

**A STUDY OF THE SOCIO-POLITICAL MOBILITY OF
THE KAPU CASTE IN MODERN ANDHRA**

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**BY
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This is to certify that I, M.L. Kantha Rao, have carried out the research embodied in the present thesis for the full period prescribed under Ph.D. ordinances of the University of Hyderabad.

I declare to the best of my knowledge that no part of this thesis was earlier submitted for the award of any research degree to any other university.

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CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

There are quite a large number of works on the Indian caste system and there are as many theories about caste as there are authors who have written on the subject. The recent tendency is to study caste in terms of relations, tensions and integration and its social dynamics. Moreover, castes and their organisations are no longer confined to a local base but have spread out horizontally with urbanisation and the franchise so that the sentiments of caste affiliations are used in an ever increasing range of civil, social and political activities.

Democratic system of Government, adult franchise and Panchayati Raj have brought political consciousness to all the castes. The castes which were lowly and had in the near past no advantages or had in the past never enjoyed political power are now contending for it. They have the advantages of numbers through which they can make their influence felt. These factors have sought to strengthen the castes as politico-economic pressure groups. In some places certain castes have perpetuated their power to the extent that other castes remain in a state of subordination and constant fear.

Of all the Indian social institutions caste has attracted the widest attention. And it is not only the social scientists who have dealt with it, but novelists, dramatists and short story writers have also made caste and caste dynamics their dominant themes. The chief reasons for this are two fold: in the first place, the agelessness and indestructibility of the caste system and secondly, the impact it has on practically every aspect of Indian life.

A caste association emerges when a number of people of a caste ally together to form an organisational system to pursue certain common ends. It constitutes a system in itself uniting different sub-castes of a caste together. Membership to these associations is not ascriptive as in caste, but is voluntary for the caste members. These associations have offices, membership, publications, and institutions like organised interest groups. These are based on caste sentiments and want to preserve the caste. Their interests do not clash with each other. There are not the attempts for over throwing the caste system but to maintain that. Functions of caste associations depended upon the level at which these are organised. If a caste association is organised at the Nation or state level then it's functions are largely political. But at the city or town level their functions are social and

for the welfare of the caste. Some of the common goals of the caste associations are as follows:

- To eradicate social evils.
- To help the down-trodden members of the caste.
- To raise the status of caste socially, economically and educationally.
- To achieve caste solidarity and integration.
- To preserve the cultural heritage of the caste.

'Caste' is employed to connote different structural orders such as the smallest endogamous sub-caste for which local words like 'Jati' 'quom', 'dudh', and 'biradari' are used, a higher order consisting of several sub-castes and a still higher level of varna order. The term 'caste' is also used to refer to a category of cognate sub-castes as a unit of association across different regions of India. It is used to refer to a category of different sub-caste groups at the pan-India level. Finally it is used to refer to ideology as in caste ideology.¹ In order to avoid confusion, we reserve the general term 'caste' only when we want to refer to it as a phenomenon, ideology or identity. These specifications help us to understand caste as a process of social formation and the nature of the new formations as distinguished of the traditional structures.

It is also pointed out that castes are enduring groups the membership of which is determined by birth, whereas class is a category the membership of which is determined by ownership or non-ownership of property or means of production. By implication, class status is achieved whereas caste status is ascribed. However, this proposition is true only in a limited sense. The next point of contrast that is pointed out between caste and class is that the former is a community and the later is a category. This is again not a structural distinction. A sub-caste in a particular locality may, but not necessarily, constitute a group with commensal and the affinal ties. But several sub-castes of similar caste status constitute only a category and not a group.²

It is necessary to understand the forces behind routinisation in pre-British India. The economy was mostly agricultural and production relations were organised on the basis of differential positions of ownership, control and cultivation of land. Reciprocity

¹ M.S.A. Rao, "Some Conceptual issues in the study of caste, class, ethnicity and dominance", Francine, R. Frankel and M.S.A. Rao, (ed) *Dominance and State Power in Modern India. Decline of a Social Order. Vol.I.* O.U.P. Delhi, 1989. p.22

and exchange under the Jajmani system formed the basic principles of distribution of the agricultural produce within the village. Outside linkages to the political system operated mainly through extraction of surplus food grains as revenue. In some cases, Kings built irrigation systems to increase agricultural production. In this situation, the caste system provided the social framework for the operation of the traditional political economy, but allocating resources differentially according to the status value of the caste system. The legitimising principles - the kings (Political authority), the priest (ritual authority), and the caste councils and village panchayats were effective in upholding the values behind the caste system.³

Economic and Political Dimensions of Caste:

The caste system in the context of relations of production and the exercise of power, incorporates economic and political dimensions, and has the system of inter-caste relations rather than caste category gains primary importance.⁴ Economic aspects are manifest at two interrelated levels (Varna and Jati) of the caste system. At the varna level broad categories of calling or work are associated with each of the four varnas, in the post vedic period (about 600 B.C. to 300 AD). Priesthood and learned callings were associated with Brahmins, military prowess and kingship with Kshatriyas, trade, banking and mercantile occupations with vaisyas and cultivation of lands with Sudras. Over the years, flexibility developed in the calling or occupation that the varnas followed. Except for the first category of occupations which remained more or less closed, the other three categories were relatively open. For instance, those who were not born as Kshatriyas but were endowed with military prowess, could acquire a piece of territory, expand and graduate into Kshatriyahood, through a process of legitimation by Brahmin priests. G.S. Ghurye notes that "the Chera, Chola and Pandya kings belonged to the Vellalas. The Nayak Kings of Madura and Tanjore were Baliyas (Traders)".⁵ At the Jati level, specific jobs and occupations were associated with sub-castes or sub-sub castes. Specialisations in occupations lead to the split and formation of other sub-castes.

²*Ibid.*, p.24.

³*Ibid.*, p.29.

⁴Gail Omvedt., *Land, Caste and Politics in Indian States*, Authors Guild Publication, New Delhi 1982.

It should be noted that kin-based caste dominance was not a monolithic entity against other castes. There were factors within the dominant-caste which promoted vertical ties across the different castes in a village and thus weakened the dominance of the caste as a whole within a region.⁶

In the Indian context, caste is unique in the sense that both economic and status situations co-exist. Status in the caste situation is determined by economic criteria, (occupation and property or its absence) as well as by ritual, social and educational considerations.⁷

For instance, caste associations have become a part of the modern political process. In some cases, they form part of broader caste movements with a defined ideology engaged in collective mobilisation. Under such circumstances caste clusters (including cognate jatis and sub-jatis) tend to develop into large ethnic blocks competing for ritual, ethnic and educational advantages and struggling against a position of subordination in a bid to gain position of dominance.⁸

Caste Consciousness:

Consciousness of one's caste status is an important factor which may explain the differential fertility of various caste groups. Though consciousness about one's status in society always exists in the individual, but it is only when a large number of individuals had similar status and are made conscious of their status to certain disabilities or privileges that they tried to behave in a particular way. It is in this context that a consciousness of one's status affects behaviour patterns. When even this consciousness is sanctioned by an ethical or political institution, it always leads to an effervescent situation coupled with an enhanced consciousness of one's status.

⁵G.S. Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1969, p.106.

⁶M.S.A. Rao, *Op.Cit.*, p.31.

⁷*Ibid.*, p.35.

Castes and sub-castes:

Unlike, the four-fold varna system, Indian castes and sub-castes (Jatis) are counted in thousands. However, each Jati is a name, relatively small endogamous group that is traditionally ranked in a regional system of relative social prestige and wealth. In other words, unlike the varna system, the jati system is localised. Consequently, knowing the common name of the jati will not necessarily reveal their relative social standing in their localities given the great regional variation that characterised the jati system. In this respect, person's names and sur-names are no strong guides to a person's caste and sub-caste affiliations. It is a consciousness of complementary of self and ascribed attributions generated in cognitive and social interactional contexts. Caste consciousness is reinforced dialectically by the egalitarian ideology. Just as the ideologies Nationalism and Secularism have failed to wither away communal identities, it is doubtful that caste identities, which are paying in material terms, will be shaken off totally; it is possible that caste relations may improve but caste identities will not erode easily.⁹

Gladstone explains

"People do have a longing for progress. Many people see this progress in terms of the progress of a particular caste. There has always been a tendency to compare the position and gains of one caste with those of the other castes. The existence of strong caste organisations encouraged the idea of progress in terms of caste or community".¹⁰

Harbans Mukhia writes

"The silent manifestation of communalism inheres in the very use of community as the category of social analysis and political operation. Community or Caste or Linguistic group is the most tried unit of mobilisation of votes On the one hand, such mobilisation has helped a very large mass of people to participate in this modern political process; on the other, the very success of such participation has tended to reinforce, rather than erode, their community or caste identity. It is thus the very process of economic and political modernisation that has lent vitality to a traditional feature."¹¹

⁸*Ibid.*, p.39.

