industries; however, this investment was not uniform across the peasant castes in East Godavari. Initially the *Reddys* from places like *Anaparti*, *Ravula Palem*, invested in rice mills, go-downs. The *Kammas* are dominant in the places like *Mandapeta*, *Kapileswarapuram* and nearby places of Rajahmundry invested in rice mills and in paddy related businesses such as go-downs, pesticide shops, and small and medium retail rice shops in the towns²⁶. Whereas the *Kapus* primarily moved in two directions, one, the Upland²⁷ *Kapus* started accumulating land²⁸ through different sources, such as the surplus from the agricultural crop or from money lending business²⁹. It is a fact that the *Kapus* controlled the endowment land and the

²⁵ Malsani Srinivasa rao, from Kakinada, East Godavari District interviewed on 15-05-2013

²⁶ Kammas in Andhra Pradesh use Chowdari as suffixed title along with the Naidu. The term Chowdari is also prevalent in the Northern parts of India, but the Kammas have no connection whatsoever with them. In North India, it is a title for people who collect a particular tax called 'chout'.

²⁷ East Godavari is classified administratively into three-Upland, Delta and Agency. The third section of this chapter has dealt in a detailed manner.

²⁸ As I have already said in the beginning, the places like Rajahmundry, Kakinada, etc comes under the (metta) Upland sub-region of the district.

²⁹ The relationship between the Money-Land is explicable in the Kapus-Land nexus in the district.

government lands (village commons) because of their access to the British rulers in the region. Therefore, one could see horizontal growth for the *Kapus* implying the growth-taking place within the Godavari delta.

Comparatively speaking, the *Kapus* from *Konaseema* had a different approach altogether in the process of accumulating wealth. They have imitated and not competed with the *Rajus*, the upwardly mobile social group in the Godavari delta, especially the West Godavari district. The *Kapus* diversified and expanded their economic activities on par with the *Rajus*. Unlike the *Rajus*, the *Kapus* never moved out from the district or out of their economic mobility options within the district, whereas the *Rajus* invested in large-scale industries, both agro based and non-agricultural. *Rajus* moved to either Vishakhapatnam, a port town in north coastal Andhra or Orissa, a neighbouring state to invest mostly in agro-based industries like sugar factories, or large-scale agriculture that included commercial crops like sugarcane farming³⁰.

The changes at the economic level certainly influenced the political sphere. Many of the peasant castes were actively involved in both the Congress and the Justice party politics³¹. The formation of the Justice Party served as a counterforce that contested the Brahmanical supremacy and hence it constituted non-Brahmin castes, mostly dominated by the peasant castes. Politics as a vocation and pursuit of social reform agenda was possible only for those caste groups who had leisure because of the economic surplus they were able to generate from agriculture. Several of them were, if not part of the parties, active independently in the national movement. As indicated by several scholars (Washbrook D 1976; Stoddart B 2010), the rise of vibrant provincial politics can be seen during this period. This is the same period in which, the Gandhi era began in national politics and it (national politics) gradually shifted from militant to non-violent form. In the then Madras Presidency there were several contradictions between Gandhi and some of the nationalist leaders of the Independence movement. Several of the peasant castes were active in the national movement but were against Gandhi. Some of them were inspired by Gandhi but disliked the Congress party (Murali

³⁰ It can be called as the 'joint farming'; two or three individuals together cultivate large tracts of land. They prefer mostly the commercial crops, such as the sugar cane, in those days; even now this method is persisting; now the crops are like Banana, etc.

³¹ For instance, K V Reddi Naidu,

A 1988). These contradictions had a significant influence on the social structure of Coastal Andhra during that time.

Section: 3-Post-Colonial Interventions

The third section of the chapter, analyses the changes that occurred after Independence. Chronologically speaking the events occurred after Independence, but many of the policies, perspectives were a continuation from the pre-colonial and colonial periods.

In the post-Independence period, significant economic and political changes occurred in Coastal Andhra as they did across the country. The transfer of power from the British to the local caste elites, who were also land owners, determined the political affairs of the entire state. In Coastal Andhra, with the *Zaminadari* abolition, many of the peasant castes, especially the *Kammas* and *Rajus* from the Godavari and Krishna Deltas strengthened their influence over the political sphere. Similarly, the *Kapus* in Godavari delta gained ascendancy in the political sphere because they were tenants under the *Zamindari* lands, most of the big *Zamindars* were from the *Kammas*, *Velamas* and *Raju* castes, (see table 4.1).

Table 4.1: List of Zamindars in East Godavari*

SNo	Zamindars	Caste
1	Peddapuram	Raju
2	Pitapuram	Velama
3	Polavaram	Raju
4	Ramachandrapuram	Raju
5	Vegayammamet	Vaishya
6	Valampalem	Marati Brahmin
7	Venkatayapalem	Muslim
8	Vellanki	Muslim
9	Telakkalra	Raju
10	Panagipalli	Komati
11	Undeswarapuram	Komati
12	Mukkamala	Brahmin
13	Vilasa	Marati Brahmin
14	Bantumilli	Brahmin
15	Jalamudi	Marati Brahmin
16	Kirlampudi	Raju

*Adapa Satyanarayana, 2008

When the *Zamindari* system was abolished, it was the *Kapus* who started owning the land, though in a small proportion. Unlike the *Kammas* or the *Rajus*, *Kapus* couldn't diversify their economy. The upper classes within the *Kapus* were reluctant to migrate to other places as there were adequate economic opportunities in the Godavari delta, of course, the SRMT (Sri Ramdas Motor Transport) which was started during early 40's by both *Kamma* and *Kapu* caste families was one exception. Both the shareholders from *Kamma* and *Kapus* castes hailed from agricultural families and invested their surplus in the joint venture. In fact, it is the first transport company to acquire dealership rights from the TATA's³². After a couple of years, the *Kapu* caste shareholder sold his share and went back to agriculture. One well-informed respondent, who is also a teacher from Kakinada, supplied a reason for this, "because *Kapus* lacked the courage to invest in large scale businesses and that too outside of their villages". He further adds, "historically *Kapus* were not into risk taking professions" (Prabhu A 2013). Even if they migrated it was due to livelihood options but not for any business purpose. For instance, large-scale of migration by the *Kapu* labouring classes either who migrated to Vijayawada or to Vishakhapatnam, city and they were mostly confined to working as daily wage labourers. This first phase of migration by lower class *Kapus* was limited to daily wage work, whereas the second phase of migration during the 60's, one could see, was for new businesses, and this is covered in the next section in more detail.

It is interesting to note some of the economic shifts that occurred in Coastal Andhra during the pre and post-Independence period. During the early 20th century, the agrarian economy was replaced by the trading economy in the coastal Andhra region, which resulted in the destruction of artisan castes and their occupations. As these castes are both non-agricultural and non-political³³ they were marginal in every sense in the colonial economy. A very small section from these castes was able to enter into the agriculture sector. Most of the artisan castes had lost their occupations and livelihood due to the policies of the British. First, it was because of the British concentration on agriculture; second, the British policies were undermining the local artisan castes and

³² The Kakinada based SRMT was started in 1944 and in 1953 it has ventured into manufacturing of motor spare parts, within two years of time, it has acquired the dealership for TATA commercial vehicles in this region, which comprises of East Godavari, Vishakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, and Srikakulam (Damodaran H 2008: 102).

³³ Artisan castes were insignificant in the political power structure during British period.

their occupations which were largely dependent on natural resources such as the forests. Majority of these castes had no option but to get involved in the British created jobs, as workers in health and sanitary sectors. Along with these artisan castes (who are also OBCs at present), the tribals also got victimised by the British policies. It was not only at the regional level, in Godavari delta or in the Madras presidency, but across the country these policies had their adverse effects on non-agricultural communities especially the tribals. As a case in point, David Hardiman (1987) details the prevailing conditions in the Bastar forest region and the communities affected, during the British time³⁴. In response these affected communities including the artisan castes protested against the British and its policies which continued into the post-Independence period. The rise of consciousness and the consolidation process among these non-agricultural castes can be located during this period. Castes such as *Agni Kula Kshatriyas*, *Golla*, and *Settibalija* of Coastal Andhra confronted the Colonial regime for different reasons. For instance, the *Settibalijas* protested against the ban on toddy in the Godavari delta, but they could not sustain it long enough to achieve their demands (Matchett 1989: 161-163).

The Contemporary Social History of East Godavari

An account of socio-spatial development along with the agricultural and industrial development of the East Godavari is presented here. East Godavari is divided into three regions geographically- Upland, Delta and Agency- they are distinct from each other in several aspects. The Upland (*metta*) region divided into sub-plan and non-sub-plan area. Delta region is further sub-divided into two - central delta and eastern delta (*konaseema*), (See Map 4.2). There are five revenue divisions and 60 revenue mandals in the district and 1012 Gram Panchayats³⁵. The revenue divisions are *Kakinada*, *Rajahmundry*, *Peddapuram*, *Amalapuram* and the *Rampachodavaram*, respectively. According to the 2011 census, the population of the district is approximately 5 Lakh. The table below provides an overview of the population of East Godavari district from 1821 to 2011.

³⁴ Hardiman David, 1987, *The coming of the Devi: adivasi assertion in western India*, Oxford University Press,

³⁵ Official website of East Godavari district. Government of Andhra Pradesh. <http://eastgodavari.nic.in/>, accessed on 13-09-2012

Table 4.2: Variation of Population of East Godavari: 1821-2011

S No	Year	Pop (persons)	Diff in Pop	Percentage
1	1821-22	7,38,308		
2	1830-31	6,95,016	-43,292	-6.23
3	1840-41	5,33,836	-1,61, 180	-30.2
4	1851-52	10,12,036	4,78,200	47.25
5	1861-62	13,66,831	3,54,795	26
6	1871	15,92,939	2,26,108	14.2
7	1881	17,80,613	1,87,674	10.53
8	1891	19,51,645	1,71,032	8.76
9	1901	1339029	-6,12,616	-45.75
10	1911	1511222	1,72,193	11.39
11	1921	1536868	25,646	1.66
12	1931	1756477	2,19,609	12.50
13	1941	1976743	2,20,266	11.14
14	1951	2301822	3,25,079	14.12
15	1961	2608375	3,06,553	11.75
16	1971	3087262	4,78,887	15.51
17	1981	3701040	6,13,778	16.58
18	1991	4541222	8,40,182	18.50
19	2001	4901420	3,60,198	7.34
20	2011	5151549	2,50,129	4.85

*Director of Census Operations, Hyderabad.

The above table indicates the rise of population especially after the construction of anicuts on the river Godavari after the 1850's. This migration was largely from the north coastal Andhra, i.e., Vizianagaram, Vishakapatnam and Srikakulam and some of the major 'pull factors' included construction work for the anicut, agriculture related work as well as petty trade. From then on, the consistent increase in the population was a regular feature of the district. In-migration occurred in three phases- post anicut, (1850's), second crop regime (1920's) and thirdly green revolution (mid-1960s-70's). There was also steady 'out migration' mainly for the business purposes in order to invest the surplus generated from agriculture in East Godavari district. Most of the migrants who invested capital outside the region belonged to *Rajus*, *Kamma* castes and a small proportion of *Kapus*. The patterns of East Godavari migration, both 'in' and 'out' migration can be explained by examining migration data in the neighbouring urban centres, Vijayawada and Visakhapatnam; however, this is beyond the scope of the present study.

Although one could infer certain trends from the general growth of population in the district, caste-wise distribution of population is not available as there is no caste census in India except for the 1931 census. An attempt is made to collate the caste-wise population in the East Godavari district based on different estimates

Table 4.3: East Godavari Caste wise population³⁶

S No	Caste	Estd. Pop (%)
1	<i>Brahmins</i>	3
2	<i>Komatis</i>	3
3	<i>Rajus</i>	2
4	<i>Kapus</i>	19
5	<i>Kammas</i>	4
6	<i>Reddys</i>	2
7	<i>Settibalijas</i>	12
8	<i>Besta</i> (Fishermen)	5
9	<i>Golla</i> (Yadava)	5
10	<i>Netagallu</i> (weavers)	5
11	<i>Rajaka</i> (Washermen)	4
12	<i>Nayee Brahmin</i>	3
13	<i>Kamsali</i> (Ironsmith)	3
14	SC's	18*
15	ST's	3.9*
16	Muslims	3
17	Others	5
Total		100

*which includes all the castes in the SC fold, such as Mala, Madiga, Bindla, Adi-Andhra, etc, but in East Godavari it is the Mala caste which is the dominant numerically among SC's. Whereas among ST's it is the Kondadora, Konda*Kapus* who are significant in number

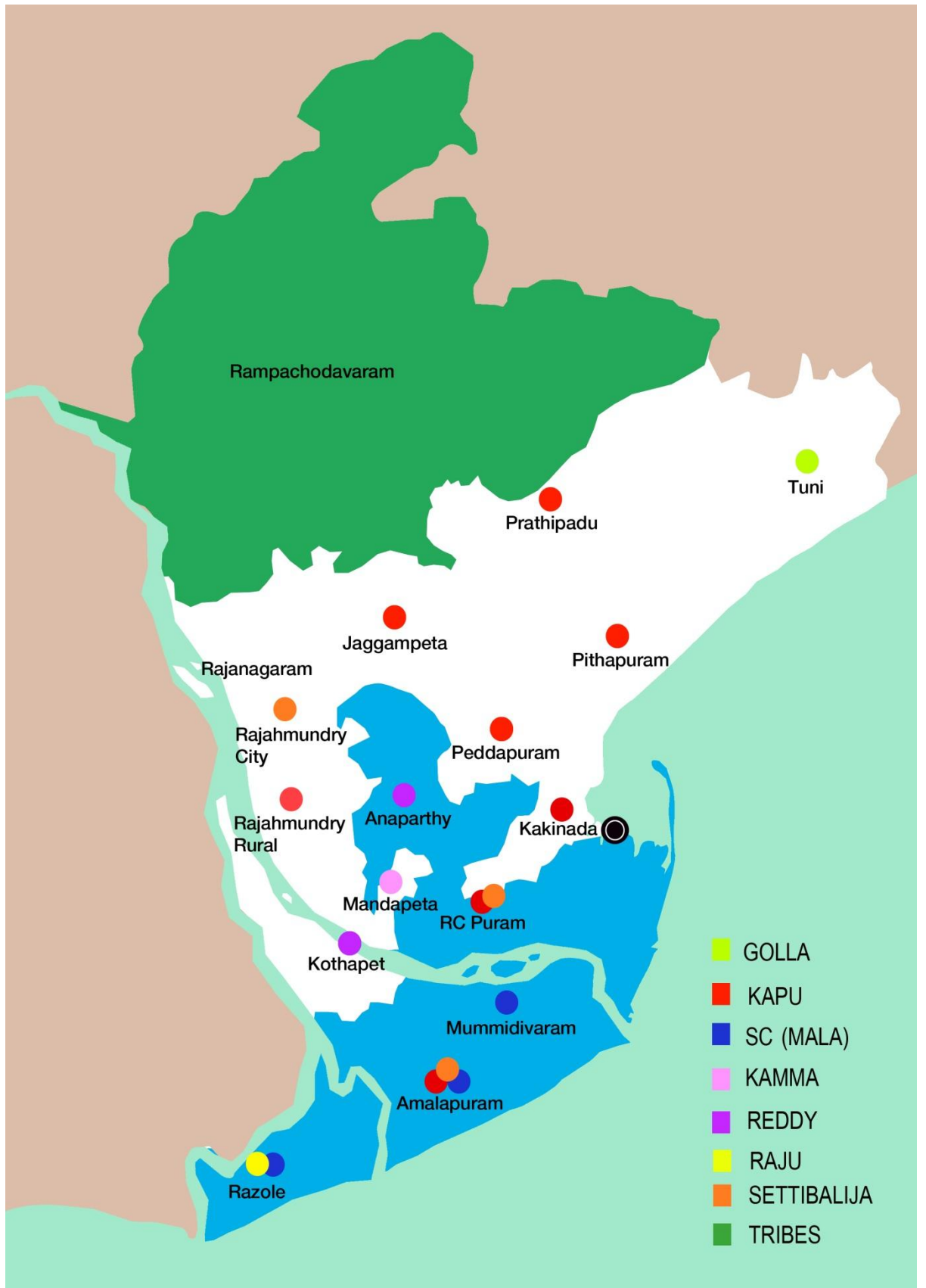
The above table indicates that the *Kapus* are dominant numerically, followed by the SCs (mostly *Malas*) and the *Settibalijas*. Interestingly, these three castes represent a social hierarchy- upper-middle and lower castes. *Kapus* are the upper castes, a landowning group. *Settibalijas* are traditionally a toddy-tapping caste, classified as Backward Classes by the state, whereas the *Malas* are known to belong to the lower sections of society. The social negotiation and dialogue between these castes is always political. The collaboration and contradiction between these castes is discussed later in this chapter. Although, numerically the *Kammas* (*Chowdaries*) and *Reddys* are fewer,

³⁶The data compiled in this table is based on estimates from different sources i.e., census data, Kapumitra journal, Surya daily newspaper and few other websites.

they yield significant power in the district. The tribal people are at the margins in the district, whereas the *besta* (fishermen) caste population is high in the coastal part, especially in Kakinada, but its influence is restricted to this particular geographical space.

The socio-spatial inhabitation of caste population in East Godavari is important to note. Some castes in each sub-region had created their own boundaries. Most of the sub-plan of Upland is inhabited by the *Kapus* in the administrative mandals such as *Jaggampet*, *Prattipadu*, *Peddapuram*, whereas *Anaparti*, *Ravulapalem*, are dominated by the *Reddys*; *Kammas* are significant in *Mandapeta*, *Kapileswarapuram*, whereas the *Rajus* along with the *Malas* are substantial in number in *Rajolu*, but *Rajus* outnumber the *Malas* economically. The *Brahmin* presence is visible in the towns of Rajahmundry and Amalapuram as well as a few streets in Kakinada. This also indicates that the *Brahmins* migrated from villages to towns. Dalits, especially *Malas* are dominant numerically in the Konaseema sub-region, especially in places like Amalapuram and Rajahmundry (see Map 4.2).

Map 4.2: East Godavari Sub region wise



The development of each administrative block during the colonial and post-Independence period provides interesting insights. For instance, if we look at *Anaparti*, a revenue mandal or electoral constituency, it becomes clear that the canal irrigation facilities along with the, railway line in 1890 by the British paved the way for mobility of ideas and people. This has opened a huge market for the local people to export the rice/paddy to different parts of India, generally to Kolkata, Chennai and recently to Bangalore and Hyderabad. These new interventions by both the British and Indian state affected the life styles, culture, politics of *Anaparti* and surrounding villages, such as *Samarlkota Mandapet* and *Bikkavolu*. These developments indicate the rise of *mofussil* towns and their consolidation in due course in the district.

Anaparthi comprises of 11 *panchayats* and *Reddys* dominates all those *panchayats* (discussed in the electoral section of this chapter). They dominate numerically as well as they control the agro-based rice mills, go-downs as well as agricultural lands. Commercial crops such as, banana, mango orchards etc, have been common for several decades, but in post-90s, their emphasis on these crops increased multi-fold due to the high returns they get. The rice industry as such is a very old business in this area. There are evidences to show that during the British period, i.e. after the anicut, the rice business started expanding its contours. During the World War I and II, most of them benefitted from exporting rice and that probably led them to get entrenched in this business. In addition to these entrepreneurial activities, *Reddys* also are engaged in money lending or finance business for a long period. At present, the *Reddys* are confined to few places apart from *Anaparti*, such as *Kapileswarapuram*, *Ravula Palem* and *Pedapudi*. The *Ravulapalem Reddys* have control over different kinds of contracts largely from government sources such as Roads & Buildings (R & B), *Panchayati Raj*, and Railways. Infact, one of my respondents claimed that the *Ravulapalem Reddys* have control over the government contracts in the entire district of East Godavari.

Similarly the other peasant caste- *Kammas* (*Chowdaries*) are confined to one or two administrative blocks in the district, such as *Mandapeta* and *Kapileswarapuram*. Although *Kammas* constitute a small proportion numerically, in the East Godavari district, they wield economic and political power on par with the *Kapus* and *Reddys* in the district. This is because *Kammas* also control significant proportion of rice mills

and rice go-downs in *Mandapet* including big nurseries in *Kadium* (Thorner D 1967: 246-247).

Kapus are a numerically dominant caste in East Godavari district and they are spread across the district unlike other landowning castes. Therefore, *Kapus* wield significant political presence in the district. A narrative about the *Kapus* presented in a detailed manner in the next chapter. The most populated caste among the Backward Castes is the *Settibalijas* (see table no 4.3) who dispersed across the Delta, especially in the *Konaseema* sub-region. The other Backward Castes, such as *rajaka*, *kamsali*, and *padmasali*'s spread across the district, though insignificant in number. *Besta* (*Agnikula Kshatriyas*) are limited to the seashore, especially near Kakinada. *Malas* are numerically dominant in *Konaseema* especially places like, *Amalapuram*, *Rajolu*, *Dindi*. Most of the Scheduled Tribes are restricted within the Agency sub-region.

Delta Sub-region

It is important to understand the complex relationship between economy and caste. Agriculture provides one of the important sources of income for all the caste groups in the district. The net crop area cultivated constitutes about 39%, i.e., 2700 Sq.Kms of the total geographical area of the district³⁷. The table below provides different economic sources which different caste groups control in each of the revenue mandals. This data on different economic sources is collected from key respondents in the district during 2012 and 2013.

³⁷ In 2009-10, the total area under cultivation for rice was 3, 06, 576 Lakh hectares, whereas for 2008-09 it was around 4 Lakh hectares. Please see, Hand Book of Statistics, 2010, East Godavari District, Government of Andhra Pradesh,

Table 4.4: Caste wise Distribution of Economic Activities in the central Delta sub-region

S. No	Mandal Name	Caste	Different Economic Sources
1	<i>Anaparthi</i>	<i>Reddy</i>	Paddy, Poultry, Rice Mills
2	<i>Mandapet</i>	<i>Kammas</i>	Paddy
3	<i>Rajahmundry</i>	<i>Komati</i>	Petty Business (Kirana)
4	<i>RC Puram</i>	<i>Kapus</i>	Rice, Sugarcane
5	<i>Bikkavolu</i>	<i>Reddy</i>	Paddy
6	<i>Kapileswaram</i>	<i>Kammas</i>	Sugarcane
7	<i>Alamuru</i>	<i>Reddy</i>	Vegetable Crops, Sugarcane, Tobacco
8	<i>Kadium</i>	<i>Kammas</i>	Nursery
9	<i>Sakinetiipalli</i>	<i>Rajus</i>	Poultry, Aqua culture

Source: Fieldwork data during 2012 and in 2013.

This table indicates that important economic sources in the district come from agriculture and agro-based industries. It is only the upper castes who control and derive income from these sources.

Konaseema

The eastern part of the Delta region is called *Konaseema* which is very popular among tourist places in the state for its location, serene beauty, and its economy. *Kona* means corner in Telugu and *seema*, island, and so the region came to be known as *Konaseema*. The *Gautami* River bound the northern side and the southern side is bounded by *Vasista* River, both the rivers are tributaries of the *Godavari* River. It consists of 17 mandals, which include, *Amalapuram*, *Ainavilli*, *Allavaram*, *Ambajipeta*, *Atreyapuram*, *I.Polavaram*, *Katrenikona*, *Kothapet*, *Malikipuram*, *Mamidikuduru*, *Mummidivaram*, *Nagaram*, *P.Gannavaram*, *Ravulapalem*, *Razole*, *Sakhinetipalli*, and *Uppalaguptam*. *Konaseema* is the heart of the East Godavari district. It is responsible for stimulating East Godavari politics. The role of the British is visible in this area as modern education was made available for the people³⁸. This sub-region also witnessed resistance against caste hierarchy and untouchability during the colonial time and at present. Through representative democracy, certain sections, which were previously excluded from the political sphere, started participating. Ideological, political, religious and cultural consciousness is vibrant in *Konaseema*. The construction of the anicut and subsequent economic diversification was primarily responsible for the socio-political

³⁸ Together there are 5,121 schools in East Godavari, which includes the primary, upper primary and the high schools. These 5,121 schools are managed by Central Government, State Government, Mandal Parishad, Municipality, Private aided and Private Un-Aided. Op. cited pg-237.

consciousness-raising in the district. The British were responsible for developing transport in terms of the grand trunk road that linked Madras and Bengal presidencies which passed through the district and communication facilities which connected people living even in remote areas³⁹.

Table 4.5: Mandal wise population in *Konaseema*

S. No	Place Name	Population	Percentage
1	<i>Amalapuram</i>	1,41,194	11.76
2	<i>Ainavilli</i>	65,131	5.43
3	<i>Allavaram</i>	68,261	5.69
4	<i>Ambajipet</i>	63,145	5.26
5	<i>Atreyapuram</i>	64,879	5.4
6	<i>I.Polavaram</i>	67,372	5.61
7	<i>Katrenikona</i>	74,809	6.23
8	<i>Kothapet</i>	77,862	6.49
9	<i>Malkipuram</i>	75,758	6.31
10	<i>Mamidikurduru</i>	70,456	5.87
11	<i>Mummidivaram</i>	68,591	5.71
12	<i>Uppalaguptam</i>	59,972	5.0
13	<i>P.Gannavaram</i>	75,341	6.27
14	<i>Ravulapalem</i>	83,463	6.95
15	<i>Razole</i>	71,438	5.95
16	<i>Sakinetiipalli</i>	72,577	6.04
17	<i>Nagaram</i>	5,913	0.49
Total of 51,51,549*		12,00,249	23.3

*Total East Godavari Population according to 2011 census.

Konaseema was also an important centre also reflected Dalit politics and the influence of Ambedkar's ideas is evident in the literary forums and journals that abound in the area. Many Dalits, particularly the *Malas* have propagated Ambedkar's philosophy, especially people like *B V Ramanaiah*. The communist ideology has also played a crucial role in protesting against the hegemony and the dominance of the *Zamindars* and the upper castes atrocities against the Dalits and the societal atmosphere in general (Satyanarayana A 1986: 34-37). Unlike the Krishna delta, here in the East Godavari district, the communist movement was not that exuberant and active even during the British period⁴⁰.

³⁹ Interview with Sashi on 23-05-2013 in Rajahmundry.

⁴⁰ In some pockets of East Godavari district, Communists are very strong, especially in the Agency area and places like Rajolu, Sakinetipalli, Amalapuram, etc in Konaseema. Especially in Rajolu, their presence is visible even now in terms of controlling the 'field co-operative societies'. Interview with Devanarsaiah, on 21-05-2013 in Dindi, East Godavari

Metta (Upland)

The major source of income for *metta* (upland)⁴¹ was trade and commerce until the 18th century. Today, most of the small towns/mandals come under the present upland, like *Peddapuram, Pithapuram, Jaggampet* and *Kirlampudi*. The *Godavari* River does not flow in this region, however, a small stream called *Yeleru* cuts across several places in the upland. A reservoir was built on this stream called as *Subbarayudu* reservoir in 1982, and later a dam was constructed, thereby, leading to the development of the sub-region in due course. In most of the above places, *Kapus* are dominant numerically and own a major stake of the land holdings. After constructing the reservoir on the *Yeleru* stream, the upland farmers were able to derive significant income from agriculture. This reservoir indicates the economic prosperity of this sub-region and the fact that the *Kapu* caste landowners are major beneficiaries, they wield economic and social power in this sub-region.

According to the official records, there are 550 rice mills in the district, which is the highest in the state. The supply of levy rice to the Food Corporation of India is to the tune of 8.5 lakh tonnes of the raw variety and 2.7 Lakh tonnes of boiled rice.⁴² East Godavari district controls the rice mills sector all over the state, in terms of deciding the prices, holding the rice in the mills, increasing the artificial demand for the rice, either through holding or through exporting to other countries (Thorner D 1967: 247). The East Godavari Rice Millers Association is the strongest and the oldest organisation related to rice industry in the state of Andhra Pradesh. This association provides employment to more than 20,000 members⁴³.

Both Rajahmundry and Kakinada are important towns in the district. Prior to British rule in Coastal Andhra, Rajahmundry was famous in terms of trade and commerce particularly for its textile and timber. The municipality at Rajahmundry was founded in the year 1866, after which Rajahmundry was upgraded to Municipal Corporation in the year 2000. Followed by the accreditation of Municipal Corporation, there was

⁴¹ Dry land, which is dependent primarily on the rain water cultivation. Please see, H H Wilson (1855).

⁴² <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-andhrapradesh/rice-mills-in-east-godavari-district-set-to-go-online/article3399628.ece>, accessed on 06-06-13

⁴³ Brief Industrial Profile of East Godavari District, report carried out Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), Visakhapatnam, downloaded from <http://dcmsme.gov.in/dips/East%20Godvari%20profile.pdf>, accessed on 03-09-13.

expansive growth in the city and consequently an increase in real-estate value, construction of the engineering colleges like GIET, (Godavari Institute of Engineering and Technology) IT centres, the opening up of *Nannaya* University, the opening of a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Kakinada, the *Polavaram* irrigation project⁴⁴ and the construction of the airport (Jena A 2009).

Rajahmundry is the cultural capital of the district and served as the cultural capital of the entire Coastal Andhra region during the British period⁴⁵. However, there is a view that Rajahmundry had established itself culturally even before the British during the Muslim period, i.e. prior to 17th century⁴⁶. Then, even the British had also encouraged education, both in the vernacular as well as in English. In the year 1826, the Collector, Mr. Bayard, established three schools under the instructions from the Company, they were one at Rajahmundry, one in Kakinada (Cocanada) and a third at *Nursapore* (presently in West Godavari). Even though they lasted only for a decade the impact was certainly there on the natives, especially on the lower sections of the society. (Morris H 1879: 92).

An analysis of social and spatial composition of urban spaces in cities such as Rajahmundry indicates the caste consciousness and economic activities associated with it. This is quite evident from the socio-spatial composition described below.

The social composition of Rajahmundry is based on different castes, classes and occupational spaces such as administrative, commercial or business work directly related to the nature of the work. For instance, *Brahmins* largely inhabit the areas of *Aryapuram*, *Danveipeta*, and *Seethampeta* and in certain portions of the newly built *Srinivas Nagar*, *AP Paper Mill area* and *Tilak road*. The *Kamma*, *Kapu* and *Reddy* castes reside mostly in areas like *Srinivasa Nagar*, *Tilak road*, *Hukumpeta*. The weaving castes such as *Padmasalis*, reside in *Thaditota*, *Mangalavarampeta* and *Kothapeta*. Other Backward castes such as *Settibalijas* and the Schedule Castes such as *Mala* and *Madiga* castes reside in many working class areas such as *Quary*, *Innispeta*, *V.L Puram*, *Ambedkar Colony*, *Annapurnammampeta*, *Tummalova*, *Gurakshanpeta*,

⁴⁴ The controversial project is between Andhra and Telangana regions for quite some time.

⁴⁵ Y S Narasimha Rao, retired teacher in Andhra Kesari Degree College, Rajahmundry wrote a book titled *nrusimha prashnopanishat*, the legacy of Rajamahendri, 2012 (2007), Bharateeya Ithihas Sankalana Samiti, Rajahmundry. Interview with Y S Narasimha Rao in Rajahmundry on 27-05-2013

⁴⁶ Interview with Sashi in Rajahmundry, East Godavari on 24-05-13

Mangalavarampeta and also newly constructed areas such as *Narayanapuram*, *Shanti Nagar* with the efforts of Government in providing land to the poor under the VAMBAY Schemes and INDIRAMMA programmes” (Jena A 2009: 16). Muslim presence can be seen in places like *Jampeta*, which is famous for its vegetable and poultry markets.

It is important to locate the caste wise distribution of Rajahmundry primarily to understand the way in which economic activities are organised. This is evident in the way different castes have acquired control over different business activities in Rajahmundry. Traditionally it is the *Komatis* especially during the British time who played a crucial role in business. Rajahmundry is dominated by small and medium scale industries; most of the small scale businesses are controlled by the *Komatis* and the service sector is dominated by the *Kammas*. Most of the businesses which were predominant during the British period are no longer visible. The textile industry has gradually lost its place, though this was happening even during the British period. As for timber, it was largely imported from Burma, while Rajahmundry and Kakinada served as secondary sources.

The table below provides how propertied classes in Rajahmundry owned cinema halls and lodges in the town, which was an important source of revenue. Malls and Multiplex culture was also introduced recently in the town. There is one big bazaar and three multiplexes in Rajahmundry. While agricultural surplus moved into cinema halls and lodges in 1970s and 1980s, the capital flows found new avenues in terms of multiplexes, big bazaar, real estate and other entrepreneurial activities in post-1990s. The notable feature in Rajahmundry is that it is the *Kamma* and *Kapus* who largely reinvested their surplus in these economic activities to accumulate wealth. Incidentally, this economic power contributed to the consolidation of social power in the region.

Table 4.6: Caste-wise Ownership of Cinema Halls, Lodges and Malls in Rajahmundry*

S No	Types of Ownership	Caste wise Ownership in Rajahmundry		
		<i>Kapu</i>	<i>Reddy</i>	<i>Kamma</i>
1				
2	Cinema Halls (19)	6	1	12
3	Lodges (60)	35	0	25

*Jena Asima 2009.

Kakinada

Kakinada is an important port town in Godavari district due to its proximity to the sea. A great impetus to its trade was given during the American Civil War⁴⁷ when large quantities of Cotton from Guntur and the surrounding cotton-growing country were shipped from Kakinada to cater the needs of US. This port was found to be a more spacious and convenient harbour for trans-shipment than *Machilipatnam* (Morris H 1879).

Kakinada, lies on the northern coast of the Godavari, and all but the northern portion of it is included within the delta of that river. During British rule most of the villages belonged to the *Pithapuram Zamindars*. Ricemills along with metal vessels are the big industries in this division. Kakinada was established under the first regular municipal act and the council was constituted in 1866 (Ramesan N 1979: 178). Tracing the history of how Kakinada got its name is informative: earlier it used to be called *Cocanada*, and the then British pronunciation was like 'Co-Canada'. Kakinada can be understood from the vantage point of cultural and political sphere rather than only in terms of trade relations because the British had nourished Kakinada town for Imports and Exports. Initially, the combination of *Brahmins* and Communists had a great influence in Kakinada town, people like *Kambampati Satyanarayana*, *CVK Rao*, *Porabatu Seetharamaiah*, *Prativada Bayakarachari*, *Bulusu Sambamurthi* and others played a crucial role in developing the politics of the place as well as its cultural aspects. Later on, it was replaced by the peasant castes, mainly the *Kapus*. Especially *Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu*, *Pallam Raju*, *Venneti Satyanarayana*, *Dandu Narayana*, *Chelikani Ramarao* and others from the *Kapu* caste and *Koppana Gandhi* from *Settibalija* caste played important roles in regional and national politics in and from

⁴⁷ American Civil War took place during 1861-1865 by then Anicut was already built on River Godavari.

Kakinada (Stoddart B 2011: 30-31). Kakinada, along with Rajahmundry, was the place for several, cultural, political and social movements (Rao D 2003: 75).

Prior to colonisation, Rajahmundry was the district head quarter and was patronized by many rulers. It was only in 1925 that the British due to their economic interests made Kakinada the head quarters. In fact, the port facilitated exports and business deals. Kakinada was developed by equipping the city with colleges and educational institutions. Historical accounts reveal that the development of the port by the British led to a great deal of economic activities including urbanisation. Oil, natural gas in the river Godavari basin, clay, graphite and bauxite were some of the minerals available here which influenced the economy of the city (Ramesan 1979; Jena A 2009).

Geographically, a salt stream cuts Kakinada into two: *Jagannathapuram*, which is known as old Kakinada and the new town. This new town is much more developed than the old one and is largely dominated by migrants. Whereas *Jagannathapuram* is close to the sea and is occupied by fishing communities, among whom the *Besta* caste also known as *Agni Kula Kshtriyas* are numerically dominant. There are several sub-castes within the *Besta* caste, such as 'vaadi' and 'vaada balija'. Though they are dominant in *Jagannathapuram*, they are completely dependent on the sea. Men have to go for fishing and their women will sell them in the market. Apart from that, they are not active in either social or political activities of the district. The government of Andhra Pradesh has listed them as Backward Classes, whereas, the *Agni Kula Kshtriyas* claim to be warrior castes and provide information pertaining to their genealogy (Satyanarayana A 2008: 363). The social life for this caste group is restricted due to their geographical and social proximity to other castes. However, recently due to the inclusion of these castes into the reserved category, a small proportion of them gained access to electoral politics. For instance, *Kondababu*, who belongs to 'vaadi' caste, became an MLA on a Telugu Desam Party ticket. Apart from *Kondababu*, *Satyalinga Naicker*, is a tall figure among the *Bestas* who was a *maestri* (middle man and supervisor) i.e., a labour supplier from East Godavari to Burma during early phase of his life, (mid 1880's) but later on he moved to import and export business. He has donated a major chunk of his property to charities and NGOs. He has started a charity

called MSN Charity, which looks at activities such as schools and colleges⁴⁸. Among the *Agni Kula Kshtriyas*, the literacy rate is very less, and their main occupation is fishing.

The main town area of Kakinada lies on the northern side of the salt stream. This town is largely dominated by migrants from the places, which are part of the '*Pithapuram*' and '*Peddapuram*' Zamindari. This migration has taken place when the *Zamindari* system was abolished and a large chunk of the population from among the *Kapu* caste migrated to this place. Historically, the *Kapus* under the *Pithapuram Zamindari* system, (in *Prattipadu* and nearby villages) were engaged in agriculture. Later on, when the *Zamindari* system was abolished, *Kapus* were the major beneficiaries and a few of them have migrated to Kakinada town. This port town was developed rapidly during the British period, and in fact, it was preferred by the British over the already established town of Rajahmundry.

The '*Yeleru*' stream originated in the Rampachodavaram area (Agency) and merges into the Indian Ocean by cutting across both the Agency and the upland (metta). Many of the *Kapus* have settled on either side of the stream in the Delta region. *Kapus* claim that they have migrated here about 150-200 years back. In *Prattipadu*, a minor irrigation dam called '*Subbarayudu Sagar*' was built on the '*Yeleru*' stream.