⁹Venkateswara Rao, Jr.P, "The Caste-Class Conundrum" *The Indian Express*, Oct.8, 1990.

¹⁰Gladstone J.W. "Caste, Religion and People's Movements in Kerala" *Religion and Society*, Vol.XXXI, No.I, 1985, p.35.

¹¹Harbans Mukhia, "The Connotations of Indian Secularism" *The Indian Express*, (Weekly Magazine) 1987, Jan.2.

Showing how caste continues to be an important factor for marriage, Hardgrave noted that the Christian Nadars prefer to marry Hindu Nadars rather than Christians of other lower caste origins, if suitable spouses are not found within their own fold. The next preference is for inter-marriages among converts from homologous caste groups. Caste as we have seen is not an immutable identity but a variable and varying category whose contours and meanings undergo periodic redefinition.¹²

On the one hand, it is getting increasingly embedded in the politico-economical and socio-economical matrices of the society. Caste consciousness is an essence an enduring product of life events and experiences, current props and perceptions of its instrumental value and the material rewards and gratifications it currently brings. Bougle eloquently affirms that “the caste system is an emorphous collection of anomalies and anachronisms, calculated to embarrass the most expert enquirer and discourage the most enthusiastic researcher”.¹³ Writing about its vitality Bougle observes that:

“the caste system allows all regimes to pass over its head, it alone remains. And like the tenacious jungle, its vegetation rapidly swallows up once more the few cleared patches, it is as though Hindu soil belongs to it from all eternity and for ever.”¹⁴

Caste is one of the most important aspects of social and political life in India.¹⁵ As a social institution, it is strongly entrenched and inspite of the modernisation trends in India (as a result of urbanisation, improved means of communication and development of secular education) the caste factor persists. Although caste has undergone many changes it has become a factor to be reckoned within politics. No political party ignores it. To a limited extent the caste system is recognised by the Constitution as it reserves seats for S.C.'s; S.T.'s and O.B.C's.

¹²C.V. Prasad Rao and K. Radha Krishna Murthy, “Dalit Consciousness Brahmanism: A Multiplex Question”. *The Eastern Anthropologist*, Vol.46, No.1, Jan-March, 1993, p.36-37.

¹³C. Bougle *Essays on the Caste System*, Cambridge, C.U.P., 1971, p.86.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p.65.

¹⁵M.N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*, Asian Publishing Houses, Bombay, 1962, pp.1-15.

Caste is one of the various sub-national forces playing a very important role in the politics of the nation. "Politicisation of caste system",¹⁶ became the new trend in Indian politics. In the process not only Hindus of upper classes but Dalits also came to play an important role. New conditions of independent India have given a fresh vigour to the politicisation of caste as a result of which it has begun to manifest itself as a regional, rather than a local force increasingly independent of competitiveness in relation to other castes. "The central discovery is that politics is more important to caste and castes are more important to politics than before. It is also commented that top political leaders may proclaim the goal of the casteless society, but the newly enfranchised rural masses know only the language of traditional politics which so largely turns about caste..... Behind the formal list of party candidates nominated for the contexts, there is probably an inside story of careful calculation in terms of caste appeal".¹⁷ This change is further strengthened by the fact that all the parties and their leaders speak from house tops against caste, casteism and casteist politics. But surprising enough with all this verbal attack caste remains a powerful factor in politics. The reasons are not far too seek. No party seems to be free from the sly of caste appeal. "Caste has very deep roots in the Hindu social structure and it is wrong to expect that the mere institutionalisation of western political ideals and techniques would automatically do away with this social system of ancient standing."¹⁸ "And it has been marked that the caste system in India over the years has acted in stratifying the society socially, corrupting it politically and weakening it economically."¹⁹

The basis of understanding of caste system is an emperical reality is to locate caste groups as Jatis in a specific rural/urban context. Caste is seen as a status group in these contexts. It is a source of placement in the social set up. But at a macro level caste is also a means of identity. Is caste an interest group? Can common interests bring together men of different castes from various regions and states more smoothly than

¹⁶Rajni Kothari, *Caste Politics in India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1970, p.225.

¹⁷W.M. Morris-Jones, *The Government and Politics in India* B.I. Publications, Madras, 1974, pp.65-66.

¹⁸V.M. Sirsikar, *Political Behaviour in India* P.C. Manaklata and Sons, Bombay, 1965, p.67.

¹⁹R.B.Jain, *Political System and Nation Building: The Indian Political Experience in Democracy, Pluralism and Nation Building*. 1984, p.42.

those of the same caste? Caste is certainly a resource, but its resource-ability varies from caste to caste depending on the status of a given caste in a given area. Caste identity/membership has become a liability for the members of a high and middle castes in recent years as a certain percentage of jobs, seats in parliament and state legislatures and admissions in institutions of higher learning have been reserved for the weaker sections of Indian society.

Caste is a very complex system precisely because caste is not simply a ritualistic system of power relations and economic activities. If it gets weakened in one aspect, then it also gets strengthened in the other with certain alterations, additions and accretions. Therefore, what we need is to study the dynamics of this complexity of the system. We all know that there is no uniform pattern of caste structure in actual terms throughout India. There are thousands of castes in India with different names and nomenclatures, but there are only about five or six dominant castes throughout the country.

Since we are probing the role and position of caste in our society as a whole, we should bear in mind that the caste structure has not developed uniformly in all the regions of the sub-continent. The number of castes also varies from region to region. Different historical experiences of different regions has contributed to the shaping of present day socio-political processes. Moreover, there is uneven economic development in the country and also within the states, providing uneven economic opportunities to different social groups. And, all castes do not have uniform numerical strength and concentration. Some are scattered throughout the state and some are heavily concentrated in some regions only. Hence the role and the composition of caste varies from area to area and from caste to caste. What is attempted here is to present a broad pattern regarding caste, the role it plays and the position it occupies in society today.

Caste as a Means of Social and Political Power:

The Indian social system is organised around caste structures and caste identities. With the passage of time, new social values have grown and many from higher castes are indifferent towards caste if not actively opposed. The eminent Indian social scientist M.N. Srinivas says :

“Caste is undoubtedly an all Indian Phenomenon in the sense that every where there are hereditary and different groups within a caste, which have a traditional association with one or more occupations.”²⁰

It is true that caste in India is one of the major determinants of occupation. Occupational superiority determines social hierarchy and economic status. A feature of rural life in many parts of the country is the existence of dominant land-owning castes²¹ and for a caste to be dominant, it should have a sizeable amount of arable land, have numerical strength and occupy a high place in the local hierarchy. Land ownership is a crucial factor in establishing dominance in Indian village life.²² It is the land, which confers power and prestige. Dominant castes are generally land owners, land ownership determines social status which leads to economic and political power.

Dominant Castes as Vote Banks:

It has been the land owning, socially superior, economically sound, caste oriented dominant section of the rural life which has been the centre of attention, for state and national politics. These dominant castes have been functioning as vote banks for the political parties in India. These castes, because of their economic superiority in specific regions, functions as donors to the political parties at the time of elections and in turn they aspire for gains and facilities from the ruling leadership after elections. Political leadership of the country outwardly denies utilisation of caste as a factor of winning elections and almost every political party denounces caste system as such, but does not hesitate to identify dominant castes in a particular constituency and put up a candidate of such dominant caste for winning elections. Caste appeals are made in private. Caste for the purpose of achieving political power is very much alive in India, particularly in rural areas. Gunnar Myrdal in his *Asian Drama* writes “politicians of all parties in their election campaigns patently cater to caste sensitivities.”²³

The caste composition of our society has been broadly exploited by the political parties and the caste has become the centre around which politics in India moves. The

²⁰M.N.Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, Orient Longmen, New Delhi, 1972, p.3..

²¹*Ibid.*, p.10.

²²*Ibid.*, p.11.

various caste and caste groups have become the source of political power and now it is difficult to conceive of politics without caste. The Indian society, in spite of multiple caste composition was homogenous in its nature but it has not become heterogeneous due to exploitation of caste in politics.

Almost all the societies of the world are characterised by stratification. The Indian society, in particular, is regarded as the most stratified of all the known societies. The caste system represents one form of social stratification that is unique to the Indian society. The caste system as a complex social phenomenon with its myriad forms of working has been a subject of curiosity for a number of Anthropologists and Sociologists both in India and abroad. An enormous amount of literature has been produced on the subject. Many theories regarding the origin of caste system have been proposed further complicating our understanding of the phenomenon. For instance, Gail Omvedt writes:

“the endogamous principles and practices that constitute the jatis, the purity-pollution behaviour rules and occupational tasks governing the relations of hierarchy and exploitation existing among them are the practices and rules that constitute the caste system”²⁴.

While proceeding to discuss the phenomenon of caste, it is important to understand the related concepts like ‘varna’ and ‘jati’ as also the different connotations of the use of the term ‘caste’ itself.