The surrounding villages near the '*Subbarayudu Sagar*' are *Routhulapudi*, *Uttarakanchi*, *Kirlampudi*, *Jaggampet* and *Yelaswaram*. The areas which are surrounded by the Sagar are situated in the middle of both the Agency and the Upland. It was in that context that the Government of Andhra Pradesh announced a special package with a name 'sub-plan'⁴⁹ to develop this area. *Kapus* are numerically dominant in the sub-plan area and own a large chunk of land. Most of the land holdings here belong to small-medium landholders (Matchett, E S 1989: 148). This small-medium

⁴⁸Much of the information on Kakinada was collected during the field work conducted in the months of September and October-2010, February-April-2011, and April and June-2013

⁴⁹ Even in this area, the Act 1/70 is implementing, which says that ST lands belongs to ST's only. The sub-plan is constituted in between both of the Agency and Upland. It comprises of four mandals. They are Kotananduru, Sankhavaram, Yeleswaram and Prattipadu. Among them, both Prattipadu and Yeleswaram have large concentration of *Kapus*. Especially after the *Yeleru* canal, the irrigation in this area has improved drastically. Primarily, the *Kapus* have benefitted with that canal.

category of *Kapu* farmers also extracted the surplus from the state resources, particularly the commons. Commons in this sub-region included tamarind trees, endowment lands, forest wood, timber and honey. In fact, with the construction of *Subbarayudu Sagar* on the *Yeleru* River in the 1980s, the dominance of *Kapus* was absolute in this sub-plan area. At present, this area is under the dominance of *Kapus* economically, politically also numerically. Under the '*Subbarayudu Sagar*' project almost one-lakh acres of land is under cultivation and most of the land is under the control of the *Kapus*. Sugar cane is the most cultivated commercial crop along with paddy. *Peddapuram* revenue division, which is part of Upland in East Godavari, has relatively less cultivable land. Compared to *Pithapuram*, the *Peddapuram* revenue division is relatively weak in terms of its economy. In this sub-region, one crop per year is the norm, but a few kilometres away from *Peddapuram*, there is a place called *Kandra Kota*, where the '*Yeleru*' Canal passes and here two-crops are grown per year. Most of the time farmers prefer to cultivate pulses, rather than paddy. Pulses such as sesamum and sago are cultivated as well as fruits such as mango and sapodilla (*Chiku*).

It is to be noted that the *Kapus* in this sub-region had started agriculture as their primary occupation as long ago as the period of *Samudra Gupta* (400 A D). Historians say that agriculture gained its importance and was prioritized by the *Samudra Gupta* kingdom. It was against this background that the *Kapus* started playing a prominent role in the politics through the Congress party prior to the 1980s. However, with the emergence of the TDP in 1980's, they shifted their allegiance to that party. Families like, *Thota Narasimham*, *Thota Venkatachalam*, *Pantham Gandhi Mohan*, *Mallipudi Pallam Raju* were all-important *Kapu* families in the district as well as in the state.

Apart from *Agni Kula Kshtriyas* and *Kapus*, the third important caste in Kakinada, is *Settibalijas*. They constitute around 15% of the Kakinada population, which is next only to *Agni Kula Kshtriyas* and the *Kapus*. *Settibalijas* mostly stay in *Indra Palem*, *Gandhi Nagar* and other such areas. In Kakinada, they are called as '*endragallu*' or '*kallu gese vallu*' (toddy tappers). *Indra Palem* is the corrupt form of '*Endra Palem*' and in due course acquired some association with the Hindu god *Indra* as well. At the occupational level, they are toddy tappers, but due to colonial policies became agricultural tenants, and in recent times, due to institutional benefits some of them have jobs in the government sector. There is a certain kind of hostility between *Settibalijas*

and *Kapus* at the district level, which is also evident in Kakinada town. Among the BC's *Settibalijas* are dominant and quite assertive. Economically they are on par with the *Mala* caste from Scheduled Castes and geographically inhabit spaces closer to Mala residential settlements.

The *Malas* are Scheduled Castes. However, they are numerically on par with the other two castes groups, i.e., *Kapus* and *Settibalijas* they are economically very weak. Largely they reside in areas like, *Kacheri Pet*, *Bank Pet* and *Elwin Pet*⁵⁰. They had also migrated from other places even before Sir Arthur Cotton constructed dams on Godavari and Krishna rivers. Economically, the *Malas* presence is significant but compared to the other Dalits in the district, they hold a greater influence due to their proximity to political power. As it is mentioned in the Delta part, especially in *Amalapuram* and other places, the *Malas* are socially conscious due to the interventions of the colonial rule, especially the education availed during that period both by the colonial state and by the Christian missionaries. However, in Kakinada *Malas* are still underdeveloped, most of them are working as class IV employees in places like Kakinada port and in the Corporation office⁵¹. Even among the SC *Malas*, migration took place steadily - the first phase of their migration was during the British period primarily to Burma, where as in the second phase, which is a recent phenomenon they have been migrating to Gulf countries.

Local Caste Dynamics in Kakinada

The rest of the castes such as *Brahmins*, *Reddys*, *Kammas*, *Perikas*, *Telagas*, and artisan castes are very few in number and are scattered. Majority of the *Brahmins* stay in the upmarket areas of Kakinada such as *Gandhi Nagar* and *Rama Rao Pet*. Along with *Brahmins*, *Komatis* and *Reddys* stay in the same locality. *Komatis* are more into business, like small and medium scale general stores, stationery and cloth shops. *Telagas* are engaged in oil business for the last few decades in Kakinada. Recently, the *Kapus* have been claiming that the *Telagas* are part of the larger *Kapu* conglomeration, but in Kakinada, the picture is completely different. These two castes do not have much social interaction, neither in terms of real nor fictitious kinship. Also most of the time

⁵⁰ During British time, Elwin was a collector for Godavari District, on his name the colony was formed.

⁵¹ Interview with JV in Kakinada, East Godavari on 16th and 17th of March-2013.

this unity issue comes from the *Kapus* at the state level, but not at the local level and particularly in Kakinada, as *Telagas* never made any claim to be included as part of *Kapus*. What is articulated politically at the macro level does not get reflected at the micro-level. *Kapu-Telaga* dynamics in Kakinada is one such instance that demonstrates clearly the tension between different jatis within the *jati* cluster of *Kapus*.

Reddy's in Kakinada have mostly migrated from Nellore approximately some 150-200 years back. There have been some native *Reddy* families in Kakinada, but there is always a tussle among the migrant *Reddy*'s and local *Reddy*'s. This tussle is because of the fact that the migrant *Reddys* played a significant role in procuring paddy for the Government of India's Food Corporation of India (FCI) from the local farmers. This process is similar to how the tribals procure honey from the forest and in turn get paid commission by the government. To make it more clear, the government does not pay anything for the honey to the tribals, rather it will pay only for the procurement (See for instance Parthasarathy G and Patnaik Uma 2003 esp chapter 3). It is similar with paddy procurement also. Hence this money from paddy procurement is like 'easy money' for the *Reddys* who have also invested in other business ventures such as, mostly rice mills, buying cultivable lands, and most importantly, the financing business. They have bought the lands near *Ramachandrapuram*, *Dwarampudi*, *Anaparthi*, *Balabadrapuram* and *Mandada*. *Reddys* are economically dominant unlike *Kapus* who are dominant numerically. The migrant *Reddy*'s, especially from the *Mavidada Mandal*, are very much into the finance business, they have expanded until Kolkata due to the easy transport facilities provided by the British⁵².

Kammas, in the district are confined to places like *Mandapet* but in Kakinada, they are very insignificant in numbers, as one of the respondents in my study indicated that in *Mandapet*, 60% of the land belongs to or is in control of the *Kammas*. They had all migrated to this place a long time ago. Most of the *Kammas* in this place are either middle class or upper middle class. In some places in *Rajahmundry* as well, *Kammas* are wealthy.

⁵² Interview with Ramachandra Reddy in Kakinada, East Godavari on 13-03-2013.

An attempt is made in the table below to provide the caste-wise distribution of *Kakinada* town. A majority of the district's *Agnikula Kshatriya*'s population resides in *Kakinada*, they are limited to a place called *Jagannadapuram*, which is close to the sea, whereas the *Kapus* are concentrated both in the main town and the rural villages (suburb) attached to *Kakinada* town. The *Settibalija* population is also significant and there is a mild tension between the *Kapus* and the *Settibalijas* as indicated by few of the study respondents.

Table 4.7: Caste Composition of *Kakinada*⁵³

S No	Caste	Population %
1	<i>Besta</i>	38
2	<i>Kapus</i>	35
3	<i>Settibalijas</i>	15
4	<i>Malas</i>	5
5	Others*	7
Total		100

*Includes, *Reddys*, *Brahmins*, *Perika*, *Komatis*, *Telagas* and artisan castes, such as *padmasalis*, *kummari*, *kammari*, and *Muslims*, etc.

Among 13 theatres in *Kakinada*, six theatres belong to the *Dwarampudi* family who are part of the *Reddy* caste and represented *Kakinada* constituency politically as MLAs both in 2004 and 2009. Most of the theatres were taken on lease by *Daggubati Suresh Babu*, a *Kamma* running six theatres and the rest by *Allu Aravind's* family, a *Kapu*. The first Star hotel was established in 1980's by *Mutta Gopal Krishna*, but even that hotel was leased to others. Small and medium lodges, about 200-250 in number, are owned by *Kapus* and *Komatis*. *Settibalijas* role in the hotel/lodges is very minimal. *Brahmins* own 12 *Udipi* hotels in the town. In earlier days, *Komatis* used to maintain the vegetarian hotel whereas the *Rajus* maintained the non-veg hotels under the name of 'Raju Military Non-Veg hotel'. Like in *Rajahmundry*, even in *Kakinada*, rich peasant castes such as *Kapu*, *Reddy* and *Kammas* have reinvested their surplus into the service sectors, particularly real estate and the tourism industry.

⁵³ This is an approximate estimation done during the field work conducted during the months of March and April-02-2013 and specifically with *Addepalli Prabhu*, teacher from *Kakinada* interviewed in *Hyderabad* on 22-05-2012 and several others in *Kakinada* during the months of March and April-2013.

In terms of controlling the land, it is the *Rajus* and the *Kammas* who control the land in urban areas primarily through real estate. Whereas, the *Kapus*, whose presence is more visible in the hinterland of Kakinada own much of the agricultural lands, in-fact, they control 70% of the land in the hinterland. The land which is under their control is either cultivated by them or given up for tenancy. *Kapus* are very particular in terms of choosing their tenants and they seem to prefer people of their own caste. Most of the land is very fertile, and two crops per year, is a common phenomena. Next to *Kapus*, we find *Komatis* who owns 3 to 4% of the land. Most of the *Komatis* don't engage themselves in cultivation; they rent out their land mostly to the *Kapus*. It was primarily because the *Kapus* are attached to agriculture traditionally and secondly as we said earlier, the population of the *Kapus* is also significant in the hinterland of Kakinada and also the sub-region of the district-Upland. In terms of Non-Agriculture activity, pisciculture⁵⁴ is in more demand in this area. *Kammas* and *Rajus* own a majority of the share and *Kapus* own a smaller share. Though the owners come from the peasant castes, the workers come from *Agni Kula Kshatriya* caste, because the work is less attached to this caste these peasant castes.

In the industries sector, it is the *Kammas* and the *Rajus* who have major share; SRMT is owned by a *Kamma*, most of the oil related businesses are in the hands of *Kammas*, like transportation and spinning mills, whereas the *Rajus* own *Nagarjuna* and *Godavari* fertilisers. In recent years, after the Kakinada port got a face lift, many of the *Settibalijas* and *Malas* joined the port industry as medium and small scale workers.

Third Sub –Region of East Godavari - Agency

The below table depicts the mandal wise population in the agency sub-region of East Godavari district.

Table 4.8: Mandal wise population in Agency sub-region⁵⁵

S. No	Mandal Name	Population	Percentage
1	Gokavaram	69,321	23.13
2	Maredumilli,	19,383	6.47
3	Devipatnam	28,149	9.39
4	Addatigala	37,217	12.42

⁵⁴ The breeding, rearing, and transplanted of fish by artificial means is called pisciculture.

⁵⁵ Census of India, 2011, accessed on 12-11-2013

5	Y.Ramavaram	28,440	9.49
6	Yeleswaram	77,925	26.0
7	Rampachodavaram	39,262	13.1
Total out of 51,51,549*		2,99,697	5.82

*East Godavari Population according to 2011 Census

Scheduled Tribes constitute 3.91% of the total district population. There are seven Mandals in the agency area which includes *Gokavaram, Maredumilli, Devipatnam, Addatigala, Y. Ramavaram* and *Rampachodavaram* is the head quarters of Agency. Agency constitutes different tribes, the *Konda Reddys, Koya Doras, Valmiki*s, and *Konda Kapus*. Primarily the Agency area is situated in the hilly region with thick forest, and with poor communication facilities and other resources. Agency's social life is distinct from that of Delta and Uplands. In recent times, many of them are into agriculture, mostly *podu* (shifting) cultivation, also coffee which is largely state sponsored, otherwise, traditionally they used to be into collecting honey or forest wood.

Map 4.3: Tribal belt of the East Godavari District⁵⁶.



⁵⁶ <http://www.laya.org.in/context.aspx>, accessed and downloaded on 28-01-2014

The green patch in the above map is the Agency sub-region of the district. It consists of 7 mandals. The major one is the *Rampachodavaram*. Ecologically, the agency is replete with mineral and resources, which the non-tribal groups are competing with each other to acquire control over each other. While in East Godavari, *Kapu*, *Kamma*, *Reddy* and *Raju* castes have been in different ways extending their influence over the sub-region, the neo-liberal policies in the post-1990s have created mining contractors and other agencies. The state instead of protecting the interests of the tribals, has been known to effectively intervene on behalf of dominant non-tribal interests (Oskarsan Patrick 2011)⁵⁷.

⁵⁷ For more details visit the official website of Government of Andhra Pradesh Mines Department website- http://apmines.org/?page_id=838, accessed on 29-01-2014.

Electoral and Political History of East Godavari District-1956-2014

Table 4.9: Caste wise distribution of East Godavari politics-1956-2014

S No	Constituency Name	Kapu	Reddy	Kamma	Raju	<u>Settibalija</u>	Other BC's	Mala	Other SC's	Others
1	Rajahmundry (Urban)	2	1	5			2* (T <u>Kapu</u>)			2*and 1#
2	Rajahmundry (Rural)	7		1			1 <u>Padmasali</u>	2		
3	Kakinada (Urban)	1	1				4+2Besta&Kalava			1*and 4#
4	Kakinada (Rural)	2				6	3(<u>Besta</u>)			
5	<u>Prattipadu</u>	13								
6	<u>Peddapuram</u>	5		5						3*
7	<u>Rajanagaram</u>	1		5				2		
8	<u>Tuni</u>	1			6		6 (<u>Golla</u>)			
9	<u>Jaggampet</u>	12				1				
10	<u>Kothapet</u>	4	4		4					
11	Amalapuram(SC)	5				6		3		
12	<u>Ramachandrapuram</u>	4	1	1		5				2(<u>Velama</u>)
13	<u>Anaparti</u>		10	3						
14	<u>Mandapet</u>	4		7				1		
15	<u>Razole</u>	2		1	7			4		
16	<u>Pitapuram</u>	11			1					1#
17	<u>Mummidivaram (SC)</u>							1		
18	<u>Gannavaram (SC)</u>							1		
19	<u>Rampahodavaram (ST)</u>									1
Total		74	17	28	18	18	18	14		15

*Brahmin

#Vaishya

The above table indicates the electoral landscape of East Godavari district from 1956-2014. During this period, the district, as well as the state had witnessed assembly elections 13 times. There are 19 assembly constituencies in the district. Out of these 19, three are reserved for SC's and one for the ST. The remaining 15 constituencies are unreserved.

The distinctive feature of East Godavari district's political landscape is the concentration and dominance of one or two castes in each electoral constituency. This phenomenon has allowed for a systematic dominance of few castes in each sub-region of the district in the last seven decades. The analysis of the electoral data (see table no 4.9) indicates an overwhelming *Kapu* caste representation in the district. Out of 202 candidates elected till 2014, 74 candidates (36%) belonged to *Kapu* caste alone. In three Assembly constituencies (*Prattipadu*, *Jaggampet* and *Pithapuram*) it was only the *Kapu* caste representatives who got elected in almost all the elections. Similarly, *Reddy* and *Kamma* representatives got elected a maximum number of times in *Anaparti* (9 out of 12 times) and *Mandapeta* (7 out of 12 times) Assembly constituencies respectively. This is a clear indication of the nexus between caste and politics in the district. The underlying reasons for the caste dominance in each sub-region are to do with numerical strength, land ownership and caste status. Therefore Dalits (*Malas*), or Backward Castes such as *Settibalijas*, despite their numerical strength, couldn't entrench themselves in the non-reserved constituencies. One of the explanations seems to be the lack of economic and social power (land and social status). It is in this context that the idea of Dominant Caste proposed by M N Srinivas way back in 60's, needs to be critically evaluated. This concept needs to be re-examined with the numerous changes that occurred due to Green Revolution, and neo-liberal economic policies.

The above table indicates that the electoral landscape of the district is dominated by the *Kapus*, followed by the *Kammas*, *Rajus* and *Reddys* from the upper castes. From the Backward Castes, the *Settibalijas* and *Gollas* have represented few constituencies. The presence of the *Settibalijas* is visible in *Amalapuram* and *Kakinada Rural* constituencies whereas the *Gollas* have represented the *Tuni* assembly constituency almost 6 times. The *Golla* assertion in the *Tuni* constituency can be attributed to the formation of the TDP, i.e., from 1983 and until then it was represented by the *Rajus*. In

terms of Scheduled Castes, the presence of *Malas* is visible throughout the reserved constituencies. But then they are confined only to the reserved constituencies. Their presence is nominal despite their numerical strength in some of the constituencies such as *Amalapuram*, *Rajolu* and *Mummidivaram*.

The phenomenon of upper caste domination in the electoral space can be identified across the state but what is unique in the East Godavari district is the domination of the *Kapus* across the district, whereas the presence of *Reddys*, *Kammas*, *Rajus* is visible but limited to few of the constituencies where they are numerically dominant. If we look at the *Kapus* presence more closely in the district, through the above table, it can be inferred that the *Kapus* represent *Peddapuram*, *Rajahmundry*, *Jaggampet*, *Prattipadu* from the Upland (*metta*) and *Amalapuram*, *Pitapuram* from the Delta sub-region of the district.

It is indeed essential to examine the presence of *Kapus* by going through the constituencies which they have represented multiple times. As we have already noted that the *Kapus* dominate 6 out of 15 constituencies. *Rajahmundry Rural* is one among those six. This constituency was formed by merging *Kadium* mandal in the 2009 part of the delimitation of constituencies. During the first two elections-1955 and 1962, this constituency was represented by the *Malas*, but then, from 1978 onwards, the *Kapus* are continuously representing this constituency and this has been done irrespective of the party which they are representing, whether TDP or Congress. Numerically the *Kapus* represent more than 40% in the total constituency.

The second constituency, *Prattipadu*, comprises of *Sankhavaram*, *Yeleswaram* and *Rowthulapudi* mandals. It is exclusively represented by *Kapus* from 1955-2009, i.e. from the beginning of the formation of the constituency. *Kapus* have complete control over this constituency which also indicates that the frictions are often between different *Kapu* families rather than between different castes or between parties. The *Mudragada* family has been an important family in *Kapu* politics for a very long period both in the state as well as in the district, especially after 1980's, through the formation of the '*Kapu Reservation Porata Samiti*' by *Mudragada Padmanabam*. The presence of *Kapus* here can be classified as follows: one, who have benefitted through tenancy during the British period and the *Zamindari* abolition in the post-Independence period,

secondly, it was due to the construction of irrigation projects on *Yeleru* and *Pampa* rivers, and *Subbarayudu Sagar*. Due to such economic strength, many of the *Kapus* started engaging in politics actively in the TDP, which was formed during this period.

The other major constituency where the *Kapus* assert themselves completely at the political level is *Jaggampet*. This constituency was formed by merging the *Gokavaram*, *Gandepalle* and *Kirlampudi* mandals. Within these three the *Kapus* are numerically dominant in this constituency since the 1962 elections to the 2014 one, leaving the first elections, i.e. the 1955 one, to the *Settibalijas*. Two Kapu families -*Pantham* and *Thota* - control this constituency for a very long period⁵⁸. It is comprised of more than 1 lakh voters, and among them, *Kapus* are more than 50%, and this certainly determines their political engagement in the constituency.

The fourth constituency, in which the *Kapus* presence is still visible, is the *Peddapuram* constituency. But they share it with both the *Kammas* and the *Brahmins*. Together, the *Kapus* have won 4 times, *Kammas* 5 times and *Brahmins* have won thrice from this constituency. The way *Prattipadu* was dominated by a few families, like the *Mudragada*, *Parvata*, even here, two families-*Pantham* and *Thota* have been controlling *Kapu* politics. Unlike *Jaggampet* or *Prattipadu*, here the *Kapus* are well entrenched in the Congress party. In the *Kothapet* constituency, though the *Kapus* have won four times, it has been considered as the important constituency for the *Reddys*.

The other two constituencies where the *Kapu* representation is visible as well as dominant are in the Delta region of the district. They are *Amalapuram* and *Pitapuram*. The political economy of *Amalapuram*, in-fact most parts of *Konaseema*, revolves around coconut plantations and related activities. *Amalapuram* constituency, the focal point for the Delta sub region, also part of *Konaseema*, currently though reserved for SC's, has historically been dominated by three castes- *Kapus*, *Settibalijas* and *Malas*. Among these three castes, *Kapus* controls the economy through their number, whereas both the *Settibalijas* and *Malas* though numerically significant, due to the lack of capital, have a limited presence in the political sphere. The *Amalapuram* constituency

⁵⁸ People like, *Pantham Kamaraju*, *Pantham Padmanabam*, *Thota Subbarao*, *Jythula Venkata Apparao*, *Thota Venkatachalam*, *Thota Venkata Narashimham*, etc, all have represented this constituency either through the Congress party or from the TDP, even if not they have contested independently. The interesting fact is that the above named leaders hail from a closed family.

was formed with three mandals- *Uppalaguptam*, *Allavaram* and *Amalapuram*. Until 1980's, Congress was the single party which represented several castes including the above three castes despite the frictions and conflicts between them. The emergence of Telugu Desam party posed an alternative to the Congress and all the disgruntled elements moved towards the TDP. The formation of TDP has certainly altered the discourse of the District's politics. After the formation of TDP, many of the *Kapus* aligned with the TDP, thus allowing *Settibalijas* to continue to stay with the Congress. The presence of *Kapus* in the TDP in the district is in contrast to the relations between the *Kammas* and *Kapus* at the state level. From the year of its formation, the TDP was strongly supported by the *Kapus*; this was not limited to Amalapuram, but was true even at the district level. Until the formation of PRP (Praja Rajyam Party) in the year 2008, the alliance between the *Kapus* and the TDP had sustained. However, the PRP's formation has altered the political relations of the district drastically. Many of the *Kapus* moved out of TDP and joined PRP but then when the PRP merged with the Congress, they all went back to the TDP again. In due course, the *Settibalijas* had occupied the space in the TDP that was vacated by the *Kapus*. But they went back to the Congress or to the recent outfit-YSRCP when the *Kapus* came back to TDP. Such 'movements of political migration' can be located across the state as well as the district.

Pitapuram is another major constituency where the presence of *Kapus* is very much visible, similar to that of places like *Jaggampet* and *Prattipadu*. This constituency was formed by including mandals like *Gollaprolu*, *Pithapuram* and *Kothapalle*. Lastly, the *Ramachandra Puram* constituency has witnessed a tri-party conflict between the *Settibalijas* and *Kapus* and Dalits. Even here, due to economic factors, the *Settibalijas* and the *Malas* presence is insignificant politically. Primarily the conflict is between the *Settibalijas* and the *Kapus*. Until the formation of two parties recently, i.e. PRP and YSRCP, there were only two parties-Congress and TDP. After the merger of the PRP into the Congress it was only the YSRCP which was a big challenge for both the Congress and the TDP. *Thota* family belongs to the *Kapu* caste and have been influential in the district in many ways in various ways, specifically at the political front which includes both Assembly and Parliament. The family has expanded gradually by utilising kinship networks and political power. Their presence is visible across the parties. People like *Thota Trimurthulu*, *Subbarao* and *Venkatachalam* have all been involved in party politics. They also have marriage alliances with the *Pantham* family

and the *Jythula* families, which are *Kapu* families, that are also influential in the district.

Discussion

The analysis of the history of East Godavari district provides the basis to locate the intricacies and complexities of the relationship between region, caste and politics. The important factors which have shaped the district were the reclamation of land, settlement and growth. These three factors need to be examined along within a region by engaging with caste and political categories. Reclamation was very important for the British when they had acquired rights over the land from the Nizams. Secondly, the British also encouraged the migration of labour, mainly to utilise the reclaimed land and it is quite possible that a significant proportion of the people voluntarily migrated to this place as there was an abundance of land. While the district attracted several migrants by virtue of being port towns, the sudden appearance of cultivable land has pushed for several new settlements as well. These new settlements contributed in expanding the growth of the district or the Coastal Andhra region as such.

Land and Caste Relations:

Land has always been an important element that determines caste relations. The land during the East Indian Company rule was classified into three- *Haveli*, *Zamindari*, *Hill lands*. The East India Company had control over the *haveli* lands and on the Hill lands, whereas the *Zamindari* lands were in the control of the *Zamindars*. In fact, much of the fertile land was under the control of *Zamindars*, such as *Peddapuram*, *Ramachandra Puram* and *Pitapuram*. The East India Company had acquired the rights to collect taxes from the local people in the name of ‘*circar*’ from the Mughal through the Nizam. The Company had acquired this right in the year 1765 but they did not alter the existing administrative and revenue related affairs. It almost took 30 years for them to intervene especially into the revenue system of Coastal Andhra. Even though they had initiated several revenue related changes in Bengal presidency, the Madras Presidency was reluctant to interfere mainly because of the complex existing social relations especially in the wet region of Coastal Andhra in Madras Presidency. Both the *Haveli* and *Zamindari* land was cultivated by the *Kapus* who were dominant numerically as well as

had existed as a farming caste that was associated with the land for many years. Secondly, among the twelve-member committee constituted by the Company⁵⁹, even *Kapu* was included under the name of '*peddakapu*'. Thirdly, the term *Kapu* means protector or ryot. One can see the clear departure from the trading economy to the agrarian economy in the period from the Company to the crown rule. This was how the agrarian structure in the district got altered substantially. There were inter-caste relationships, which emerged mainly, based on the occupational structure of the agrarian economy. Even if these castes were not part of it, they can be influencing factors, such as moneylenders, peasants and artisans (Swarnalatha 1991).

Due to the interventions of the British and their agriculture policies, rice cultivation became a primary source in which several castes were engaged. From 1850's to mid 1940's, the agriculture has gradually evolved into commercial form precisely because of four reasons: one, irrigation through canals, second, drastic growth in the crop yield, three, better transport facilities and lastly, re-investing the surplus in agriculture. Thus, one can trace the factors that played a crucial role between land and caste during pre-colonial and colonial setting that significantly contributed to the existing agrarian structure in the post-independence period.

Political Space:

One of the important ways to understand the political domain is through electoral politics. If we see the trajectory of the electoral history of East Godavari district, it indicates that politically, it is the Congress party, which wielded much influence. After the 1980's, there was more diversity and competing politics when a regional party such as the TDP became a significant political force. When a regional separatist called Jai Andhra emerged during 1972, several of the *Kapus* had actively participated and this dissent was enough to support the new political party, the TDP in 1980's. Similarly, another political experiment in the name of PRP contested in 2009 and, has certainly flared up the caste consciousness again, making the *Kapus* move away from Congress and TDP to PRP. *Kapus* are considered as the traditional vote bank to the Congress party since the 1930's. However, within these political experiments, both TDP and PRP

⁵⁹ The formation of this committee was based on the occupations. *Peddakapu* is one among the twelve, an important position who controls the ryots.

had to contest with several caste tensions, for instance, the conflict between *Kapus* and *Kammas*, *Kapus* and Dalits and *Kapus* and *Settibalijas*.

Historically, *Kapus* were supporting the Congress, unlike the *Kammas* in Krishna district who had supported the Justice party and later on the Communist parties. Out of 19 assembly constituencies, *Kapus* control 5 constituencies, such as, *Jaggampeta*, *Prattipadu*, *Pithapuram*. *Kapus* share power with the *Settibalijas* in *Amalapuram* and in *Ramachandra Puram*; they share power with the *Kammas* in *Peddapuram* and in *Aalamuru*. Even though they share power with the *Kammas*, politically their relations are cordial, whereas with the *Settibalijas* both in *Amalapuram* and in *Ramachandra Puram*, *Kapus* have antagonistic relations. These relations are related to the market relations they share where in an owner-worker situation, the owner is most times, a *Kapu*, and the worker, a *Settibalija*.

Along with the *Kapus*, even the Dalits are also a strong vote bank for the Congress. Both Communist and Ambedkarite ideologies influence them. Several of the Dalits, especially from *Mala* caste, are prominent leaders in both the communist parties. People like *Devamusalaiah*, *B V Ramanaiah*, *Ganji Nageswara Rao*, *Kaneti Mohana Rao*, *Kandikatla Nagabhushanam* and others have played crucial roles in promoting communist and Ambedkarite ideologies.

The social structure of the district is very complex due to the interaction between the three castes, which have continuous contentions among them- the *Kapus* from the upper sections, *Settibalijas* from the middle and the *Malas* from the lower sections of the society. It can also be observed here that the *Kapus* seem to be imitating the *Reddys* from the Rayalaseema and *Kammas* from the Krishna Delta in terms of marriage alliances, or expanding kinship relations within their caste. Politically, this move has been advantageous, as Carolyn Elliot has pointed out in reference to the *Reddys* (Elliot C 1970).

The political economy of East Godavari has changed after the construction of anicut on *Godavari* River. For the first time, the farmers of the district have experienced the

‘second crop’ during this period⁶⁰. This surplus has allowed for the creation of a class which in Veblen’s terms could be called a ‘leisure class’. Accumulation of wealth has begun or rather gotten intensified after the anicut and canal irrigation.

Due to the anicut, and canal irrigation, there were several ‘pull factors’ which have attracted the migrant population. Table 1 also indicates that post-anicut; there was a sudden influx of migrants. This migration occurs in two ways, one comes from Northern Coastal Andhra, from places like Vishakapatnam and Vizayanagaram., The second kind of migration occurs from South Coastal Andhra, i.e. Prakasam, Nellore and also Guntur. The former is driven by poverty, lack of opportunities, both industrial and agricultural, whereas the latter was due to the famine in several districts of South Coastal Andhra⁶¹.

Communications facilities:

Primarily, the East Godavari district was acquainted with sea transport, especially due to trade relations. During the colonial period, several bridges were constructed, especially on the *Tandava* River, constructed in the year 1885; secondly, in the year 1887 and a third one was near *Korangi*, an important port during the British period or even before that. Apart from the above, the British created several new transport facilities by both rail and road. They constructed a railway bridge on Godavari River in the year 1900. Whereas the first railway line in East Godavari was constructed in the year 1927 between *Kotipalli* and Kakinada.

The British certainly enhanced the region in terms of better transport facilities. They had appointed several committees to deal with this aspect. The East Godavari district was scattered without any connectivity, the social life of the people was fragmented because of the lack of transport facilities. Though there was some transport facilities before the British, i.e. during Dutch, French and Portugese period, but those facilities were only limited at the peripheral level and their presence was insignificant; secondly, they had never attempted to establish administrative control over the local people. In

⁶⁰ There are contentions about this point. Few say that it was only after 1920, the second crop was introduced in East Godavari district, but the dominant opinion is after anicut, the second drop has come into force.

⁶¹ Nellore famine in the year 1811, Guntur famine in 1833, apart from the two, the famine was spread across the coastal Andhra both during the 1823 and 1839

the year 1858, i.e. immediately after the crown took over from the Company, the British had floated a Public Works Department and a list was prepared to identify the necessary roads and collect tax from the rich in the name of the Road Tax, that too, by taking the permission from the Board of Revenue. By 1883, there were roads which connected the main centres of East Godavari, mainly Rajahmundry and Kakinada. From there the connectivity was established to places from *Tuni* to *Alamuru* via *Ramachandrapuram*. By 1915, in the East Godavari district, almost 850 miles were covered and by 1935, it was almost double—up to 1340 miles. This signifies the changes at the infrastructural level in the East Godavari. Even at the social level, we find these kinds of drastic changes occurring. However, not all this growth occurred only in the British period; it is important to remember that the British only consolidated many of the interventions that had been started in the pre-British period.

Chapter 5

Articulating the Social Power: The Mobilisational Processes of *Kapus*

This chapter, theoretically classifies while critically interpreting *Kapus* into three sections: first, it establishes the ontological and epistemological grounds of *Kapus* and their claims, especially in terms of the ambiguities which is surrounded with the numerical strength and also examine it through the writings of Sudipta Kaviraj (2010) especially his ‘fuzzy communities’.

Secondly, it presents different ways, methods approached or adopted by the *Kapus* in consolidating/organising themselves, at the social and political level. The thesis attempts to analyze three different ways adopted by the *Kapus* in terms of organising themselves. They are: caste associations, journals and the political parties, but then, there are many more components deployed by the *Kapus*, for instance, the recent example is *vanabojanalu*¹ which was turned into *kulabojanalu*.

This chapter also empirically classifies *Kapu* mobilisational processes into three-² numbers, organisation and the resources. Many scholars have studied caste from different perspectives, but they have undermined how power operates within caste. It is also important to see the different forms/sources through which power operates. This chapter attempts to trace the forms of social power by closely examining the socio-political nexus of intra and inter-caste relations. Both primary and secondary sources have been used to explain the *Kapu* mobilisation processes.

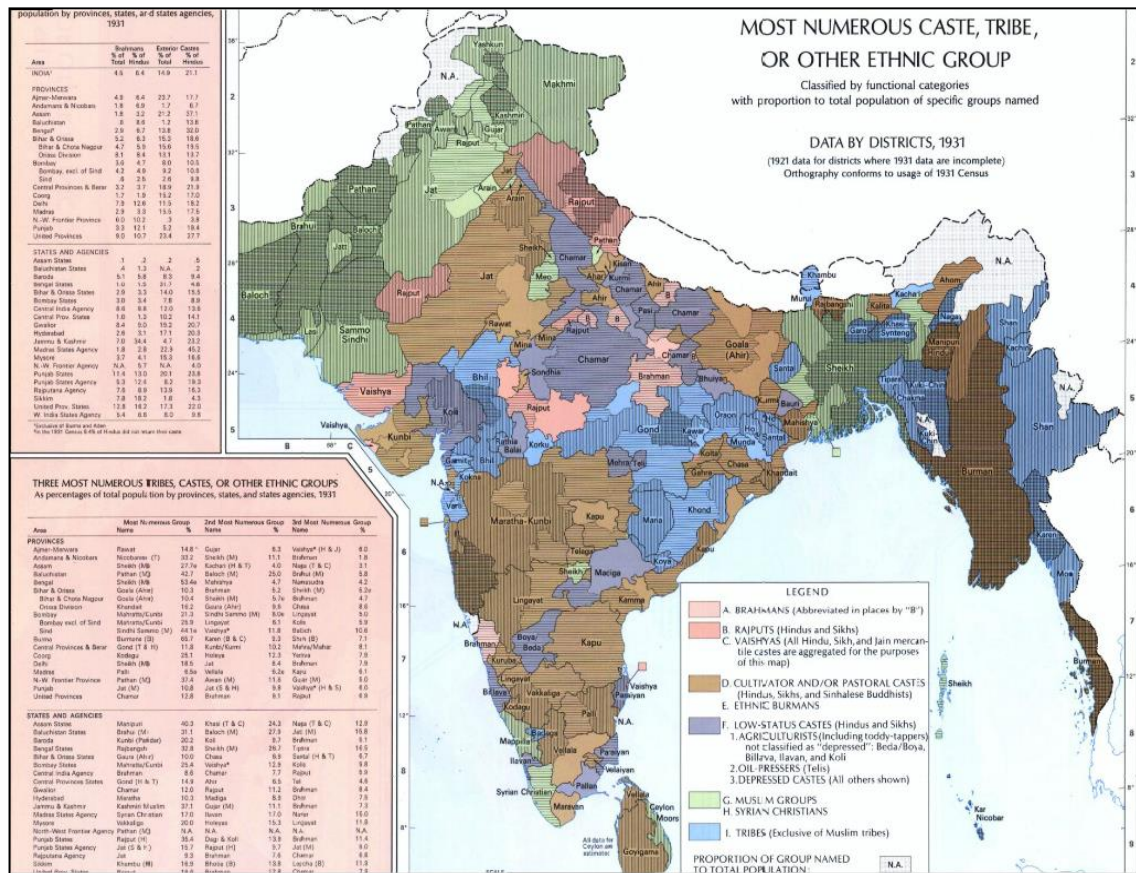
¹ *Vana* in Telugu is equivalent to forest in English, whereas *Bojanam* (singular) and *Bojanalu* (plural) means food. *Vanabojanalu* usually takes place in the Telugu month of *Karthika* (month of November in English calendar). Hindus think that *Karthika masam* (month) is auspicious month. The importance of this occasion is having food with the extended families and with neighbours somewhere close to the village, but due to the heavy migration to the cities in recent days, *vanabojanalu* also are organized in the parks, or even some of the private farm houses. But what is interesting is by taking this as an occasion, caste groups are organized these *vanabojanlu* specifically for each caste. At the end, they become a mobilisational point for several of the caste groups. This tendency is prevalent among all caste groups, especially, *Reddys*, *Kammas*, *Brahmins* are all organizing these *vanabojanalu*.

The colonial discourse certainly contributed to the understanding genealogy of caste studies. This colonial discourse, has led the scholars to engage broadly in two directions, one: a set of scholars highlighted the cultural dimensions of castes. (for instance, Karen L (1970) on *Kayastas*, Barnett S (1976) on *Kondakattai Vellalar Mudaliar* (hereafter KV), Conlon F (1974) on *Gauda Sarasvata Brahmans* (GSB), while the second set of scholars focused on the economic dimensions of castes on *Baniyas* (1978), *Sourastrians* by Sounders (1927), *Vaishyas* by Nandi (1978), *Marwari's* (Timberg 1973) *Nattukkottai Chettiars* by Rudner (1994), *Parsis* by Guha (year), *Nadars* by Hardgrave (1969). Specifically, quite a few studies have focused on Andhra Pradesh in the contemporary period, locating caste in multiple dimensions. To mention some of them especially from Andhra Pradesh, Carolyn Elliot (1970), Leonardo Karen (1970), Carol Upadhya, (1989) Katten Michael (1999), Clarinda Still, (2009), Simon Charsley (2004), etc, contributed to enhance the understanding of the Andhra's socio-political dynamics³.

In terms of the structure of the chapter, firstly, it problematizes the very term '*Kapu*'. Primarily, in terms of the definition and the ambiguities related to the term *Kapu*. Secondly, it traces the genealogy of the term in three periods- pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial, while giving much emphasis to the third (post-colonial). Thirdly, it also traces the 'processes' (both *being* and *becoming*) of *Kapus* and finally, the chapter attempts to locate the subject (*Kapus*) within the perspectives of 'Social Power', by applying the ideas of Robert Bierstedt (1950). In due course, it also invokes Weber's ideas, but then, goes much beyond his analysis of power.

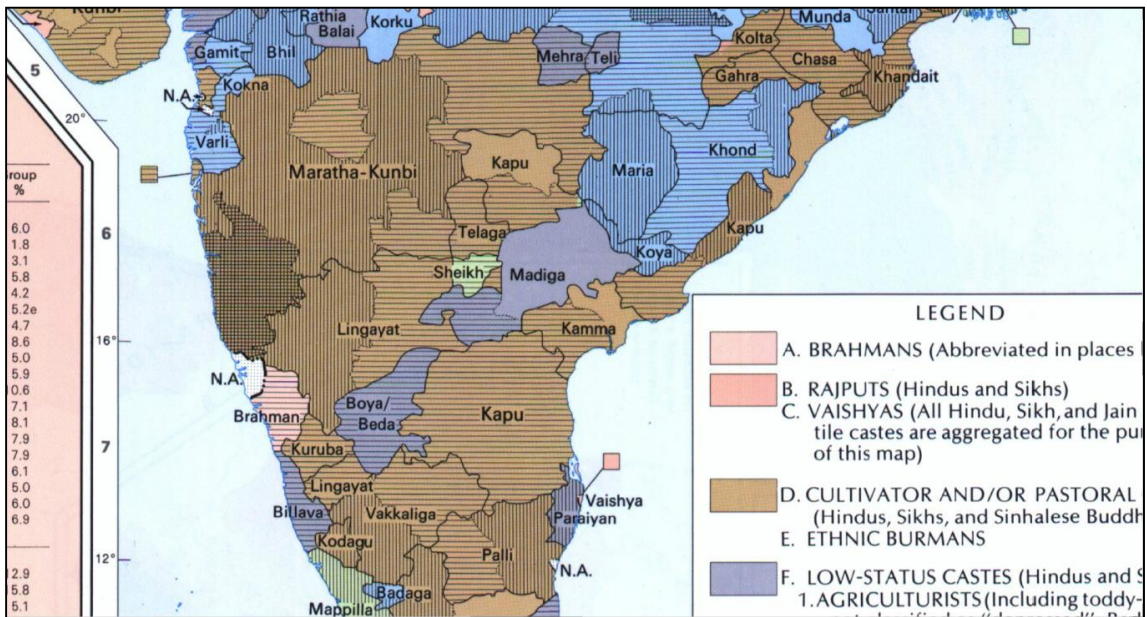
³ 'Biographies of Different Castes' section in the thesis present an account of these works.

Map 5.1: 1931 census full Map

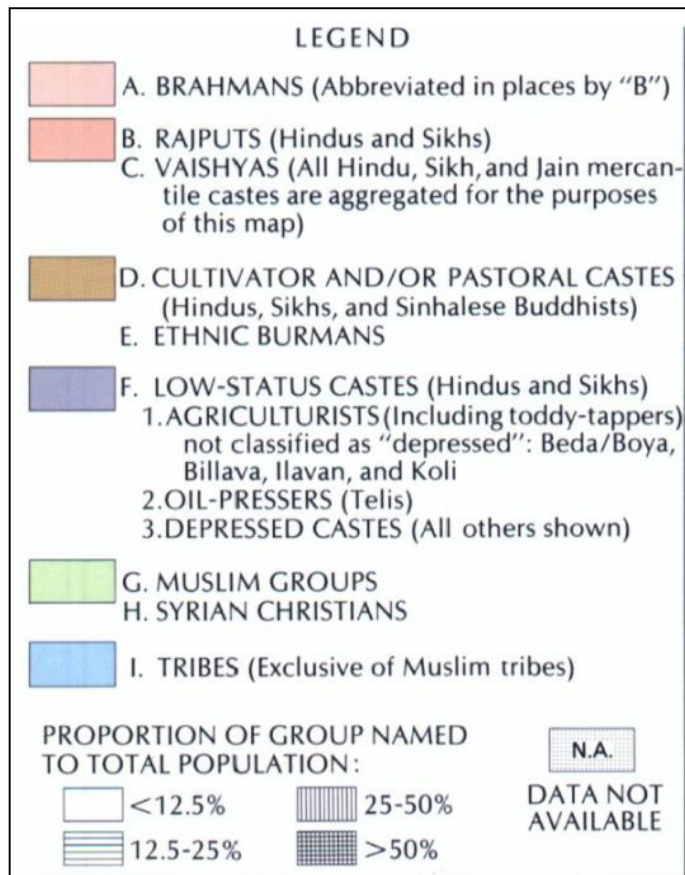


Source: Schwartzberg, Joseph E. *A Historical Atlas of South Asia*, from <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/maps/>, accessed on 05 October, 2013.

Map 5.2: 1931 Census focusing *Kapus*



Source: Schwartzberg, Joseph E. *A Historical Atlas of South Asia*, from <http://dsal.uchicago.edu/maps/>, accessed on 05 October, 2013.



Section 1: *Kapus*-The articulations from the Occident

The subject of caste has been interpreted right from the British period (Bayly S 1999), or even prior to that. There is an extensive discussion on the subject of caste, which was enhanced during the colonial rule especially through the better communication facilities, cheap paper, etc. The episteme during the British period can be classified into three thematic approaches-anthropological, administrative and theosophical/missionary. The Madras Presidency or specifically the Andhra's social structure was mostly articulated in these three categories, within an administrative language. Critics pointed out that the administrators, have attempted to define the subject of caste, but ended up in either misinterpreting, or misunderstanding the subject itself, largely because of their occidental orientation, see for instance (Stuart 1891; Francis 1901; Risley 1903; Hutton 1931). The anthropological approaches were articulated through the cultural sphere, whereas the missionaries used a religious approach in defining caste.

The term *Kapu* has been largely defined from administrative approach. Although there are many interpretations, the challenge for the present study has been to make sense of these various interpretations. To start with, H. A. Stuart (1891) in his census report gives a very broad definition to *Kapus* by calling them as 'watchmen' (cited in Thurston 1909: 223). Despite this broad definition, Stuart's definition has some limitations, such as the caste occupation, and the nature of their work has not been included in the definition. Stuart also does not explicitly specify for whom the *Kapus* are acting as watchmen, whether for people, or for the agricultural field, or something else. These are a few questions left unanswered. The Second definition which is much narrower compared to Stuart has come from Edgar Thurston who defines it as a "common telugu word for a ryot or for cultivator" (1909:227). Thurston's attempt was much sharper than that of Stuart's definition, when he says; *Kapus* were attached either with cultivation, or with the land, which is closer to the contemporary reality. Then, even Thurston's definition has certain limitations. Firstly, during the colonial period, in fact even now, many of the castes are attached with the agriculture, castes such as *Reddys*, *Kammam Velamas*, and several other castes, whether they are from Other Backward Castes (OBCs) or from the lower castes (even Dalits) who also practice agriculture. Secondly, Thurston has undermined the *changes/diversifications* at

the occupational level during the colonial period. The third one, which is an important one, missed out by Thurston was to present the differences between *Reddys* and *Kapus*; this has certainly furthered the ambiguity pertaining to these two castes. Thurston cannot be singled out in holding responsible, in-fact, this particular limitation is apparent across the European scholars who have attempted to study the castes in Andhra.

Thirdly, W. Francis (1901), another British administrator, (census commissioner) explained the term-*Kapus*, in relation to the other peasant castes- *Kammas*, *Kapus* or *Reddys*, *Velamas*. He opines that the above-mentioned castes are all *Kapus*, and they all closely resembled with each other specifically in terms of their appearance or custom. Francis observation has a Dravidian plank and he observes the castes through the lens of the Dravidian and Aryans (Francis 1901:94). If one deciphers Francis statement, it can be said that, it is partly established on facts, partly on assumptions, for instance, inclusion of *Kammas* in the Dravidian family is not yet traced, and many of his colleagues are sceptical about the origins of *Kammas*⁴. Secondly, the contentious point in Francis definition is that, during 1871 census (the first census carried by the British in the Madras Presidency) itself, the *Kammas* were not included under the rubric of *Kapu* category. Until 1931 census, there was the practice of grouping several of the peasant castes, particularly *Kapus*, *Velamas* and *Reddys* from Andhra and several of the castes from Tamilnadu, under the broad rubric of ‘*Kapu*’ category. However, *Kammas* were never part of this category. They were listed separately who sought an independent identity. One thing that is common across Francis, Stuart and Thurston’s definitions, is that the *Kapus*, are either associated with agriculture or land related activities. This ambiguity about the term *Kapu* has prevailed for a very long period, in fact it is continuing. What becomes clear with the colonial historiography is that the *Kapus* are associated with farming. Though the colonial scholarship made it clear that the *Kapus* are into farming, but they never demarcated the distinctiveness between *Kapus* and other peasant castes, especially of the *Reddys*.

⁴ Few of the historians, says that the *Kammas* have either migrated from the North especially UP, Bihar, or have affiliations with the Kurmi caste, or they also say that the *Kammas* got assimilated with the *Kayastas* who also migrated from UP and Bihar to Andhra during the Muslim period. The above explanation in terms of *Kammas* can be substantiated with two reasons, one, both the *Kayasta* and *Kammas* occupations in the beginning (earliest days) was scribing, secondly, in present days, *Kammas* use the title ‘*chowdari*’ which is also present in several parts of North India. The title *Chowdari* has come from the term *chout*, one of the tax names during the Mughal period.

During the pre-colonial period, the Andhra's social structure and the role of *Kapus* was different from that of the contemporary period. In the present day, the *Kapus* mostly reside in the Godavari delta, whereas the *Reddys* are limited to the Rayalaseema⁵, but during the pre-colonial period, especially during the *Reddyrajyam* times, (*Reddy* kingdom-14th -15th C) *Reddys* had control over most parts of the Andhra, infact; one of their capital was *Rajamahendravaram*, (the present Rajahmundry)⁶. Hence, there are many possibilities for the British to assume that the *Kapus* and *Reddys* are the same and hence used both these castes interchangeably. However, their assumption was partially true, because both were engaged in agriculture. *Reddys* being big farmers (farming the *zamindari* or ruler's lands), whereas the *Kapus* were engaged with the local village lands (Hanumantha Rao BSL 2012). It is this subtle variation between these two castes, which could not be located by the British intelligentsia for a very long period. Selig Harrison makes this observation

...the Madras Census report of 1911 has (though) mentioned Kapu and Reddys as synonymous terms, but it is far from the truth. Reddys are also agricultural caste along with the Kammas and Velamas, but *Kapus* cannot be called Reddys", he also says that "the terminology is confusing because the term Kapu is loosely applied to other non-Brahmin peasant castes at that time (1956: 68).

It is clear through the writings of the colonial scholarship that they either have created the ambiguity regarding the term *Kapu* or did not make efforts to unravel certain pre-existing ambiguities. Therefore, an attempt is made here to examine the ambiguity regarding the *Kapus* by mapping a social history.

To sum up, *Kapus* were 'a group of people who were attached with the land or agriculture'. They (*Kapus*) are cultivating the land in a small proportion and participating in the wars as and when required. It was during this time, the caste was

⁵ In addition, parts of Nellore and Prakasam districts and in Telangana. In the 1871 census, the term Kapu was used as a generic term to refer to all cultivators except Kamma caste. Until 1931 census, the practice of clubbing several non-Kamma cultivating castes, particularly Kapus and Reddys, continued, despite the fact that a strong Reddy identity had emerged by then (Pathasarathy 2001: 118). Even now in certain areas of Coastal region, especially Nellore, Prakasham and in Rayalaseema region, Reddys are referred to as Kapus, in their informal usage

⁶ The other two are-Kondaveedu (in present Guntur District) and Addanki (Prakasam District). The historical part was presented in both the second and the third chapters.

taking a shape, primarily in the form of *jati*. The above definition, which clearly indicates that ‘group of people’ who were attached with the agriculture, called as *Kapus*. The *Kapu* category has departed from ‘Class’ to that of ‘Caste’ structure during this period. It has taken place not in the form of ‘Varna’, but in the form of ‘*jati*’. The ‘*jati*’, which was in an infant form during or after the collapse of the *Kakatiya* dynasty (will be discussed in the next section), has systematically been consolidated during the British period. This consolidation can be attributed to the policies initiated by the colonial regime, especially, the census reports.

Mapping *Kapus* Historically: Pre-Colonial period

There was not much of difference in terms of the several articulations pertaining to the *Kapus* even during the pre-colonial period. In fact, many of the articulations, which prevailed during the colonial period, can be located from the pre-colonial narratives.

If one examines the social structure of Andhra Pradesh, especially in terms of peasant castes, there are four peasant castes Andhra Pradesh- *Reddy*, *Kamma*, *Velama* and *Kapu*. According to the Brahmanical Varna system, they fall under the fourth category of ‘*Shudra*’. Before getting into the understanding of *Kapus*, we will first talk about the distinction between different peasant castes of Andhra Pradesh, such as *Reddys*, *Kammas*, and *Velamas*. To begin with the *Reddys*, who associated with the *rastrakutas* who ruled the Andhra from 8th AD to 10th AD (753-982). The etymological roots of the term ‘*Reddy*’ can be traced back to the ‘*rattadi*’, ‘*rattodi*’, ‘*rastrakuta*’, etc. The term ‘*Reddy*’, used primarily as a title associated with agriculture and land. The decline of the *rastrakuta* kingdom has prompted *Reddys* to join with the *Kakatiya* dynasty, and when even the *Kakatiya* dynasty declined, the *Reddys* declared independence. Thus, the formation of *Reddy Rajyam* (1325-1448) took place, and it has spread across the Coastal Andhra⁷.

The *Kammas* founded the *Kammarastram*, by *jayapa senani*, but it was substantially explained by the *musunuri prolaya*. Initially, they were scribes in the *Kakatiya* dynasty, later on turned to military and established their own dynasties especially after

⁷ For an elaborate discussion, please see, Mallampalli Somasekhara Sharma, 2001, *Reddyrajya charitra*, Potti Sriramulu Telugu University, Hyderabad.

the decline of the *Kakatiyas*⁸. *Velamas*⁹ were confined to *Rachakonda* and *Devarakonda* at one point of time. One pertinent thing, which is significant in relation to the peasant castes, is that due to the collapse of *Kakatiya* dynasty in the year 1323, among the 72 *Nayakas* under the *Kakatiya* dynasty, these three- *Velamanadu*, *Kammanadu*, and *Reddyrajyam* were very powerful, prominent and consolidated during the British period in Andhra and the Nizam period of Telangana.

The *Kapus* are attached with the land, primarily as ryots, cultivators, and as watchmen. During the colonial period or even prior to it, *Kapus* were characterised primarily in these three terms. To define them, more precisely, they are cultivators/farmers, specifically a person who oversees the farm, or who protects it, secondly, they were also into army, primarily to protect the state, and thirdly, who practiced agriculture as well as served the army, especially during the *Nayaka* period. BSL Hanumantha Rao (1995), a historian, while explaining the term *Kapu*, says that the “people who are into cultivation, or farming, but who do not belong to *Kammas*, *Reddys* and *Velamas* are known as *Kapus*”.

The rise of agricultural growth can be attributed to the collapse of Roman Empire in a large way, especially during the middle of 3rd century AD. Agriculture has certainly overcome the trade and industry in a big way (ibid, 1995). The collapse of Roman Empire has certainly halted the trade and Industry. As a replacement to these activities, agriculture was intensely promoted by several of the dynasties in India, or in Andhra, from the period of *Ikshvakas* (3rd AD to 12th AD) who ruled Andhra and this process got intensified during colonial period. During the *Kakatiya* dynasty, many occupational groups emerged out of agriculture. These groups were not only engaged in agriculture but also served the military, which in turn influenced the discourse of politics and political decisions. It was during this time, one can trace the ‘*jati*’ elements, though in subtle way, especially at the end of *Kakatiya* dynasty period.

Apart from those who owned land and acquired military power, several ‘other’ groups were left only with the day-to-day farming activity. Therefore, these groups lagged

⁸Places such as Narasaraopet, Guntur, Sattenapalli, Vinukonda and Palnadu are included in Kammanadu. Please see, BSL Hanumantha Rao, 1995, Bouddham-Andhram, Telugu University publications, Hyderabad.

⁹ It has come from the place called ‘Velamanadu’, comprises of Tenali, Repalle, Bapatla

behind in representing themselves at the political level. Thus, they have remained only as local farmers or agricultural workers, and could not achieve political power or could not mobilise the necessary resources. *Kapus* can be located as part of this ‘other’ group who used to cultivate the village land, called as ‘squireens’, whereas the Reddys who looked after the state land, were called as ‘state farmers’. This particular distinction between the *Reddys* and the *Kapus* was absent in the colonial historiography. In many instances, for many years, the *Kapus*, a group of cultivators were only supporting the power holders, namely *Kammas*, *Reddys* and *Velamas*. This aspect has certainly may have denied the opportunities for *Kapus* during British period.

Kapus despite being similar to that of other peasant castes economically they lagged behind in acquiring the political power. However, in Godavari districts, the *Kapus* were land lords, a few were *Zamindars*. This group of *Kapus* played a prominent role during the British period. They also have taken up tax collecting jobs, such as, the *Karanam* posts in the Godavari districts. The families, who were collecting the taxes under the *Karanam*, started using the ‘*Naidu*’ as suffix to their names, especially in the Godavari and Krishna deltas. In present context, using the *Naidu* as suffix by the *Kapus* is widespread across the state, which is part of their Mobilisational strategies, which discussed later. The etymology of the term *Naidu* has come from the term *Nadu* means a place, or it also might have come during the *Kakatiya* period, when they were appointed as the *Nayakas* for 72 *nadus*, but it was only during the colonial period, they have gained prominence asserting their title on par with the *Kammas* and *Reddys*¹⁰.

By the time, colonial regime has taken over the political power in the coastal Andhra around the middle of 18th C caste was transforming itself, from the ‘*Varna*’ to the *jati*. The idea and constitution of caste based on occupational status was a pre-colonial

¹⁰ Even Thurston also indicates this point in his works, saying that “the social position among the chief cultivating castes in the Godavari-Krishna areas seemed to be as follows. *Velamas* were called *Velama Doras* and followed by *Kammas* called as *Kammavaru* and were followed by *Kapus* who were called simply *Kapus* without any title”. (1901:341). Here he makes it clear that the *Naidu* title used by *Kapus* is only during the colonial period phenomenon. Secondly, though it is not necessary here but certainly relevant, that even *Kammas* in the parts of Rayalaseema region, especially Chittoor uses the *Naidu* as suffix to their names. BSL Hanumantha Rao attributes this to the political turmoil, which took place after the decline of *Kakatiya* dynasty, because of the Muslims, and to the conflict between the *Reddys* and *Velamas*, several of the *Kammas* have migrated to Hampi, (*Vijayanagara* Empire’s capital) as political asylums, and there, they became chiefdoms. Thus, in some parts of Rayalaseema, especially Chittoor, we witness, *Kammas* also using the title *Naidu*. Please see, BSL Hanumantha Rao, 81pg

phenomenon. However, the consolidation of these castes into several jatis certainly took place in a big way during the colonial period. Even, Nicholas Dirks (2002) also agrees to it while tracing the modern forms of caste during the colonial period.

So far, we have tried to present the *Kapu* narrative from both the colonial and pre-colonial perspectives. While presenting it, we have tried to trace the genealogy of the term-*Kapu*, by saying that, it denotes a group of people who were into agriculture, which has a class structure, especially during the pre-colonial period, and in the early phase of colonial regime. Then, it also had certain elements of *jati* in a loose form during that period. It was consolidated only after the British have started controlling the political power of the Coastal Andhra, which was part of the then Madras Presidency.

As we have understood the colonial and pre-colonial narratives in terms of *Kapu*, in the next section, we tried to present the perceptions of *Kapus* i.e. ‘representation from within’, or ‘self-representation’. It is essential to throw some light on how *Kapus* have depicted themselves within the realm of history, as well as their mechanisms in locating themselves in the broad caste history, and particularly within the historiography of castes in Andhra Pradesh. In the process of doing this, we have classified the nature of *Kapus* into three: colonial, pre-colonial and the third one on the representations by the *Kapus*. Together, this narrative will present a holistic picture of *Kapus*. The next section, deals with the epistemology of *Kapus*.

The Symbolic Imagery of *Kapus*- A Narrative from within

This section, while presenting certain claims of *Kapus* about their history, does it critically and presents it from a sociological point of view. It is like critically interpreting the interpretations. This approach, i.e. interpreting or understanding the subject, is very much rooted within the Weberian tradition in sociology. Weber (1948) who has advocated this approach says that the sociology’s principal agenda needs to be interpreting the subjects by completely detaching from it¹¹.

¹¹ This is an important methodological tool for Weber in his ‘Interpretative Sociology’, in the due course, the term ‘*Verstehen*’ (understanding) played a significant role in Weber’s both theory and method. Please see. Gerth and Mills, 1948, (1991), From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology, Routledge, especially pages-56-57.

This section also pushes the scope of *Kapus*, little further to the pre-colonial period, which brings some new dimensions to the subject of *Kapus*. The representation of *Kapus* is presented primarily in three ways: political, social and cultural. However, this section emphasizes the ‘social’ and the cultural aspects, whereas the next two chapters lays out their political representations.

Much has been written on *Kapus* by *Kapus*, using the common thread through the symbolic representations of *Krishnadevaraya*. *Kapus* construct their history from the time of *Krishnadevaraya* of Vijayanagara Empire. For most of them, attributing the caste origins to the Vijayanagara Empire is an undisputed issue. These claims and self-representations were quite evident during the fieldwork in East Godavari district, and parts of Vijayawada. Many of the *Kapus* tried to establish a link between the Vijayanagara Empire and the *Kapus*. By claiming *Krishnadevaraya*, they also claim *Kshatriya* status. The entire narration presented by the *Kapus* in their self-representation elevates their status¹². The claims have been about the elite status in their articulation¹³. Whether, it is in terms of claiming the *Zamindarihood*, or associating themselves with the dynasties, or even working as chieftons, etc. In-fact, one of the *Kapu* writers claimed that “the *Kapus* were rulers, always” (Ravichandra Yerramsetti 2011: 45).

The ‘symbolic imagery’ deployed by the *Kapus* is primarily to enhance their social status, and in due course to achieve political power. One can see this association in two directions: one, which is related to the ‘dialectics of symbolism’. By associating the celebrating figure, it is easy to construct one’s history, rather than starting from the scratch. In addition to that, it is also easily available platform to avail the elite status, by associating with that particular symbol, here it is *Krishnadevaraya*. This phenomena, is

¹² While searching for the sources of structures of power, Weber uses the category ‘Status’ along with the Class and Party. Please see, Gerth and Mills, (1948)

¹³Please see, Sarasvati, (year not mentioned), *Sree Kapu Vamsha Prakasini*, self-published, (place not mentioned), Srikanth Kumar Chillagattu, 2007, Kapulu, Samajika Rajakiya Vishleshana (Socio Political Analysis), Akila Bharata Kapu Yuvajana Sangam, Vijayawada. Ravichandra Yerramsetti, 2011, Kapu Garjana, Atmala Ioni Antaranga Vishleshana, published by author, Guntur. Sree Tanaya, 2006, Kapu, Telaga, Balija Kula KalpaVruksham, Chittor. Padmarao Rayal Battarusetti, (year not mentioned), Sri Krishnadevarayulu, Balija Kapu Kshatriyude, Arunodaya Printers, Vijayawada. A thorough reading of other castes history also indicates this point, such as on Kamma’s by Kottabavaiah Chowadari, 1962, Kammavari Charitra, Pavuluri Publishers, Guntur, on Gouds by Adinarayana murthy Goud Buddiga, 1993, Samagra Goudulu Charitra, Sarada Publications, East Godavari, Andhra Pradesh and also a history by Yerukula’s by Veeraiah, Palavarthi, (year not mentioned), *Yerukula*, Andhra Rastra Adimajati Sevaka Sangh, Vijayawada,

not new in Andhra Pradesh, many of the castes attempted this formula in articulating their caste status as high and rulers. For instance, *Kammas* associate them with the *Kakatiya* dynasty; *Velamas* with that *Bobbili Zamindar* and the *Reddys* with the *Reddyrajyam* as their lineages. Similarly, *Kapus*, associate with the larger royal figure, *Krishnadevaraya*. Secondly, by attaching to a particular object, it is also an attempt to construct an idiom for the caste. It is within this context, *Kapus* also attached themselves with the *Krishnadevaraya*. Though there were many claims by the *Kapus*, apart from *Krishnadevaraya* or the Vijayanagara Empire, which were unverifiable or untraceable, yet their symbolic attachment remains intact even today.

A critical introspection in this matter brings us to different approaches adopted by several castes. In a way *Kapus* also located or interpreted themselves within the broad approach of *puranas*, mythological claims which were widely adopted by many of the other castes. Secondly, many castes presented their self representation narratives in tune with the Brahmanical philosophy to claim higher social status. This has been done across the castes and even among few tribes. This is nothing but, to use MN Srinivas's phrase, the sanskritisation process, where you tend to associate with the dignified occupations and place one's caste on par with other respected castes, and finally sanskritise your caste by changing certain habits related to food, dress, customs, and marriage practices. The process of locating themselves within the social hierarchical system has not been limited to the *Kapus*. It did take place among several castes, across India, for instance, in the southern India, castes like *Kamma*, *Velama*, *Reddy*, *Vanniyar*, *Vellala*, etc, and from North India, castes like *Kurmi*, *Jats*, etc also have claimed the Kshatriya status during the caste census introduced by the colonial regime.

To sum-up the above three dimensions pertaining to the articulations of *Kapus*, it is evident that the effort through self-representation has been to identify themselves with 'upper caste' higher status, in tune with the Hindu social hierarchical system. A critical interpretation of claims made by *Kapu* association indicates that *Kapus* have been seeking 'upper caste' status on par with say *Reddys* who were 'state farmers' unlike *Kapus* who were local farmers. Traditionally, *Kapus* were associated with the land, much similar to that of other peasant castes in Andhra Pradesh, but the question remains whether they were land owners, or labourers or tenants? To answer this puzzle, firstly, the distinction between the *Kapus* and *Reddys*, BSL Hanumantha Rao (2012),

says, that the *Kapus* were farming particularly the village lands, which is in a small proportion, whereas the *Reddys* were farming the *Zamindari* or rulers lands. Secondly, there was also a transformation among *Kapus*, who has turned from tenant to that of land owner especially during the British period itself. Thirdly, there was another major transformation among *Kapus*, was during the post-Independence, especially through the policies implemented by the Indian government, policies such as the Green revolution, Land reforms, Tenancy Act, *Zamindari* abolition Act.

The three approaches deployed to understand the genealogy of *Kapus*, presents that the articulations from the *Kapus* wanted to identify themselves with the *Kshatriyas*, on par with other peasant castes in Andhra Pradesh, whereas during the pre-colonial period, we have witnessed that the term *Kapu* is just a group of people associated with agriculture. In the following section, the spatial dimensions, - concentration of *Kapus*, their occupational differences, and that of politicisation' of the term-*Kapu* in recent times will be discussed.

Section 2: Spatial Location and its Significance

The *Kapus* are largely concentrated in Godavari Delta Region. The Godavari delta is rich in grain production and demographically dense till the early twentieth century with Rajahmundry as its pivotal city. The colonial writings have demarcated the Godavari and Krishna rivers as very important for cultivation and for trading respectively. *Machilipatnam* (Krishna) enjoyed a good reputation in maritime trade, whereas the Godavari delta was significant for its agriculture. Caste accounts through administrative records reflect large variations because of the complex social structure in concrete situations. First, the proportion of *Brahmins* was higher in the Krishna delta and hence they secured almost all the village *Karnam*'s posts, and therefore were very influential. In Godavari, *Brahmins* had "less influence in religious and social matters over other castes" (Hemingway 1915: 53). This could be one reason why non-Brahmins particularly *Kapus* occupied the *Karanam* post in East Godavari district thus wielding the social power.

The 'spatial' factors help us understand the rise of prosperity that is largely associated with the castes. This is evident if one looks at the relatively prosperous regions such as coastal Andhra, Coimbatore which is more to do with the castes associated with it

rather than merely spatial factors. Several studies have also indicated this point that the prosperity of space also influences the prosperity of castes. While studying the then Madras Presidency, Washbrook, (1977, 1981, 1994) Cambridge historian, also remarks about the prosperity of *Reddy* and *Kammas* in the Coastal Andhra; he attributes the prosperity of *Kammas* and *Reddys*, to the Green Revolution which took place during late 60's. He also stressed that the economic power achieved by these two castes is primarily due to the Green Revolution (Hemingway, 1915)¹⁴. However, other historians such as BSL Hanumantha Rao (2012), Mallampalli Somasekhar Sharma (2004) contests this idea saying that attributing prosperity of say, *Kammas* and *Reddys* only to green revolution is reductionist. They indicate that several historical factors during colonial and pre-colonial period need to be brought into the discussion to analyze the prosperity of *Kammas* and *Reddys*. However, there seemed to be a broad agreement amongst different scholars that social and spatial factors need to be seen in tandem to analyse the processes of wealth accumulation.

A careful analysis indicates that it is *Kapus* in Godavari districts who were able to reap the maximum benefits¹⁵ due to green revolution, *yeleru* canal and rise of regional political party (TDP). The surplus gained from the Green Revolution was re-invested in various entrepreneurial activities by the *Kapus*. In fact the *Kapus* not only acquired lands, ventured into agriculture related businesses to eventually become propertied classes in both Rajahmundry and in Kakinada, the two major commercial urban centres in East Godavari District.

Occupational diversification

'Occupation' is one of the important factors to identify the role and status of a caste in the society¹⁶. A group of people who engaged themselves in agriculture were called as the *Kapus*. Over a period of time, these groups have fragmented themselves, diversified their occupations and subsequently their social relationships got constituted through marriage and, kinship. This feature Robert Hardgrave (1968) calls it as a 'fission',

¹⁵ This is not to deny that Kamma and Reddy castes were not beneficiaries of green revolution but their growth has much large historical antecedents because of their access to the resources even during colonial and pre-colonial period.

¹⁶ Some of the scholars strongly advocate the occupation as the basis for the formation of caste.

which was consolidated structurally in Indian society. In fact, Hardgrave points out that the colonial regime contributed significantly to this process.

When one tries to recount the occupational diversification of the *Kapu* caste, the writings from both the British as well as Indian scholars indicate that the earliest occupational feature of *Kapus* was to do with farming or with the army. Whenever there is a war, the *Kapus* used to assist the army, along with other castes, and return to agriculture once the assigned task is over. BSL Hanumantha Rao (1995:78) also says that they have embraced both military as well as farming, only till the Vijayanagar Empire (1750s). Subsequently, when the colonial regime took over the political power, it has certainly reduced the peasant castes role in the military. It was during this time, many of the peasant castes, along with the *Kapus* concentrated on the agriculture. Gradually, they have also moved to different occupations, provided by the British, but their main concentration was the agriculture. The contemporary scenario is much more complex than the past in respect to the peasant castes occupations, and more specifically *Kapus*. The British period contributed significantly to the complex occupational structure.

The British replaced peasant castes the lower caste in the military recruitment in order to have more control for the army leadership. The *Kapus*, along with other peasant castes- Kammas had to move away from the military jobs, but did not leave the land. As one of my respondents from Vijayawada compares these peasant castes, especially the Kammas, with the Sikh families of Punjab, as each family sends at-least one male child to the army, similarly even the peasant castes also send at-least one child to the farming¹⁷. The *Kapus* in East Godavari embraced agriculture, as small, medium farmers and as tenants. The field data indicated that while large proportion of land is concentrated in the hands of *Kapus*, they are all small and medium farmers. The rise of 'small farmer' is a general phenomenon across regions and castes in the state of Andhra Pradesh (Vijay R and Srinivasulu 2013). In rural areas of the East Godavari district, especially in the vicinity of Rajahmundry, *Prattipadu*, *Jaggampet*, most of them are into agriculture, or agriculture related activities. Due to the socio-historical factors, *Kapus* got deeply entrenched into agriculture from the colonial period and got

¹⁷ Interview with Subrahmanyam (pseudonym) in Vijayawada at his office on 20-07-2010.

consolidated with the green revolution in the post-Independence period. The deeper association with the land for *Kapus* is comparable with that of *Kammas* in the region. Paddy cultivation and its labour practices played a predominant role within agriculture. Gradually with the intervention of the British; the paddy crop got converted from the subsistence crop to commercial crop (Rao GN 1985)¹⁸. Along with the paddy, it was sugar cane; banana, coconut, etc became more prominent in the region. These crops also varies from place to place in East Godavari district, for instance, in the upland (*metta*) areas, it is the commercial crops such as cotton, chilli, are prominently grown along with banana and sugar cane¹⁹. Whereas, in the Delta, banana is the main crop, while sugar cane, paddy, and coconut, are also grown. *Kapus* generate surplus through paddy and re-invest in the coconut, banana. Especially the coconut business is thriving for *Kapus* in the *Konaseema*. *Kapus* own much of the coconut fields in this sub-region- *Konaseema*. In the urban areas, the occupations of the *Kapus* are scattered, and fragmented. They plunged into those occupations which have come up predominantly during the British period such as government jobs (supervisory staff in health and sanitation sector, administrative jobs), small scale business²⁰. In fact this was part of the new culture brought by the British in *mofussil* towns.

Kapus, a tenancy caste?

Due the spatial advantages, few families among *Kapus*, in the East Godavari district, became *Zamindars*. The *Kapu Zamindari* families may not be as prominent as the *Velama*, or *Kamma Zamindari* families, in the Coastal Andhra, but they also controlled the lands and played an important role in the district²¹. These families, for instance, ‘*Veeravaram Zamindar (Thota family)*, *Veeravallipalem Zamindar (Mudragada family)*, *Vella (Vattikooti) Burugupalli (Chegondi)*, etc were some of prominent *Zamindars* among *Kapus* in the district. Among them, *Thota*, *Mudragada* families are

¹⁸ G N Rao, 1985, Transition from subsistence to Commercialized Agriculture: A Study of Krishna District of Andhra, c. 1850-1900, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XX, No.25&26, Review of Agriculture, June, pp.22-29

¹⁹ Crops can be divided into four types: Field crops, Horticulture crops (fruits and vegetables) Plantation and Fodder crops. Field crops include- Paddy, Sugarcane, Cotton, Greengram and Blackgram. Horticulture crops include- Mango, Banana and Lemon, whereas in vegetables, Chillies, Bhendi, Brinjal, etc. Plantation crops include-Coconut, Cashew and Oil palm and lastly fodder crops includes sericulture, grazing land. East Godavari comprises both Delta and Upland where paddy, sugarcane, mango, banana, chillies, coconut and cashews are largely grown.

²⁰ Several of the journals and books published by the *Kapus* emphasizes, in-fact, glorifies, this aspect by listing out the names of officers who are into different government jobs, both central and the state.

²¹ The list of the *Zamindars* in East Godavari was given in the third chapter, where none of *Kapus* figures.

into active politics even now in the district, as well as in the state politics. Apart from the *Zamindars*, large number of *Kapu* landlords, compares themselves with that of *Zamindars*, for instance, *parupula* family from *Prattipadu*, *Polisetti* family from *Gudala*, *Yalla (Bendamurlanka)*, *Gurram (Bendamurlanka)*, *Pantham (Gaddanapalli)*, *Metla (Komagiripatnam)*, *Basava (Goditippa)*, *Jakkampudi (Adurru)*. It is these landlords, along with the *Zamindars* who have controlled the East Godavari's economy, in a big way over a period of time. When there was power of transformation, during Independence, many of them were benefitted with huge tracts of lands; they were not affected either with the land ceiling, or with the land reforms, but certainly got affected positively through the Green Revolution. This Green Revolution has certainly allowed them to generate surplus from agriculture in a big way and they have re-invested the surplus again on agriculture and very much within the district, in a very small way, they also have invested in the Vishakapatnam city. It is to assert, again, that the landed gentry among *Kapus* were limited to few families, and these families were scattered across the district, especially in the 'sub-plan' area, Delta, as well as in the Upland (*Metta*).

A small note on the important *Kapu* families in the district, will act like an impetus for the question, which the present section is trying to probe: the status of *Kapus* in agriculture or in the agrarian economy. A note on the *Kapu* families who are controlling the politico-economic dynamics in the East Godavari district is essential to understand the presence of *Kapus* to understand the political economy of district. There are five families, at present, who are controlling the East Godavari politics, largely. They are: *Thota* family, *Pantham* family, *Mudragada* family, *Jakkampudi* family, and *Metla* families respectively.

To begin with the *Thota* family, who were *Zamindars*, as noted earlier, has spread across the sub-regions in the district-Delta, Upland, *Konaseema*. They have expanded the politico-economic factors by focusing on the marriage and kinship alliances, which is much similar to the *Kamma* and *Reddy* in the Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema, indicated by Carolyn Elliot (1970). The *Thota* family have marriage alliances with the *Pantham* family, *Metla* family, importantly. Their economic interests are also diversified. Politically, the *Thota* family is very significant and it is reflected in the

electoral politics of the district. This clearly reflects in the electoral history part of this chapter. Their presence in the electoral politics is quite evident (see table no.4.9).