Varna:

The layman’s understanding of the term varna as the division of Hindu society into four orders, viz., Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vysya and Sudra . Varna which literally means colour, originally referred to the distinction between the Arya and the Dasa. Ghurye writes, “varna means ‘colour’ and it was in this sense that the word seems to have been employed in contrasting the Arya and Dasa. The colour connotation of the word was so strong that later on when the classes came to be regularly described as varnas,

²³Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, Vol .I, The Penguin Press, London, 1968, p.279.

²⁴Gail Omvedt, *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1994, p.30.

four different colours were supposed to be distinguished"²⁵ The fourfold varna system does not operate on the ground. The varna scheme is primarily a fiction since it does not in fact regulate the social order. Emperically the caste system is constituted by numerous Jatis or Kulas which are specific to a region. Marriage rules, commercial taboos, occupational rigidity and village politics in particular operate at the level of jati. In Ghurye's opinion the relevant level at which caste system should be analysed is that of Jati. The term Jati which in sanskrit means caste, is used to refer often to a category or identity rather than an actually existing group. But in fact, sub-castes are real units of endogamy and interaction.²⁶ The Jati, however, is a better term than the term varna to refer to social order. There are various social connotations for the term caste.

Segmental Division of Society:

The social system in India is organised around caste structures and identities. Caste is one form of social grouping, the membership of which is determined not by selection, but by birth. The social status of the person depends on the caste in which he or she happens to be born. The caste gives a specific social status to every individual thereby separating his/her caste identity from a larger community identity of which he/she may be a part. The principles of endogamy and commansality divide the entire society into caste groups. But this separation is maintained importantly by organising caste panchayats or councils. The caste councils deal with every aspect of the member's life such as eating, drinking, concubinage, marriage, defiance of caste custom etc. This implies that in the caste bound society, the importance of community identity is restricted and individuals owe their moral loyalty to their caste first, rather than community as a whole. The caste councils are thus important instruments by which caste, as closed 'status groups', restrict and formalise the social relationships between members of different castes.

No social structure has ever been static in the world. The caste structure has undergone various changes from time to time. The process of change has been very complex and defies precise assessment. Many lower castes went up in religious

²⁵G.S. Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India* ., p.46.

²⁶Gail Omvedt, *Dalits and the Op.Cit.*, p.27.

hierarchy by acquiring economic and political power. In the 20th century the economic and political changes along with the development of productive forces has radically changed the social relationship between traditional twice-born who were at the top of the social ladder and the sudra peasant castes. Since these peasant castes have acquired higher economic and political power than the twice-born, the religious hierarchy could accommodate them as social superiors. The tremendous manoeuvrability of the caste system could make this possible. The more the economic and political power of particular caste, it tries to defend the caste system as the caste legitimises the economic and political power that caste is enjoying.

A recurrent problem in India in the years since independence has been the integration of social and political structures at all levels of society, but especially the state and region. Hence, an important area for an analytical study is the extent to which units larger than districts exhibit significant degrees of social and political integration. The present study suggests that where such integration exists political participation is enhanced.

The institution of caste has received a great deal of attention from scholars both within and outside India. The more evidence that becomes available, the clearer it becomes that caste is an extremely complex phenomenon representing different structures at different levels of analysis. In this study an attempt is made to examine the literature on social and political organisation of castes in Andhra Pradesh. This review will help to clarify the currently prevalent conflicting views on the subject and it will allow us to derive hypothesis about the influence of regional contexts on political participation.

All observers of Indian politics, recognise the importance of the caste factor. The last 15 or 20 years, in particular, have seen a major change in the role of caste. Earlier it was important in the politics of South India. Did developments in the South differ from those of the North? why did the middle class in the South remain caste ridden and why was the social mobility which was the leading feature of the North Indian society in the 19th century not extended to the South of the Vindhya? According to Bhatia:

“I do not intended to convey the impression that North India is free from caste prejudices in all matters. In fact various investigations in the pattern of voting during the 2nd and 3rd general elections of free India have

shown that caste is a potent force in political alignments and that instead of disappearing from the Indian social scene, it is becoming an increasingly important factor in the politics of the country".²⁷

Similarly, the introduction of Panchayat Raj has led to the polarisation of political groupings on caste basis.²⁸ But while accepting all that one might still argue that even before the British conquest, the Indian society in the North was more fluid occupationally than in the south, and that the fluidity increased greatly as a result of the new forces released by the British conquest so that the relation between the caste and occupation of an individual were snapped.

In the south, on the other hand, occupations continued to be patterned along the caste lines. According to M.N. Srinivas: "caste is a hereditary endogamous, usually localised group, having a traditional association with an occupation".²⁹ It is in this sense that caste ceased to be less important in the North in the 19th century while it continued to be so in the South. In the answer to these questions we may find a clue not only to the present day strong anti-Brahmin movement in the South,³⁰ but also to the comparatively slow pace of industrialisation and economic development in that part of the country. But now it has gained very strong foot-hold in the politics of North India. Particularly, in the last two decades or so a new focus of caste politics has emerged; the politics of quotas for backward classes. Together with its attendant spin-offs- the emergence of new caste-based organisations, growing polarisation along caste lines, violence and reservation conflicts-the caste has embedded itself firmly in socio-economic and political fabric of the country. To understand and analyse this increased role we have first to see what the caste system is and how it has developed as a politically significant variable.

²⁷B.M. Bhatia, "Some aspects of economic Development of Southern India in the 19th Century and their effect on the growth of middle class in the Deccan" in *V.K. Bawa Aspects of Indian History*, Institute of Asian Studies, Hyderabad, 1975, p.57.

²⁸M.N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India*,..... *Op.Cit.*, p.2.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p.3.

³⁰M.N. Srinivas attributed this to the absence of powerful Brahmin groups in the North. Further he told "that it is not unlikely that the absence of powerful Brahmin groups in the North has prevented the emergence of an anti-Brahmin Movement and this has probably led to the popular impression that caste is more powerful south of Vindhyas than to the North. There are signs, however, that caste is becoming stronger in the North. *Ibid.*, p.36.

Any analysis of contemporary caste requires a minimum understanding of the institutions as it was in the past. We shall take an oft-cited passage to refer to the features of caste. Caste is "a hereditary endogamous, usually localised group, having a traditional association with an occupation"³¹ and a particular position in the hierarchy of castes. Relations between castes are governed among other things by the concepts of pollution and purity and generally, maximum commensality occurs within the caste. The following features became evident from this definition. firstly, membership in the caste is by birth, secondly, a caste is an endogamous unit, thirdly members of each caste traditionally had an occupation or trade to pursue. Fourthly, castes are graded in a local hierarchy, fifthly, notions of pollution and purity govern the nature and extent of the relationships between castes.

From the above passage it can be inferred that Indian caste is derived through birth alone. It cannot be transferred from one class to another; cannot be gained as a reward for the highest merit or bestowed as an honorary title by the most powerful monarch.³² All the members of the same caste are alike that they have the same levels of ritual, socio-economic and political positions.

Since our concern here is not to discuss the caste system itself, suffice it is to keep in mind that there are a large number of castes. Theoretically, each caste has a definite place in the social hierarchy. Its place in the hierarchy is determined by its ritual status based on the observance of religious values and its hereditary occupation. However, the caste hierarchy has never been static throughout history. Though the upper castes try to maintain their higher status, the middle and low castes have successfully tried to improve their status.

First caste or jati is essentially a localised social group where members share common socio-cultural bonds. Second, caste does not just form a social group. The caste based social system originated with the development of economic surplus. Production and distribution systems have remained caste based for centuries. With the

³¹M.N.Srinivas, *Ibid.*, p.3.

³²J.Murdoch, *Review of Caste in India*, Rawat Publications, jaipur, 1977, p.4.

introduction of the capitalist system and the consequent penetration of capital as well as the competitive political system, certain changes have taken place in the features characterising the caste system. Production is no longer based on caste thereby weakening the hierarchy of the system.

Caste is one of the basic institutions of Hindu society and has engaged the attention of scholars, activists and politicians. There is voluminous literature on the nature and character of caste in its various aspects. Its typical structure with regional variations and the processes of change and continuity have been vividly described and cogently analysed. Scholars have tried to explore the fundamental principles that underlie the caste system and the study of caste has given rise to endless controversies and debates.

At the same time, it can not be contended that the caste system has not changed at all. It can hardly be said that even from the times when written accounts of its practices are available, caste has undergone considerable change. In any case, it is nowhere practised as rigidly as it was prescribed in the ancient Hindu law texts. What is important to note however, is that the caste system has been the most flexible of the primordial institutional arrangements any where in the world, and it has shown an extraordinary capacity to adopt itself to a variety of changing and often apparently contradictory socio-economic conditions.