Mudragada family got into limelight at the state level politics with the *Padmanabham*, who had a controversial political stint with several parties-TDP, Congress and with the BJP, but then, the family has a long history. This family has huge tracts of land in *Prattipadu*, and also surrounding the *yeleru canal*. Toomati Doneppa (1986), a historian, attempted to decipher the etymology for the term *Mudragada* in this way; he says that '*gada*' is a corrupt form of '*gadda*' which means, '*kota goda*', (fort wall), there used to be many '*kota godas*', primarily to protect the fort, and this name was acquired by people who have fought the war standing on a particular fort wall.

These narratives indicate that few propertied classes among *Kapus* have been controlling the economy. Also these families are inter-connected in more than one way, either through marriage, or economic or even political alliances. For instance, the *Thota* family has marital relationship with *Metla* family; *Pantham* family has marriage ties with the *Thota* family, etc. This is how they consolidated their social networks to forge economic and political control over the sub-regions in the district. What is interesting about the *Kapus* is, this phenomenon is not widespread, rather limited to few families, thus allowing for a class to emerge within the *Kapus* in the district.

While the above narrative is about a small proportion of the (ex) zamindars or landlord classes among the *Kapus*, most of the *Kapus* are, either small or medium farmers, or tenants. If we trace this historically, the *Kapus* have benefitted due to the interventions of the British policies, both at the level of agrarian and revenue policies. When the British have acquired the control over the lands in the Coastal Andhra, especially the *haveli* lands, they have appointed few peasant castes to cultivate that land under the tenancy of the British state. In Godavari districts, it was the *Kapus*, who were numerically dominant, even at that time,²² started controlling the *haveli* lands, but only as tenants, owned by the British state simultaneously, *Kapus* also started cultivating the *Zamindari* Lands, owned by the *Zamindars*. It is indeed necessary to emphasize the role

²² According to the 1902 census, they are 15% approximately, but there are two problems with this number, firstly, it includes both Krishna and Guntur, secondly, population of Reddys were not counted separately, instead included them in the Kapu list. Please see, Census Reports, 1902, Madras Presidency,

of 'majority' which has played a significant role in obtaining the access to resources, both material, and institutional.

Now during the Post Independence period, the *Kapus* are largely concentrated on agriculture and its related occupations. They are also primarily the tenants²³. In gradual progression, they have moved to other enterprises, such as, cinema halls, small, marginal industries, business etc. Specifically, most of them were into the coconut business, which is the biggest 'industry' after the paddy cultivation in the district. The coconut industry, which can be diversified into many lucrative businesses is the important business investment for many of the *Kapus*, especially in the *Konaseema* sub-region, particularly, *Amalapuram*, *Rajolu* divisions. Few of them also got into politics²⁴, It was only after the formation of the TDP, the aspirations of the Godavari *Kapus*, especially, it is the second generation 'neo-rich' which have attempted to achieve the mainstream political power, aimlessly. According to one of my respondents, who says that the

... 'neo-rich' of *Kapus* are in bedazzled with the situation prevailed during late 1980's. While sharing an anecdote, he says that, 'a neo-rich Godavari Kapu caste middle aged person told him that Dasari (Narayana Rao) will become Chief Minister, Ranga (Mohana Ranga) will be his Home minister and Mudragada (Padmanabam) will be the Revenue minister in that cabinet'. Though that boy's dreams were not materialized, but Danny explains this failure as the lack of 'four pillar factor'-finance, agriculture, culture and crime. It is to be noted that among the four, the *Kapus* were managed to achieve the last one-crime, at-least that it is the impression by the general public against the *Kapus*, especially after 1989 Coastal Andhra Riots, (post-Ranga riots) (Interview with Danny, in Hyderabad on 16 October 2013).

Capitalist growth in agriculture has not only contributed to significant changes in the economy but also in the social and cultural domains in coastal Andhra. Several scholars such as Daniel Thorner (1967), Carol Upadhyya (1988; 1997), G N Rao (1988), have

²³ A few recent studies also indicated that the majority of the farmers in the East Godavari district are tenants and several of them were medium farmers (see for instance, Ramanamurthy, 2011).

²⁴ In terms of Political entry of the *Kapus*, N.Venugopal, an editor of a Telugu journal, says that it was because of the decentralization of democratic powers, but mostly at the second level. Not that the *Kapus* were not present in the political sphere prior to the decentralization, but their presence is minimal. During the later period British period, it was only the economically dominant castes which were engaged in the politics, such as Kammas and Brahmins, a king of leisure class, politics at that, even now, time was meant for the leisure class. Interview with N.Venugopal in Hyderabad on 16-10-2013.

offered explanations from different perspectives. Upadhya C (1997) says, that the agrarian policies in post-Independent period certainly allowed for the emergence of the 'Kulaks'. She specifically has brought out many of the changes pertaining to the 'actors' investment and consumption strategies which are aimed at the accumulation and monopolisation of social, cultural, symbolic and economic capital" (Upadhya C 1997: 169). She also observed that "through such accumulation and by converting one type of capital into another, actors are able to construct class boundaries, promote internal cohesion, and establish hegemony" (ibid).

Upadhya's observations, though largely related to the Kammas from the Krishna delta, not much is different with the *Kapus* from Godavari delta. This entire growth trajectory has certainly led to the caste consciousness among *Kapus*, which took many shapes especially during 80's, which will be discussed in the later part of the chapter. Similarly, Daniel Thorner (1967) observing the Godavari delta, both pre and post Green Revolution period, calls it the "most affluent society". The *Kapus* who are predominant in East Godavari have taken advantage of Green Revolution, subsequently expanded their interests, and diversified their surplus economy into several entrepreneurial domains. It was during this time that they launched themselves into the coconut business which now turned into a huge industry. The *Kapus* from the *Konaseema*, or specifically, from *Amalapuram*, *Razole* mandals, are into coconut business, which has branched into several sub-domains- ropes, coconut, etc. In the upland sub-region, places like, *Prattipadu*, *Jaggampet*, *Kakinada*, *Kapus* has mostly opted for the sugarcane, primarily because the *Yeleru* canal flows through these mandals.

The *Yeleru* canal, which came to use during early 1980 has, made significant impact on political sphere in the Godavari district. The *Yeleru* dam was constructed on the *Yeleru* River, in 1982. The main purpose of constructing this dam was to mitigate the floods, later on it got converted into irrigation. This canal also supplies water to the Vishaka steel plant which is 150 km away from the site. In the due course, many of the areas which are surrounding this canal also benefitted with this dam. Most of the agricultural lands around the dam are either owned or controlled by the *Kapus*, who are also numerically significant.

To sum up, we have noted that the *Kapus* in the district have played a predominant role in the *Konaseema* sub region, and in the sub-plan area, which is in between Delta and the Upland, where the majority of *Kapus* reside. The *Konaseema* with its rich and abundant water facility through Godavari River sustained the *Kapus* of the region economically for a very long period in the district, despite the heavy floods regularly. Whereas, the latter- sub-plan area, which is in between the sub-regions of Delta and Upland, has benefitted enormously, after the *Yeleru* project became functional. These two aspects have certainly changed the contours of East Godavari district during 1980's. Therefore in the post-1980s, *Kapus* played a decisive role politically. In the due course, the formation of TDP also provided a substantial space for *Kapus* in the district which altered the district political dynamics. In the next section, we will present the political processes of *Kapus*, and the nature of mobilization including the directions of these consolidations.

Section 3: The Process of Politicisation of Castes

Social Reforms and its impact on Castes

In the post-Independence period *Kapus* have furthered their social and economic power and to some extent become decisive in political realm as well. The rise of social and economic power can be traced back to the colonial period. Social reforms, western education and the Canal irrigation played an immense role in enhancing the consciousness. This consciousness played a crucial role in articulating the inequalities, social apprehensions, caste prejudices, etc.

The first three decades of the 20th century witnessed a wide consciousness among the peasant castes, especially *Reddys* and *Kammas* as well as among the lower sections (especially among *Malas*) of Coastal Andhra region. This period represents the urge and efforts of the newly emerged rich peasantry-comprising non-Brahmin castes like *Kammas*, *Reddys*, to modernize their social and cultural outlook through internal reforms. This was seen as a necessary condition for playing an effective political role in the national movement (Rao K 1999; Ramakrishna V 1993; Baker C 1976; Washbrook D 1976). Even among the *Kapus*, this process can be perceived during this period, but they have only played secondary role to the other peasant castes. This is quite evident in the writings of the scholars who have worked in that period (Baker C 1976;

Washbrook D 1976; Stoddart B 2011). The fact that the role of *Kapus* was not mentioned either during Independence or prior to it, needs a careful scrutiny. One interpretation is that as *Kapus* did not have adequate political representation, their voices were unheard in the literary and academic writings as well. However, *Kapu* in their self-representational narratives (*Kapunadu* association, *Kapumitra* journal, interviews from the study respondents) assert that historical accounts written by other peasant castes have completely ignored *Kapus*. They cite the examples from the writers of Andhra history, such as, *Yetukuru Balaramamurthy*, *Mallampalli Somasekhara Sharma*, *Kambampati Satyanarayana*, who completely undermined the presence of *Kapus*. (Srikanth Ch 2012: 279). Srikanth, who has written extensively on *Kapus*, says that the above scholars never mentioned about the linkage of *Kapus* with that of *Krishnadevaraya*, the ruler of Vijayanagara Empire or even *Chalukyas*.

Caste Consciousness among *Kapus*

The caste consciousness which increased during the colonial period also shaped itself by focusing on the concept of 'unity'. It can be said that this unity, thus, allowed for the formation of 'Caste Associations'. These caste associations are like limbs of a body and if they are strong, the body will be equally strong. Of course, to strive for the development of one caste does not mean to hate other castes. (Rami Reddy D 2000) Whereas Rudolph and Rudolph (1960) opined that, the caste associations play a crucial role in bringing the political democracy to the Indian villages through the familiar and accepted institution of caste. At one level, scholars argue that the caste associations, contribute towards upgrading the position of caste in the social hierarchy, at another level, they point out that it contributes to the dissemination of liberal and democratic ideas to wider sections of society. Rudolph and Rudolph (1960) goes one step further to argue that these caste associations will begin to press for places in the new administrative and educational institutions and for a political representation as well.

With the introduction of modern education (English), communication facilities, canal irrigation, the coastal Andhra has witnessed significant changes at the economic (market facilities expanded, the rise of *mofussil* towns) and political levels. These factors influenced upward social mobility among certain castes in the region. These changes have certainly altered the existing traditional patterns, and allowed for the upward mobility, especially among the upper castes. Rather than reducing the caste

inequalities, this upward social mobility expanded the hierarchies both at the political and social levels. Especially after the construction of dams on Godavari and Krishna rivers, peasant castes, became more powerful on par with the Brahmins (Ramakrishna 1993). It is in this context, C V Subba Rao says that the economic and the social advancement of the non-Brahmin castes and the gradual migration of the Brahmins to the urban areas, leaving the land ownership primarily to the dominant peasant castes, made the latter to enjoy immense social power, comparable to that of *Rajputs* in Northern India²⁵. For Subbarao, the dominant peasant castes mean the *Kammas* in Krishna delta and *Kapus* from the Godavari delta.

Several of the artisan castes, especially the *Viswabrahmins*, and *Komatiss*²⁶ were the first to protest against *Brahman* dominance and ritual supremacy by forming the caste associations in the first decade of twentieth century²⁷. The prime agenda of these caste associations were to uphold the interests of their caste at the level of distribution of education benefits, employment and political representation. Secondly, they attempted to anchor the social reforms at the level of opposing the pre-puberty marriages, discourage dowry, encourage widow marriages, strive to promote unity and a spirit of camaraderie among the caste people. The effort was also to develop its members through improved agricultural practices, cooperative and credit societies and to strive for a proper share in public employment. These caste associations were involved in neither large mass nor have a mass appeal. They were organized independently of one another by the caste elites whom Washbrook (1975) would call the ‘publicists’. The functionalities of these organisations/associations are minimal, infact they represent, on many occasions, the elite of that particular caste. There was no regular functioning or activities of associations, nor were there any attempts to mobilize different strata within the caste (Suri K C 2000; Keiko Y 2008).

²⁵ Cited in Ramakrishna V, 1993.

²⁶ The etymology of the term can be traced to ‘*Gomati*’. Please see, Thurston, Caste and Tribes.

²⁷ In 1903 they have founded *Viswakarma Kuloddharna Sangham* and organized their first conference in 1908 and even they have published a monthly magazine called *prabodhini*. The Komatis found their association, *Arya Vaisya Mahasabha* in 1907. In the name of *Vaisya Patrika* Atmuri Lakshminarasimham, a Komati ran a magazine. They were followed by the formation of several other caste associations between 1907 and 1913, notably the *Adi Velama Sreyobhi Vardhini Sangam* in 1907; *Kamma Jana Mahasabha* in 1910, *Reddi Mahasabha* in 1913 was formed.

Kapus and their Mobilization Patterns

This particular consciousness that emerged in coastal Andhra also prompted the *Kapus* to mobilise the caste in the name of their caste association primarily to uphold the interests as well as the status of the caste-*Kapus*. In the initial phase, this mobilisation was focused principally on upholding the status of the caste, i.e. to retain the elite status, i.e. placing them on the plank of *Kshatriyas* as was articulated, as it has been noted in the beginning of the chapter that most of the articulations revolved around the aspiration for the elite status (Srikanth Chillagattu 2012; Ravichandra Yerramsetti 2011; Saraswati (undated); Sri Tanaya (undated)). These articulations sustained until the Green Revolution period. It has changed only after the emergence of the Telegu Desam Party during 1980's. There was certainly a shift in the mobilisations patterns 1970s (the Green Revolution period) and after the emergence of TDP. It is this shift which has changed the direction of *Kapu* Mobilisational patterns from aspiring to achieve elite status to that of obtaining recognition for the Backward Class category. This is the ambiguity with which *Kapus* have been negotiating within themselves in the political domain. In their effort to retain their elite status, they also want to include all the 'other'²⁸ as part of *Kapus* only in the political domain while continuing to maintain the exclusivity within the social domain. These processes, at one level can be seen as the transformation from the 'sanskritisation to the de-sanskritisation' process but in a restricted sense. This is where the present study argues that M N Srinivas's concept of sankritization cannot be applied in its totality but in a modified and extended form.

One of the earliest attempts by the *Kapus* was to use the '*Kapu*' as mobilisational tool to bring several of the castes, under the fold of larger '*Kapu*' identity. It has been done by proclaiming that whichever caste possesses the title of *Kapu* be included under the category of *Kapus*. If one scrutinises it closely, this move appears to be a political strategy by the *Kapus* to forge solidarity with other castes such as *Baliya*, *Telaga* and *Ontari*, thus obtaining the numerical predominance of *jati* cluster called *Kapus*. Here one can see how *Kapu* caste is transcending itself into a *jati* cluster (Manor J 2010). In the post-1980s caste mobilization in political domain was taking place intensely across the country. In fact, OBCs in particular (*Yadavs*, *Kurmis*, *Dalits*, *Muslims*) acquired new political status and their access to state power was evident in several states. The

²⁸ The 'other' includes *Toorpu Kapus*, *Munnuru Kapus*, *Telaga*, *Baliya*, *Ontaris*.

attempt of several OBCs was to acquire state power through numerical dominance. This probably made *Kapus* to emulate OBC model and innovate it in Andhra Pradesh as they belong to upper castes. One of the purposes was to ascertain and compete with other dominant peasant castes such as, the *Kammas* and the *Reddys* in the political domain. Unlike the *Kammas* and the *Reddys*, the *Kapus*, had limited political power as well as the economic power²⁹, hence they have relied heavily on the numbers which is significant factor in the representative democracy. But then, even this was not sufficient, hence the *Kapu* movement also started including the *Munnuru Kapus* from Telangana, and *Toorpu Kapus* from the North Coastal Andhra, the two of which have already been included in the state BC list.

The Sociology of Majorities-Kapus and their Numerical Strength:

The theories on elite in sociology, primarily dealt with the numerical strength, but in two directions: the sources for it, and its adverse effects. To define the Elite theory, in short, it advocates that the 'organised minority rules the un-organised majority'. The Elite school comprised of Pareto, (1991), Mosca (1961), Robert Michels, (1962) opined that the role of minorities is decisive and determines the political sphere. It is certainly evident in many instances, in the Indian case as well. It is the minority which is constituting itself as the 'ruling class' in several spheres, not only in the realm of politics, but even in administrative, entrepreneurship, cultural, economic, etc. The ruling class in India largely constituted of the *Brahmins* who are a small minority for a very long period. Even today if not in politics, they determine the administrative affairs of the country quite consistently. In the West, the Jews had acquired the status of ruling class very early. The Elite theory and its analysis were primarily directed towards the Jews.

In the Indian context, historically, it is the tiny *Brahmin* caste, which became an ally of the ruling class, both during the Muslim as well as during the British period (Aloysius 1998). However, their presence was limited during the Muslim period, but they had a tremendous influence during the British period. A significant proportion of the educated *Brahmins* accumulated wealth, dignity, status, etc., It was during the colonial period, that the *Brahmins* have consolidated their social status, sustained their

²⁹Kapus are landowning castes concentrated only in East Godavari district while the presence of other dominant peasant castes Kammas and Reddys is widespread across the regions in A.P.

hegemony through different means, whether it is through communication facilities, or possessing the land, or even acting as intermediary between the local and the British. This particular aspect brought them enormous power in the society and therefore other castes mobilized non-Brahmin movement under the justice party. In the due course, many of the peasant castes also strived for acquiring the status of ruling class. Although the peasant castes such as *Reddys* and *Kammas* were also a minority, they were able to assert themselves through economic power and alliances with the ruling classes.

There was a shift, progressively, at the end of 1980's where the lower sections of the society started asserting themselves politically across India, especially in North India. These sections though economically weak yet numerically dominant, but as elite theorists indicate, that the majority will never rule, primarily because they are not united. This is very much true in case of castes in India. There seems to be three possible reasons for Dalits, Backward Castes, or even Tribals, for not able to acquire the political power. Firstly, it is their majority which is a hurdle, because, the majority never mobilises themselves for various reasons. Secondly, they are economically weak; there is always a possibility that the minority will always ensure that the majority never gets united.

The shift that took place at the political sphere during late 1980's, primarily altered the approach of Elite theory. The assertive politics, or in the name of 'Identity Politics', many of the lower sections of the society also started playing a decisive politics in India. The political discourse has certainly changed due to the presence of Kanshiram, Mayawati, Laluprasad, Mulayam Singh Yadav, who hails from the Backward Castes, Dalits, respectively (Jaffrelot 2009). For all these leaders, it is their caste which played a significant role not the economy. The assertions by these leaders certainly altered the political space as well as the intellectual space. Their actions and their repercussions engaged intensely with the Marxian school as well as the Elite theory school. The economic determinism which is advocated by the former and the emphasis on the minority by the later were questioned by these low caste and OBC assertions in India.

In terms of *Kapus*, the plank for their political aspirations was to forge the required numerical strength. Hence, they have started mobilising their caste as well as the other castes, politically. In the course of seeking the political power, the *Kapus*, especially

Kapus from the East Godavari, attempted to use many of the mobilisational strategies primarily to gain access to the resources. Here the resources include the political power also. If one carefully analyzes the mobilisational processes adopted by the *Kapus*, it can be seen in two directions. One, seeking the backward class (BC) status, and secondly, politicising the *Kapu* category.

Politicizing the Caste

There seems to be an inherent contradiction and dual nature in forming a homogeneous identity from among diverse jatis/sub-jatis, whether it is in terms of 'state' or administrative categories- Dalits, Tribes or even the *Kapus*. Stephen Barnett uses the term 'mega categories'³⁰ in a different context but can be applied to the *Kapu* movement which emerged through a process of 'substantialisation'. Groups which are originally separate from each other and whose status identification was of the least possible kind'. These communities, therefore, resort to what Barnett terms 'hedging' that is presenting contradictory identities in different contexts', which he describes it as a 'kind of holding action'. The shifting identities keep moving between class and caste; their more sophisticated façade in urban areas belies their background as village power-holders and their readiness to even adopt the most feudal traits, as Omvedt³¹ puts it. Omvedt (1991) also says that the rich peasant in India essentially has 'an ambivalent almost dual political character'.

The British regime has brought the *Kapus* under the deprived classes in the year 1910, but after the independence, Indian government has deleted several of these castes from that list which resulted in derailing the attempts to homogenize the *Kapus*. Secondly, the Godavari *Kapus* attempted to consolidate several of the castes or (*jatis*) which have the term *Kapus* as either prefix or suffix. In Andhra Pradesh, *Munnuru Kapu* and *Toorpu Kapus* are listed in the Backward Classes list, while the rest of the *Kapu* sub-castes including *Balijas* are not included in the BC list. Though these sub-castes are spread all over the Andhra Pradesh, the concentration of *Toorpu Kapus* is in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, (Srikakulam, Vishakhapatnam and Vizianagaram) the *Kapus* and *Telagas* is more in the Coastal districts, the *Balijas* are in Rayalaseema and

³⁰ Barnett, Steven, 1977, Identity Choice and Caste Ideology in Contemporary South India, in K David, ed, the New Wind: Changing Identities in South Asia, The Hague, Mounon.

³¹ Omvedt, Gail, 1991, Class Caste and Land in India: An Introductory Essay, in H Alavi and J Harri, ed, Sociology of Developing Societies: South Asia, Macmillan, London.

Munnuru Kapus are largely concentrated in Telangana region' (Rao K 1999:69). It is interesting to examine the ongoing mobilisation processes that are being brought under one umbrella for political purposes.

Table 5.1: Region wise distribution of Major *Kapu* Castes in Andhra Pradesh

S No	Coastal Andhra	Rayalaseema	Telangana
1	<i>Kapus,</i>	Baliya	Munnur <i>Kapus</i> *
2	Toorpu <i>Kapus</i> *		
3	Telagas		
4	Ontari		
5			

* listed in Anantharaman Backward Commission Report³².

The Anantharaman committee has come out with the criteria to determine the Backwardness of a particular caste: poverty, low standard education, low standard of living, place of habitation, inferiority of occupation and caste. Based on these lines, the committee has rejected the *Kapu* Caste to be included in the list citing them as Socially, Economically and spatially not backward. However, efforts to articulate for *Kapu* jati cluster as backward classes is on-going and in fact the TDP which came to power in A.P in 2014 elections promised 12% reservations to them in its election manifesto.

There are four major types of *Kapus* in Andhra, such as '*Toorpu* (eastern) *Kapus*' in the north coastal districts of Srikakulam, Vijayanagaram and Visakhapatnam, '*Kapus*' in the agriculturally prosperous districts of Godavari's, Krishna and Guntur, '*Baliyas*' in the Rayalaseema districts and '*Munnuru Kapus*' in the Telangana districts. *Toorpu Kapus* and *Munnuru Kapus* are listed BCs. The total population of the *Kapus* estimated is around 12% of which about 5% are listed as BCs. In other words, if reservations are extended to all *Kapus*, they form a formidable 12 per cent and have the potential to tilt the electoral balance significantly. Politically they will become a strong group

³²Anantharaman Commission appointed by the Government of Andhra Pradesh in the year 1968 and presented its report on 1970. Its main recommendation was that the reservation may be made for a period of ten years and Government may review the position thereafter. According to that the Government of Andhra Pradesh headed by N K Muralidhar Rao in 1982 has appointed the next Commission. It was a one man commission, accidentally he is a *Kapu* and this report never saw the light after NT Rama Rao took over the Chief Minister post in 1983.

(Shatrugna 1994)³³. Parthasarathy also substantiate this point by saying that the attempt of bringing several of the castes (sub-castes) under one nomenclature was a political decision to increase their stronghold at the political level. The list of sub-castes is given below:

Table 5. 2: Kapu Sub- Castes and their Sub-Castes

S. No	<i>Baliya</i>	<i>Telaga</i>	<i>Munnuru Kapu*</i>	<i>Toorpu Kapu*</i>
1	<i>Gazula</i>	<i>Racha</i>		
2	<i>Gonuguntla</i>	<i>Hajari</i>		
3	<i>Perika</i>	<i>Bobbili</i>		
4	<i>Pagadala</i>	<i>Telaga Chetti</i>		
5	<i>Thota</i>	<i>Telaga ThotaChetti</i>		
6	<i>Vada</i>	<i>Chalika</i>		
7	<i>Setty</i>	<i>Chambu</i>		
8	<i>Krishna</i>	<i>Sevak</i>		
9	<i>Linga</i>	<i>Kasa</i>		
10	<i>Rajamahendravaram</i>	<i>Telaga uppara</i>		
11		<i>Munnur Telaga</i>		
12		<i>Mutarasi Telaga</i>		

*Sub-castes details for Munnuru Kapus and for Toorpu Kapus are not available.

Source for the *Baliya* and *Telaga* sub-castes (Srikanth Ch 2007, 2012; Saraswati undated)

The attempt also was to revive the inter-marriages among different *jatis* and thereby enlarge their geographical spread, since each of these groups were concentrated in a few districts in different regions of the state. But economically, it was only the *Kapus* in the Godavari delta who constituted prosperous peasant cultivators, the rest constituted a substantial proportion of the small and marginal farmers, and the urban lower middle classes had a dominant presence especially in the tertiary sector (Parthasarathy 2001). Over a period of time, the idea of bringing together several castes seems to be quite complex as the castes/sub-castes have all established an independent identity, claiming political, educational and job opportunities for each of them. It is through the formation of caste associations and journals these mobilisations have been taken up.

³³ M Shatrugna, 1994, All Kapus as BCs Andhra Pradesh, Reducing Reservation to a Farce, Economic and Political Weekly September 10,

Kapu Nadu-Caste Association

Caste Consciousness of the *Kapus* is on the upsurge since the organization of *Kapunadu* was formed in 1982 and it reached its peak with the assassination of *Vangaveeti Mohanragarao* (V M Rao, the then Congress MLA from East Vijayawada on 26th December 1988). Since then the representation of the *Kapu* caste in the Andhra Pradesh state assembly steadily increased from 6 in 1985 to 22 in 1989 and 26 MLA's in 1994 (Rao K 1998: 233) to 38 in 2004 and decreased to 34 in 2009 and the number went to 40 in the 2014 assembly elections³⁴.

While discussing about the *Kapu* caste relations with other castes, Parthasarathi (2001) says that "it was perhaps the rise to dominance of *Reddys* and *Kammas* by the time of independence which first created a consciousness among the *Kapus* of a separate identity. Subsequent developments in coastal Andhra, involving the rise of *Kammas* as a dominant rich peasant class as a result of the abolition of *zamindars* and the Green Revolution, resulted in several changes in the economic structure of rural Andhra". He also adds to that by saying, that the "[L]andowning and Upper classes among *Kammas* and *Reddys* migrated out while the comparable class among the *Kapus* did not. It was the workers, and the labouring classes among *Kapus* who migrated out especially to the large towns in a major way. This process mainly happened in 50's and 60's especially in the Delta region. The adverse economic impact of the economic changes, the pauperization of the *Kapus*, except in small enclaves in the Godavari delta, and the concomitant rise to dominance and prosperity of the *Kammas* constituted the initial impetus for the coming together of the *Kapu*-sub castes (ibid, 2001:118).

Kapunadu as an organization began its functions in early 80's mainly influenced by the other caste organizations. The main purpose of organizing a caste community is to create awareness, educate, and help the poor students with their studies mainly financial assistance. This organization took different form due to the conflicts that erupted between the *Kapus* and *Kammas* and more particularly the conflict originated from *Vangaveeti Ranga Rao* from 1985 onwards in Vijayawada. This shift in terms of activities, such as acting aggressively, claiming for the Pan-Andhra *Kapu* identity and

³⁴The figures include *Kapus*, *Toorpu Kapus*, *Balijas* and *Munnuru Kapus* <http://www.kapunadu.org/> (accessed on 4 June 2014.)

the charismatic leadership of VM Rao also has influenced the caste organization and its activities. *Kapunadu* meeting was organised in the year 1985 in Vijayawada. The mobilisation of *Kapu* caste was displayed through this meeting. Primarily the *Kapus* have imitated the *Kammas* who have organised a similar meeting in the same place with a name Mahanadu. The struggle between the *Kamma* and *Kapu* is mainly because of the comparative economic and political power between both the castes. The abolition of the *zamindari* system made the *Kammas* more powerful in the rural Andhra³⁵. *Kapus* have migrated from the rural villages of the Krishna district, and Godavari districts to urban and semi urban areas in search of jobs and started as unskilled labourers. It is in the process, CPI started recruiting many in-migrants into the party and its associated trade unions especially in the period of 1960's. Among these migrants there were *Kapus* who were aggressive as well as assertive. Parthasarathy (2001) says that it was a strategically arrangement by the Kamma caste leaders who want to curtail the *Kapus* in getting into the political field by diverting them into anti-social activities.

According to Balagopal, VM Ranga mobilized all the *Kapu* sub-castes in the name of *Kapus*, and attempted in bringing all the castes under one umbrella. He says that,

[Ranga] chose the Kapu caste as the appropriate identity, for the caste-or rather the castes which call themselves Kapu in the generic sense-has a wide presence among the peasantry and urban lower middle classes all over the state; and the fact that there is a substantial Kapu landowning and business elite in the Krishna and more so the Godavari deltas, which would also find the mobilization in the name of the Kapus useful for the furtherance of their own interests, only helped them. He convened meetings at many places in the Godavari and Krishna deltas; each of these Kapunadu was attended by thousands of people, and soon other Kapu notables started identifying with it (Balagopal 1989: 228).

The *Kapunadu* movement also attempted to imitate some of the mobility patterns of the *Kammas* by forging marriage alliances across regions and sub-castes and setting up educational institutions. However, these never really took off for various reasons. The main reason seems to be the economic or the class factor. Marriage alliances as a means of geographical expansions require a much higher economic status to be a successful technique; *Kammas* adopted and executed it significantly in unifying sub-*jati* differences amongst themselves through marriages across the regions in A.P which was

³⁵ Pardhasarathy, G, 1997. *Collective Violence in a Provincial City*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

never really took off for *Kapus*. (Kantha Rao 1999: 223; Upadhyaya Carol 1997). Parthasarathy attributes the *Kapu* mobilisational limitations to both economic and class factors (Parthasarathy 2001: 115).

Aspiring *Kapu* elites were confronted with two contradictory issues. In the political realm, *Kapu* elites wanted unity among sub-castes, which led middle and lower class *Kapus* demand Backward Caste reservation status to derive the benefits from the state. In the social realm, *Kapu* elites wanted to demonstrate 'equal status' on par with Kamma and Reddy land owning groups. The *Kapunadu* movement as such was established on the political lines mainly to benefit economically and fight for the equal educational opportunities, centred with a slogan- 'Backward Class Status for the *Kapus*'. There were two Backward Class Commissions set up one in 1968 and another in 1982 – the Anantharaman and Muralidhara Rao Commission- did not recommend the inclusion of *Kapus* in the Backward Classes list on the grounds that they were not a uniformly Backward Caste" (ibid:113). At the end, Parthasarathy highlights three prominent issues from the *Kapunadu* movement into three categories- first, it relates to BC status, second, since the *Kapunadu* actually consisted of several jatis, the concept of community took precedence over caste as a self-referent for identity and thirdly, class differences³⁶.

Apart from the politicization of the caste, the *Kapunadu* movement has another dimension, i.e. ambiguity. As Parthasarathy (2001) says that the *Kapu* movement as such seems to be established on the lines of ambiguity.

“[T]he heterogeneous Kapu community was deliberately forged into a unified one so that its ambiguity could 'allow the blocs to continue, while at the same time suggesting the possibility for commonality across the blocs' (Barnett 1977). This ambiguity has enabled the *Kapus* to struggle unitedly against Kammas in Vijayawada, Settibalijas, a backward caste and Malas in East Godavari and also in electoral politics. However, the *Kapu* elite in the Godavari districts and Guntur have been actively involved in the atrocities against Dalits, the rest of the *Kapus* have often had to bear the brunt of a whole range of upper-caste violence³⁷. The ambiguities of *Kapunadu* have, therefore, not been to overcome the dissensions from within, leading to splits,

³⁶ The idea of *Kapunadu* as such brought the class perspective quite explicitly where a small prosperous rural elite and a majority of rural and urban poor have come together for the institutional benefits and also for the caste coherence.

³⁷ Veekshanam, 2008, a Special Issue on Praja Rajyam Party, October, 2008.

and the consequent decline of the movement. The movement no doubt was an outcome of the wielding together of diverse political and economic interests, a horizontal alliance, based on anger and resentment at social exclusion, to target a common political enemy' (ibid:120)

The second strategy deployed by the *Kapus*, was seeking the backward class (BC) status. As of now, we have discussed how *Kapus* have organised themselves socially based on the category of *Kapu*, and then, we have also discussed how the 'Kapunadu' as a caste association became a vehicle for them in communicating their agenda more effectively. Secondly, their attempt was to include them in the BC status, primarily seeking the institutional benefits. Forming caste associations is the first indicator where one can see the rise of the consciousness which cuts across all the castes. The *Kapus* also have adopted this method by forming an association, starting a journal, forming a political party and recent outfit is the *vanbojanalu*³⁸, but popularly called as *kulabojanalu* (caste gatherings). I will explain the formation of an organisation and *vanabojanalu* in this section, whereas the party and journal will be dealt in other sections.

The 'Sanskritization Process': *Kapus* and their Anti-reservation claims

The Janata Party under some political compulsions has announced reservations for the backward castes during 1990's. Morarji Desai, VP Singh, former prime minister has appointed B P Mandal as the chairman, primarily to identify the social and educational backwardness, in the due course, the commission also has recommended the reservations for these castes, There was uproar against this act, across the country. This actually turned into a violent form in places like Gujarat, Delhi, etc. Balagopal calls them as the "ugliest political movements of modern India" (Balagopal 2000: 1076)

As it is been noted that the protests took place across the country, Andhra Pradesh was no exception. During the same time, even NT Rama Rao also announced an increase in the percentage of reservations for the BC castes. This has certainly added to the fuel. The protests were violent in nature especially in places like Hyderabad, Vijayawada,

³⁸ Vana+bojanalu= forest+ food, it means that on an occasion, largely during the months of October-December, people in a particular colony, or from a group, etc, meets in a nearby forest and will have a meal, mostly the lunch. In the due course, it was taken over by the castes groups/associations, and started openly calling them as 'caste vanabojanalu', such as Brahmana vanabojanalu, Kapu vanabojanalu, Reddy vanabojanalu, etc.

Tirupati. These protests were largely carried out by the upper castes in Andhra Pradesh, especially castes like, *Kammas*, *Reddys*, *Kapus*, *Velamas*, *Kshatriyas*, along with the *Brahmins*. These protests were directed towards the very idea of ‘reservations’, in general, and made ‘mockery’ by ‘degrading’ the professions of the backward castes in symbolic ways. These professions include the toddy, weaving, goldsmith, ironsmith, etc.

The ‘De-Sanskritisation process’: Claims for the Reservation Benefits

During the colonial regime, especially in the then Madras Presidency, 86 castes were included in the Backward Caste category list, under the category of Depressed Class’ which includes the *Kapus*. These reservations were directed towards the backwardness of the particular castes. This backwardness was defined by three factors: social backwardness³⁹, educational backwardness and thirdly economic backwardness. Reservations for the depressed or deprived classes was introduced or implemented in the year 1885 in the name of ‘Grant-in-Aid’ followed by Mysore and the Bombay presidencies. Politically speaking, this grant was to divide the dominant ‘non-Brahmin castes’ by the colonial regime, devoid of politics, this initiation was to up lift educationally backward classes. The Government of India Act, 1919, has extended these benefits by including the political representation. This Act was opposed by Ambedkar claiming that a grave injustice was done to the majority of the castes through this Act. Scholars like Marc Galanter have thrown some light on this aspect sociologically but from a legal perspective.⁴⁰

When the state of Andhra Pradesh was formed in the year 1956, together there were 146 Backward Castes in the list (includes 60 castes from the Hyderabad state). These benefits were continued until the Andhra Pradesh was formed. *Kapus*, then under the umbrella of Telugas, (British has recognised them under that name) have utilised the benefits till 1956. When the state of Andhra Pradesh was formed in the year 1956, *Kapus* were removed from the list, based on their economic and social position. From the year 1956 to till 1961, the *Kapus* were fighting relentlessly against the governments

³⁹ In the realm of social backwardness, the ‘profession’ or the ‘habitation’ or the ‘custom’ plays a major role in determining the social backwardness of a particular caste.

⁴⁰ Please see, Galanter, Marc, and also Eugene Irschick. Also the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms (1919).

primarily seeking their inclusion in the BC list. For a brief period, i.e., Damodaram Sanjeevaiah, the then chief minister again brought the *Kapus* into the BC list, but the decision was put on hold based on the high court decision. To avoid the consistent unrest among a section of the *Kapus*, a commission was appointed in the year 1968, Anantaraman as the chairman for the committee by the Kasu Brahmananda Reddy. After a thorough review, the Anantaraman committee has identified four categories based on the social and educational backwardness, these categories are, aboriginal tribes, *vimukta jathis*, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes covering category (A), vocational groups under (B), *harijan* converts under (C) and (D) covering other classes. (Shatrugna 1994). This committee did not consider the *Kapus* as the backward castes. There was another commission appointed in the year 1982 by Muralidhar Rao, but even this committee did not approve the *Kapus* as BCs.

It was due to the political factors, the *Kapus* were included in the BC's along with the Muslims by the Kotla Vijayabhaskar Reddy around 1980's. The issue of backward caste status was deeply politicised especially after the formation of the TDP party, i.e. 1982. Until then, during the Congress regime, there were not many voices protesting for the reservations, it was only after the formation of TDP Government in 1983 some *Kapu* leaders have appealed the government to consider the plea of including the *Kapu* caste in the OBC list. But the efforts of the *Kapu* leaders went in vain, until 1994. The movement was intensified with the *Ravulapalem* incident⁴¹ which has brought all the *Kapus* together for a meeting headed by *Mudragada Padmanabam* who has resigned as Legislator in the meeting itself.

Section 4: Shifts in the Mobilisation processes

The socialist caste hegemony: *Kapunadu* and *Mahanadu*

While explaining the rise of gangsterism in politics, Balagopal (1989) also brings the concept of '*nadu*' saying "*nadu* is an old Dravidian word which denotes a territory as well as an assembly which is territorially-or even communally, as in this case-

⁴¹ A Protest was organized by the *Kapus* led by *Mudragada* against the then Chief Minister *Kotla Vijayabhaskar Reddy* who had visited the *Ravulapalem*, East Godavari district. Police have opened fire on the mob and several people have injured. This incident has motivated *Mudragada* to form an organization called *KRPS*. Please see, *Chillagattu. Srikanth Kumar, Kapula Charitra, 2012, Sudarshan Publications, Hyderabad.*

delimited” (1989: 228)⁴². Post Telugu Desam Party, the tensions between castes blown out of proportion especially places like Vijayawada, Guntur etc. One of the several reasons were the Congress designed tensions because of the sudden loss of the power and also sudden rise of *Kammas* at the political level, made them more aggressive which made the villages virtually divide into two and resulted negatively. The *Kapus* who were only next to the *Reddy*, *Kamma*, and played a prominent role in the Congress party during the independence movement or even now, and also very supportive during the formation time of the TDP⁴³. Within ten years of time, the clashes between the parties became caste conflicts, there was a rage between *Kammas* and *Kapus* in places like Vijayawada, and *Kapus* have tried to consolidate themselves by forming a *Kapunadu*. The term first emerged during the 1985 AP elections; the castes such as the *Baliya*, *Telaga*, *Ontari* and *Kapu* (BTK) have come under one umbrella. This meeting took place at the *Mahanadu*, (TDP) meeting held few months back. It appeared as a projection of strength by *Kapus* against *Kammas*. It can be said that the basis for the *Kapu* caste consolidation activities have also started with that conference.

Within the purview of the Identity politics, and in the changing context of political scenario, even the *Kapus* also attempted to assert their identity by demanding and striving for the mainstream political power. In search of a separate new identity they are now trying to bring together under the rubric of *Kapus* all the similar cognate groups. As different jatis are spread across different regions of the state, hence they tried to construct some historical roots for a common origin for all the *jatis*. They formed a common platform known as ‘*Kapunadu*’, to articulate their grievance. One of their immediate demands is that they should be included in the list of backward classes’ (Vakil, F D, 1984; Rao K 1999: 170).

Kapu consolidation after the formation of TDP

The economic dominance and caste solidarity of *Kammas* was further strengthened by the emergence of TDP in 1982 under NTR. The emergence of TDP also provided a source of inspiration for the *Kapus* to mobilize on similar lines. But *Kapus* of Coastal

⁴²Also please see, Kesavan Veluthut, 2012, The Political Structure Early Medieval South India, Orient Blackswan, Hyderabad.

⁴³ It needs to be noted that both Ranga and Mudragada, who considered to be champions were in one way or other associated with the TDP, Ranga was a strong fan of NTR and also produced a movie with him, and Mudragada became a minister in the first cabinet formed by the TDP.

Andhra, particularly the Godavari areas were economically in a good position. The Balijas from Rayalaseema and Munnuru *Kapus* from Telangana regions are relatively in a developed stage especially after 1970's more markedly after the emergence of TDP' (Rao K 1990: 166). For instance, Parthasarathy says that, during the formation of TDP, i.e., 1980's, there was a void in the Andhra politics and NTR has capitalised that void consolidated the party quite significantly. In the due course, caste identities became prominent tool to mobilise the groups at the socio-political level. *Kapus* elite were very active in the TDP, as we have mentioned earlier, that even the strong *Kapu* caste leaders were also very active during early days of TDP. This activeness was, according to Parthasarathy, primarily

to capitalize on the crisis to emerge powerful at the regional level. However, it soon became apparent that the section of the ruling classes responsible for the emergence of the TDP had no wish to share power with any other community. The calculated use of caste to form strategic alliances for power, however, showed the *Kapu* community their own route for power. Thus, with a couple of years after the TDP had come to power, the *Kapus* began their own movement for power. In a sense, therefore, the *Kapunadu* Movement presaged the current upsurge of different communities who have, as their major demand, reservations on the basis of populations of various castes and sub-castes (2001:118-119).

There were different methods deployed by the *Kapu* caste leaders in terms of achieving their goals, first the movement was only directed towards reservations, but after the emergence of TDP, even the *Kapus* also aspired for the political power with a slogan 'ye kulaniki yenni votlo, a kulaniki anni seatlu' (seats should be proportionate with the votes). Secondly, the *Kapunadu* movement was built around the opposition to the *Kammas*, who were seen as the dominant group, the *Kammas* themselves provided the terms for self-identification of the *Kapus*. *Kapus*, by a dialectical process, referred to themselves as an exploited or dominated community rather than simply as a backward 'class'. (ibid: 116-117)

Upholding the Status of *Kapus*- Ranga

As Weber says that the movement, which is of any form, will have certain leaders, who drew much attention from the mass. According to Weber it can be achieved through three types of Authority- legal, rational and charismatic. *Vangaveeti Mohana Ranga*, popularly called as *Ranga*, played a pivotal role in mobilising the *Kapu* caste not only

in Delta region but across the state through his charismatic leadership. *Ranga*, migrated from a small village to the Vijayawada city primarily to overcome the economic hardships back at home. He began his life in the city, mostly political, by being a member of communist ideology based taxi-drivers' union⁴⁴. But soon he turned into a hoodlum under the leadership of his elder brother, the late *Radha* (the full name was Radhakrishna). *Radha* got killed by the communists, some say, because *Radha* has killed the Communist strong leader in Vijayawada- *Chalasani Venkatratnam Naidu*, a Kamma, some of them also says that he got killed by the *Kamma* business men, who have high stakes on the city. In the Post- *Radha* period, the gang soon split into two, one under the leadership of the Vangaveeti brothers and the other under the leadership of the Devineni brothers, Gandhi and Nehru⁴⁵ (as their parents named them: Gandhi was murdered some years ago and Nehru is now a Congress MLA from Vijayawada). The influx into Vijayawada of agrarian wealth- and the profits from agro-based processing and trade, which finds no better outlet than real estate and finance, offers a fecund basis for such hoodlums: second is the murky underworld of shady real estate and finance. The land constrained Vijayawada is the hub for the land mafia which is controlled presently by both Kammas and *Kapus*.

Vijayawada: Spatial and Caste Politics

Vijayawada as a spatial category played crucial role in witnessing the violent conflict between upper castes. Vijayawada has a significant place in Andhra Pradesh. The birth of Non-Brahmin movement, Communist politics also began in this place. One can see the art of questioning, protest has enrooted in this place. '*Kapus* migrated to city mainly from the Godavari and Krishna districts. Initially they worked as manual labourers in construction, as *mutta* labour in the transport sector and in unskilled and semi-skilled jobs' (Rao MSA 1984 94). The second generation of *Kapu* in-migrants took up petty trading, skilled jobs and low paid white colour jobs. They live mainly in *Krishna Lanka* as well as in numerous slums in the new part of the city.

The justification is clear by the communist politics when the *Rama-Lakshmana* groups were trying to tease the women who are part of communist politics, the communists

⁴⁴ There is an unverified rumor that at one point he was even inspired by the call of Naxalbari.

⁴⁵ Both belongs to Kamma caste from Vijayawada, initially with the Radha, brother of Ranga, but after demise of Radha they had problems with the Ranga, later on that turned as a caste problem.

have retorted them rigour sly. This unorganized goondaism has turned into organized and the communists also hired the local goondas for the support of their women cadres. In that process *Vangaveeti Radha* with help of *Chalasani Venkataratnam*, a senior leader in CPI helped him to get into the party.

Radha who was a booking agent then, used to book tickets for passengers travelling from Vijayawada to other places of the state or to other states, such as Chennai, Bangalore, etc. In the process of doing that, he got some commission, and as part of the union rules he needs to deposit some amount in the union office. *Radha* later became a president for the union, and started using that money, handling the problems individually, etc. These acts have not gone well with the communist leaders, especially *Chalasani* who was very furious and got killed by *Radha* with an encouragement by the Congress⁴⁶. From then on there was no one in the town who can oppose *Radha*. In 1974, CPI has killed *Radha* to revenge the killing of *Chalasani* and to get rid of goonda politics. However, from then onwards *Radha*'s brother *Ranga* and along with him, *Devineni Gandhi* and *Nehru* came into picture. *Devineni Nehru* and *Gandhi* were student leaders who worked with *Radha* but due to identity problems with *Ranga* they have moved away from him and started goondaism independently. Both the groups have shared *Bandaru Road* and *Yeluru Road* as their territories. *Ranga* could not digest all these things and killed *Gandhi* in student's elections. This is clear indication of how caste becomes a vehicle to expand the self-interests at the social as well as economic level.

Claims for Reservations- *Mudragada*

After sudden demise of *Ranga*, there was void in *Kapu* politics which was concentrated in Vijayawada, but gradually it shifted to East Godavari district where the *Kapus* are economically and numerically dominant, like Vijayawada. *Mudragada Padmanabam* took over the space created by *Ranga* in the *Kapu* politics. *Mudragada* family is an influential *Kapu* family in *Prattipadu*, in-fact in East Godavari politics. *Padmanabam* was a teacher initially, but got attracted to the politics. He first joined TDP and became a minister in NTR's cabinet, but resigned due to clashes with NTR when NTR sacked all the ministers at one go.

⁴⁶ Even during 1972 assembly elections, *Radha* campaigned for the Congress against *Chalasani* who has contesting CPI platform. In 1972 *Radha* has killed *Chalasani* in Vijayawada.

NTR in his in-imitable egoistic style sacked all the 32 ministers of his cabinet on the eve of a year's budget, holding them responsible for the 'leak' of the budget papers. Though most of the sacked ministers did not protest, three of them, K *Jana Reddy*, *Vasantha Nageswara Rao* and *K E Krishna Murthy*, resigned from the TDP in protest. The resignations of these senior ministers apparently made no difference to the style of functioning of NTR. But the three sacked ministers became the rallying point for dissidents. *Mudragada* also joined them. The formation of the Telugunadu Party under *Mudragada Padmanabham* was the culmination of dissidence in the TDP (Shatrugna, 1989).

Secondly, due to the allegations of corruptions on the ministry led by *Mudragada*, NTR again asked for a resignation, *Mudragada* took this occasion as an opportunity rallies the backward classes, along with emerging prosperous *Kapu* caste, under his leadership in the rich delta districts of Godavari, which were the vote banks of TDP since 1982. A major event was the mammoth *Kapunadu* meet in Eluru in mid-1988 where the slain Congress (I) legislator and emerging *Kapu* leader V M Ranga made his presence felt. The Eluru meet was *Mudragada*- Ranga joint show. However, the challenge for NTR has come in during December 1988 when Ranga went for a hunger strike and was murdered resulted in bloody clashes between the *Kapus* and Kammas in the coastal districts of Krishna and Guntur and West Godavari. The failure of the government to protect life and property and its casual attitude to tracking down Ranga's assassins further alienated the backward castes in particular and the common people in general.

Kapu Reservation Porata Samiti Vs Madiga Reservation Porata Samiti

Apart from considering the upper castes and the backward castes, the *Kapu* movement was also influenced by the movements initiated by the lower sections of the society. The KRPS was formed in 20th March 1994 mainly to uphold the spirit, which was carried by the predecessors. This movement was largely initiated by *Mudragada* in the lines of MRPS. It had loosely organized with no definite form and structure with the pattern of organisation varying from place to place depending on the particular local context and circumstances. (Rao K 249) This movement though followed both quasi-violent methods and non-Institutionalised collective political action, primarily their demand was only one- enlist them as other backward class. However, due to the violent methods adopted by the movement, the government has issued a GO providing certain

non-statutory educational benefits and economic schemes to poor and providing non-statutory educational and economic schemes to poor among *Kapus* whose annual income was less than 12,000. It was then the Mudragada withdrew his agitation⁴⁷.

Much of the discussion in this chapter concentrates on the historical genesis of *Kapus* in different spheres-socio-political as well as economical. There were many factors, which have influenced the rise of *Kapus*.

⁴⁷ What is interesting here is, immediately after this incident, there was an Assembly election for the state of Andhra Pradesh and *Mudragada* was defeated in his own constituency *Prattipadu*.

Chapter 6

Self-Representations of *Kapus*: A Study of *Kapumitra* Magazine

A sociological analysis of *Kapu* caste representation is attempted here through a magazine of the *Kapu* caste association called ***Kapumitra*** (*Kapu* friend)¹ which was started in the year 2002. Prior to *Kapumitra*, there were other magazines which primarily represented the interests and aspirations of *Kapu* caste. They are, *Kapunadu*, *Kapunadu Kalyanmastu*, *Kapu darbar*, *Kapu dairy*, *Kapu tejam*, *Kapu Jyothi*, *Kapu voice*, *Kapu association*, *Kapu satta*, *Kapu yuvata*, *Kapuyuvata* (from Guntur), *Kapusandana* (Kakinada) (Prasad Harischandra 2006:03). These magazines began during the late 90's but several of them were in circulation for a short period of time and then were discontinued. It was only the *Kapumitra* which is being consistently publishing till date. The present study analyses the content of the magazine from 2002 to 2012, i.e. for a decade. The prime objective in studying this magazine was to 'explore the *Kapu* caste dynamics, its aspirations, articulations, mobilisation patterns' through their self-representations.

Section: I- Contents of the Magazine

To begin with the cover page of the issue of May, 2002, says '*Telaga Baliya Kapu Jana Sankshema Maasa Patrika*', (Telaga, Baliya, Kapu people's welfare monthly magazine) and inside the magazine, at the top of every page, it is written that 'All the above castes are *Kapus* and therefore are friends'. From October, 2002 issue onwards Munnuru *Kapus* from Telangana and from the month of March, 2003 issue Toorpu *Kapus* from North Andhra are also included in the cover page. This move indicates the rise of political aspirations of the *Kapus* to project that all these castes are the same but they

¹ This magazine is owned and managed by Harischandra Prasad and his family, He is the chief Editor and his wife is the editor for the magazine, and his two sons are acting as marketing managers. Dr. Harischandra Prasad is a *Kapu* and hails from D Muppavaram Village, West Godavari District. He did his PhD in Telugu from Osmania University. He is retired Public Relations Officer, Go. A. P. After his retirement, he has started this journal and eventually became a mouth piece for the *Kapus*.

exist with different names based on the locality/region and arguably on the basis of their economic status. Whereas from May, 2003 issue onwards, the magazine has removed all the caste names and brought the issues with a slogan '*Kapu Jana Sankeshma Masapatrika*' (Kapu People's Welfare Monthly Magazine)' till the end of Oct, 2003. But from December, 2003 till Feb, 2005, the magazine again went back to the original slogan i.e., '*Kapu, Telaga, Baliya* People's Welfare Monthly Magazine'. After a couple of issues, the magazine has come up with much broad slogan '*Kapumitra* - only platform for our two crore people'.

During the decadal publication the magazine's shifting focus and its slogans indicates the possible political realignment among the *Kapu jati* cluster that was being forged. These different strands and positions reflect the aspiration of the *Kapus* to stake claims for political power. Initially, during its formative days, the magazine had articulated limited political vision for the upper castes comprising of *Kapu, Telaga* and *Baliya*, but gradually the magazine also included the Backward Castes, such as *Toorpu Kapus, Munnuru Kapus*. This move clearly synchronizes with the *Kapus* political agenda. The two pronged strategy of including *Toorpu Kapus* and *Munnuru Kapus*, the backward castes was to claim numerical dominance in order to stake the claim for state power while the upper caste *Kapus, Baliyas, Telagas* also wanted to retain their social status on par with *Kammas, Rajus* and *Reddys*. Therefore the magazine's content and emphasis reflected these aspirations of *Kapu jati* cluster.

A critical scrutiny of the attempts by the magazine to forge 'alliances' amongst different *jatis* raises certain epistemological questions, primarily pertaining to the nature of the alliances, secondly, it also brings the question of whether these alliances are inclined towards social or political? A thorough analysis of the contents of the magazine provides certain clues about this alliance more towards the 'political' aspirations rather than bridging the social cleavages within the *jati* cluster. For instance, the study respondents in East Godavari indicated that "there have been no marriage alliances between the *Kapus* and *Munnuru Kapus*, or the *Kapus* and *Toorpu Kapus* or *Toorpu Kapus* and *Munnuru Kapus*. Every caste has its own independent nature, they are spatially demarcated, their geographical location is different, their economic status is very wide, and socially their positions are unequal". Whereas, the *Kapumitra*

magazine has been articulating the unity thesis among the *jati* cluster reflecting the political aspirations of a Godavari *Kapus*.

The way *Kapumitra* is advocating sameness among the *jatis* and its intimate social relationships are fictitious in nature. Stephen Barnett's (1976) study on *Kondakattai Vellalar* (KV) caste, which also tried to forge homogeneity among all sub castes/*jatis* in Tamilnadu, indicates that these efforts of *Kapus* are not anything new followed in regionally specific ways in different regions. While referring to this homogenising process, Barnett uses the term 'mega-categories' to explain the aspirations of KV caste at the political level during the Madras Presidency (Barnett S 1976). While tracing the formation of mega-categories, it takes us back to the colonial regime, and MN Srinivas says,

[t]he building of roads all over India, and the introduction of railways, postage, telegraph, cheap paper, and printing-especially in the regional languages-enabled castes to organise as they had never done before. A postcard carried news of a caste meeting, and the railway enabled members scattered in far-flung villages to come together when necessary, while the availability of cheap news print facilitated the founding of caste journals, whose aim was to promote the interests of their respective castes", he adds, "the availability of cheap paper enabled caste disputed to be recorded, and this gave permanent form to rules and precedents which were till then dependent upon the fallible, and therefore challengeable, memory of elders (1957: 530).

It is indeed visible that the Colonial regime has facilitated caste mobilisations by providing better communication facilities. Andhra, which was part of erstwhile Madras Presidency, has witnessed many mobilisations at the caste level, especially the Delta regions of Andhra, and in particular the Godavari and Krishna Deltas. The development during the colonial regime has certainly instilled the consciousness at various levels, particularly at the caste level². British may not have anticipated the consequences of development and the rise of consciousness in caste mobilisations. The *Kapu* mobilisation in the contemporary period is explained by analysing some of the main issues raised in the *Kapumitra*. The main issues include: consistent attempts to bring

² Please see, Ramakrishna, V, 1993, A Background study to the Emergence if Caste Consciousness in Coastal Andhra Pradesh In Suranjan Das and Sekhar Bandopadhyay, Caste and Communal Politics in South Asia, KP Bagchi and Company, New Delhi.pp-101-116, GN Rao, 1985, Transition from Subsistence to Commercialised Agriculture: A Study of Krishna District of Andhra, C 1850-1900, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 20, No. 25/26, Jun. 22-29, pp. A60-A69 and Carol Upadhyya, 1988, the Farmer-Capitalists of Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 23, No. 28, Jul. 9, pp. 1433-1442.

several castes- reconstructing an identity of the *Kapu* caste, attempts for possible ‘homogenization of *Kapu* castes’, seeking institutional benefits by demanding Backward Class status, exploring the nexus between the caste and politics, the role of caste associations, and to construct a cultural and social space for the *Kapu* caste for achieving the political power based on the numerical strength. Each of these issues will be discussed in the following sections.

Section: II - Re-constructing the ‘Kapu’ Identity

The magazine attempted to re-construct or re-define the *Kapu* identity in a very systematic way. This re-construction is primarily to include several castes into the fold of ‘*Kapus*’. These castes are *Kapu*, *Telaga*, *Balijas*, *Toorpu Kapu*, *Munnuru Kapus* and *Ontaris*. The magazine within a decade has altered the discourse in a substantial way. A quote from the magazine, indeed, reflects tone,

Krishnadevaraya period has encouraged both literature and the military. As Part of their war/defence duties many of the Kapus have migrated to different places of the state. Over a period of time, many things have changed for Kapus due to the harsh socio-economic conditions. Despite these hardships, many of the Kapus tried to retain their culture, customs, etc. After Independence, the ruling class used the British technique, i.e. ‘divide and rule’ to de-stabilise the Kapu unity. (May 2002)

In another issue of the magazine, Venkatacharylu, a teacher, says that the origin of the term *Telaga* has come from *Telugu*. He also says that, it was during the Krishnadevaraya period, there was a spatial gap between the *Kapus* and the *Telaga* because of continuous wars. He also says that due to this, *Telagas* have started facing economic constraints (June 2003: 14)³. Kanda Nageswara Rao (2006)⁴ says that the term *Kapu* is a ‘very ancient term’ and he says it is derived from the word ‘*Pantakapu*’- meaning protector of crop and land. He also states, “there won’t be a village without *Kapus* in Andhra Pradesh but unfortunately at present the *Kapus* are largely limited to East and West Godavari districts, Guntur, Krishna from Coastal Andhra districts”. In the same article, Nageswara Rao has provided an etymological meaning to all the *Kapu* (sub)-castes: “*Telaga*- has come from the *Telugu Kapu*, *Baliya* has come from *Vaniya*,

³ Dr. Kotte Venkatacharyulu, 2003, *Telagalu-Telugu Galagalalu, Kapumitra*, June, p14.

⁴ Nageswara Rao, Kanda, 2006, ‘*Kapus existence in Andhra Pradesh*’, *Kapumitra*,

(business), *Ontari*, meaning single in Telugu language, has become the caste name because a group of people remained as a single group especially in the wars. Similarly the *Toorpu Kapus* has come from their geographical location implying a group of migrants from eastern part of Andhra” (Nageswara Rao 2006: 26). These are the ways through which the magazine was reconstructing the identity of *Kapus*.

Yogi (2007)⁵ explains how the history of the *Kapus* can be traced from the pre-colonial period, especially from 1386, during *Katayavemuni* reign. He cites from historian Chilukuri Veerbhadar Rao’s remarks on *Kapus* that they were Village heads and that is the reason the term ‘*Kapu-Karanam*’ has existed. Yogi also says that it was only because of the Muslim rule, the term *Kapu* was replaced by the term *Munsib*, and gradually the *Munsib-Karnam* term got stabilised in Andhra society.

While ascribing for the social status, in a similar tone, P. Ramadevi (2009), in her article describes the culture of *Kapus* during pre colonial and colonial period. The author says that among *Sudhra*’s, *Kapus* occupied the higher social status. *Kapus* are primarily agriculturists, they love cattle. *Kapu* men grew their hair and did not tie it except during the festivals or when they visit their relatives or some ceremonies. *Kapus* employed washer men to wash clothes regularly. Every man wore two pieces of cloth, both lower and the upper cloth, head band, a gold ring for his finger and men will apply *bindi* or vermilion straight one on their fore head. In terms of *Kapu* women, Ramadevi says

women combed their hair and knot/bun it and the knot will be towards the right. They avoid flowers and use only cosmetics for eye, hands and for legs. They don’t remove the artefacts even though they are in pain. They apply *bindi* which is round in shape. They will do all the household chores themselves. They used to travel in a bullock cart with both sides of the cart covered. (May 2009)

Ramadevi’s articulation demonstrates the *Kapu* caste aspirations in terms of retaining their social status quite clearly. It reflects when she says that *Kapus* occupied higher status among *Shudras* during pre-colonial or even colonial period, and also even while describing about their physical features. It is clearly an indication towards upholding or

⁵ Yogi, 2007, Prior to 1931, *Kapus* are not Special (recognised) Castes? *Kapumitra*, April, p13. His article was a reply to a news paper article published on March, 31, 2007 Saturday.

retaining the caste status. Whereas the below Para, presents quite contrasting picture. Balnidi attempts were directed towards the categorising the presence of *Kapus*. He says that *Kapus* are, though, part of the upper strata of the society, but economically they are weak. Hence, they need to avail the reservation benefits. These two positions indicate, how *Kapus* or the *Kapumitra* magazine laying claims for both the high status as well as for the lower status. This shift in positions was quite evident in throughout the magazine.

Balnidi Lakshmi Narasimha Rao (2007)⁶, who has articulated the *Kapus* from the contemporary point of view, says “socially, the *Brahmin, Vaishya, Kshatriya and Shudra* exist in the caste structure of Andhra Pradesh and among *Shudra's- Kammas, Reddys* and *Kapus* are dominant castes, whereas the *Kapus* though numerically dominant, economically are weak”. He also adds “the state has listed *Toorpu Kapus* from North Andhra and *Munnuru Kapus* from Telangana in the BC category, but has not listed the *Baliya* and *Telagas*, whose economic and social conditions are much similar to that of *Toorpu Kapus* and *Munnuru Kapus*, it is nothing but dividing the *Kapu* caste”.

While carefully re-reading the above two versions, it is clear that the *Kapu* identity is moving in two directions. Ramadevi glorifies the status of *Kapus* during colonial or pre-colonial period, whereas Balnidi presents a moderate view of the contemporary scenario of *Kapus*. This dichotomy consistently prevailed in the *Kapu* caste articulations in constructing their identity.

In the process of reconstructing the *Kapu* identity, the magazine emphasises three crucial factors: One, glorification of the *Kapu* caste, second, attempt to ascertain the numerical strength and third, to elevate the social status in order to project that they are no less compared to the dominant peasant castes such as *Kammas* and *Reddys*, in the society. While articulating these factors, the magazine does reflect certain ‘ambiguity’. Despite this ambiguity, the magazine has attempted to re-construct the *Kapu* caste identity in a systematic way. If we see the views expressed in/by the magazine, there is, as Hardgrave (1968) says, a ‘fusion’ that has taken place. It is important to note that,

⁶ Lakshmi Narasimha Rao, Balnidi, 2007, ‘Kapu Caste needs to realise’, May issue. He is the Chief Secretary for Kapunadu, West Godavari District.

there are many attempts by the upper classes among *Kapus* who attempted for a ‘pan Andhra Pradesh *Kapu* identity’.

It is indeed a systematic caste construction by the *Kapus* that one could see through the magazine, which is, similar to that of other castes in India. For instance, one could see it within the *Marathas*, Maharashtra, *Patedars*, Gujarat, or even among the *Yadavs* in North India. One can trace this process of caste construction even during the colonial period. This process of constructing an identity was primarily to utilise the resources, especially the state. Secondly, after the adult franchise, the electoral politics created vote banks and in turn several caste mobilisations became an integral part of democracy. The Mobilisational patterns may vary across the country. For instance, the *Nadar* caste mobilisations in Tamilnadu were primarily linked economic mobility. *Marathas* in Maharashtra mobilised based on the pride, associated with Shivaji, etc. In case of the Andhra Pradesh, *Kapus* have been attempting to mobilise the castes based on the numerical strength in order to achieve state power. The caste consciousness and mobilisation patterns were evident for upper castes such as *Brahmins*, *Kammas*, *Reddys* during the colonial regime, the *Kapu* mobilisation process is mostly a post-independence phenomenon.

Although, the *Kapus* were also involved in the non-Brahmin movement during the colonial period, their presence was less compared to *Kammas*, their counterparts from the Coastal Andhra. During colonial period, whoever was associated with agriculture, or collection of tax, were called as *Kapus*. To re-construct the *Kapu* identity, it is evident that the articulations in the magazine were attempting to ‘extend the caste history’. In the process of doing this, the magazine was also ‘legitimising’ the mythical or conjectural history of *Kapus*. There is also a note by Ramadevi (2009) who emphasized on the physical features *Kapus* to mark caste distinctiveness. With her note, the magazine was prescribing a ‘distinctive’ nature of the caste and probably this is an act of seeking ‘recognition’. This also denotes a specific identity for the *Kapus*.

Section: III- Mobilisation of *Kapu* Caste

An attempt by the magazine in terms of mobilising the *Kapus* as well as other *jatis* within the *jati* cluster is significant in their representations through the magazine. To begin with Harischandra Prasad, editor of the magazine, says “*Kapu, Telaga, Baliya, Munnuru Kapu, Toorpu Kapu* and *Ontari* are all same but each caste has its own ideology. All these *jatis* will have to shed their differences on the lines of ideology and need to come together for the unity of all *Kapus* in the state” (Harischandra Prasad 2002: 3).⁷ Similarly Venna Krishnarajuna Rao, says “one has to shed their local identities and change their caste names from *Baliya, Telaga* or *Ontari* to ‘*Kapu*’, both legally and socially”, so that “the unity can be forged for all the *Kapus*” (2006:20)⁸. Kottu Sekhar, a Lecturer from Visakhapatnam, presents a strategy to be deployed by the *Godavari Kapus*. He says “after *Reddys* and *Kammas*, *Kapus* are dominant caste in the state who has the potential to stake their claim to power in the state. If *Kapus* can forge unity with *Telagas* from Srikakulam and Vijayanagaram, *Toorpu Kapus* from Vishakhapatnam to Nellore, and *Baliyas* from Rayalaseema then it leads to a formidable large ‘*Kapu*’ identity.” (Sekhar 2003). The editor of the magazine, Harischandra Prasad (2006), makes a critical point referring to the *Telaga* mobilisations. He says that “seeking and fighting for the backward class status independently will be a dent to the homogenisation process and the unity of the *Kapus*”. Although he accepts the independent nature for each of the *jatis* in the *Kapu jati* cluster, but also says “fighting alone reflects the lack of unity among the *Kapus* which will be utilised by other dominant castes in the state”. While in another context, he sharpens his argument by saying that, “hence the reservation issue became a political issue; it needs to be dealt politically and for that unity is essential”. His further claim was “to be united in order to hold power, holding power eventually will raise the status of the caste” (Harishchandra Prasad 2011: 7).

The magazine also justifies the inclusion of the *Munnuru Kapus*, listed in the BC category into the fold of broader ‘*Kapu*’ *jati* cluster. The magazine recounts the origin of *Munnuru Kapus* saying that “during the period of Nizam’s rule, 300 families had migrated from Krishna District to Telangana and they are called *Munnuru Kapus*. The

⁷ Harischandra Prasad, 2002, Ikyataragam, *Kapumitra*, July, pg 3.

⁸ Krishnarajuna Rao, Chennai, 2006, Unity need to be a goal, Jan, pg 20.

presence of *Kapu* caste was not there during the Nizam period both in Telangana and Rayalaseema. In fact Reddy's were referred to as *Kapus* in the two regions-Rayalaseema and Telangana" (Harischandra Prasad, 2002: 4)⁹. Harischandra Prasad (2011) justifies the inclusion of *Munnuru Kapus* within the Kapu fold, saying that "the attempts by the *Kapus* to homogenise different castes is not new to/in Andhra Pradesh, even among *Brahmins*, many sub-castes forged unity. Infact they set the example for many present day mobilisations, even among Christians and Muslims we find several sub-sects but they prefer calling themselves as Muslims or Christians. There is some concrete basis for *Kapu* caste in attempting to forge unity among different jatis. One of the issues of the *Kapumitra* in 2011 justifies it saying that "Andhra Pradesh state government has accepted and recognised that *jatis -Kapu, Telaga, Balija, Munnuru Kapu, Toorpu Kapu* and *Ontari* as having equal social status in the year 1961. The magazine also argues that this similarity among these jatis was recognised even by the colonial regime" (Feb 2011)¹⁰.

Similarly the state convenor the *Kapumitra* argues that ¹¹ "*Kapu, Balijas, Telagas* and *Ontari* are one and the same but called differently in different regions. They are economically poor, both working as agricultural labourers, and farm servants in the land lord houses and few of them are tenants. *Kapus* are also working as *beldars*, (construction workers), brick suppliers, and in few places even as rickshaw pullers etc". He further adds saying "all the castes have to be united to seek and get the economic and educational benefits from the state government" (Venkateswara Rao 2006: 6).

Along with the above views, the magazine also covered other views pertaining to the Mobilisational aspects of *Kapus*. In the initial period of publication of the magazine, writings were not inclined towards including the *Munnuru Kapus* and the *Toorpu Kapus* in BC list. At a later stage, the magazine tilted towards conglomeration of all jatis into a Kapu cluster. It was evident during the field work in the East Godavari district, that the *Kapus* in the district have not been favourable to forge any kind of relationship either with the *Toorpu Kapus* or with the *Telagas*. In fact some of the study respondents indicated that the *Kapus*, from Kakinada urban and rural areas

⁹ Harischandra Prasad, 2002, *Toorpu Kapus and Munnuru Kapus need to go along with Kapus, Kapumitra*, Oct, pp. 4.

¹⁰ Harischandra Prasad, 2011, *Kapus and its Sub-Castes, Kapumitra*, Feb, pp. 7.

¹¹ Convener, Andhra Pradesh State Kapunadu,

(hinterland) of Kakinada, or even from Rajahmundry, both rural and urban, treat the *Toorpu Kapus* on par with the *Malas*, who are part of scheduled caste. A social hostility exists among *Kapus* and *Toorpu Kapus* and *Telagas* at the ground level in East Godavari district. These contradictions within the jati cluster never got reflected in the writings of the *Kapumitra*.

One particular issue in the year 2003 brought out these contradictions more explicitly which was also re-printed in one of the Telugu dailies. To quote “coastal Andhra *Kapus*, are a hindrance to the *Kapu* mobilisation primarily because of their feudal attitude, Brahmanical thinking process and the progress achieved by these *Kapus*”. The author Kottu Sekhar also says that “ due to economic reforms and Green Revolution, many of the *Kapus* in the Godavari districts were well developed, thus creating a huge gap between them and other *Kapu* castes” (Sekhar Kottu 2003: 7)¹². Therefore this issue pointed out how the unity is a mirage because of the internal contradictions within the social realm of *Kapu jati* cluster.

These contradictions between *Kapus* in Godavari district and that of other *jatis* in north coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana indicate that the articulations of *Kapumitra* magazine about the unity of *Kapus* as a political project rather than based on the social cohesion and economic compatibility. Therefore the major demand by the non-Godavari district *Kapus* is about inclusion of their jatis into BC list while Godavari district *Kapus* see this BC listing as de-sanskritising process. A critical analysis of the content of *Kapumitra* indicates that it has given much emphasis to the non-Godavari district jatis by underplaying the Godavari district *Kapus* about reservations.

It is interesting to note that most of the *Kapu* articulations have come from either Rayalaseema *Balijas* or from the Godavari *Kapus*, the propertied classes among the *Kapus* rather than from *Munnuru Kapus*, *Toorpu Kapus*, *Telagas*, *Ontaris*. The class or social location of these writers provide insights in explaining the contradictory aspirations of different jatis within the *Kapu* cluster. In-fact several of the Backward Castes (BC's), including *Munnuru Kapus* and *Toorpu Kapus*, the *Gowdas*, *Settibalijas*, *Edigas*, *Yatavas* and *Srisairas*, have submitted a memorandum to the National

¹² Sekhar, Kottu, 2003, Coastal Andhra *Kapus* lacks the the strategy, Oct, pg 7.

Commission for the Backward Classes, saying “*Kapus* of Godavari districts should not be included in the BC list on three grounds: firstly they are not socially backward, secondly, not educationally backward and thirdly, not economically backward” (Gouthu Lachanna 1999)¹³. The castes listed officially in OBC list see this inclusion of some more *Kapus* in the OBC list as competition and allege that the *Kapus* just want to capitalise the state benefits. At another level, they also see it as a political project because upper classes within *Kapus* are trying to forge an alliance with *Munnuru Kapus* from Telangana and *Toorpu Kapus* from North Coastal Andhra merely for political power by demonstrating the numerical strength.

The dominant class within the *Kapu jati* cluster articulated political vision and aspirations of all the jatis. In fact one of the arguments that *Kapumitra* makes is that it was the Indian state which divided the *Kapus* who were united until 1961. Of course the magazine conveniently underplays the reservation benefits given to several non-Brahmin castes in the name of ‘Communal award’ by the British. It was *Telagas* availed the reservation benefits and not the *Kapus* during colonial period. In fact both *Telagas* and *Kapu* castes have existed during the Madras presidency time, a special report was carried by the *Krishna Patrika*, a daily which indicated that the *Telagas* (mahasabha) meeting was held in Bandar, Krishna District, on 07th of Oct, 1923¹⁴. Therefore one could see that certain historical facts need to be seen closely to analyze the inter-jati dynamics.

Harischandra Prasad justifies the homogenisation attempts of *Kapus* by saying that it was not *Kapus* who initiated this homogenisation process. It has a long history in the Indian sub-continent. Several of the castes, to begin with the *Brahmins*, *Marathas*, *Yadavas* or even castes like *Kamma*, *Reddy* in Andhra Pradesh, have attempted to mobilise the sub-castes/jatis to enhance the representation at the social and political level. This homogenisation process emphasizes the language, culture, region, etc in the forefront to mobilise people from different castes.

¹³ Representation from Sardar Gouthu Lachanna to the Andhra Pradesh Commission for Backward Classes on 08-01-1999, Hyderabad.

¹⁴ This news was reported on 13th Oct-1923. This is a significant fact to establish that the *Kapus* and the *Telagas* are different during that time and the fact was acknowledged by many.

The next section presents the inter-caste relations between *Kapus* and that of Dalits, other BC castes, other upper castes in the state.

Section: IV- *Kapus* Relation with other Castes

It is indeed essential to begin this section with an editorial note published in the May 2004 issue, it says “by considering the strength of *Kapus*, they should be getting at-least 80 assembly and 13 Lok Sabha seats from different parties in A.P. However, at present *Kapus* have representation only in 9 Loksabha and 18 assembly seats” (May 2004). Taking this into account, *Kapumitra* advocated that there should be proportional representation based on caste enumeration so that *Kapus* will get their due share in representative democracy¹⁵.

Kottu Sekhar in another issue says “despite *Kapus* numerical presence in the Madras Presidency, *Reddys* and *Kammas* have outnumbered them both economically as well as politically. To effectively stake the claims, we (*Kapus*) also need to adapt the strategies of (Maratha) *Kurmis* of Western India, *Modaliar*, *Gounders* from Tamilnadu to mobilise our caste” (Sekhar Kottu 2003: 7)¹⁶. Sangineedi Seetaram, Chillagattu Srikanth Kumar, and several others through their writings in the magazine expressed that *Kapus* need to be included in the BC category. Sangineedi Seetaram infact goes further by saying “*Kapus* are more backward than several of the castes in the BC category”. He further adds that “the lower sections are enjoying the reservation from class I to IIT, from peon post to IAS, or even from ward member to the MP whereas the upper castes who are prosperous, can get hold of this representation through their money power, however it is the middle caste such as *Kapus* who get completely ignored” (April 2008: 25). This is an attempt to articulate the *Kapus* as middle caste to reclaim the middle ground and assert their representation in the electoral politics.