According to Kolenda, the traditional caste system consisted of a set of occupationally specialised castes integrated into local hierarchical ritualised politico-economic systems of cooperation and inter dependence. This 'cooperative caste system' and "the hierarchical organic solidarity" has been disappearing due to a variety of economic and political factors. In its place a new system of competitive solidarity has been emerging as "fused combinations of castes compete with one another". Thus "despite the gradual demise of the occupational aspect of the caste system (a demise now taking place at a more rapid tempo) the solidarity of the jati is intact".³³

³³Kolenda Pauline, *Caste in Contemporary India*, Menlopark, California, 1978, pp.154-155.

At the very outset it has to be conceded that the concept of caste is itself problematic. Castes could be viewed either as being functionally inter-related in a system contributing to the vertical integration of a rigidly stratified society or as autonomous groups serving common purposes and striving for common ends. Viewed as the former, caste constitutes a structural principle of society and viewed as the latter, it acts as a dynamic force in interest articulation, collective mobilisation and social movement. While changes in the institution of caste can be comprehended fairly from either of these analytical perspectives, the relationship between the realities subsumed by them as complex and eludes easy analytical grasp.

The decline of caste as a system should theoretically have resulted in castes becoming mere social categories encompassing descent groups, whose boundaries across local areas would have at best been only notional and that too only in kinship terms. But the 'politics of scarcity' and the exigencies of democratic politics have made the people belonging to these categories more and more caste-conscious and given currency to the idea of caste unity. The backward classes movements and 'Mandalism' have obviously abetted caste-consciousness, Caste mobilisation and caste aggrandizement.

Caste and Politics in Colonial Period:

Caste has always been a powerful weapon in keeping the people divided and weak in the face of any challenge. More than 145 years back Marx remarked, "How came it that English supremacy was established in India? A country not only divided between the Mohammedan and Hindu, but between tribe and tribe, between caste and caste, a society whose framework was based on a sort of equilibrium, resulting from a general repulsion and constitutional exclusiveness between all its members. Such a country and such a society, were they not the predestined prey of conquest?"³⁴ Nevertheless, during the colonial period itself the existential realities of caste system began to be different from its typical ideal form.

A number of changes brought by the British rulers in Indian economy and administration significantly affected the 'essence' of caste system. While on the one hand, the traditional aspects of the caste were getting changed, on the other hand caste

was acquiring new dimension and political functions. For administrative purposes, the British Government had brought a good deal of improvement in communication. The immediate effect of this according to Srinivas was that it increased caste consciousness and inter caste competition. This happened because now it was possible for the caste relations to outgrow its regional constraints and develop caste associations so as to bargain for some concessions from the British Government, on the plea of backwardness in order to catch up with the advanced castes.³⁵ At the same time the caste associations worked for elevation of social status. This backwardness was claimed in the secular context and a high status in a ritual context. This was a new dimension and function of caste, unknown before.

Thus, we find that the caste system began to acquire new functions and dimensions in the changing socio-economic and political ambience of the pre-independence period. However, changes in the caste system notwithstanding the grip of this institution on the social matrix did not loosen to any appreciable extent. Caste continues to persist, albeit in a different form from its feudal 'embodiment'. After achievement of Independence and introduction of electoral politics in a traditional society, caste gained a new role for itself.

After independence many changes were introduced in the political system. Democratic polity based on the principles of adult-franchise was perhaps the most crucial factor which reinforced caste with a lot of vigour. According to Moin Sahkir there is dual role of caste in the post-independence era. The type of mass politics operating after Independence is radically different from that of British India. The compulsions of the democratic system, to mobilise the illiterate people who cannot understand politics in terms of class interests, make it imperative appeal to the caste sentiment, because it pays dividends. In the absence of clear-cut class based parties or because of weak Communist and Socialist movements in the country, factors other than ideology and class are bound to be more effective. It activates primordial institutions.³⁶ Thus caste, religion etc., become relevant inputs in the mass politics in the country.

³⁴Quoted by A.B. Bardan, "*Caste, Class Situation in India*", (Memo) n.d.

³⁵A.S. Narang, *Indian Government and Politics*, Gitanjali Publishing House, New Delhi, 1993, p.596.

To what extent caste has become a means to level the old order, is highly debatable issue. But there cannot be gainsaying the fact that caste has provided substance to politics. It will be proper to recall here that even the communists in India used caste idioms for mobilising the class of agricultural labourers in Andhra elections in 1950's and elsewhere also on the ground of caste-class correspondence.³⁷ In 1955 elections, when the congress was fighting back, after the communists had scored on the language issue, it was decided that the caste game must be played with even greater finesse. The coastal delta region was Kamma territory, the uplands were held largely by Reddis. The congress held off until the C.P.I. had filled its list and then, candidate for candidate, it matched the C.P.I. list with a list of Congress supporters belonging to identical castes. That way, with superior organisation and funds, the congress could successfully trade upon caste loyalties every where.³⁸

In 1961 June, E.M.S.Namboodiripad wrote in the monthly *New Age* that whereas caste as a social bar had weakened, it has increased in the political sphere and has in many cases decided the fate of elections and even selection of Ministries. In 1964 at the Vijayawada Conference of the communist party of India, its General Secretary Ajay Ghosh reported that caste sentiments instead of loosening have grown tremendously. There was a greater tendency to use caste in all elections.³⁹

Several scholars, India as well as foreign, consider Kerala as being so caste ridden that every political party is based on some caste or the other. To quote E.M.S.Namboodiripad:

“it could be totally unrealistic to close one's eyes to the fact that even those political parties which claim to be secular and above all considerations of caste and community, have to take into consideration the

³⁶ Caste as a political factor in free India was first used by the congress strategist S.k.Patel in 1957 elections in A.p..He matched the communist 'caste by caste' and succeeded. See Sharif K.Bhowmik 'Caste and Class in India' *Economic and Political Weekly (hereafter E.P.W.)*, Vol.xxvii. Nos.24&25, June,13-20.1992.p.1248.

³⁷ A.S. Narang, *Op. Cit.*, p.598.

³⁸ Hugh Tinker, *India and Pakistan: A Political Analysis*, Fall Mall Press, London, 1967, p.137.

³⁹ Sharif K. Bhowmik, *Op.Cit.*, .p.1248

caste or communal composition of particular constituencies when they select their candidates for elections."⁴⁰

The style of functioning of the various political parties proves the validity of the caste factor in the selection of the candidates. They are realistic to accept that the stress on caste should be more at the Gram Panchayat level and less on the state level and negligible at the national level.⁴¹ Because castes are ordinarily bounded by language, they have affected Indian political life more at state level and local levels than at the national level. Again we would like to point out that it has acquired a markedly ideological tone since 1990. The ideological tone was given a new articulation, when the left parties decided to join hands with the Mr. V.P.Singh's Janata Dal in pressing for the extension of caste quotas in the cause of social justice. This made it in effect impossible for any party openly to oppose caste quotas, so that caste has at least for the time being strengthened its grip over politics. In fact the strongest supporters of caste quotas are, paradoxically, also the strongest opponents of caste as a hierarchical system.⁴²

In South, where efforts have been made to draw linguistic and state boundaries congruently, castes do not usually reach beyond the state. In the North, along with Hindi, castes can be found in more than one and some times in all the four Hindi speaking states.⁴³

It is true that the most stable states in the Union like Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka derive their strength from powerfully organised caste groups, while the most instable states are those where power alliances are not supported by strong caste-bases or

⁴⁰ E.M.S.Namboodiri Pad, *Selected Writings* Vol.I.National Book Agency, 1982,p.152. It might be expected in Indian conditions, that caste could form the ideal base for a political party (but in fact very few parties with exclusive caste affiliations have appeared) Although formerly the C.P.I. was virtually the political machine of the Kamma caste, and the P.S.P. in Kerala that of the Nair Service Society, the only major party that now remains clearly related to the traditional divisions of Hindu society is the Republican party, the successor of the Scheduled Caste Federation created to represent the interests of the untouchables or Harijans. Also see A.H. Hanson & J.Douglass *India's Democracy*, vikas publishing house, New Delhi, 1972.pp 85-86.

⁴¹ A.S. Narang, *Op. Cit.*, p.598.

⁴² C.J. Fuller, *Caste Today*, O.U.P. Delhi, 1996, p.169.

⁴³ Lloyd I .Rudolph and Susanne H.Rudolph, *The Modernity of Tradition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1972, pp.67-69.

transformation of castes as interest groups is intrinsically related to the introduction and spread of democratic politics.

The Introduction of democracy, which has been effective in India since Independence, while dismantling the traditional authority structure, at least theoretically, has contributed to the growth and consolidation of castes as interested groups. In view of the fragmentation and factionalism within caste groups and alignments and realignments among them, political parties no doubt cut across caste groups. But because of the compulsions of electoral politics, no party can ignore the caste factor except at its own peril. At every stage in politics, the leaders of political parties, have to engage in 'Caste-rope walking'. The importance of caste increases as we go down the political hierarchy from the parliamentary constituency to the village panchayat. Religious and sectarian leaders and the *Mathadhi Patris* (Monastic leaders) also play a crucial, though covert, role in the mobilisation of the caste factor for political purposes.