The magazine focuses largely on the plight, aspirations of *Kapus* on the one hand and apathy of the state on *Kapus* on the other. At the same time, it also provided some space for the inter-caste relations *Kapus* with other BC's and Dalits. These views are

¹⁵ ‘Working together, political mobilisation’, May, 2004

¹⁶ Sekhar Kottu, 2003, Lack of Strategy for Coastal *Kapus*, originally published in Vaartha Newspaper on 4-09-2003, republished in *Kapumitra*, Oct, 2003,p7

largely articulated from the year 2008, i.e. prior to the formation of Praja Rajyam Party (PRP) in the year 2009. Dr. Kada Venkata Ramana (2009) says “in East Godavari District, both *Kapus* and *Settibalijas* are numerically dominant, but *Kapus* are economically powerful, hence wield much social power. It is not that *Settibalijas* have not resisted the domination by the *Kapus* on many occasions. Therefore, *Kapus* who are seeking the OBC status needs to think how to negotiate the relationship with the *Settibalijas* who are OBC caste”. While accepting the conflictive relationship with *Settibalijas*, Venkata Ramana also indicates that “for many decades, *Kapus* in the *Konaseema* and Central Delta regions of East Godavari district have conflictive relationship with both the *Malas* and the *Settibalijas*. Both these castes (*Settibalijas* and *Malas*) are either into tenancy or works as agricultural labourers” (Venkata Ramana 2009: 41). Venkata Ramana also says that, by keeping these intricacies in mind, Chiranjeevi led PRP carefully formulated an agenda of *Social Justice, Development of Backward Classes and Poor Dalits*. The PRP project was to bridge the alliance of *Kapus* with the backward castes and Dalits”, at the end, he also advocates that *Kapus* needs to be cordial with both *Settibalijas* and *Malas*¹⁷.

The above views expressed in the magazine indicated, a change which was substantial as well as significant in terms of establishing relations with the BCs and with Dalits. But the magazine was not clear in which way it is going to alter the existing relations between *Kapus* and *Settibalijas* or *Kapus* and *Malas* which have always been tension ridden and hegemonic. While the *Kapumitra* was articulating the inclusion and accommodation politics, the empirical situation as narrated by study respondents indicated that *Kapus* went on a rampage against the Dalits even after PRP was formed. This was also reported widely in the media¹⁸. The upwardly mobile class of *Kapus* from the Godavari districts were in the news on several occasions due to the conflict with both *Settibalijas*, and *Malas* from East Godavari district, and with the *Kammas* in Vijayawada¹⁹.

The magazine’s perception changed significantly after the emergence of PRP, particularly in articulating *Kapus* relationship with the OBC’s and the Dalits. This is

¹⁷ Dr. Kada Venkata Ramana, 2009, *Kapus-Settibalijas-PrajaRajyam*, *Kapumitra*, January, p41

¹⁸ Haragopal, 2008, PRP-From politico-economic perspective, *Veekshanam* journal, Oct, pp.21-23.

¹⁹ Please see for details, Balagopal K, 1989, Rise of Gangsterism in Politics, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.24, No.5, Feb.4, pp.227-229.

due to the fact that *Kapus* dream of capturing the state power through Chiranjeevi, a *Kapu* chief minister aspirant will not be realised if *Kapus* do not strategically position themselves vis-a-vis *Malas* and *Settibalijas*. The next section deals with significance of OBC status for *Kapus* as represented in *Kapumitra*.

Section: V- BC status for *Kapus*

The magazine has given utmost importance to this issue. This is one issue that unites and simultaneously divides the *Kapus*. It claimed that the *Kapus* have been fighting for many decades. Several writers have contributed to this aspect such as Kommi Veerbhadrarao ²⁰, Miriryala Venkat Rao, Harischandra Prasad, Chillagattu Srikanth Kumar, Adapa Durga, Kanda Nageswara Rao, and others. These views have been classified into three aspects: Invoking the caste history, invoking the backwardness of *Kapus* in relation with other castes and appeal to the legal courts.

While requesting the state government to include the *Kapu-Telaga-Baliya* and *Ontari* in BC's, Chillagattu Srikanth Kumar, says "from 1931 onwards till date, in the three regions, Telangana, Coastal and Rayalaseema, out of every hundred, 35 belongs to *Kapus*. Excluding the Telangana region, British government with notification no-67 dated on June 15, 1915 included the *Kapus* in the Backward Category based on their poverty. From 1919 to September 1950, *Kapus* received the British state support through grant-in-aid policy" (Srikanth Ch 2005: 9-10)²¹. Yogi says that even "in 1921 caste census, the *Kapus* were listed in the BC category (Yogi 2007:13).

In another issue, it was discussed that, "prior to Independence, *Kapus* were recognised as OBCs based on their backwardness in education", it also says "after Independence, the Government of India has withdrawn the reservations for *Kapus*. From the year 1915 to 1950, *Telaga* caste (but not *Kapu*) was recognised as a Backward Caste. In 1950, Madras Government has cancelled it. In 1955, Justice Kaka Kalekar Commission recommended that the reservations should be based on caste, occupation and financial condition. Considering this point, the *Kapus* were once again recognised as OBCs by

²⁰ Presided a meeting organised by Kapunadu, East Godavari District Committee on 23-03-2008. In this meeting, the committee has declared that *Kapus* need BC status and state government need to revoke the 1961 decision.

²¹ Srikanth Kumar, Chillagattu, 2005, *Kapu, Telaga, Baliya Castes of Andhra Pradesh needs to include in BC Category, Kapumitra*, June, pg 9-10.

the state commission through a GO 3250 (Educational) by the social welfare department. However, the High Court of Andhra Pradesh has cancelled citing the technical grounds (1961). It is essential for all the *Kapus* to fight for the BC status mainly to improve the conditions of the younger generations” (Aug 2004: 13-14).

The above views presented the economic condition of the *Kapus*. Harischandra Prasad, says “though *Kapus* were Zamindars/Munsibs during Madras Presidency, but now they have reduced themselves to *Coolies* and he attributes it to their leisure attitude of the *Kapus* developed due to their lavish life style” (April, 2009). While extending Harischandra Prasad’s point, Chalapathi Rao²² also says “80% of *Kapus* are still working as daily wage labourers, labourers in brick industry, in mines, as cart pullers, as masons, as daily wage agricultural labourers. *Kapus* who own land are not more than 20%; among them 80% are small (*Sanna and Chinna*) cultivators. At the educational level, only 10% of them have upper primary education, and 4% of them are in higher education”, he continues saying “even after Independence, economic condition of the *Kapus* haven’t improved much. Despite holding an upper caste status *Kapus* are still exploited by the other upper castes at the political level”.

While some claimed that *Kapus* were upper castes, there were others who underplayed their status, especially Kanda Nageswara rao (2006) who says “*Kapus* are not upper castes and most of them are either small or agricultural labourers”. He also adds, “a very few Zamindari families were *Kapus*”, but many of them are into petty jobs, as construction labourers, drivers, constables, even as cart pullers. The upper castes treat the *Kapus* on par with the Dalits” (2006: 26).²³ Kottu Shekar (2003) says “Backward castes and Dalits think that the *Kapus* are on par with *Reddys* and *Kammas*. These contradictory perceptions by other castes on *Kapus* make the *Kapu* status more ambiguous. It is because of three reasons: progress achieved by small proportion of *Kapus*, behavioural pattern and Brahmanical attitude. Due to economic liberalisation, few *Kapus* did benefit but compared to other upper castes they are still backward.

²²President, along with Visweshwara Rao, Secretary, Kapunadu, East Godavari District, has given a representation - to Chief Minister YS Rajasekhar Reddy on ‘BC Problem among Kapus’,

²³ Nageswara Rao, Kanda, 2006, *Kapus are not part of Upper Castes*, December, p26

While Globalisation destroyed the benefits of Dalits, self-employed groups, etc, the state policies dampened several benefits to *Kapus*” (Oct 2003)²⁴.

The magazine also published several representations by different stakeholders among the *Kapu jati* cluster for inclusion into OBCs. Most of them who contributed to the magazine through representations appealed to several institutions: state, judiciary, and legal systems. These representations mainly have come from Godavari districts and Rayalaseema region, especially Chittor and Anantapur. Many of them have appealed the institutions to do justice to the *Kapus*. For instance, a representation was made to the then Chief Minister Y.S Rajasekhar Reddy in 2009 and submitted a memorandum with three main demands: to include *Kapus*, *Ontaris*, *Telagas* and *Balijas* in OBCs, secondly, increase the percentage of OBC reservation similar to that of Karnataka and Tamilnadu states, thirdly, to remove the hurdles for Puttuswamy Commission (appointed in 1994) and Dalwa Subramanyam commission which was constituted to look into the *Kapu* reservation aspects²⁵.

The magazine looked into the politicisation aspect as well by bringing many of the writings pertaining to *Kapu* reservations. Dr. Harishchandra Prasad (2007) appeals to the *Kapus* on many occasions in the magazine that “only through movement and with the political will, (*Kapus* can get reservations), but not by filing cases in the legal courts, protests or agitations (Feb 2007)²⁶. Several of the writers also said that the issue of *Kapu* reservations was appropriated conveniently by the *Reddys* and the *Kammas* through political parties (Balnidi 2007). Balnidi says that it was only through agitations and protests, *Kapus* have achieved reservations. He also says “*Kapu Hakkula Porata Samiti* (Kapu Association for protection of rights) was also formed under the leadership of *Mudragada Padmanabham* who sat for hunger strike (reservations to *Kapus* was the main demand) and successfully drew the attention of state”. But, Balnidi says “after TDP came into power in 1994, it has withheld the non-statutory status for *Kapu* students which affected the students very badly (Balnidi 2007: 6)²⁷. For instance, when

²⁴ Kottu Shekar, 2003, Lack of Strategy for Coastal *Kapus*, Originally published in *Vaaritha* on 4-09-2003, reprinted in *Kapumitra* on Oct, 2003, p7.

²⁵ On February, 2009 *Kapunadu* meeting was held in Rajahmundry, East Godavari District attended by *Akula Veeraju*, *Aarlapalli Nagabosu*, *Barla Ravindra Kumar*, etc.

Dr. Harishchandra Prasad, 2007, *Kapus-BC Problem, A Review of High Court Decision*, *Kapumitra*, Feb, p4.

²⁷ Lakshmi Narasimha Rao, B 2007, *Kapu Caste need to realise at least now*, *Kapumitra*, May, p6.

Chillagattu Srikanth Kumar says that the *Kapus* were once Zamindars, it indicates that he is invoking the grand legacy of *Kapus* and at the same time describing the pathetic situation they are in today. Along with him, many other writers expressed similar views emphasising the current plight of *Kapus*, who are working as rickshaw pullers, masons, etc. By indicating their current profiles, the authors in the magazine indicated that the *Kapus* are more backward than the Dalits and other BCs. This point was also raised by Harischandra Prasad when he was comparing the *Kapus* struggle with the *Madigas* struggle. He opined that the *Kapus* are struggling for their political rights, whereas the *Madigas* are fighting for their basic fundamental rights.

Comparing and contrasting their relation with other castes was also a major concern in the magazine. These comparisons were largely related to economic, social, development, cultural, political power, numerical strength etc. Many of the writers constantly compared *Kapus* with *Kammas*, and some other lower castes such as *Malas*. In this context, Srikanth Kumar says “*Kapus* are ahead of lower *Shudras* but they are not as progressive as upper *Sudhras* such as *Reddy* and *Kammas* and are therefore lower to them”. (Srikanth Kaumar 2005). Harischandra Prasad, while comparing their struggle with *Mala* and *Madiga* struggle for reservations, says “*Madigas* and *Mala* castes are fighting for rights provided by the constitution based on their numerical strength, but not Political power, whereas the *Kapus* are fighting for the rights based on the numerical strength, but not for rights but political power” (Harischandra Prasad 2002:4).

The above set of statements indicate that *Kapu* caste as a whole constitutes a complex caste structure where the *Kapus* at one level are projecting their upper caste status and at another level reducing its social status by appealing to be included in the BCs. This process is a kind of ‘De-sanskritisation’ unlike MN Srinivas’s ‘Sanskritisation’. It can be theorised that, *Kapus* are laying claims simultaneously for both higher status as well as the lower status. It is evident by the magazine’s representations that the *Kapus* were *Zamindars*, and also ‘*Munsibs/Karanam*’, etc. In Sanskritisation the lower castes imitated the upper castes for upward social mobility, whereas here in De-Sanskritisation the *Kapus* are comparing themselves with the lower castes to gain access to the economical benefits. At the political level, it appears that the *Kapus* are in competition with the other dominant peasant castes in Andhra Pradesh-*Kammas* and

Reddys. Especially after *Kammas* gained political power in 1983 *Kapus* have aggressively pushed their agenda for acquiring political power. This method of homogenisation was initially articulated and materialised by the Dalits through the BSP party, primarily based on their numerical strength and their alliances with other castes. However, there are certain contrasting factors between the mobilisational strategies between *Kapus* and the Dalits. One crucial difference in reconstructing their identities, Dalits at present are not hesitating to use their caste name either as suffix or prefix, which was unusual earlier, whereas the *Kapus* are trying to reconstruct their identity itself.

The above articulations, compels us to trace the issue of Kapu caste reservations chronologically, firstly, Damodaram Sanjeevaiah, the then chief minister of Andhra Pradesh has included the *Kapus* in the BC list through a G O No 3250 dated 14-10-1961, but it was struck down immediately by the High Court of Andhra Pradesh citing that the decision has come from the government and not from the BC commission which is the statutory body in taking these decisions. Again in 1994, Justice Puttaswamy commission was appointed by Kotla Vijayabhaskar Reddy government primarily to seek the suggestions whether to include *Kapus* or not, but this commission did not submit its report. At the same time, *Mudragada* went on a hunger strike on July 1994, by mounting pressure on Kotla Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy, the then chief minister. At the end, his fast was successful, as Kotla released a GO No.18 6-9-1994 through Social Welfare Department to extend non-statutory economic, educational benefits for *Kapus*. These benefits were availed only for a very brief period by the *Kapu* students, because this decision was revoked by NTR citing technical grounds. There were series of commissions to resolve the issue, like appointing Justice Shyam Sunder (1997), Justice B L Yadav (1999), as head of the respective commissions; yet, these commissions were ineffective in taking decisions.

Two important issues can be deciphered from the above paragraph, one it is certain that there was an aggression based on caste that pressured the government to take the decisions in favour of the *Kapus*, secondly, *Kapus* mobilized themselves effectively compared to the other upper castes in the state, by which process they were able to bring the state government to a standstill. In the due course, *Kapus* developed antagonist relations with several of the castes especially in Vijayawada and in East

Godavari districts respectively. Commenting on the caste violence in Vijayawada, Kondal Rao, a Gowda leader puts it in a perspective saying “*Kapus* have confronted the dominant caste in the state, i.e. Kammas, by using violence as dominant mechanism, if *Kapus* were in a position to challenge, resist Kammas, it certainly displays their strength, especially in terms of unity. He further says, “if *Kapus* can handle the dominant peasant caste Kammas, then it is not tough to handle the backward castes, in anyway” (Kondal Rao 2004). Kondal Rao, a BC leader consciously articulates the claims of *Kapus* in terms of BC status. His comment indicates that the BC groups are quite bedazzled by the *Kapu* caste demands. The next section, engages with the nexus between the caste and politics foregrounding the Kapumitra magazine’s perceptions.

Section: 6- Caste and Politics

Dr. Harischandra Prasad, the editor of the magazine wrote many editorials on this aspect continuously after the emergence of PRP. To begin with, the *Kapus* relationship with the Congress party the editor says “*Kapus* were always loyal to the Congress” (Oct 2007) in the Coastal region. He continues saying “Janata party, Communists and even BJP also attempted to break the *Kapu*-Congress relation but in vain”. (June 2009: 5)²⁸. This editorial has come after the debacle of PRP in the 2009 assembly elections, it appears that the magazine has attempted to appease the congress party, but *Kapus* were loyal to the Congress party from a very long time.

Harishchandra Prasad also attempted to detach the *Kapus* from PRP, by saying that “it was Chiranjeevi who has lost in the elections, but *Kapus* as a whole have won this election (2009 elections)”. Pre and post 2009 elections, there was much discussion on PRP from different quarters. There were many questions raised by the authors in the magazine pertaining to different issues: whether PRP is giving enough space for *Kapus*, should it be given, what if it gives and what if it doesn’t give, whether PRP should align with Communists, or with Congress, or with BSP (Durga A 2008: 26). There was enough space for the authors to hold on to a view. For instance, Mitra, who comes from a noted communist family was part of PRP from the beginning, has allowed speculations that PRP will align with the Communists, secondly, Pawan Kalyan is

²⁸ Dr. Harischandra Prasad, 2009, Congress Party and *Kapus*, *Kapumitra*, June, pg 5.

closely associated with many of the Dalit writers, hence the BSP-PRP possible alliance came in the fore front. However, it is important to note that most of the discussions were largely based on castes, and to which party the *Kapus* should align with, was the main discussion raised by the magazine. While doing, that, they have also come out with an interesting comparison between NTR and Chiranjeevi ever since the emergence of PRP. This has come up in many writings of the magazine, which I have summarised through the following table²⁹.

Table.6.1: Comparison between NTR and Chiranjeevi

S No	NTR	Chiranjeevi
1	Native place- Coastal Andhra- Krishna District	Coastal Andhra, West Godavari
2	Came from lower middle class family	Lower middle family
3	Stayed in Chennai in a small room for rent	Stayed in that same room
4	Andhra people treat him as Lord Ram	Lord Anjaneya
5	Launched his son Balakrishna in cinemas before he entered into politics	Did the same with his son- Ramcharan tej
6	His caste, Kamma backed him very strongly	Same with him, Kapu
7	Before him CM was a Reddy	During PRP formation, the CM was a Reddy
8	Agenda-Self Respect	Social Justice
9	Yellow	Green

This section dealt with the magazine's perceptions pertaining to *Kapus* and its politics. It also addresses magazine's representations of *Kapus* at the political level, and *Kapu* alliances with PRP, Congress, TDP, and Communists. The formation of PRP has certainly opened many windows for the *Kapus* across the parties, irrespective of their ideologies. A sense of achievement or recognition is visible in the writings of the magazine while representing the *Kapus*. The magazine was always in forefront while protecting the PRP, primarily negating the ongoing debate about the nature of PRP and its links with *Kapus*. It also underplayed the conflicts between the *Settibalijas-Kapus*, *Malas-Kapus*, *Gowda-Kapus*, *Yadava-Kapus*, only to enhance their political opportunities. The magazine has also given enough space and sustained the discussion on the confrontation and comparison with the *Kammas* throughout the decade, more prominently after the formation of PRP. These comparisons were diverse, to say few,

²⁹ Gouriseeti Venkateswarlu, 2007, Page 24.

between Chiranjeevi and NTR, economic growth, population, Cinema field, political power.

Section: 7- Space for Business/Investments

However, business and investments is not a dominant theme in the magazine, but a scrutiny of the whole magazine for a decade indicates that there was no uniformity in the advertisements published and carried by the magazine. These advertisements were diverse, for instance, related to real estate, educational institutions, (schools, colleges, etc) small-scale industries. This diversity reflects the magazine's position in terms of encouraging the *Kapus* to invest in diverse fields, emulating the *Kammas*.

In a subtle way, the magazine acknowledged *Kamma* and *Reddys* for their uniformity in controlling the industries. It (magazine) advocates and asserts that the *Kapus* should be able to get hold of any industry like their counterparts, citing the example of *Reddys* who control the political power and the *Kammas* who control the entrepreneurship and the cinema industry. Therefore, making it clear that, *Reddys* and *Kammas* are their reference points to claim higher status socially and economically, whereas *Settibalijas*, *Toorpu Kapus* etc are their reference point to claim political benefits/ reservations.

Summary

Kapus have attempted to mobilise themselves and several other jatis by trying to incorporate or bring homogeneity within them. The *Kapumitra* magazine is also a platform, a window for them to articulate, represent, their perceptions pertaining to the idea of 'conglomeration of *Kapus*'. The caste's primary agenda to re-construct the *Kapu* identity is for various purposes. It has raised the issues, which are helpful in mobilising the *Kapus*; it has undermined certain issues, which will hamper the unity of *Kapus* as well as other castes. The magazine has given space to different types of arguments, which will help consolidate the *Kapus*. A close examination of the content of the magazine tells us that it has tapped the growing caste consciousness and expressed it in different forms.

It is indeed necessary to say that there is a lacuna in studying magazine's within the sociology or in social sciences, excluding the history. Many of the sociological scholars did not take up this approach of studying caste magazines. Studying a magazine for a period of ten years has certainly opened up many approaches to understand the caste; it also provided an opportunity to critically look at the 'representation from within' dimension. The magazine has played a significant role in portraying the caste aspirations, presenting the caste apprehensions, etc. Caste magazines along with the women magazines have played a crucial role during the colonial period, especially in Madras Presidency, where many of the caste views were expressed through their magazines. Even during the present context, the magazines are playing a pertinent role in placing the caste views in a systematic way and in representing the caste at the political level. Magazines have been the best medium to ignite the caste consciousness, among their caste members, and *Kapumitra* has done it quite successfully for a decade. This was one of the main reasons to consider caste magazine as an important source for analysing the social power.

Magazines, in this context, are not only an important source for analysing social power, but they are also an important 'resource' in representing the interests. As Bierstedt articulates it in terms of social power with the three sources-numbers, social organisation and resources- it is this particular resource, which actually addresses the large numbers and acts like an impetus during mobilisational process. This is what the *Kapumitra* has done to the *Kapu* caste, when there were attempts to mobilise and to consolidate, infact, in many occasions, it has taken the initiation to mobilise the aspirations of caste. An attempt to start a magazine itself indicates that the respective caste is under the process of consolidating, mobilising and organising the *Kapus* more effectively. In the due course, *Kapumitra*, quite significantly represented the interests of *Kapus*.

Through the above sections, we have tried to demonstrate the articulateness of the magazine in representing the interests of caste. This representation can be in terms of BC reservations, or attempts for unification, or in term of numbers, culture, more importantly for the political power and politics. The attempts by the magazine were very much in line with the activists at the political front. This particular feature itself

indicates that the camaraderie does exist between the stakeholders of *Kapu* caste. Nevertheless, this cannot be generalised, primarily because one can observe or notice the frictions/conflicts between the *Kapumitra* magazine and other magazines or even between the management of the magazine with the political activists.

To conclude this chapter, largely, the magazine has focused much on the political nature of the *Kapu* caste. Most of the arguments put forth in the magazine were politically motivated. It is indeed a significant transformation in terms of the caste mobilisations. The change of articulation that is significant in the magazine writings was a shift from cultural homogeneity to the political homogeneity. The magazine with reference to the *Kapu* caste demonstrated the metamorphosis of the caste.

Chapter 7

Sociology of Political Parties: A Case of Praja Rajyam Party

Several scholars (Hardgrave R 1968; Ilaiah K 2004; Bandyopadhyay S 1993; Ramakrishna V 1993) argued that the rising caste consciousness paved the way for several mobilisational processes, which take multiple forms in the due course. The present study attempted to trace the mobilisation processes in order to locate them in *associations, magazines, and political parties*. The previous chapters, especially chapters 5 and 6 analysed the role of associations and magazines within the purview of *Kapus* caste. However, this chapter will discuss the role of political parties by looking at the PRP sociologically. The Caste association primarily represent the concerns of caste, by high lighting the demands in an organised manner.

The present chapter focuses on the formation of the party, in terms of its engagement with the democratic process, role of vote banks, the parties' role in emphasizing the caste aspirations, etc. In the phase of Identity politics, forming a political party has been considered significant in mobilising the caste members to represent for themselves. Although many political parties in India have strong caste base, the public face of the parties reflect the diverse and democratic political agenda in order to make their mobilization strategies more acceptable. The following section discusses some of these issues.

Section: I- The Study of Political Parties: An Overview

A cursory look at different theoretical perspectives may help us understand the political parties and their ideological positions at the empirical level. Max Weber along with Gramsci provided deeper insights on political parties particularly in terms of its functions, mechanisms and intricate issues. It is sheer co-incidence that both the theorists' location (Germany and Italy), represented autocratic (Nazism and Fascism) form of governance, thereby providing the context for their conceptual formulations on

political parties. Both the theorists articulated their democratic views, having encountered a repressed atmosphere in their own lifetime. Max Weber in particular laid out certain defining principles of a political party, within the broad contours of political sociology. He says that parties were

[T]o designate associations, membership in which rests on formally free recruitment. The end to which its activity is devoted is to secure power within an organization for its leaders in order to attain ideal or material advantages for its active members. These advantages may consist in the realization of certain objective policies or the attainment of personal advantages or both. Parties may have an ephemeral character or may be organized with a view to permanent activity (Weber Max 1956: 284)

With the above statement, Weber lays out clearly the functions of the party that ought to be held in the interests of the members by giving a secure power to their leadership. He says that this process (upholding the interests) will begin from the recruitment itself, and it is evident that the parties construct a space, which is exclusive for their membership. While defining the nature of the parties, Weber says that members can be permanent or also temporal. Subsequent to Weber, many of them have contributed to the study of political parties, especially from the 'Elite School'- Robert Michels, Pareto, Mosca¹, etc., but it is Gramsci, who provided a structural approach in studying the nature, prospect and the functions of the party. He has expanded Weber's views and presented a holistic approach to the conceptual schema of the political parties. Gramsci says

[T]he political party, for all groups, is precisely the mechanism which carries out in civil society the same function as the State carries out, more synthetically and over a larger scale, in political society. In other words it is responsible for welding together the organic intellectuals (1996: 15).

The above statement of Gramsci indicates that parties carry out the functions of the state in the civil society, whereas the state will carry out its functions at the political society. Though he doesn't use the term 'political society' openly, in the process of fragmenting the responsibilities of the state and the civil society he makes it clear that

¹Robert Michels says that the party rule is nothing but the rule of oligarchy. Pareto and Mosca, from Italy, had similar line of thoughts on the formation of parties, and forms of governance, emphasized that the Democracy is a farce, and in the name of Democracy, only few will rule the state. Michels wrote a book titled '*political parties*' (1962). Michels, Pareto and Mosca are all part of the 'elite school theory', which strongly opposed the Marxist school of thought thoroughly.

the state carries certain duties at the political level, and parties carry out certain other duties in the civil society.

Gramsci, like Weber, prescribes certain functional modalities in studying the formation of the party. They are: Exploring the party ideology, understanding the people who constitute the party, exploring the history of certain intellectual personalities, presenting a political biography of a single personality associated with the party and importantly, people (to use Gramscian phrase-masses) who have followed the leader since the formation of the party and sustained the leadership trust, loyalty and discipline and simultaneously criticising the party and the leadership 'realistically'.

The above perspective provides an adequate ground on the subject of political parties, in various ways, especially to unravel the empirical realities. The Praja Rajyam Party in Andhra Pradesh provides a case in point to analyze some of these observations on the functioning of political parties, which are discussed in the following sections.

Section: II- Changing Nature of Political Parties in India

The purpose here is not to review the whole corpus of literature on political parties, but rather to analyze the substantive work done on political parties by some of the scholars. These studies include Weiner (1957, 1963, 1964, 1967), Rajni Kothari (1964, 1967, 1970), Moriss Jones (1964, 66, 67), Rudolph (1961), Bayly (1975), Paul Brass, (1965, 1981, 1983, 1985) James Manor (1981, 90), David Hardgrave (1970), Stanley Kochanek (1976), Atul Kohli, (1983), John Hariss, Chris Jafferlot (1998). These scholars have primarily studied politics as a phenomenon, locating the political parties within a particular framework. Mostly they explained how the nature of political parties is shifting systematically over a period and traced the changes within the internal structure of the political parties. Rajeswari Despande (2005) says that there are two ways of looking at the party system in India, one to look at the electoral processes, and secondly, how these processes negotiate with the democratic values, where the parties play a dominant role.

The formation of political parties in India, is based on multiple factors - region, religion, caste, or ideology etc. It is primarily because of the significance attached to Democracy through electoral politics, which prompted many individuals, or groups to

form the party and represent their dissent or the voice within the given democratic space². The post-Independent India has witnessed the large number of political parties. Several of them were either offshoot of the Congress party or influenced by it, leaving aside the communist parties³.

Even during the colonial period, there were few political parties, but mainly articulated the nationalist agenda. The 'Congress' as a party played a crucial role in representing the interests of Indians and fighting to protect the *imagined national identity*⁴. Over a period of time, especially after Independence, the Congress party became, in Rajni Kothari's idiom "Party of Consensus" (1961: 1161-73). In South India, the 'Justice Party', an alternative forum, formed in the year 1916, primarily to protect the interests of the landlord class, Peasant Caste Communities, etc. comprising of 'Non-Brahmins'⁵.

Section: 3- The Origin of Caste Based Parties in India

In terms of analysing the origin of Caste based parties, it is essential to begin with the Justice Party, formed *by* and *for* the non-Brahmins. The move was to hold/protect the interests of the 'Non-Brahmins' against the dominant hegemonic attitude of the Brahmins, especially in terms of jobs, education, and political positions⁶. Electorally, the attempt was very successful, primarily because the Non-Brahmins outnumbered the Brahmins numerically; the Justice Party functioned effectively largely owing to the economical and numerical dominance.

Post, the success of Justice Party, there were many attempts to mobilise the castes, Ambedkar initiated several federations, mainly to empower the lives of the

² Please see, Suri K C for a-detailed account on the political parties in India, titled "Parties under Pressure: Political Parties in India since Independence", 2005, Lokniti, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies.

³ There are many dissents for the Congress, party, for instance, Rajagopalachari, please see, Srinivasan, Vasanti, 2009, Gandhi's Conscience Keeper: C Rajagopalachari and Indian Politics, Permanent Black, and also Ramachandra Guha, 2003, A Chapter on him in the book titled 'The Last Liberal and Other Essays', Permanent Black

⁴The debate on the role of Congress has many various strands. Judith Brown, Cambridge Scholars, (Washbrook, Baker, Seal, Gallagher) Sussex Scholars, (James Manor) Canberra Scholars, (Robin Jeffrey, Ravinder Kaur, David Arnold) and Subaltern Studies, (Ranajit Guha) etc have contributed to it.

⁵ In the present context, the term 'Non-Brahmin' is a loose category, which is a non-existent entity, primarily due to the rise of the Identity politics, where each caste is striving to be independent for many factors or benefits or even for their rights. The term was articulated during early 20th century, mainly by Periyar.

⁶ Irschick, Eugene F, 1969, Politics and Social Conflict in South India, The Non-Brahmin Movement and Tamil Separatism, University of California Press, London.

marginalised sections, which later turned into parties, such as Republican Party of India (1956) and most recently, the Bahujan Samaj Party (1984). Scrutiny of all these parties or their formations indicates that, a party can function effectively not only with the ideological reasoning, but combining ideology with the numerical and economic dominance. Due to lack of economic dimension, many attempts by the lower classes of the society to form a party have failed, including the efforts made by Ambedkar himself. It was only during the 1960's one could notice the rise of the caste based mobilisations, especially from South (Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu) and North India (Haryana, U.P, Bihar). In south India, the powerful peasant dominant castes formed into a 'Syndicate' in order to effectively oppose Indira Gandhi and her political popularity. While Indira Gandhi's agenda was to reduce the hegemony of this syndicate vis-a-vis peasant castes, the 'Syndicate' introduced alternative politics by bringing the backward castes and Dalits into the political sphere. This Syndicate includes Kamraj Nadar from Tamilnadu, Nijalingappa from Karnataka, and Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy from Andhra Pradesh. The above three people represented Nadar, Lingayat and Reddy castes respectively from three south Indian states. Infact, later, Kasu Brakhananda Reddy from Congress differed with Indira Gandhi and started a party called 'Reddy Congress' in the year 1969⁷.

The major breakthrough for the emergence of caste-based parties was during 1980's. To begin with, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in Andhra Pradesh was formed in the year 1982. It started with the project of safeguarding the 'Telugu Pride' but largely addressed the aspirations of the Kamma caste⁸. The founder of the party hails from the Kamma caste, which is the economically dominant peasant caste in Andhra Pradesh (Atul Kohli 1988; Carol Upadhyay, 1989; K C Suri, 1996, 2004; Balagopal, 1999; Yamada Keiko 2008). Even in other parts of South India, many parties have formed to cater the needs of larger sections of the society. In Tamilnadu, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), All India Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, (AIDMK) and in Karnataka, it was *Janata Dal*, whereas in Maharashtra *Shivasena* formed.

In North India, many castes have attempted to articulate politically, having benefitted from Green Revolution. Especially castes like *Jats* were in a decisive position due to

⁷ Please see, Innaiah, Narisetti, 2009, Political History of Andhra Pradesh, Center for Inquiry India, Hyderabad.

⁸ Please see, Selig Harrison, 1956, 'Caste and Andhra Communists', American Journal of Sociology.

the wealth and prosperity they gained after the Green Revolution. These groups started the new social movements in north India. Over a period, these castes started political parties as well. The prominent among them was the Samajwadi Party (SP) in UP backed up by *Yadavas*.⁹ *Yadavas* say that they claimed their ruling class lineage from Lord Krishna who was a powerful ruler; hence, citing their lineage with Krishna, they even justify their claims, ruling other castes through ideology, or bringing the religious idiosyncrasy. In the due course, the *Yadavas* mobilised through associations, caste meetings, etc. Subsequently, SP a political party was formed with the *Yadava* social network, thus transforming itself into a powerful political party with the support of Muslims in Uttar Pradesh¹⁰. Similarly, caste mobilisations by Rashtriya Jana Dal (RJD) were *Yadavs*, Janta Dal (U) *Kurmis* and Lok Jansatta Party (LJP) the Dalits in Bihar.

It is interesting to examine the impact of caste-based parties on political life, such as the parliamentary democracy, electoral politics, etc. in India. The increasing nexus between the Caste and Politics particularly the manner in which it decisively shaped the political contours of Indian society in the post-independent period needs to be critically scrutinized. If one looks at how caste has deeply entrenched in the political realm, one could explain why Representative Politics, Identity Politics¹¹, seeking recognition, fighting for the re-distribution of the institutional benefits, etc., have assumed more significance in the recent past.

Irrespective of the nature of castes, whether they, lie within the Brahmanical hierarchical order of upper castes, middle or even from lower sections of the society, several of the caste leaders have been mobilizing the members for acquiring the political power. The prime agenda, in general, seems to be to acquire the institutional sources or to use Bierstedt phrase, 'resources', in the due course, as these castes seek identity through the recognition. It is in this context, one has to see the issue of reservations in the entire political system. The vision of Dr. B R Ambedkar to provide

⁹ Please see Jafferlot, 2009; Milucheti, 2004 for further details

¹⁰ Jafferlot and Gilles Verniers, 2012

¹¹ Signify a wide range of political activity and theorizing founded in the shared experiences of injustice of members of certain social groups. Rather than organizing solely around belief systems, programmatic manifestos, or party affiliation, identity political formations typically aim to secure the political freedom of a specific constituency marginalized within its larger context. Members of that constituency assert or reclaim ways of understanding their distinctiveness that challenge dominant oppressive characterizations, with the goal of greater self-determination. Several scholars have contributed to this aspect, Charles Taylor, William Connolly, etc.

reservations for the marginalized had some counter arguments. One, reservations actually offset the merit, second, intense competition among the backward castes for inclusion into the reservation schema¹². These debates on reservations have actually increased the urge among different caste groups towards identity politics that got reflected intensely in the political sphere.

Several of the parties, have attempted to focus on the above factors and mobilised their caste groups. One could trace the contestation of status or merit argument, starting from the Justice party, which opposed the hegemony of the Brahmins at the cultural, educational and political level. Justice party, which constituted largely from among the peasant-dominant castes, protested vehemently against the dominance of Brahmins. The peasant-dominant castes mobilized the Non-Brahmin castes but in the due course, they adopted the Brahmanical hegemonic practices over the other castes¹³. As a result, the dialectic of confronting the dominant by the dominated continued, wherein the backward castes and Dalits formed their own organisations/associations and gradually formed their own political parties in both north and south India.

The rise of caste consciousness was another contributory factor that constituted the basis for Identity Politics, which stimulated the formation of political parties. The new forms of political processes have allowed these castes to form a party and create a space for their own representation. In the contemporary period, Identity Politics are attributed exclusively for the lower sections of the society, but this needs to be contested because the formation of the Justice party is an example, which indicates the Non-Brahmins striving for the identity against the Brahmins. One is not denying that there is no departure of the identity politics over a period of time; it gradually took a different shape from the recognition or the hierarchy question to that of the 'rights' and social justice¹⁴.

¹² Balagopal has immensely contributed to this argument, especially the merit in several of his articles, especially in EPW and also in Yagati Chinniah's edited book titled 'Dividing Dalits'

¹³ Backward Castes (BCs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs).

¹⁴ Javed Alam 2008. Prabhat Patnaik has classified the Identity Politics into three: Identity resistance, Identity bargaining and Identity fascist. The first one denotes the struggles by Dalits, second is relevant to the upper castes who are attempting to use their caste as a bargaining tool and the third is related to the religious identities. Please see, Prabhat Patnaik, 2014, Neo-Liberalism and Democracy, EPW, Vol, XLIV, April, 12, pp.

Section: 4- Caste and the Party Nexus in Andhra Pradesh

It is within this framework, of the 'identity and hierarchy' that an attempt has been made to analyse Praja Rajyam Party (PRP) in Andhra Pradesh, which was formed in the year 2008. Chiranjeevi, a film actor star turned politician, announced his party formation in Tirupati a temple town which assumes its significance both for its religious as well as caste consciousness¹⁵. Chiranjeevi belongs to peasant caste called 'Kapu' and hails from West Godavari District (Coastal Andhra) of Andhra Pradesh. He has acted in 149 movies¹⁶, popular hero with mass following called 'mega star'. Later he also got involved in philanthropic activities such as blood bank, eye bank, etc.

It is essential to render certain factual details pertaining to the nexus between the political parties and castes in Andhra Pradesh, prior to making a detailed discussion on PRP. Many scholars have noted that the political space of Andhra Pradesh was consistently dominated by the Reddy's in Congress, until the intervention of N T Rama Rao with his Telugu Desam Party through *Kamma* caste in the year 1983 (for instance, Kohil A: 1988). The *Reddy*-Congress and the *Kamma*-TDP became contending political parties polarizing all other castes by 1980s. Gramsci statement that the 'history of the party' is nothing but asking the 'history of a particular social group' (Gramsci 1971: 151), is apt here in terms of *Reddy* Congress and the *Kamma* TDP.