Considering the political potential of mobilisation on caste lines, caste associations have come to thrive. It is for this, that caste associations first emerged as early as in the 20th century. But in their numbers, spread, organisation, resources and power, contemporary caste associations are certainly distinct from their humbler counterparts of yester years. Today "through the association the urban politically literate elite (are) linked with the less literate villagers belonging to the same caste".⁴⁸

Whither Castes and Caste System:

The extent and nature of changes in the institution of castes are certainly different between the urban and rural areas. The decline of caste as a system is more perceptible in cities than in rural areas, whereas the growth of castes as articulated interest groups is more noticeable in urban areas. This should not be construed to mean that there is no semblance of a caste system in cities, and that the mobilisation of people on caste lines is absent in villages. Rather it only means that the systematic dimension of caste is expectedly less significant in cities than in villages, whereas the locus of caste consciousness and caste mobilisation at the broader level is to be found in the cities and towns rather than in the villages.

Notwithstanding, the above variations in the nature and significance of change in the institution of caste, one question which still remains to be answered is about the future of this institution. This question has been raised and answered several times for over a century and half. The general thrust of the answers based on careful scrutiny of evidence seems to be categorical and it is summarised by Gould:

“it is appears very unlikely that so admirable and adaptive structure as caste is in any serious danger of ever disappearing completely; its religious basis may wane, its systematic rigour may weaken, but its social (kinship) basis will persist and its group connotation will gain strength”.⁴⁹

Caste thus has a definite role in the society as well as in politics. Caste is a fundamental aspect of the Indian social structure and also the economic foundation upon which the society rests in India. The relationship between the caste and politics reveals the politicised nature of the caste. Caste has its own importance and caste associations constitute para communities that enable members of respective castes for social mobility, political power and economic advancement. In fact, every caste in India is a well knit social group and no explanation of Indian politics is possible without a reference to the caste. Whatever may be the history and origin of the caste system, the institution of the caste has been one of the specific features of the Indian social life. In the process of its growth it was sustained by peculiar social, economic and political conditions that existed in a particular society. The present study is an attempt to know the nature of caste and its links with the society and its role in politics. This is one part of the caste studies that is overlooked by the world of scholars. This is evident from the review of literature.

⁴⁸Kolenda Pauline, *Caste in Contemporary India*, Menlo Park, California, 1978, p.121.

⁴⁹A. Harold Gould, *Caste Adaptation in Modernising Indian Society*, Chankya Publications, Delhi, 1988, p.167.

Review of Literature:

Before discussing the role of caste in politics, it is proper to examine in some what general terms the relationship between caste and the political system. Most recent studies by social anthropologists have emphasised the role of caste in local politics and political scientists too, have become increasingly sensitive to the part it plays in wider political systems. Some kind of inter relationship between these two sets of factors is also often assumed by journalists both in this country and abroad. Enough material now exists for the formulation of a common strategy for the analytical study of the relationship between caste and politics in different parts of the country. It is also a fact that the relations between castes and politics are not static but change continuously over time.

Caste is a deeply embedded feature of Indian society. It haunts us every where - North, South, East and West and it pervades practically all groups-Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jains, Sikhs. Despite its ubiquitous character, it has been differently translated as an operational entity in different parts of the subcontinent. With considerable regional difference both in its manifestations and adaptations, it is not easy for a conscientious scholar to hazard a universal generalisation about it. Social scientists have addressed themselves to the task of studying the structural aspects of caste in depth in various regional settings. The interplay between caste and politics remained, however, a neglected territory. Those studying caste at a micro-level, the village did not pay sufficient attention to the macro dimensions of caste in the emerging political culture of India. Neglect of this dimension resulted in a curious cognitive hiatus between society and polity; the former representing tradition and the later, modernity-the two ends of a false dichotomy.

The publication of *Caste in Indian Politics*, a collection of essays edited by one of India's leading political scientists, Rajni Kothari can be considered as the first systematic attempt in the field. The book was published by Orient Longman in 1970. The scholarly introduction very competently provides a social scientific perspective and discusses of the problematics involved in the caste analysis relative to politics. The book thus gives us an account of politics in terms of caste about seven regions namely Maharastra,

Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. We get detailed information about the following castes. Mahar, Kshatriya, Patidar, Nadar, Maratha, Brahmin, Reddis, Kamma, Pushkarna, Oswal, Jat, Jatav, Bhumihar, Agarwal and a few others.

The book brings home the point that the idiom of caste is a part of the grammar of Indian politics. Politicization of caste, however is a phenomenon much older than the political independence the country attained in 1947. Pre-independence politics of caste was characterised more by its inner direction. Efforts to foster unity, to organise the membership for social and religious reform and to improve economic well-being were the key forte of caste politics of the period. Inter-caste rivalries however did figure in the wake of self-enhancement exercises on the part of the lowly placed castes. The granting of franchise by the British emphasised the arithmetic of votes and resulted in demand for separate electorates as if to retort the high caste Hindus.

In the post-Independence era, with the enlargement of the scope of political participation, several new patterns have emerged. Earlier caste organisations became broader both in terms of inclusion of more castes of identical rank and in terms of larger territorial coverage. The various political parties also engaged themselves in the process of mass mobilisation and thus utilised local caste demography to get more or to divide votes. Need for intercaste support is increasingly felt and intra-caste factions are now getting linked with intra-party factions, as also with different political parties. Use of caste idiom in politics is in a way becoming an instrument to reduce its monopolistic influence.

Kothari considers the more useful point of departure for his studies to be: "what form is caste taking under the impact of modern politics, and what form is politics taking in a caste-oriented society"?⁵⁰ Anchoring his arguments further in the power dimensions of the status communities of India, he makes the following shrewd observation. "The alleged 'casteism in politics' is no more and no less than politicisation of caste. It is something in which both the forms of caste and the forms of

⁵⁰Rajni Kothari (ed.), *Caste in Indian Politics*, *Op.Cit.*, p.5.

politics are brought nearer each other in the process changing both"⁵¹ According to Kothari, it is a sterile controversy,

"where caste itself becomes political category it is futile to argue as to whether caste uses politics or politics uses caste".⁵²

Coming back to Kothari's view of interaction between caste and politics, "the most important achievements in this area are the case studies of the formation of caste associations and caste federations, the role of caste associations in mobilising mass support for political movements and the participation of caste groups into politics for purposes of social mobility, economic well-being and political articulation"⁵³ one can do no better than quote Kothari.

Having come closer to each other modern political institutions and caste structures enter into a process of interaction in the course of which both change. By drawing castes into its competitive structures politics finds its bases in society, and by subjecting itself to the rules of competitive politics, caste acquires political characteristics.⁵⁴

Kothari in his work, *Caste in Indian Politics* observed that by drawing the caste system into the needs of organisation, politics finds material for its articulation and moulds it into its own design. In making politics their sphere of activity caste and kin groups secure change to assert their identity and strive for positions. Politicians mobilise caste groupings and identities in order to organise their power. They find in it an extremely well articulated and flexible basis for organisation, something that has been structured in terms of a status hierarchy but something that is also available for political manipulation.⁵⁵

⁵¹*Ibid.*, pp.4-5.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p.5.

⁵³D.L.Sheth, *Caste and Politics: A Trend Report*, New Delhi, ICSSR, March, 1971, p.33.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p.34.

⁵⁵Rajani Kothari, *Caste In Indian Politics*, 1970.

Kothari observes that caste role in politics has gradually been increasing compared to the previous decades. Without caste influence, politics cannot survive. Caste provides an extensive basis for organisation of democratic politics. In India caste remains the principal base for social organisation. So caste obviously is used for mobilisational purposes in electoral and other political activities. Kothari puts it, "it is not politics that gets caste ridden, it is caste that gets politicised."⁵⁶

Kothari adds that usually in rural areas caste is used as a mobilising factor by the political parties. It is easy for various political parties to mobilise support directly on caste lines. The present system itself encourages or inhibits the use of caste as a means for breaching followers. He mentions that caste enables the illiterates and politically ignorant masses of India to participate in the modern democratic process.

Further, Kothari in his book examined the relationship between caste and politics in different parts of the country. He also dealt with the changes that have taken place in the political system as a result of involvement of different caste organisations at different points of time and at different levels of the polity. For instance how different parties or even different groups within a single party, mobilise different social strata as resources for their political objectives was studied. It is from this perspective, that this study is relevant for this thesis.