Prior to *Reddys*, the *Brahmins* dominated the Congress Party in the state. The *Brahmins* have skilfully co-opted *Reddys*, a peasant caste to counter another peasant caste *Kamma*, as the *Kammas* were challenging the *Brahmins* both economically and politically through the Justice Party. With the state power, *Reddys* started controlling the economy in a large way. Elliot says that, the *Reddys* have established a strong social network among them through marriage alliances and have utilised that to acquire political power (Elliot 1970). The *Reddys* could control the Congress Party, because economically, they had control over the land in parts of coastal Andhra, Telangana and Rayalaseema. One can also emphasize that historically, *Reddys* controlled the state power for many centuries from the period of *Reddyrajyam* in coastal Andhra and later

¹⁵ In Tirupati, *Balijas* are numerically significant and they determine the political sphere through their numbers. *Balija* caste is also part of the *Kapu* unification process. It is one among several reasons for Chiranjeevi to choose the Tirupati for his political entry as well to contest from this constituency. In fact, he has won from this constituency quite comfortably in 2009 assembly elections.

¹⁶ A small description of Chiranjeevi was presented in the middle of this section.

through the *polegar* system in Rayalaseema¹⁷. This feudal tendency fetched them social power over other castes. *Brahmins* also commanded social respect due to their upper caste status, but gradually, *Reddys* through ‘economic power’ attained certain degree of respect in the society (Elliot C 2010: 125). Apart from Congress and the TDP, Communist parties have also played a prominent role in the state politics from late 1940’s. The social base of the communists was largely from that of *Kamma* caste in coastal Andhra and *Reddys* in Rayalaseema and Telangana. There were many critics against the over-presence of upper castes in the party¹⁸.

Along with the TDP, there are few more regional parties in Andhra Pradesh, such as the Telangana Rastra Samiti, (TRS) formed exclusively demanding a separate state of Telangana, which was finally achieved on 2nd June, 2014. The social base for TRS has been from the *Velama* caste complemented by *Reddys*. Another party called Loksatta Party was formed by Jayaprakash Narayan, a former bureaucrat and a *Kamma* from Coastal Andhra. Largely, either *Reddys*, through the Congress or *Kammas* through various non-congress parties, such as, the TDP, Loksatta, communist parties, (CPI and CPI (M)) or the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) dominates the state politics. Therefore, the point that emerged from this section is that there is a growing nexus between caste and politics progressively in the post-independence period. Whether one analyzes from a modernization perspective or Capitalist model of development, or liberal democracy perspective, caste seem to be incorporated into the political realm rather than being eliminated or undermined as anticipated by classical thinkers. In the following section, the rise of PRP will be discussed.

Section: 5- The Rise of Praja Rajyam Party

The immediate reason for the formation of PRP seems to be, as KC Suri (2009) points out the ‘rapid upward social mobility of the *Kapus*’¹⁹. There are many other reasons that one needs to take into consideration. Firstly,–Sonia Gandhi’s incompetence in taking decisions quickly, had allowed the then chief minister in 2008, YS Rajasekhar

¹⁷ Nagaraju Naidu, Yenugonda, 2013, *Seema porubiddalu-Palegallu*, Sakshi daily Telugu newspaper, 16-08-2013.

¹⁸ Especially Harrison, Selig, 1956, Caste and the Andhra Communist, The American Political Science Review, Vol.50, No.2, June, pp.378-404.

¹⁹ Jaffrelot, Christophe, 2012, The Caste based mosaic of Indian Politics, Caste Matters, May.

Reddy to wield his absolute power. Thus, he became a prominent person and a rallying point for all Reddys²⁰. As a result, there was unrest among many castes including *Kapus*, which was resulted in the form of PRP. Jinka Nagaraju (2012) says that due to autocratic and anti-democratic policies of Indira Gandhi, TDP emerged in 1982 articulating the aspirations of different social groups and economic classes.

Similarly, during Sonia Gandhi's regime (UPA), Loksatta, PRP and YSR Congress articulated the growing discontent the between the lower castes and upper castes. Along with it, one also needs to consider that the growing disparity, backlash of capitalist mode of development, anti-democratic principles of running a party affected in the formation of a new party. In Gramsci's words, the "history of any given party can only emerge from the complex portrayal of the totality of society and State" (1971: 151). By following Gramsci one can sum up that, the reasons behind the formation of any party could be due to complex situations or relations that exists both at the macro (state) level as well as at the micro (caste) level which led to the formation of the PRP. The social and caste relations were disturbed and distressed due to the undue and unequal power sharing by the ruling party and the ruling caste, the rest of the castes who were deprived of power started questioning primarily to protect the rights and interests. This point is well explained by Gramsci, in his quote

every party is the expression of a social group, and of one social group only, nevertheless in certain given conditions certain parties represent a single social group precisely in so far as they exercise a balancing and arbitrating function between the interests of their group and those of other groups, and succeed in securing the development of the group which they represent with the consent and assistance of the allied groups..." (1971: 148)

Secondly, it needs to be considered that both *Mudragada Padmanabam* and *Vangaveeti Mohana Ranga*, two prominent leaders during late 1980s, initiated the *Kapu* movement. *Mudragada Padmanabham*, a strong *Kapu* Caste leader from East Godavari District, was crucial in the formation of a party called, "*Telugunadu Party*" in Tirupati²¹ in May

²⁰ Due thanks to Jinka Nagaraju for letting me use his unpublished paper titled 'Marginalization of Congress party in Andhra Pradesh', 2012. And also please see, K Srinivasulu, 2009, YS Rajasekhara Reddy, a Political Appraisal, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.XVIV, No.38, pp.8-11.

²¹ It was NTR's decision to sack the entire cabinet which erupted dissents and at the end, a political party was formed- Telugunadu Party. Please see, Menon, K Amarnath, 1989, Dissent drama, sacked ministers

1989. He became a rallying point for not only *Kapus* but also for several other Backward Caste Communities during that time. Despite the hustle, the party could not sustain for long, and finally got merged with the Congress. Hence, considering the formation of PRP as the initial step for *Kapu* articulations at the political level is too naive, in fact, one has to see that, the formation of PRP is a culmination of several previous attempts initiated by the *Kapu* caste leaders, especially the neo-rich class hailing from the Godavari and Krishna districts. It was during the same period, even *Mohana Ranga* also emerged as a potential *Kapu* leader from Vijayawada challenging the *Kamma* capitalists in the town. These two (*Mudragada* and *Ranga*) have successfully carried the *Kapu* identity all over the state, although for a very short period.

It may be useful here to analyze several responses on the formation of PRP as a political party including its rise and merger with Congress party. PRP emerged in a context when there was discontent regarding the main political parties both TDP and Congress. The discontent was articulated in terms of representation in these parties either by *Kamma* or *Reddy*. Therefore during the Post liberalisation period, one could hardly find any difference between Congress and TDP as all the benefits accrued only to a particular section, be it allotment of land, electricity, medicine, software, colleges, real estate, etc. PRP promised to provide alternative space for dissenting members particularly from different political parties and social groups (Kodandram 2008). As one of my respondents says that the “formation of PRP and to come into political domain, is a social need, because people got fed up with 35 years of congress monopoly and 15 years of TDP and its disillusion politics. They saw an alternative in PRP²²”.

Haragopal, an academician/activist, perceived the formation of PRP from a politico-economic context. He said that PRP would face two hurdles: firstly, the economic forces are much stronger in the present context, probably stronger than the time of NTR, secondly, Chiranjeevi, unlike NTR, is not a decision maker, nor can execute his plan of action at the crucial juncture²³. Haragopal commented that as these two

rebel in Andhra Pradesh, March, 31, please see <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/sacked-ministers-rebel-in-andhra-pradesh/1/323255.html>, viewed on 11-02-2014

²² Interviewed Venugopal, a social activist, on 16-07-2010 at his Office in Hyderabad.

²³ For instance calling Naxalites as patriots and then implementing rice for 2 rupees and second time when he came to power, he promised that he will ban liquor, and he implemented it. Please see, H J Dora, 2012, NTR to *Nenu* (I am with NTR),

problems cannot be overcome by either Chiranjeevi or PRP; we may see a downfall of PRP very shortly.

Duddu Prabhakar (2008), Dalit rights activist commented that PRP 'is another mask for the looters'. He also said that there is certain longevity for the 'rhetoric nature' and 'populist language' in the state through the slogans of Chandrababu Naidu- *Swarnadhra Pradesh (Golden A.P)*, YSR- *Harithandra Pradesh (Green AP)*, and Chiranjeevi joined the bandwagon with the slogan of *Santhosandra Pradesh (Happy A.P)*.

When PRP as a political party emerged, political commentators perceived that it would destabilise the two party systems in Andhra Pradesh- Congress and TDP, in turn both *Reddys* and *Kammas*. This also reflects how caste and politics are intertwined in Andhra Pradesh like in most part of India (Kothari R 1970, Elliot C 1970). The rise of PRP in A.P can be seen as a contestation among the elites or new social groups staking their claim to political power. As Christophe Jaffrelot (2012) comments

...out of the aspiration of the elite among the Kapu community (caste) to see their man at the helm of the state government. In recent times, they seem to have nurtured a grievance that under the rule of the Congress and the TDP, only two communities, namely, the Reddys and Kammas, exercised supreme political power although the Kapus enjoyed analogue social status and were numerically as large as these communities. They were resentful of the asymmetry between their rise in social and economic prominence and their role as junior partners in power (2012:50).

Several activists and academic scholars including Jaffrelot analysed the central role of caste, including *Kapu* caste in the formation of PRP. Without undermining Jaffrelot's view that upward social mobility is significant in the formation of PRP, it is argued here that the formation of PRP was in fact a culmination of several attempts that resulted as a political party in 2008. The dissenters from among the *Kapus* have made efforts since 1980's, however, these attempts did not fructify into a political party.

Section: 6- Mapping Representation from PRP's Perspective

The PRP visualised a larger role and wider social support from different sections of the society. It did not articulate *Kapu* identity as its political base; it projected a broader caste and political calculus. Despite doing that, the PRP could not nurture the idea of

unity among the Backward Castes and *Kapus*, nor a tactical alliance with the lower classes particularly with the Dalits. A critical scrutiny of the party's manifesto will reveal certain fundamental issues related to the party's ideology. First, it states that,

The preamble to the constitution, amongst others, guarantees to secure for all its citizens Justice - social, political and economic - and equality of status and opportunity. However, unfortunately, this remains a mirage even now for a large proportion of our population, (PRP Manifesto: 1).

Secondly,

Andhra Pradesh is a resource rich State with abundant wealth, both natural and human. Despite this, the people continue to be poor. Over the last six decades, development and progress has reached only a thin layer of the upper crust of our people, bypassing the vast majority of Backward and Weaker sections of the population. Vested political interests, lack of political will, bureaucratic apathy, unbridled corruption and public indifference have led to a sense of despair that progress and prosperity is a distant dream.(ibid: 1)

Thirdly, the PRP's reason for the formation of party was the issue of development. They considered that the development during the regime of both the Congress which ruled for 35 years and TDP which ruled for 15 years was a "Chimera"(ibid: 3). PRP critiqued the Congress and the TDP for being corrupt, failing to maintain law and order, provide health, education etc. (ibid: 3).

The above three statements from the PRP's manifesto, clearly indicate party's ideology in terms of equal opportunity, development and presenting itself as the best alternative. These three points indirectly hint at the 'deprivation of power' for different social groups. Secondly, it also indicated that the institutional benefits have not been distributed appropriately; hence, they proposed to do that in a democratic way and contribute to social justice.

Section: 7- Broad Trends emerged out of PRP formation

During the fieldwork, the study encountered several comparisons between NTR and Chiranjeevi. This comparison was not limited only to East Godavari, Vijayawada, or Hyderabad, but it was a general comparison among the people across the state.

Comparisons between Chiranjeevi and NTR

There were multiple views pertaining to the comparison of both NTR and Chiranjeevi. Few of the respondents said that the comparison is inevitable. Firstly, they come from the same region-Coastal Andhra, secondly, they have reached the zenith in their film careers, thirdly, immediately after cinemas they both joined politics, and fourth, both began their political career from Tirupati (AP). Whereas few of them have negated the comparisons between them, for instance, the study respondent who is part of visual culture industry, brings the non-comparative elements between both of them. He says

There was a political concept in NTR movies, if one takes ‘*Seetharama kalyanam*’ (1961), *Sri Krishna Pandaveeyam*’ (1966), his approach to the problem is completely different. The projection of negative characters as the protagonists in his movies is the first step towards politics. Even in *Dana Veera Sura Karna* (1977), *Duryodana* projected as a hero was against the original epic. He was influenced by Tripuraneni²⁴ and MGR²⁵. Tripuraneni’s village is close to Gudivada (NTR’s place) and Periyar and MGR influenced NTR during his stay in Madras

In Chiranjeevi movies, we don’t find that intense argument. He did not cultivate the idea of politicalness in his movies, except the movie *Tagore* (2003). Even during the time of Mulki struggle²⁶, NTR has come up with *Talla-Pellama* song in one of his movie. There was a platform, nurtured by the Kamma caste and NTR was a better choice in CM post. Along with the Kamma caste even NTR also established himself.

The above statement is judgmental about Chiranjeevi, because he has acted in many movies as a mass hero²⁷. It may be true that there was no strong political base for Chiranjeevi like the way NTR had. NTR started his film career in 1949 and he carved his own niche by doing different roles, his mythological roles made him the substitute of Lord *Rama* and his other movies made people believe that he was a real life hero.

²⁴ Tripuraneni Ramaswamy Chowdary, an Ideologue for Kammas, NTR also belongs to that caste.

²⁵ Marudhur Gopalan Ramachandran, popularly known by his initials MGR, was a super star in Tamil Movies. Telugu cinemas were made in Madras in the initial days, so NTR has observed MJR closely. Incidentally MJR also got into politics and became Chief Minister for Tamilnadu and was there in office for Nine years. Please see, Hardgrave, Robert, 1973, Duncan Forrester, 1976, MSS Pandian, 1989.

²⁶ *Mulki* means nation and people who are living in that nation are called as *Mulki*’s. These rules were framed during the Nizam period. These rules are related to the jobs, education and also articulates the question of nativity in the realm of Telangana. Please see for more, Sundarayya P, 1972, Telangana people’s struggles and its lessons, Dec, Desraj Chada on behalf of Communist party of India (Marxist), Calcutta.

²⁷ Some of the movies are, *Sangarshana*, *Challenge*, *Manchi Donga*, *Muta mesthri*, *Indra*, *Gang leader*, *Gharana mogudu* etc.

Whereas Chiranjeevi success in movies was more in terms of appealing the masses by introducing new techniques in terms of dance as well as fights. This is well explained by another respondent, Venugopal, who says, “though Chiranjeevi became commercially successful, he lacks vision”, he also explains it by saying that the vision is towards the politics, says, and “[H]e doesn’t have a broader political hangover which was either cultivated personally or even in his movies” (Venugopal 2010).

The ideology of PRP

The PRP presented ‘Social Justice’ as its core ideology, in-fact it has stressed much on this social justice factor in their manifesto²⁸. The party president, Chiranjeevi on many occasions have expressed that the party’s sole agenda was to implement social justice to all the castes, classes, gender in the state. Chiranjeevi also expressed it through the party manifesto that the ‘social justice is the best plank to serve the needy’.

Many of the scholars have attempted to study the relevance and the importance of the role of Ideology in the formation or for the existence of any party at the political level. They include Weber, Gramsci, Beteille, and few others. Jaffrelot says

...analysing the divergence between ideology and practice, one has to take three factors into account. First, there are certain inherent contradictions between the sectional interests from which parties often draw their strength and the universalistic idiom in which they are forced to make their appeal in a secular democratic system based upon adult franchise. Second, strategic reasons demand that parties counter each other’s moves, so that if one party tries to mobilise powerful sectional interests, the others have to do the same: this is why political parties try to match caste with caste as a part of their electoral strategy. Third, political ideology, which is general and abstract, is given different interpretations in the contexts of different local conditions (2012:55).

Jaffrelot clearly says that there is always an inherent dichotomy that lies between the practice and theory of a political party. This is in line with Weber’s point that the parties, mostly, will emphasize their *proxy*, mainly to avoid the contradictions between the party’s theory and action.

²⁸ PRP Manifesto consists of 54 pages with details of their promises pertaining to different fields in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Though on the cover page it says that it is draft, but most of the time, leaders from the party have referred to this Manifesto only. See <http://es.scribd.com/doc/13788985/CHIRU-PRAJA-RAJYAM-PARTY-MANIFESTO>, accessed on 11-10-2011.

While limiting the purview of the responses on the Ideology of PRP and its role in the party formation, there were many responses from the field, but most of them refused to attach any ideology to PRP. For instance, the editor of a radical Telugu magazine points out, “there is a serious lack of political language”, and he adds to that by saying “when there is lack of political language, it will be a mirage to seek the ideology”²⁹ in the party. Another study respondent says, “there is ideological flaw with PRP, because both PRP and Chiranjeevi lack the political cohesiveness. The formula of ‘votes-seats’ will be interesting to listen but it will be practical only when there is clear caste consciousness”³⁰.

Kapu-PRP Model: Imitation or Confrontation

It has been pointed out that, the PRP is the result of the aspirations of few who have achieved the social and economic upward mobility within the *Kapus*. However, the same upward mobile class within the *Kapus* class started attempting to imitate or to confront the existing models in the state. An overview of the present models tells us that the Congress was initially associated, largely with the *Brahmins*, later on especially after independence; the *Reddys* played a determining role in the party. Considering this as the successful model in the state, even the *Kammas* also adopted it in a similar way by holding the most powerful positions in the TDP, and turned to be a ‘*Kamma-TDP*’ model. Primarily, there are two reasons behind the emergence of this ‘*Kamma-TDP*’ model: firstly, despite the strong presence in the Congress party, the *Kammas* were never promoted or given opportunity to the prominent positions either in the Congress party or in the Congress led governments, say for instance, the post of Chief Minister. Secondly, there was strong resentment growing among the *Kammas*, primarily which their role was limited to fund raising for the Congress party but not as potential contenders for the top political positions. The following table provides us the overall picture of chief ministers and their caste party affiliations from the year 1956 to 2014.

²⁹His comment directed towards the term *bavasaryyatha* used Chiranjeevi referring to the similarities between the Congress and PRP in terms of their ideological positions. Interview with N. Venugopal on 31-07-2012, at his Office in Hyderabad.

³⁰Interview with Surabattula Nageswara rao on 21-07-2010, at his Office in Vijayawada

Table 7. 1: Caste and Party Wise distribution of Chief Ministers of A. P-1956-2014

S No	Name	Caste	Party	Duration
1	N Sanjeeva Reddy	Reddy	Congress	6 years
2	K.Brahmananda Reddy	Reddy	Congress	7 years
3	Marri Chenna Reddy	Reddy	Congress	2 years
4	T Anjaiah	Reddy	Congress	2 years
5	B.Venkatram Reddy	Reddy	Congress	7months
6	K.Vijayabhaskar Reddy	Reddy	Congress	3 years
7	N.Janardhan Reddy	Reddy	Congress	2years
8	YS Rajasekhar Reddy	Reddy	Congress	5years
9	N. Kiran Kumar Reddy	Reddy	Congress	4years
10	N T Rama Rao	Kamma	TDP	6 years
11	N.Chandrababu Naidu	Kamma	TDP	9years
12	Damodaram Sanjeevaiah	Mala	Congress	2 years
13	PV Narasimha Rao	Brahmin	Congress	2years
13	Jalagam Venkatrao	Velama	Congress	5years
14	K.Rosaiah	Vaishya	Congress	1 year
15	N Kiran Kumar Reddy	Reddy	Congress	3years

* After bifurcation of state, N Chandra Babu Naidu and K Chandrasekhar Rao became chief ministers of A.P and Telangana representing upper caste *Kamma* and *Velama* caste respectively. Because of the mounting critique against the upper castes consistently garnering the chief minister's posts, the trend in the recent past has been to appoint Dalit, Muslim, OBCs and *Kapu* representatives as deputy chief ministers.

The above table clearly indicates the dominance of the *Reddys* as Chief Ministers for a very long time. It was only after the formation of TDP, there was a chance for the *Kammas* to occupy the chair. The non-*Reddy* chief ministers were merely an 'accommodation' due to several caste and factional factors. For instance, Damodaram Sanjeevaiah a *Mala* (SC) was made the Chief Minister, as a makeshift arrangement by the party high command when there was no consensus among different *Reddy* factions within the party. Secondly, a *Brahmin*, P V Narasimha Rao was made as Chief Minister, primarily to reduce the growing importance for *Reddys* within the Congress party in the state. Thirdly, Jalagam Vengala Rao, a *Velama* from the Telangana region was made the CM to pacify the Telangana agitation. In 2010, K. Rosaiah, a *Vaishya*, was appointed mainly to nullify the efforts of Jaganmohan Reddy³¹. A cursory look at

³¹ Jagan has bargained with the high command after his father-YSR- sudden demise in the year 2009. Due to multiple reasons, the party decided not to make him as CM, infact started nullifying his attempts on many occasions. Please see, Jangam Chinnaiah, 2013.

their tenure clearly indicates that these appointments of non-*Reddy* chief ministers were all for a very brief period. Together, the *Reddys* could hold the Chief Minister position for about 30 years and the *Kammas* could do that for 16 years and the rest four of them have shared 10 years among themselves: PV Narasimha Rao (2 years), K Rosaiah (One year), D. Sanjeevaiah (2 years) and J.Vengal Rao for 5 years.

While going back to the question whether PRP has imitated or attempted to confront the present political situation, it needs to be noted that, the PRP has done both imitation as well as the confrontation. They have imitated both the ‘Congress-*Reddy*’ and the ‘TDP-*Kamma*’ models by pooling the *Kapus* together. It was due to their ambiguity at many levels pertaining to their social position that *Kapus* could not forge an alliance with other backward castes such as *Toorpu Kapus*, *Telaga*, *Ontaris*, and *Munnuru Kapus*. The *Kapus* could not execute the model successfully the way it was done by the *Reddys* and the *Kammas* because of social ambiguities. The internal differences among the *Reddys* and *Kammas* were gradually sorted out to achieve the unity at caste level (Upadhyaya C 1988). This allowed politically conducive situation to mobilise their caste members. One of the editors of a Telugu magazine attributes the failure of PRP towards their “lack of nomenclature”. A political scientist from East Godavari district says, “*Kapus* political mobilisation failed because they couldn’t mobilise at the social or, caste level”³². Another respondent also from East Godavari says that, “the *Kapus* need to be economically empowered initially, and then they have to aspire for the political power, like *Reddys* and the *Kammas*”.

In terms of confrontation, the ‘PRP-*Kapus*’ model, though projected the *Kammas* as their enemies at the social level, it could not translate it well at the political level. Several of the respondents opined that *Kapus* could not resolve the internal conflicts clearly; hence, it became a very difficult task for them to place the *Kammas* as the enemies and the *Kapus* as the victims. It also needs to be noted that few of the respondents said that the atmosphere in the state does not allow an upper caste to blame another upper caste for their lack of opportunities. Particularly, a respondent from Vijayawada says, “during the Globalisation period, when opportunities are abundant

³² Interviewed Ramesh (pseudo name) In Kakinada, East Godavari, 2011

one cannot blame a particular caste, rather upper castes need to cooperate with each other”³³.

The *Kapu* elites presumed that their numerical strength is higher when compared to *Kammas* who constitute only 4 -5% of the population, therefore it is easy to stake claim for political power. These elites within the *Kapus* created an aura among the people that the next emerging caste after *Reddys* and the *Kammas* would be the *Kapus*. Therefore, they presumed that the power to *Kapus* is inevitable through the PRP. Nevertheless, due to many internal contradictions, conflicts, (BC reservation, conflict with the *Kammas* in Vijayawada, conflicts with *Settibalijas* and *Malas* in East Godavari, have reduced their space at the political front.

The differences between PRP and TDP:

Both TDP and PRP have the similarities in terms of being the regional parties, and being supported by the peasant castes. There is also another similarity between the leaders of both the parties-Chiranjeevi and NTR. Both these parties are heavily dependent and centred around these leaders. As Atul Kohli rightly points out, “the unfortunate aspect of NTR’s rule is that it also does not offer much hope of institutional redevelopment. The Telugu Desam remains, like the Congress, a leader-dominated organisation. Personalisation of power has created simultaneous tendencies toward centralization and powerlessness” (Kohli 1988: 992). Although there are commonalities between NTR and Chiranjeevi, few study respondents pointed out that there are some stark differences between the PRP and TDP, especially related to economic, political and social factors³⁴. A journalist respondent indicates the duration for which the *Kammas* have waited for political power, whereas the *Kapus* are yet to project themselves as a homogenous group at the social level³⁵. While differentiating between *Kammas* and *Kapus*, another respondent makes a point by saying that the “when TDP was formed, the whole Kamma caste rallied, whereas in the case of PRP it was not the case due to internal conflicts and external pressures”³⁶. Along with the unity within caste or *jati* cluster, the material base of caste plays a prominent role in the politics, as

³³ Interviewed Nageswara Rao in Vijayawada, Krishna District on 27-07-2010

³⁴ These include Namadi Sridhar, Rajasekhar from Amalapuram, and Addepalli Prabhu from Kakinada.

³⁵ Interviewed Jinka Nagaraju on 27-02-2011 in Hyderabad.

³⁶ Interviewed SV Srinivas on 07-03-2011 in Bangalore.

Balagopal (2004) says that especially after Chandrababu Naidu became Chief Minister the cost of elections went up drastically.

The Politics of Symbolism

PRP has brought many symbols effectively to the political space, primarily to express their perspectives. The PRP has included towering personalities from different fields such as Mother Theresa, Ambedkar, Gandhi and Phule and they have used the green colour that is largely associated with the Muslims (also peace in another context). The party said that the above four people reflect their party agenda and perspective in terms of social justice. The above four people although significant, yet distinct in their approaches and in some cases even have serious differences, say between Gandhi and Ambedkar. This particular symbolism used by PRP to appease all the sections of the society, could not galvanise all the intended social groups.

The way North India's *Yadava's* political assertion took place through *laati* (a long bamboo stick signifies their attachment with the rural life and buffalo herding), PRP's could not materialise in invoking of the symbols at the political sphere.

PRP and its Electoral presence in 2009

After forming the PRP party in 2008, they contested the elections in 2009. It won 18 seats out of 294 that is 16% of vote share. Though the *Kapus* are numerically stronger, it could not translate it into numbers. The party president, Chiranjeevi contested from two constituencies, Tirupati, in Chittoor District of Rayalaseema and from *Palakollu* (Chiranjeevi native place), West Godavari district of Coastal Andhra³⁷. He won from Tirupati but lost in his home constituency -*Palakaollu*. The below explicit the percentage and seats which PRP could manage to win in the three regions during 2009 assembly elections in the three regions of Andhra Pradesh.

³⁷ Again it was the idea of NTR; he took three constituencies from three different regions.

Table 7.2: Performance of PRP in 2009 Assembly elections*

S No	Region	Percentage	Seats
1	Coastal Andhra	21.3	13
2	Telangana	11.9	2
3	Rayalaseema	14.2	3
Total	Andhra Pradesh	16.2	18

*source: Suri K C 2009.

What could infer from the above table is, the presence of PRP is not significant in any of the region. It is only in Coastal Andhra, one could see the presence of PRP, but then, even that presence is not sufficient to form the government. The above table also indicates that the idea of *Kapu jati* cluster has not materialised or translated into votes in any of the region. The region wise analysis brings out many dynamics related to the *Kapu* caste. For instance, in Coastal Andhra, the castes, such as, Godavari *Kapus*, *Toorpu Kapus*, *Ontaris*, *Telagas* have not rallied behind the PRP. But it is even terrible in both Telangana and Rayalaseema, where the *Munnuru Kapus* and *Balijas* reside. In 2009 Assembly elections, PRP has won 18 seats from the three regions, and the below shows the caste background of those MLAs.

Table7.3: Caste wise list of MLA's elected from PRP in 2009

S No	Constituency	Caste Name
1	Nirmal	<i>Reddy</i>
2	Balkonda	<i>Padmashali (BC)</i>
3	Bhimili	<i>Kapu</i>
4	Gajuwaka	<i>Kapu</i>
5	Anakapalle	<i>Toorpu Kapu</i>
6	Pendurthi	<i>Kapu</i>
7	Pithapuram	<i>Kapu</i>
8	Kakinada Rural	<i>Kapu</i>
9	Peddapuram	<i>Kapu</i>
10	Kothapet	<i>Kapu</i>
11	Tadepalligudem	<i>Kapu</i>
12	Vijayawada (West)	<i>Vaishya</i>
13	Vijayawada (East)	<i>Kamma</i>
14	Giddalur	<i>Vaishya</i>
15	Nellore City	<i>Reddy</i>
16	Allagadda	<i>Reddy</i>
17	Banaganapalle	<i>Kapu</i>
18	Tirupati	<i>Kapu</i>

The table shows that the majority of the MLAs are *Kapus* (10). The other MLAs are *Reddys* (three), *Vaishyas* (two), Backward Castes- weavers (two) and one is a *Kamma*. Along with the *Kapus* the others were part of the caste calculus since that particular caste was higher in that constituency and therefore could not be ignored. It will be interesting to explore the presence of *Kapus* in other dominant parties in the state, such as Congress and TDP. If we consider 2009 state elections, PRP has made an impact and changed the political equations³⁸.

PRP merges with Congress

The PRP, which formed in the year 2008 and fought elections in 2009, has merged with the Congress in Feb 2011. PRP had criticised the Congress party on many counts, for instance, Agriculture, Land Management, Irrigation, Power, Rural Development, Industries, Urban development, and on Social Welfare³⁹. Even the Nava Telangana Party formed by *Devender Goud* also have merged with the PRP during the initial days, but later on went back to his original party-TDP. It is still an unresolved question as to what made Chiranjeevi to merge his party with the Congress. With the merging of the party, there is a quick rise and the fall of PRP at the political level. The way it has raised drastically, it also fell dramatically. The attempt of forming a party was like a bubble, it could not sustain for a long period. There are many parties, which have sustained for a long duration, such as SP from Uttar Pradesh, or TDP from Andhra Pradesh, by holding or influencing the vote share. The failure of the PRP cannot be reduced to the failure of the *Kapus*, and their consolidation process, but it may need to be analyzed from various dimensions

Discussion

The emergence of PRP is the culmination of several attempts by the *Kapus* for ‘upward social mobility’ that began mainly from 1980’s. With the rise of *Kammas* through the TDP, into the ‘mainstream political power’, even the *Kapus* also presumed, that their numerically preponderance is adequate to capture state power like their counterpart

³⁸Including these 18, PRP has given tickets to 56 members, belonging to the Kapu claimed castes- MunnurKapus-12, Balijas-7, Toorpu Kapus-5, 1 for Gajula Balija and 32 for the Kapus. Interestingly, Congress has given tickets to 31 (MunnurKapus-10, Toorpu Kapus-5 and Kapus-16), TDP has given only 12 (Munnurkapu-5, Balija-2, Toorpu Kapus-2 and 3 for Kapus). These numbers indicates that, despite the hype created by the PRP, TDP has certainly limited the Kapu presence in the party.

³⁹ Issues discussed in the Prajarajyam Party Manifesto.

Kammas. The *Kapus* through PRP tried to articulate the ‘social justice’ and tried to stake their claim for the state power and in-turn a share in the state’s resources. The *Kapus* tried to use both the ‘Identity Politics’ and the Representative politics framework to attain the political power but could not succeed. Within the Identity Politics framework, they claimed the BC status for few jatis, whereas in the representative politics; *Kapus* retained their upper caste status. While analysing the failure of the PRP at the electoral level in sociological terms, we find three major factors:

Firstly, PRP could not consolidate several *jatis* into the *jati* cluster. The strong *jati* cluster assertion from the *Kapus* of Coastal Andhra, primarily due to *Ranga* and *Mudragada Padmanabam* was neither capitalised nor expanded by the PRP. There was lack of trust among the Backward Castes, when a small fraction of the *Kapus* also staked their claims for the BC status; then several of the BCs have opposed this move. Due to this, the PRP has lost a substantial ground among the Backward Castes; the internal riddle could not be resolve amicably and on time by the *Kapus*.

Secondly, PRP could not address the BC reservation issue in a structured way. There was lot of ambiguity involved in the entire discourse. This ambiguity was related to *Kapu jati* status and their relationship with other backward castes in the *jati* cluster. BCs opposed any move by the Godavari Delta *Kapus* to stake their claim in official BC list, as *Kapus* are economically strong and by including, they would appropriate all the benefits under this category. This aspect was not addressed by the PRP⁴⁰. The *jatis*, *Munnuru Kapus*, *Toorpu Kapus* and *Balijas*, who are politically articulated as equals by the delta *Kapus*, were not treated in their day-to-day life properly by the Godavari Delta *Kapus*. *Munnuru Kapus*, *Toorpu Kapus* and *Balijas* never trusted the economically and socially dominant *Kapus*. The unification of these *jatis* was visualised with the formation of PRP. However, the BCs distrust with the *Kapus* continued and the study respondents argued that the other *jatis* did recognise that *Kapus* are using them for their political benefits⁴¹. The distinctiveness of these *jatis* - (*Munnuru Kapus*, *Toorpu Kapus*,

⁴⁰ We have spoken in-length in the preceding chapters on this issue. Also please see, Kondal Rao.

⁴¹ interview with Kiran (pseudo name), a Munnur Kapu on 09-03-2009 at his office, Hyderabad

and *Balijas* was further demonstrated by forming separate caste associations, establishing schools, hostels, and function halls⁴².

Thirdly, the PRPs ideology of ‘social justice’ was not understood by most of the *Kapus* themselves. The Godavari Delta *Kapus* from the East Godavari repeatedly displayed contrary images by seeking the reservation benefits and hesitation to be an ally with other OBC *jatis* in the *jati* cluster. There are two reasons for that, first, their status problem, most of the *Kapus* in the Godavari and Krishna Delta (especially Vijayawada) uses the title ‘*Naidu*’ consciously, and hence it is a status problem for them to be associated with the BC’s. Secondly, in the East Godavari District, the *Kapus* have serious problems with the *Settibalijas*, who are toddy tappers, and are part of BC list. Historically, these two castes are at loggerheads with each other. One of the reasons narrated by the study respondents in East Godavari District indicated that *Kapus* violently resisted any effort of the *Settibalijas* towards upward mobilization of *Settibalijas*. Therefore, the *Kapus* in that region does not want to associate with the BC’s. Even now, most of the *Kapus* in the Godavari and Krishna *Delta* act and behave like Upper Castes⁴³. In this context, one of my respondents sums up the issue saying that *Kapus* behave like upper castes but seek the BC reservation, which is undemocratic and unjustifiable. It is nothing but the petti-bourgeois attitude of the *Kapus*, which has cost them the electoral power.

Lastly, the Dalits were not associated with the PRP because of the contradictory positions taken by it. On one side, party makes claims that Ambedkar inspires them and on another, they bring Gandhi. Due to such contradictory statements, most of the Dalits did not associate with the Praja Rajyam Party. The major castes within SC group from Andhra Pradesh-*Madiga* and *Mala* castes distanced themselves from PRP. *Krishna Madiga*, the founder president for *Madiga Reservation Porata Samiti* (MRPS) preferred to call Prajarajyam Party (people’s state) as ‘*Kapula Rajyam*’ (*Kapus* state), whereas *Katti Padmarao*, another senior *Mala* leader who is active consistently even from the time *Karamchedu* atrocities, was part of PRP for a short period, but then he also distanced himself gradually. *Padmarao* also said that, because of the upper caste

⁴² Munnuru *Kapus* from Telangana and Toorpu *Kapus* from North Coastal Andhra and even the *Balijas* from Rayalaseema also formed associations, hostels for their students, Interview with Venkateswararao, a *Balija* from Anantapur, on 08-10-2012 near lower tank bund, Hyderabad.

⁴³ Interview with N.Venugopal on 16-07-2010 at his office in Hyderabad

attitude of the *Kapus*, most of the Dalits have distanced themselves from the PRP (cited in Sambaiah G 2009: 55). According to Haragopal (2008), *Kapus* “are the lumpen groups waiting for the power”. He said the above statement when there were several attacks against Dalits in East Godavari District immediately after the announcement of the PRP (Haragopal 2008: 21).

Despite the growing importance towards the modern institutions, we can see that caste is still perpetuating within the domain of Representative Democracy and Electoral politics, etc. PRP seems to be the recent example where the nexus between caste and politics is more visible. One can say that it was an unsuccessful attempt by the PRP from the *Kapus*. Nevertheless, PRP was yet another experiment that attempted to expand the political space and include different social groups and their aspirations.

Chapter 8

Summary and Discussion

Green Revolution has been a landmark event in the agrarian history of India. Green Revolution brought significant changes in the agrarian structure (Ladejinsky Wolf 1970, 1973; Gartrell W John 1977) in the 1970s which also witnessed enormous level of caste consciousness in Andhra Pradesh (A.P). One of the important consequences has been the rise of intermediary castes and their consolidation, in the economic domain as much as the growing assertion from the Dalits and Backward Castes (Balagopal 1988). In this context, the present study tries to trace the mobilisation processes, especially at the level of intermediary castes, within Andhra Pradesh. Earlier studies attempted to understand the castes in Andhra Pradesh. For instance studies on upper castes include, *Kammas* (Upadhyaya C 1988), *Reddys* (Elliot C 1970), and *Velamas* (Katten Michael 1999). Similarly studies on lower castes in Andhra Pradesh include Still C (2009); Charsley (2004).

One of the intermediary agrarian castes called *Kapu* was selected for the purpose of this study. What intrigued about this caste was that it had some similarities as well as differences with other agrarian castes and in due course these castes were competing with each other, within a region and later in the entire state of Andhra Pradesh. After having selected the caste, we encountered the definitional problem of *Kapus* as it indicated diverse historical trajectories. While *Kapus* existed across the regions in Andhra Pradesh, a particular group from Coastal Andhra, specifically from East Godavari articulated *Kapuness* or a wide jati cluster in the political domain that called for a careful scrutiny of the issue. Sociologically speaking, attempts by the *Kapus* from East Godavari district were towards the formation of 'Jati-Cluster'. It is these articulations, especially after 1980s which challenged the social power of certain agrarian castes that led us to investigate the underlying issues of the problem.