Babulal Fadia made a study on caste politics in India entitled *State Politics in India*.⁵⁷ In his study he discussed that adult franchise and panchayati raj have provided new opportunities for castes. Through this rapid developments, the caste system has undergone some changes. Automatically upper peasant castes have become important pressure groups in politics at the district and state level. He mentioned about various state politics in India. In Rajasthan one has to take into account the rivalry between Jats and Rajputs; in Karnataka between Okkaligas and Lingayats; in Andhra Pradesh between Reddis and Kammas; in Kerala between Nayars, Izhavas and Syrian Christians; in Maharashtra between Marathas, Brahmins and Mahars, in Gujarat between Baniyas, Patidars

⁵⁶A K.Lal, "Dynamics of Village Factionalism: A Study of Conflict between traditional and emerging leadership" *Journal of Social and Economic Studies*, 1973, pp.1-2.

⁵⁷Babulal, Fadia, *State Politics in India*, Vol.I, Radiant Publishers, New Delhi, 1984, p.97.

and Kolis and in Bihar between Bhumihars, Kayastas and Rajputs. This explains the Universality of the problem of caste.

Further, Fadia writes about the caste organisations which are oriented to secure jobs, economic benefits and more so a political purpose. They unite for the purpose of fighting the hegemony of upper caste or the ruling castes. For any specific purpose they strike links with government and political party. Thus organisations seek to maximise representation in the cabinets. The main function of these caste associations is to promote social material and general welfare of that particular caste. And there are organisations which try to protect and promote the interests and rights of the community. These caste organisations play a predominant role in electoral politics. He concludes that caste associations have, thus, contributed significantly to the success of political democracy by providing basis for communication, representation and leadership.⁵⁸

According to Rudolph and Rudolph,

“caste has significantly affected political life in contemporary India and it has helped in realizing political mobilisation in a variety of ways”⁵⁹

In this sense political development in India experiences, through caste, a sort of modernity of tradition.

In view of emerging caste consciousness and its organisations and functions in Gujarat, Orissa, Madras, Andhra, Mysore, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, Srinivas has concluded that the forces of caste instead of weakening with modernisation are being further strengthened.

Describing caste associations as para communities Rudolph and Rudolph maintain that they

enable members of castes to pursue social mobility, political power and economic advantage. The characteristics of the para communities resemble in many ways those of the voluntary association..... on the other hand, the para community is distinguishable in a number of important

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹Lloyd.I. Rudolph and Susanne H. Rudolph, *Op. Cit.*, p.24.

respects not only from the voluntary association but also from the natural association such as caste out of which it has developed⁶⁰

There are some studies which analyse politicisation of caste. These studies take note of the mutual influence of caste and politics on each other and determines the extent to which political power is generated and distributed in society. Studies of I.P. Desai, Hebsur and Arkey find out how and to what extent caste influences politics and is in turn influenced by it. The study of J.C. Johari examines the inter relation between caste associations or federations and the political parties.⁶¹ Thus these studies conclude with the political mobilisations and shows how the caste plays an important role in building the political infrastructure.

Studies conducted by M.N. Srinivas, S.C. Dubey and Makim Marriott, deal with the caste system in India as traditional social structure and concluded that Indian traditional social structure has continued⁶² and maintained its basic characteristics and as even expanded in spite of the influences brought about as a result of introduction of adult franchise and political parties after independence.

States:

Kothari has analysed role of caste in state politics. State politics in India has been particularly the hot bed of political casteism. Politics in Bihar has been mostly organised on the basis of caste.. If the parties based on caste lines it does not mean that the members entirely are motivated on only caste considerations. There may be other caste people in the organisations. So basically the general interest of caste comes into consideration. Caste gets politicised and becomes a means in the elite politics of securing or retaining power. Almost all the top leaders in Bihar congress party are associated with their respective caste associations. The main castes which dominate politics of Bihar includes Brahmins, Bhumihars, Rajputs, Kayasthas and Backward castes. In the pursuit of

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p.29.

⁶¹J.C. Johari, "Caste Politicisation in India" *Indian Political Science Review*, 7 (2) April-Sept, 1973.

⁶²M.N. Srinivas, "The Social Structure of Mysore Village" and S.C. Dube "Deccan Vjillage" in Srinivas M.N. (edited) *Indian Village*, Asian Publishing House, Bombay, 1960, p.29.

power, various caste groups strike alliance between themselves, not with enduring support but with temporary and transient alliances.

Emergence of B.S.P.

What is not realised by many analysts is that caste is much more emotional issue than religion in Indian context. For example Kanshi Ram's Jat Thodo, Samaj Jhodo (break the caste and unite the society) is a more emotional slogan than that "all Indians must be Hinduised". Further, Hinduism for - caste - divided Indians is an abstract issue where as caste is a concrete issue. The theory that caste is disintegrating as an institution in the modern market system and modernised civil society is nothing but a myth.⁶³

"If the Hindutva school is trying to appeal to the sense of 'religious community', the Dalit-Bahujan school is trying to appeal to the sense of "caste Community"⁶⁴

There is no dearth of scholars, commentators and journalists who prefer to see Indian society and U.P. society and politics in particular in terms of caste. The 1993 election results has only reinforced that idea. To many scholars observes and to many progressive political organisations, the results came as a shock in the sense that they indicated a 'casteist' reflex. The gratifying disenthronment of the B.J.P. was marred by the emergence of a new sphynx, namely, casteism as represented by the Bahujan Samaj Party (hereafter BSP) and its helmsman, Kanshi Ram.⁶⁵

Casteism in politics requires people to stand for elections on the basis of articulated appeals to caste as a way of gaining votes. In the definitional sense, elections in U.P. may have gone the casteist way. The public utterances of Kanshi Ram do suggests that he is bent on organising particular castes in order to wrench power from parties which in his public view are dominated by other castes.⁶⁶ Caste is ostensibly

⁶³Kancha Ilaiah, 'B.S.P. and Caste as Ideology', *E.P.W.* Vol. XXIX, No.14, April 21, 1994, p.669.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, p.669.

⁶⁵G.K. Leiten, "On Casteism and Communication in U.P." *E.P.W.*, Vol.XXIX, Vol.14, April, 21, 1994, p.777

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p.777.

brought in as a bludgeon against political adversaries. In the reading of Kanshi Ram and Mayawati, caste suppression is the work of all other political parties.⁶⁷

Political casteism in addition, however, also requires the voters to collect behind parties and symbols on the basis caste identification and in the belief that they have to ally themselves as members of castes against other castes. It requires the electorates to symbolise and to comprehend the divisions in society in terms of the caste order. This apparently is not yet the case.⁶⁸

In short cut the leadership, accordingly, has to draw on caste solidarity rather than class solidarity. While covering the run up to the assembly elections in the Northern states ie., Bihar, U.P. and M.P. in Nov. 1993 most of the commentators harped on the heightened role of caste appeal in the electoral mobilisation of the leading parties, which was obviously true as well as being an old and established mode in Indian electoral politics, particularly since the 1970's. What, however, was mostly missed by these commentators was the new thrust of the caste mobilisation this time - that the alliance of the Dalits and backward caste of Yadavas is an offensive in the heart of the Hindi heart land.⁶⁹ In other words, while the overall caste complexion of North Indian politics have remained apparently unchanged, its inner impulse has undergone a significant change. Earlier, the caste appeal worked in the final analysis for mobilising the most depressed masses behind the united front of upper-caste interests. This time while the Dalits in U.P. have effectively consolidated themselves in some areas as an Independent factor. For the Brahmins, Rajputs and Jats form not only the upper reaches of the caste structure, they also constitute the most advanced and well to do segments in terms of economic and political power.

The emergence of B.S.P. as a force in Indian electoral politics, after the 1993 Assembly elections, more particularly in U.P. has introduced a new discourse among political pundits and sociologists. The BSP leader Kanshi Ram put caste in the national

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, pp.777-778.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p.778.

⁶⁹Ajit Roy, "New Thrust of Caste Mobilisation: Assembly Elections", *E.P.W.*, Dec.14, 1993, p.2641.

agenda of political discourse in an altogether different form from the one that has been existing among political parties. Earlier caste was a factor in ticket distribution. But this is an increased feeling that caste is becoming an ideology undercutting the traditional notions of left wing and right wing politics in India. Though there is disagreement among analysts on whether caste in itself can become an ideology and whether caste and class are continuous in the Indian context as caste points to a definite economic indicator of the poverty line of people, the classical theory of caste negates such a formulation and puts caste more as an analytical category of sociological position of people but not an economic category to determine economic status of people. Such a traditional understanding of caste is undergoing a change and the language of discourse is also changing. Kanshi Ram, thus, has emerged as an harbinger of a new paradigm in social science discourse.⁷⁰

Gujarat

The analysis of Kshatriya Sabha in Gujarat brings out clearly the functional relevance of indigenous patterns of communication and differentiation. The Gujarat Kshatriya sabha brought under one banner castes ranging from Rajputs to tribal Bhils, spread in Gujarat and Saurashtra. The caste leadership realised that without politicising their association they will not be in a position to ameliorate the conditions of their people. The study, however, reminds that federation for secular and political purpose does not ensure abolition of traditional distinctions. It is common economic interest and a growing secular identity born partly out of folklore but more out of common resentment against the well-to-do castes that have brought these different castes together in a broader organisation. On the other hand, barring a few exceptions, the more aristocratic Kshatriyas for the former ruling families have in the past generally kept away from the Sabha.⁷¹ That a caste federation has political significance is clearly evidenced by the Gujarat case. Having failed to influence the congress, some of the leaders wanted to depoliticise the Sabha. But the politically ambitious caste leaders felt a strong need to enlist cooperation of the caste, and the 'depoliticisation enthusiasts' experienced handicaps in the absence of an inspiring leadership. The newly formed Swantantra party

⁷⁰Kancha Ilaiah, "B.S.P. and Caste as Ideology", *E.P.W.*, April, 21, 1994, p.668.

⁷¹Rajni Kothari, *Caste in Indian Politics*, p.73.

cashed the opportunity and won the support of Kashatriya Sabha. The Swatantra party already having support of the Patidar, got divided into two caste, based factions. "Both caste groups and political group were divided, resulting in caste factions within parties and party factions within castes, providing the cross cutting nature of loyalties which politicisation brings in its wake".⁷² politics both divides and unites castes.

Haryana:

Next to Bihar, caste exercises the single most important influence on politics in Haryana. Some of the classes and castes have more or less set pattern of political behaviour. In a population of a little over about 10 million in the state of Haryana, Hindus are 89%, Muslims less than 4% and Sikhs 6.5%. The four major caste groups among the Hindus are Brahmins; 12%, Jats: 23%, Ahirs; 8%, and Scs; .22%, others are Gujars; 8%, Rajputs; 5% and Baniyas; 8%. Caste wise the jats are the toughest and constitutes the single largest group with the SCs coming next. The latter are sharply sub-divided between the Chamars, the Weavers and the Sweepers. Of these, the Chamars are the more numerous as 18% and the more privileged much as they always obtained a greater share of political spoils.⁷³

Thus, Jats as a community had been a political force in Haryana, with 23% of the total population they have a commanding position. As a community, the Brahmins have tried to challenge their leadership. About Brahmins, it should be noted that their representation in the legislature is not very large but at the same time in the elections they have a substantial influence because in the first instance they are found practically in every village and as such they can exercise some influence. This is all the more because as a community they are more united than others and vote more or less en bloc. They also try to organise other non-agricultural communities at the village level and in every constituency. About the Jats, it should be noted that as a dominant community, they do not mind the leadership of other agricultural communities coming up except that of Brahmins. One of the reasons why they are not prepared to tolerate Brahmin leadership is that there is a basic conflict between these two communities at the village level. In the

⁷²*Ibid.*, p.90.

⁷³Babulal Padia, *Op.Cit.* p.452.

Jat majority areas, the Brahmins try to organise the other communities against them in the elections which neither the Jats nor other agricultural communities would like them to do.⁷⁴

Iravati Karve and Y.B. Damle, in their study, *Group Relations in Village Community* states that in Haryana, caste is the most important single factor that influences politics. The caste distribution includes 12% Brahmins, 23% Jats, 8% Ahirs, and 22% scheduled castes.⁷⁵ Among them, Jats are the dominant followed by the Scheduled Castes. Initially, Brahmins occupied influential position and power in the society. Jats developed anti-congress feeling due to unionist party. Some times sub-caste politics became important. Results of 1967 elections clearly shows the influence of caste on voting behaviour. Thus the reasons for political instability and re-elections in 1968, in which voters did not vote for various candidates on the basis of policies and programmes of the political parties. The candidates who contested in elections did not campaign on the basis of manifesto but appealed on caste and sub-caste lines.

Tamil Nadu:

Robert Hardgrave jr examined the solidarity and cohesion among Nadars (a caste in Tamil Nadu) and its integrated political culture. He upholds that the breakdown of economic dependence in other castes and the extension of caste ties over a wide geographic area gives the caste a new solidarity. The integrated culture of the caste gives rise to the emergence of associations for the social, economic and political uplift of the community. The same thing was found in the case of degraded and defiled castes of Nadars of Tamil Nadu. The Nadars were forbidden to enter into Hindu Temples upto the middle of the 19th century. They were also not permitted to use public wells, wear shoes and gold ornaments, milk cows, carry umbrellas and walk in certain streets. But in the middle of the 19th century a mass movement brought majority of rural Nadars of the Southern regions into the Christian fold. The Nadars thus sought escape from the hierarchy of ritual purity in Christianity. Many Nadars secured small land holdings and improved their economic position. A good number went for the higher education and got

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, pp.453-454.

⁷⁵Iravati Karve and Y.B. Damle, *Group Relations in Village Community*, Deccan College of Post-graduate and Researach Institute, Pune, 1963, p.45.

good jobs. As the wealth of the community grew, the common funds called 'Mahimai', were used for the welfare of the community as a whole. The newly advanced Nadars claimed the high Kshatriya status. New books and articles were written creating a historical myth as to the origin and greatness of the Nadar community. The Nadar leaders challenged the ban on temple entry. This led to the conflict among Nadars and other communities. Jealous of the rise of Nadars to great wealth and outraged at their pretentious to high status, the high caste Hindus nursed a bitterness. The Nadar Mahajana Sangam was formed in 1917 for promoting the welfare of the Nadars. In 1921 census enumeration, all Nadars declared themselves as 'Nadar Kshatriyas'. In 1935, in 1940 and again in 1952, the Nadar community requested the government to list it among the "Backward classes". Since a sizeable portion of the community was among the most advanced communities educationally and economically in Tamil Nadu, the Backward Classes Commission (1952) designated only Shanars as backward class. Today, the Nadars have become one of the most economically and politically successful community in the South.⁷⁶

In his work '*Social Change in India*' Kuppu Swamy studied the tensions between higher and lower castes in Madras state. He holds that oppression and discrimination of higher castes on lower castes are the basic causes for inter caste tensions. He classified these caste tensions into two types., ie., Brahmins and non-brahmins, and caste Hindus and Harijans.⁷⁷ Basically the non-Brahmin movement was based on two demands. This is in respect to reservation in admissions to colleges and in the recruitment to government jobs. They demanded that the seats be reserved on the basis of population. Due to the low population percentage of the Brahmins, the situation did not turn violent. He had also analysed the caste tensions between the Scheduled Castes and caste Hindus. The main reason being that untouchables putting forth their claims to right to walk in the streets, to draw water for the common wells, to enter into the temples for offering prayers and soon. These demands led to conflict which in turn took the form of violence, rioting and arson. He cites an example of the Ramnand district in Madras state in 1930, where the Kallars wanted to prohibit Harijans wearing gold and silver ornaments, good clothes

⁷⁶Robert Hardgrave Jr., *The Nadras of Tamil Nadu*, , 1973, pp.102-126.

⁷⁷V. Kuppu Swamy, *Social Change in India*, Vikas Publishers, New Delhi, 1989, p.120.

and women using flowers. They wanted to prohibit the Harijans from cooking their food in metal vessels. On the other hand Harijans with a new awareness of their rights refused to put up with these pressures of the caste Hindus.

Andhra Pradesh:

Caste politics in Andhra Pradesh seems like a game of Cock-fighting between the Kamma and Reddis. The two castes cultivated feelings of jealousy and rivalry as a result of which while the Reddis joined the Congress Party the Kammas lent their support to the Communists. It is owing to this that Andhra Communists struggled heavily to stage Telangana rebellion in 1948. Support of the Kammas to the local Communist leaders in the first general elections became alarmingly noticeable and the congress had to take note of this fact on the eve of second general elections of 1957 when the official high command nominee S.K. Patil tactfully requisitioned the support of Kamma leader N.G. Ranga and “matched caste with caste in the choice of candidates”.⁷⁸

In Andhra Pradesh the landed castes and particularly the Reddy rural gentry constituted the backbone of the Congress Party. Both the national and the state leadership of the Congress Party tried to reach the voters not directly but through local influentials belonging to the dominant castes. This arrangement worked extremely well given the social status and economic power of the dominant castes and the low political consciousness of the other castes. The composition of the cabinet has reflected the same phenomenon. The Reddis, the Velama and the Kammas held between them 45 to 58% of the seats in the state cabinet with the Reddis being the single largest group (28 to 38%) till 1971.⁷⁹

After the formation of the Janata Party, the bulk of the prosperous agriculturists drawn from different peasant castes were attracted towards it. Its support came overwhelmingly from the Reddy Community.⁸⁰

⁷⁸Babulal Fadia, *Op. Cit.*, p.450.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, pp.450-451.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, p.451.

"If caste politics in the states of Indian union is examined from a comparative stand point, it appears that Andhra Pradesh occupies the most conspicuous place.