Taking this as an entry point, the present study tried to analyze the broad trends of caste studies within the discipline of sociology. These studies focused on different dimensions for instance, caste-religion, caste-region, caste-occupation, caste-politics, caste-gender, etc.

Caste is a spectre to most of the Indians, because it can be neither ignored, nor disassociated, nor even dismissed. Caste in sociology was understood through three main axes - Genealogy, Consolidation and Politicization. Through genealogy of caste- the discipline of sociology relied on the Hindu religious scripts, folk stories, and on caste *puranas* to interpret the caste. During this phase, the structural functional approach played an important role in Indian sociology as it was a dominant perspective in Britain. In fact, Louis Dumont understood caste from this approach. Secondly, the Consolidation- occidental perspective oriented the studies on caste or caste as such, taking a particular dimension due to different colonial forms of knowledge. These forms were influenced by the British administrators, colonial anthropologists, and the Christian missionaries. For instance, caste census by the British was one major event. Once the census started throwing light on the castes, new alliances were forged; each caste started recognising their own social position and subsequently seeking upward social mobility.

Dumont while explaining the nature of caste, proposed three principal characteristics of caste system- hierarchy, separation and interdependence and all these three were posited within the ideological framework. Moving away from this position, F G Bailey (1957) tried to understand the caste system from the 'politico-economic' perspective. Though, Bailey also emphasized the role of hierarchy which prevails in the caste system, the difference for Dumont was its purity and pollution dimension which determines the hierarchical relations, whereas for Bailey it is the nexus between the economic and political factors.

Dumont's perception towards Caste was largely derived from the text i.e. view of the Brahmins. Berreman (1971:515) critiqued Dumont saying that his views on caste, were one sided because Dumont's analysis of social relations especially in the Indian villages were emphasized as 'reciprocal', 'harmonious', and also 'inter-dependent'. Along with M. N. Srinivas and others, Michael Moffat (1979) was also associated with

Dumont's approach on caste. For structural functionalists, the caste system existed on a consensual form in order to share the values of upper castes with other castes. Justifying the above position, M. N. Srinivas says that the Indian caste system is not rigid, because there is enormous scope of mobility for each caste. This is what he defines it as 'sanskritisation'. Srinivas also justifies the unequal social relations by citing the 'jajmani system' as a testimony for reciprocity which was prevalent in south India. He also stated that the caste doesn't operate at the national level, but mostly at the local level hinting towards two directions- '*Jati*' and the Village studies. Unlike Dumont, *jati* was emphasized by M. N. Srinivas to indicate that Varna model of caste is an ideal-typical model and doesn't exist as a Pan-Indian category, thus opening up the debate between 'book view' and 'field view' (Jodhka S 1998).

In brief, Srinivas argued that caste is dynamic, caste system provides an opportunity for every *jati* for upward mobility and therefore one could infer the possibility of caste disintegration in the long run. Srinivas explores the above features within the social structure of Coorgs in relation to their religion. While doing that, Srinivas also traces family, marriage, kinship patterns among the Coorgs. Srinivas justifies in choosing the village as a unit of the study by saying that it is a self-sustained and an autonomous space, secondly, he emphasizes the absence of larger market which doesn't have the stakes in the village, hence proposes that, it is difficult to alter or influence the village by the external forces. But, his views were contested by several scholars (Desai I P 1984; Desai A R 1969). The above arguments influenced significantly the understanding of Indian social structure. In due course Indian sociology also moved away from the Village studies by giving emphasis on both micro and macro structures.

While analysing the village studies, Beteille, brings in Weberian approach, and more specifically, the concept of power into the discussion on caste studies in India (Beteille 1969). Differing with the structural functionalist and Weberian perspectives, Marxist scholars emphasized on contradictions within the Indian social structure. They argued that the village reflects tensions and conflicts. These scholars include: Kathleen Gough (1952, 1981), A R Desai (1969), Gail Omvedt (1978), I P Desai (1984) who attempted to present various forms of stratification. The Marxist perspective has changed the direction of the discipline of sociology, significantly, during 60's and 70's. Kathleen Gough through her study in Tanjore in Tamil Nadu explained the existing inequalities

between different social groups. She also argued that the economic relations are structured by the social relations, for instance wage exploitation (Gough K 1952: 584). However, the apparent lacuna with the Marxist analysis was the overwhelming perspective of 'class' which they perceived in the village, undermining the caste. Contesting the structural-functionalist, Weberian and Marxist perspectives, Dalit perspective emerged primarily during early 1980s, by invoking the writings of Ambedkar, Phule. The central argument was that Indian society needs to be understood from the below which was not attempted by Dumont, M. N. Srinivas or other scholars. The formation of a political party called Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in 1984, and anti-Mandal agitations during 1990s forced the discipline of sociology to engage with the Dalit perspective to offer explanations about the existing discrimination, inequality and exclusion. Scholars such as Gail Omvedt (1978), Gopal Guru (1993), and Rosalind Honlon (2002) were critical of the class framework and took up Ambedkar ideology as the framework to understand the caste and social relations¹.

Various strands within the sociological literature on caste indicate two broad directions—one is change and the other is continuity. Apart from these two, attempts were to look at caste in relation to other themes such as caste-democracy, caste-politics, caste-gender, caste-religion, and caste-environment. Taking these conceptual debates into account, the present study has focused on two factors – one, **caste communities** (*jati* clusters) and second, **caste and politics**.

The idea of *jati* or *jati* clusters is not anything new but at present there is revival of this idea. The purpose of these *jati*-clusters is to forge alliance with similar *jatis* for various reasons, more recently for political purposes. Earlier instances of *jati* clusters include:

¹ While searching for the different trajectories within the caste studies, the historical aspects were also quite visible. Many of the historians attempted to trace the genesis of castes and their formation. These attempts can be classified into four: Cambridge school, Canberra and the Sussex school approaches and thirdly, very recent subaltern studies. The historical approach in general concerned with or concentrated much on the macro categories, focusing on some of the broad research spectrums, for instance, nationalism, or the impact of colonialism, or even juxtaposing colonialism with imperialism. The Canberra and Sussex, initiated by DA Low (1991) attempted to understand the historicity through studying the regions and its influences on different spheres which includes the castes as well. The subaltern studies, which emerged as a critique to the nationalist perspective focussed on the history from below. In the due course, the scholars within this approach have undertaken studies on several castes and tribes, most importantly, David Hardiman. The three sets of historiography which is presented in India were articulated by scholars such as, David Washbrook, Baker, DA Low, Robin Jeffrey, and David Hardiman.

Vokkaligas (Manor J 1977; 1978), *Kontaikatti Velalar* by Barnett (1970), Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmans by Conlon (1974). An attempt was made through the present study to understand such alliances and mobilisations among the *Kapus*.

The present study reviewed some of the important studies on caste-communities and classified them into three categories - studies on 'upper', 'intermediary' and 'lower castes'. However, these classifications, the present study argued that they are not watertight, for instance some of the castes may appear in the upper as well as in the intermediary category. The location of these castes in one or the other category can be understood through M. N. Srinivas's concept of 'sanskritization' as well David Pocock's concept of 'movements'. A general review of all the studies indicated that there was much emphasis given to the study of upper or lower castes undermining the intermediary castes.

The analysis of upper caste biographies, indicate that the emphasis is given to economically developed castes. The point we are making here is that most of the studies on caste were undertaken on those castes which were economically and politically stable and very few studies on the mobilisational processes. A close scrutiny of the studies on lower castes or OBCs, indicate that it is within the framework of 'identity' the biographies have made its mark. These studies include *Chamars* from UP, *Mahars* from Maharashtra, *Madigas* from Andhra Pradesh, and also on Backward Castes, mostly comprising the artisan castes across the country. All these studies more or less emphasized on the plight of these castes, their resistance against the social hegemony, poverty, backwardness, etc. In the realm of caste studies, there seems to be an epistemological shift which has taken place especially after 1980's. Dirks (2002) also traces this shift by saying that, in general, the category of caste has shifted its base from political (during pre colonial period) to the cultural (during colonial period), and again to the political after Independence. He attributes this shift primarily to the Mandal agitations; but one can also bring in the impact of Green revolution and its distributive effects on different social groups as another factor.

Though limited in volume, the studies on Intermediary castes primarily focused on the 'movement of caste' from the lower to the middle or from the middle to the upper; i.e. social mobility aspect. For instance, if we see the *Patidars* from Gujarat, or *Marathas*

from Maharashtra, they all have moved from one status to the other. Interestingly, the studies which concentrated on the intermediary castes have largely come from the western part of India. The reasons for it can be attributed to both the colonial regime as well as post-Independent state policies that promoted entrepreneurship among intermediary castes in western India. Therefore, it is quite evident that the colonial economic policies altered the economic conditions of castes. Secondly, there was much emphasis by the studies on castes on the cultural sphere. What becomes apparent is that studies on caste completely undermined political dimensions whether it is to do with upper or with the intermediary castes.

The present study is an attempt to fill this void within the given literature by studying *Kapus* an intermediary agrarian caste from Andhra Pradesh. While locating *Kapus*, in the state of Andhra Pradesh, firstly, we have tried to map three regions and the existing power relations in the three regions from 1956-2014. The thesis has also traced the nexus between caste and politics paradigm, and found that there was considerable shift in land ownership from *ex-zamindars* and absentee landlords (*Brahmins*) to that of tenants (such as *Kammas*, *Reddys*, *Rajus*, *Velamas*) in mid-1950s due to land reforms. With the large scale irrigation projects in late 1950s these upper castes who became the new landowners consolidated their economic base. By mid-1960s, the technological modernization of agriculture, particularly the green revolution accelerated the pace of growth that helped these agrarian castes to reap the economic benefits. Subsequently, these caste communities further invested and expanded their surplus to become the provincial propertied classes². The green revolution technologies also created more disparities between the upper caste land-owning classes and that of small, marginal farmers, agricultural wage labourers. In their eagerness to catch up with the cash-intensive crops, the tenants and share-croppers were forced to rely on the non-institutional credit. The rich upper caste land owners, absentee landlords and urban trader class belonging to the dominant upper castes became the money-lender class. Cheap labour came from the dry lands to work in the irrigated and wet lands in order to earn their livelihood. Modern transport and communication helped to maintain the

² A number of large-scale plants- sugar, cotton spinning, cement and fertilizers-appeared in the delta region. Many of these were established by large companies head-quartered outside the region, but some were based on local zamindars/landlord capital (Upadhyaya C 1996)

competition among the labourers to provide cheap labour. Thus, these caste and class disparities constituted the basis for the social rupture and contradictions in A.P.

Politics of caste can be analyzed through three distinct periods. The first phase being 1956-1982, during which period, party-based politics and its leadership primarily revolved around land owning classes in terms of *Brahmins*, *Reddys*, *Kammas* and *Velamas*. Intense competition among these upper classes and upper castes within the representative democracy ensured that economic and social power was retained only amongst these groups. In the second phase, during 1982-1996, backward caste communities were politically co-opted by Telugu Desam Party which opened up the political space for OBC representatives. In the third phase during 1996-2010, neo-liberal market reforms strengthened the role of caste in economic and political sphere rather than undermining it. The political class used caste, kinship and patronage as important elements to champion the neo-liberal reforms. The accumulation of economic capital relied on the manipulation of market principles by incorporating caste into it rather than eliminating it. Thus, the conditions during 1956-2014 created new forms of casteization of politics and politicization of caste.

It is in this context that *Kapus* compared themselves with other agrarian castes and started claiming for share in political power as *Kammas* and *Reddys* did. But in the representative politics, the hegemony of certain castes (*Kammas* or *Reddys*) prevailed. It is to achieve political power, *Kapus* tried to forge different *jatis* into a *Kapu* conglomeration. Sociologically speaking, these attempts are termed as ‘*Jati-Clusters*’.

With this broad analytical understanding, the thesis tried to focus on one region-Coastal Andhra, specifically East Godavari district. The rationale for choosing the district is the presence of a provincial propertied class *Kapus* who are articulating the homogeneity or unity among the divergent *jatis* within the cluster. The thesis tried to examine whether this is an imagined or real unity articulated within the political domain.

The analysis of the history of East Godavari district provided the basis to locate the intricacies and complexities of the relationship between region, caste and politics. The important factors which have shaped the district were the reclamation of land,

settlement and growth. These three factors need to be examined within a region by examining the dynamics of caste and political categories. Reclamation was very important for the British when they acquired rights over the land from the Nizams. Secondly, the British also encouraged the migration of labour, mainly to utilise the reclaimed land and it is quite possible that a significant proportion of the people voluntarily migrated to this district as there was abundance of land. While the district attracted several migrants by virtue of having port towns, the sudden appearance of cultivable land has created several new settlements as well. These new settlements contributed in expanding the growth of the district or the Coastal Andhra region as such.

The conditions in the pre-colonial period - construction of dams across the Krishna and Godavari Rivers during 1850's, the drastic increase in population, increased employment opportunities, led to the flourishing business. With these new developments, the presence of new people, new goods, and new cultures have influenced the social and political factors. Immediate and visible change was the 'in-migration' mostly from the North Coastal Andhra, either for dam construction work or for the business. The construction of the dams indicated the rise of *mofussil* towns in the Coastal Andhra.

There were many administrative changes especially in terms of changing the boundaries of the districts, leaving aside the administrative changes. The present study has attempted to classify the coastal Andhra into four sub-regions based on its social composition. Firstly, The North coastal Andhra, which includes Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, dominated by the Backward Castes, mainly *Toorpu Kapus*, *Kalingas*, whereas Vishakhapatnam was largely developed by the British and aftermath especially due to the 'in-migration' from the nearby districts. The Godavari Delta is mostly dominated by the *Kapus* and *Rajus*; Krishna and Guntur districts are dominated by the *Kammas*, and down south, i.e., Prakasham and Nellore are mostly by the *Reddys*. The focus here is not on uniformities across the region; certainly there are variations from each of the sub-regions. In some sub-regions, economic factors determine changes, while in others it may be the numerical dominance in terms of caste which becomes decisive. This dominance, in any form, inevitably draws the attention of tensions,

conflicts, which indeed took place in many parts of Coastal Andhra³. However, the numerical dominance assumed significance during the identity politics phase in the late 1980s. This phenomenon provokes us to revisit the idea of ‘Dominant Caste’ conceptualised by M. N. Srinivas, which gradually took a different form with the changing socio-political context. Over a period of time this concept acquired different meanings, in a way, broadened, deepened and also expanded, as much as it shrank in scope. The present study tried to trace ‘inter and intra caste dynamics’ in East Godavari for about two centuries.

One can see Godavari delta as a place of paradoxes, and contradictions. Despite having the natural advantages in terms of transport facilities, sea and river, for centuries, its structural and systematic growth took place only during the British period. The trade and commerce was at its peak even before the British obtained control over this delta (Subrahmanyam S 1990: 85-86), but historians have a broad consensus that the trade and commerce during the British period effectively encouraged cultivation for its own purposes (Rao G N 1988).

In order to analyse the mobilisational strategies adopted by *Kapus*, the concept social power has been used in examining how power operates at several levels. The social power is associated with Robert Bierstedt (1950) and later on Michael Mann (1986) who contributed immensely to this subject. Although, social power is itself, grounded within the larger sphere of power, but the attempt in the thesis was not to delve much on power, rather to see how caste can be interpreted as social power. In the process of engaging with the concept of social power, thesis also explores certain limitations and constraints of power.

Robert Bierstedt (1950), proposed three essential sources in terms of articulating the social power: **sociology of majorities, organisations and resources**. With these three essential sources, the nexus between caste and politics has been analyzed contextualising it to A.P Situation. *Kapus* who have been attempting to assert or

³ These conflicts, whether between the peasant castes or between the Dalits and the peasant castes has taken place across the coastal Andhra. Most prominently, the conflict between Kammas and Kapus, or between Kammas and Madigas in Karamchedu (1985) or between Reddys and Malals in Psundur (1991) and recently between the Toorpu Kapus and the Malas in Laximpet (2012). The above conflicts drew the attention of the world, in Balagopal words’ because of the magnitude of the problem. Please see, Balagopal on Karamchedu (1987) and on Psundur (1991) in EPW.

consolidate themselves at the political level by using the numerical strength has been studied.

Major Findings.

The study findings on *Kapus* have been presented at three levels:

- I. It establishes the ontological and epistemological grounds of *Kapus* and their claims, especially in terms of the ambiguities.
- II. It presents the shifts in *Kapu* identity constructions and different methods adopted by the *Kapus* in consolidating or organising themselves, at the social and political level.
- III. It analyzes three different methods adopted by the *Kapus* in terms of organising and mobilising themselves. They are: caste associations, journals and the political parties. In addition, other methods such as *vanabojanalu* which was turned into *kulabojanalu* (collective caste gatherings) have also been used by *Kapus* as mobilisational strategy.

I - *Kapus* Claims and Ambiguities

Re-defining the Caste-*Kapu*

The present study tried to grapple with the very definition of *Kapus*. The colonial historiography indicated that *Kapus* were considered as Ryots, peasant, watchmen and protector. The *Kapus* self representation narratives indicated that they equated themselves as Kshatriyas, a phenomenon which is found among many agrarian castes also.

Broadly the term *Kapu* meant that one is a cultivator who is attached with the land, either by cultivating or protecting it. In the pre-colonial period, those who were associated with agriculture were all called as *Kapus*. Whereas during the colonial period, individual *jati* consolidation took place significantly due to economic policies. The caste census introduced by the British further consolidated *Kapu* as a category. Thus from this point of time, *Kapu* caste identity got constituted in a significant way.

The present study tried to explain the significance of colonial policies particularly caste census in giving the legitimacy and subsequently classifying them under one category. Of course, a few castes or *jatis*, protested against this colonial policy of ‘forging’ or including all of them into one category called *Kapu*. Castes such as *Kammas* successfully carved out their own *jati* identity and came out of that fold. That’s how a

category called *Kapus* emerged from among those who remained within it. During the same period, the colonial regime initiated certain affirmative actions such as facilitating employment, education opportunities and political participation to several castes, primarily to diffuse the Non-Brahmin movement.

Secondly, in reconstructing their own history, *Kapus* deployed the ‘symbolic imagery’ to enhance their social status, and also to stake claims for political power on par with other caste elites. One can see this deployment in two directions. Firstly, it is related to the ‘dialectics of symbolism’. By associating with the celebrity figure, it is easy to construct one’s history, rather than starting from the scratch. In addition, it is also easily available platform to avail the elite status, say for instance associating with *Krishnadevaraya*. This phenomena, is not new in Andhra Pradesh, many of the castes attempted this strategy in articulating their caste status as high. For instance, *Kammas* associate themselves with the *Kakatiya* dynasty; *Velamas* with that *Bobbili Zamindar* and the *Reddys* with the *Reddyrajyam* as their lineages. Similarly, *Kapus*, associated with the larger royal figure, *Krishnadevaraya*.

II- Shifts in *Kapu*- Identity Construction

In the process of mobilizing themselves, the *Kapus* have shifted their identity quite frequently based on the circumstances. The present study analysed various shifts within the construction of *Kapu* identity. These shifts did not result in the construction of *Kapu* identity, rather in consolidating their ambiguities in the identity of *Kapus*. First and foremost, the colonial scholarship, which includes the Administrators, Colonial anthropologists and Christian missionaries, attempted to define or theorise the term *Kapu* from their perception. The colonial scholarship, while calling the *Kapus*, as watchmen, Ryot, protector, etc, have not explicitly presented the nature of the caste occupation. This in fact laid the foundation for ambiguity. Secondly, in due course, these ambiguities sustained when colonial scholarship couldn’t distinguish between *Reddy* and *Kapu*. In fact both were included as *Kapus* (along with few other castes) in the census by the British and this is evident if one looks at the 1931 map which shows region-wise distribution of castes (see Map no.5.2).

Starting from 1931 census, several castes started demanding enhanced social status for themselves. In this context, *Kapus* also started claiming the *Kshatriya* (Warrior) status

(Kumar Srikanth 2012; Ravichandra Yerramsetti 2011). From 1910 onwards, *Kapus* demanded Depressed Class status, primarily to avail the benefits of affirmative action initiated by the colonial regime. In the post Independence period, Indian state derecognised many castes under the depressed classes' category including *Kapus*. Again by the year 1961, *Kapus* demanded backward class status to avail the benefits from the state, which was granted briefly and then court intervened nullifying it. Similar status was granted by the state to *Kapus* in the year 1994 which was again stuck down by the legal court. It is these shifts that led to ambiguities. Given the dual claims by *Kapus* as upper castes as well as backward castes, the present study characterised *Kapus* as 'Intermediate Agrarian Caste'. In the process of claiming the backward class status, *Kapus* have forged an alliance with similar *jatis* to increase their numerical strength. This is where *Kapus* also attempted to form a *jati* cluster. This idea of *jati* cluster was probably adopted from the successful experiments by few castes during the colonial period as well as the post-independent period. Therefore, the mobilisational strategies of *Kapus* to form a *jati* cluster have been discussed below.

III –Mobilisational Strategies of *Kapus* at the social and political level

Formation of Jati clusters:

The purpose of these *jati*-clusters is to forge an alliance with similar *jatis* for various reasons, recently, by *Kapus* to achieve political power. Earlier instances of *jati* clusters include: *Vokkaligas* (Manor J 1977), *KV* by Barnett (1970), *Chitrapur Saraswat Brahmans* by Conlon (1974), or *Kammas* by Carol Upadhya (1988), *Nadars* by Hardgrave (1969), *Marathas* by Prachi Deshpande (2003), *Chettiars* by Rudner (1994), are some of the examples where *jati* cluster formation took place although there are lot of variations in each case. All the above castes have mobilized successfully by relying on economic, cultural or religious factors. The study findings indicated that *a Kapus effort to form a jati cluster is primarily towards achieving the goal of political power.*

Kapus experiments with the idea of Jati Cluster

The attempts of *Kapus* in constituting themselves as a *jati* cluster need to be analyzed in terms of their Social, Economic and Political realities.

Social:

Each region and sub-region in Andhra Pradesh does not merely reflect geographical variations but also socio-cultural and economic distinctiveness. Six *jatis* that are included under *Kapu jati* cluster are: *Toorpu Kapus*, *Kapus* from Godavari Delta, *Telaga*, *Ontaris*, *Balijas* and *Munnuru Kapus*. Spatially, the *Munnuru Kapus* from Telangana have different social and cultural moorings. Although *Toorpu Kapus* from North Coastal Andhra, *Telagas*, *Ontari* from Krishna Delta and *Kapus* from Godavari delta are all in the coastal Andhra, there are many variations among them. While *Kapus* from Godavari Delta are landowners who can be compared with other agrarian castes such as *Kammas*, *Rajus*, *Reddys*, the other *jatis* mentioned here from coastal Andhra are agricultural workers, tenants and landless. In terms of official records or state representation, *Kapus* from Godavari delta, *Telagas* from Krishna Delta and *Balijas* from Rayalaseema are classified as OCs while all other *jatis* are OBCs.

Moreover, there is social hierarchy that prevails between Godavari *Kapus* and non-Godavari *Kapus*. Historically, various *jatis* in *Kapu* cluster maintained their own ritual or cultural status giving rise to inter-*jati* differences prominently. For instance, the field respondents from East Godavari indicated that they do not inter-marry; they consider that some *jatis* are ritually inferior implying lower social position; inter-dining is also not practiced. The field data indicated that socially there is no inter-mixing, and the internal cohesion among the *jatis* is absolutely missing even within coastal Andhra region. When it comes to *Balijas* in Rayalaseema, they are also comparable with that of other agrarian castes in the region such as *Reddys* and *Kammas* in terms of their resource and wealth position, but there is no cultural commonality either with Godavari *Kapus* or non-Godavari *Kapus*. In brief, the social cleavages among different *jatis* in different regions are too complex. Unless we understand these variations, one cannot explain why the idea of *jati* cluster that was being imagined and articulated by Godavari *Kapus* was quite complex.

The present study noted several attempts made by the *Kapus*, from the Godavari delta, to develop as one homogeneous entity. The political imagination of the *Kapus* from the Godavari delta is to construct a mega category⁴ by forging several other *jatis* in its fold.

⁴ Phrase used by Steven Barnett (1976).

At one level, Godavari *Kapus*, a propertied class wanted to pose a challenge to the agrarian castes, like *Reddys*, and *Kammas*. However, political aspirations by Godavari *Kapus* did not take into consideration the social and economic heterogeneity among various *jatis*. Also, there was growing resentment among other *jatis* within *Kapus*,

Collective Caste Gatherings:

Recently, as part of their mobilisational strategies, *Kapus*, like that of other castes, *Kammas*, *Brahmins*, *Reddys*, are organising their caste members in the name of *Vanabojanalu*. *Vana* means forest in Telugu, whereas *Bojanalu* means food. *Vanabojanalu* usually takes place in the Telugu month of *Karthika* (month of November in English calendar). Hindus think that *Karthika masam* (month) is auspicious month. The importance of this occasion is to have food with the extended families and with their caste neighbours somewhere close to the village. Due to the substantial population in the cities in recent days, *vanabojanalu* are also organized in the parks, or even some of the private farm houses. These occasions are used by caste not only in term of networks, forge solidarity etc but also create political consciousness. These *vanabhajanalu* which are largely *kulabhajanalu* are again divisive in the sense that each *jati* mobilises their own caste gathering rather than as a *jati* cluster. The deeper social cleavages come into the play at different levels including these *vanabhajanalu*.

Economical factors

The role of region

In the formation of the *jati*-clusters among the *Kapus*, coastal Andhra as a region played an important role and became an impetus primarily for promoting economic prosperity. The study has traced this economic prosperity in the coastal Andhra region, specifically in East Godavari district. The political economy approach helped us analyze the growth of a particular agrarian caste *Kapus* in East Godavari and the logic behind their political aspirations. The present study mapped out how *Kapus* developed economically due to internal and external factors which include: shift of power from company to crown (1757), impact of permanent settlement act (1802), construction of anicut (1850), Great Depression (1901) and World War I and II. All these factors, in one way or the other, have contributed *Kapus* to grow economically and socially in the region.

Regional, Sub-regional variations

The East Godavari district comprises of three sub-regions- Agency, Delta and Upland. Agency is a colonial term that denotes the presence of adivasis or tribal groups. In the agency, only the tribal inhabitants have the rights over the commons, forests and resources including land under fifth schedule.

In the delta region, *Kapus* were the main land owners immediately after independence. *Kapus* were tenants, accountants (*Karanam*) and zamindars during the British period. Hence, *Kapus* predominantly controlled agricultural lands as owners, endowment lands, government lands (village commons) due to their social power and their access to the British rulers in the region. Therefore, one could see horizontal growth for the *Kapus* implying the growth-taking place within the Godavari delta. Few among them inherited vast fertile lands because of their ex-zamindari status. However, the dominant propertied class of *Kapus* also have intense conflict with the agricultural workers, tenants and petty trader caste groups in the delta region. For instance, our study respondents indicated that the conflicts between *Kapus* and Settibaliyas (tenants and petty traders) *Kapus* and Malas (mostly agricultural labourers) in the delta region in their everyday life.

In the upland (*metta*), there were drastic changes that took place after the *yeleru* reservoir and *subbarayudu sagar* projects came in 1980s. As *Kapus* were the landowners in this sub-region, irrigation facility provided prosperity for this caste group in the rural areas. In the urban centres particularly in the port town of Kakinada and commercial centre of Rajahmundry, *Kapus* have established themselves as urban entrepreneurs and traders. In the upland also, there are intense caste conflicts between landowners and agricultural workers (*Malas*). It is a fact that the *Kapus* controlled the endowment land and the government lands (village commons) because of their association with the British administration. The relative prosperity after the *yeleru* reservoir and formation of TDP in 1980s has heightened the political aspirations of *Kapus*.

This is quite evident if one looks at the political representatives in the state legislative assembly. The analysis of the electoral data in East Godavari District during 1956-2014

indicates an overwhelming *Kapu* caste representation in the district. Out of 202 candidates elected till 2014, 74 (36%) belonged to *Kapu* caste alone. In three Assembly constituencies (*Prattipadu*, *Jaggampet* and *Pithapuram*) it was only the *Kapu* caste representatives who got elected in almost all the elections. In other three assembly constituencies (*Rajahmundry Rural*, *Peddapuram*, *Amalapuram*), *Kapus* have won more than 5 times in 12 elections. *Kapus* also have won four times out of 12 elections in three assembly constituencies, (*Ramachandra Puram*, *Kothapet*, and *Mandapet*). This is a clear indication of the nexus between caste and politics in the district. The underlying reasons for the caste dominance in each sub-region are to do with numerical strength, land ownership and caste status. The political imagination of *Kapus* also grew both in and outside the region because of the social power that this caste wielded.

Political

Numerical Strength

In studying the nature of caste mobilizations, the studies on upper castes indicated that economy played a significant role. In case of lower castes, studies indicated that mobilizations were possible because they were able to project their victimhood. However, in case of *Kapus*, both these mobilisational strategies did not work to construct a *jati*-cluster. Our study findings indicated that *Kapus* from the Godavari delta instead used the numerical strength by including several *jatis* into their fold. According to Robert Bierstedt numerical strength is the main source for claiming social power. Bierstedt uses the term-sociology of majorities which articulates the presence and importance of numbers in the course of acquiring social power. The important limitation within the *Kapu* mobilisation strategies is that they gave emphasis only for acquiring political power by aligning with similar *jatis*, to increase their numerical strength. While the *Kammas* (Upadhya C 1988), *Nadars* (Hardgrave 1969) or *Chettiars* (Rudner 1994) first consolidated their cultural and economic base and later focused on the political factors, however *Kapus* who attempted political homogenisation without any effort in the social domain.

This mobilisation strategy of using numerical strength by the *Kapus*, is similar to the Dalit mobilisations. Dalits emphasized 'victimhood' reflecting their actual situation in

mobilizing themselves. *Kapus* in that sense were struggling with both the upper caste as well as the lower caste mobilisational strategies and therefore quite ambiguous in their conception itself.

The Mobilisational strategies of *Kapus* in the ‘political domain’ have been discussed below through their caste association, magazine and a political party.

1. Caste Associations- *Kapunadu*

The first phase of caste mobilization took place during 1980s. One of the *Kapus* by name *Vangaveeti Mohan Ranga*, attempted to mobilize *Kapus* in order to face the dominant *Kammas* who acquired political power with the formation of TDP and their growing social and political hegemony. It is in this context that *Ranga* came up with an idea of *jati* cluster, primarily mobilizing numbers to counter a dominant caste that emerged powerful in the region both politically and socially. Of course, given the social tension that prevailed in 1980s, *Ranga* mobilized *Kapus* against *Kammas* by using violence as a strategy (Balagopal 1989). There were series of murders and violent acts between the two caste communities in Vijayawada at that point of time.

On the other hand, within East Godavari district, *Kapu* landowning castes deployed everyday violence on the tenants and agricultural workers belonging to *Settibalijas* and *Malas*. Both in the region and outside the region, *Kapus* used violence as a strategy in countering the agrarian upper castes such as *Kammas* and tenants and agricultural workers belonging to OBCs on the other. Therefore social violence (to use Balagopal’s phrase) was evident between and among different castes.

During the second phase of their mobilizations, i.e., around 1990s, *Kapus* have shifted their mobilisational strategy quite drastically. This time, it was *Mudragada Padmanabam* a *Kapu* leader from East Godavari tried to mobilize several *jatis* under *jati* cluster by invoking the issue of BC reservations. The claims for BC status turned politically intense and at the end of these mobilizations, the state government succumbed to the demands of *Kapus* by granting them BC status albeit for a very short period. High court intervened and nullified the reservation status to *Kapus*. What is interesting here is the substantial shift from social pride or social status (upper caste

status) to that of OBC status. The significance of mobilizing the numbers has acquired prominence during this period.

The shift in *Kapu* mobilisational strategy from the upper caste status to that of Backward Castes had different reactions. The BC caste associations such as *Perika Sangam*, *Gouda Sangam*, *Yadava Sangam* reacted sharply against the inclusion of *Kapus* in BCs as they will be deprived of the benefits. The resistance also has come from East Godavari district by *Settibalijas*, who had a conflicting relationship with the *Kapus* in the district. *Settibalijas* vehemently opposed the idea of including *Kapus* within the fold of BCs as they considered Godavari *Kapus* as economically rich and comparable to the agrarian castes such as *Reddy*, *Kamma* and *Rajus*. Thus caste association has been used effectively to politically mobilize different *jatis* within the cluster.

2. Caste Magazines-Kapumitra

Early 20th century witnessed the rise of print culture which became an impetus for the caste mobilisations. Several of the castes in Andhra Pradesh used these magazines, journals, to strengthen their caste ties, to instil the consciousness among their caste members. Also these magazines became a vehicle or tool to effectively present various demands put forward by several castes and in that sense *Kapus* mobilized through a magazine called *Kapumitra*.

Magazines, in this context, are not only an important source for analysing social power, but they are also an important 'resource' in understanding how *Kapus* represented their interests from time to time. As Bierstedt articulates it in terms of social power with the three sources-numbers, social organisation and resources- it is this particular resource, which actually addressed the large numbers and helped in their mobilisational process. An attempt to start a magazine itself indicates that the respective caste is under the process of consolidating, mobilising and organising the *Kapus* more effectively. In due course, *Kapumitra*, quite significantly represented the interests of *Kapus*.

While doing a content analysis of *Kapumitra* magazine, the study tried to examine how caste aspirations were articulated. Here again, dominant Godavari *Kapus* used this platform to mobilize their interests in constantly forging unity of all the *jatis* within the

Kapu jati cluster, underplaying the social and economic differences among themselves. The issue of *jati* cluster, *Kapuness*, state benefits in terms of employment, education through BC status were all articulated through the magazine. Of course, the magazine focused on political homogeneity and did not raise the issue of cultural heterogeneity.

3. Political Party- PRP

By 2008 a political party named PRP was formed indicating the manifest attempts to capture political power. During this phase, *Kapus* attempted to include even the Dalits along with backward castes. The formation of PRP has further consolidated the ambiguity rather than mobilizing the *Kapus*. This is because *Kapus* were struggling between upper caste and OBC status resulting in strenuous relationship among different *jatis*. With the formation of PRP the political imagination of *Kapus* included not only several OBCs but also Dalits. While tracing these shifts within the *Kapu* mobilizations, the study found that the *Kapus* have used mobilisational strategies ambitiously and sometimes self-contradictory.

To conclude, intermediary agrarian castes have attempted to redefine the identity politics through their multiple identities. Prabhat Patnaik's (2014) classification of the nature of Identity Politics into three- resistance, bargaining and fascist may help us analyse the *Kapus* political imaginations to some extent. *Kapus* have used resistance as an important strategy in countering social and political hegemony of other agrarian castes in 1980s; also they resisted tenants and agricultural workers (*Settibalija* and *Malas*) assertions in East Godavari district. *Kapus* used bargaining as a strategy with the state to derive institutional resources and in their claims to achieve OBC status like that of *Marathas* in Maharashtra and *Jats* in North India. *Kapus* also did not hesitate in using fascist strategies in subordinating Dalits (*Malas*) by using violence. The intermediary agrarian castes such as *Kapus* have not deployed caste as a discriminatory category as they could not mobilise themselves using victimhood but used social power in terms of numbers, organisation and resources. However, it is a different story that due to social and economic cleavages, the unity in political space could not be effectively realized yet. Nevertheless, it helps us understand different mobilisational strategies used by intermediary agrarian castes in Andhra Pradesh.

The study findings indicated that the nexus between caste and politics in Indian society is much deeper in the socio-political and economic realm. When one looks at the rising aspirations of different groups of people, caste is increasingly used as the mobilisational strategy. As the mobilisational strategies differ from upper to lower to that of intermediary castes, and that these strategies vary across the regions and sub-regions. It is a challenge for the sociologists to understand these complexities in the changing rural and urban India, rather than denying caste as a reality. In the last two decades, the neo-liberal market reforms in fact strengthened the role of caste in economic and political sphere rather than undermining it. The political class used caste, kinship and patronage as important elements in the reform process. It is through caste assertions that different social groups are able to gain access to State and its institutional resources and therefore it is a challenge to understand caste as social power.

Appendix 1

Check list to trace the *Kapu* History

Kapu History

- Social- Identity formation
Territory politics
Presence during pre-colonial period
Colonial period
Post- Independence- The Contemporary
- Political- presence in the Non-Brahmin Movement
Presence in the Justice Party
Presence during the British rule
Association with the Congress party before and after Independence
The role of associations/organisations
Presence in Legislative Assembly after Independence
The political presence in the East Godavari District
Tracing the history of 'Number-Seats' issue
Kapu unification (Ranga)-Kapunadu formation
Kapu-BC Politics (Mudragada)-KRPS
Kapus at the Political sphere (Chiranjeevi)-PRP
Caste conflict/violence-Kapus-Kamma
 Kapus-Malas
 Kapus-Settibalijas
- Cultural- Marriage patterns
Kinship within Kapus
Relationship with other Kapus
Relations with agrarian castes-Kamma-Reddys
Rituals/Worship
Presence in the Telugu cinema industry
- Economic- sources of income
Different patterns at the occupational level
Business patterns
Land as important source

Appendix 2

Check list to generate the information on East Godavari District

Economic:

Rural: Agricultural
Rural Elite
Middle Peasant
Small Peasant
Cultivators
Agricultural Labourers
Non-Agricultural Workers

Land: Rich
Middle
Marginal
Small
Tenant
Crop patterns

Urban: Business: Small-Medium-Large
Workers: Professional-Skilled-Semi-Skilled-Unskilled
Services: Hotels/Restaurants
Recreation
Entertainment-Theatres
Real Estate
Finance/Money Lending
Owners/Workers Associations
Industries: Different patterns: Govt-Private- PoP
Andhra Mills
Reliance
Refineries
Kakinada SEZ and its after effects

Social- Spatial: emergence of the town
Presence in the pre and colonial period
Castes and their presence based on the space
Different migration patterns

Political- Godavari delta political story
'Number-Seats' issue
Kapu-BC Politics (Mudragada)-KRPS
Kapu unification (Ranga)-Kapunadu formation
Kapus at the Political sphere (Chiranjeevi)-PRP
Caste conflict-Kapus-Kamma
Kapus-Malas
Kapus-Settibalijas

Cultural- marriage patterns
Kinship within Kapus
Relationship with other Kapus
Relations with other castes-Kamma-Reddys, etc
Rituals/Worship

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2. Contemporary newspapers and journals
3. Secondary sources

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