Harrison Comments:

"As an example of Hindu caste discipline in political motion, the post war decade in Andhra merits special attention. Caste has played so fundamental a role during this period that this examination becomes in effect a case history in the impact of caste on India's representative institutions".⁸¹

A very notable feature of caste politics in Andhra Pradesh finds place in its blending with the forces of regional politics. It has added much height to the politics of the Telangana agitation. The people of a particular caste living predominantly in a particular region have given a caste-cum-regional complexion to an issue in question. Obviously, this kind of relationship between a caste and a region is widespread in Andhra Pradesh as a result of which original claims, are often only a disguise for caste claims.⁸²

Ranjani Reddy in her work *The Role of Dominant Caste in Indian Politics*, made a study of role of dominant caste in the two villages of Andhra Pradesh. The main findings in her study emphasise that the economic structure is the most important factor which determines political dominance, political process at large is understood in terms of personalities and not in terms of parties. She says that the very people who occupy the top berths both in the social and economic hierarchies and who in real life are the same people who really control, guide and supervise the local political systems. She mentions that dominant castes in the area co-operate with each other cutting across the caste lines. They have common class interests and are differentiated by the villagers in material and class terms. Caste interaction and dynamics also have their own role to play. She observes that though the impact of modernisation in agriculture sector made some positive results, this made considerable difference to consumption pattern and daily life of village people. But the general economic importance was shared equally. Brahmins due to the economical drawbacks, searched for other alternatives and shifted to urban areas. The non-brahmin castes improved their economic position. The dominant castes

⁸¹Selig S. Harrison, 'Caste and Andhra Communists', *The American Political Science Review*, June 1956, p.379.

⁸²M.N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India.....*, Chapter-1.

like Reddis, Kammas, and Velamas have improved their economic position compared to the other castes like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Castes.⁸³

N. Innaiah in his book *State Government and Politics: A Study of Andhra Pradesh Politics 1885-1985* held that the politics in the state is influenced by caste more than any other factor.⁸⁴ Brahmins dominated the region till 1955 and they were replaced by Reddis and Kammas. In the words of Selig Harrison "The Kammas and Reddis, their strength diffused in the Welter of Madras castes, became vigorous advocates of an Andhra State, in which their place in the power structure was sure to enlarge"⁸⁵ Representation of Reddis and Kammas in Andhra Pradesh politics is higher than their proportion in the population. Velamas are fewer in population, but politically significant in certain parts of Telangana and Circar regions.

Caste politics also play a major role in Andhra Pradesh. The dominant castes Kammas and Reddis play a key role from the local politics to that of state politics. These castes acquired power due to their hold on land. In the allotment of seats also these castes dominate. The Janata Party attracted a section of Reddis to join. Notable features of caste politics in Andhra Pradesh is its blending with the forces of regional politics. Not only the feeling of caste but also regional feelings were evoked in Andhra Pradesh politics. The separate *Telangana Movement and Jai Andhra Movement* had their origins in the caste politics.⁸⁶ In fact after independence caste had come to play a fundamental role in the working and making of representative institutions of India.

Atul Kohli in his book *Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability* opines that the roots of India's growing problem of governability are more political than socio-economic, that is, they are located mainly in India's political structure. The opportunities provided by democracy have in turn, helped to transform

⁸³P. Ranjani Reddy, *The Role of Dominant Caste In Indian Politics*, Uppal Publishing House, New Delhi, 1987.

⁸⁴N. Innaiah, *State Government and Politics: A Study of Andhra Pradesh Politics 1885-1985*, Scientific Services, Hyderabad, 1986.

⁸⁵Selig. S Harrison, *India: The Most Dangerous Decades*, O.U.P., Delhi, 1965, pp.110-111.

⁸⁶Rastogy, "Factionalism, Politics and Crime in Andhra Pradesh Village", *The Eastern Anthropologist*, Sept.-Dec. 1974.

what was once a heterogeneous social structure into many groups of mobilised activities. Failure of leaders to make timely concessions has only intensified political demands and activity. For researchers it will provide detailed empirical analysis of local, regional and national trends. The discussion in Kohli's book revolves around alignments between castes and parties.⁸⁷ The interactions between the castes and parties are now mutual, where as the existing caste cleavages shape the decisions of political parties, the nature of the parties and the party system itself mould caste political behaviour.

A recurring theme in Kohli's book was the growing challenge to the domination of the established elite in local communities.⁸⁸ According to Kohli, in the case of Guntur, the earlier conflict involving the two dominant castes (Kammas and Reddis) has now broadened. In recent years, the backward classes are emerging as a significant political force in their own right all over India. Here the role of Kapus who are now demanding the status of backward class, has to be probed thoroughly with reference to Andhra Pradesh.

The review of above studies show that the studies done by various scholars throw light on the role of caste in politics in different regions of the country as well as the nature of caste conflicts in a few regions of different states. In India caste remains the principal base for social organisation. So caste obviously is used for mobilisational purposes in electoral and other political activities. State politics in India has been particularly the hot bed of political casteism. All the parties which happen to have a multi caste membership. If the parties based on caste lines (not only parties but also organisations) it does not mean that the members entirely are motivated only on caste considerations. There may be other caste people in the organisations. So basically the general interest of caste comes into consideration, caste gets politicised and becomes a means in the elite politics of securing or retaining power. In fact, after independence caste had come to play a fundamental role in the working and making of representative

⁸⁷ Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent: India's Growing Crisis of Governability*, C.U.P, Delhi, 1991, p.81.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.192.

institutions of India. Thus, these studies conclude with the political mobilisations and shows how the caste plays an important role in building the political infrastructure.

The caste system began to acquire new functions and dimensions in the changing socio-economic and political ambience of the pre-independence period. However, changes in the caste system notwithstanding the grip of this institution on the social matrix did not loosen to any appreciable extent. Caste continues to persist, albeit in a different form from its feudal 'embodiment'. After the achievement of Independence and introduction of electoral politics in a traditional society, caste gained a new role for itself.

Changes in the institution of caste cannot be fully comprehended in isolation from the changes in economy and politics, especially since Independence. Changes in caste as a system are closely related to the changes in the economic sphere, while the transformation of castes as interest groups is intrinsically related to the introduction and spread of democratic politics.

The Introduction of democracy, which has been effective in India since Independence, while dismantling the traditional authority structure, at least theoretically, has contributed to the growth and consolidation of castes as interested groups. In view of the fragmentation and factionalism within caste groups and alignments and realignments among them, political parties no doubt cut across caste groups. But because of the compulsions of electoral politics, no party can ignore the caste factor except at its own peril. At every stage in politics, the leaders of political parties, have to engage in 'Caste-rope walking'. The importance of caste increases as we go down the political hierarchy from the parliamentary constituency to the village panchayat. Religious and sectarian leaders and the *Mathadhi Patris* (Monastic leaders) also play a crucial, though covert, role in the mobilisation of the caste factor for political purposes.

CHAPTER - II

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF KAPU CASTE

In contemporary India caste acquired prominent place both in the society and in politics. A number of empirical studies on the role of caste in Indian politics have been made over the years. The main focus of the study on caste is to show how the society is increasingly becoming caste based and how the politics are based on caste. It is also to assess the role of different castes and the changes that are occurring in the functions of caste and to show how caste play its role in politics. Under the framework of caste studies, there is need for the study of the role of caste in Andhra Pradesh politics. The present study focusses on how Kapu caste has played its role in the politics of Andhra Pradesh, since Independence, particularly from 1980's. There is need to trace the political history of Kapus and to contextualise the Kapu caste in the hierarchical Varna system and highlight changes this caste has undergone in its socio-political forms over the time.

The term caste itself requires some discussion. What people mean by caste in day-to-day life is different from the meaning it has in the traditional literature or from what people consider to be its traditional and orthodox meaning. The English word 'caste' corresponds more or less closely to what is locally referred to as 'Jati' or 'Kulam.' In addition to 'Jati' and 'Kulam' many of the villagers, particularly the Brahmins, are familiar with the concept of varna. Varna refers to one of the four-main categories into which Hindu society is traditionally divided. 'Jati' refers generally to a much smaller group.¹ The English word 'caste' is used to denote both not only by foreigners but also by villagers who are familiar with English.

The division of mankind into groups based on fundamental differences indisposition, capacity and character is a common feature of society all over the world. Such groups have a tendency to isolate themselves into separate classes holding inter-relations chiefly among themselves. But the evolution of a caste system postulating hereditary orders functioning within rigidly circumscribed spheres of social inter-course and yet sharing the larger benefits of the community as a phenomenon, peculiar to the

¹ M.N. Srinivas. *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*, Asian Publishing House, Bombay, 1962, pp.63-69.

organisation of Hindu society, in India, including, as it does, an elaborate code of ceremonial purity and defilement, unapproachability, untouchability, commensal restrictions, penance and excommunications.

In other countries, the Principal factors determining class and status are wealth, profession etc. In the case of Hindus, membership of a caste is determined by birth.² The caste system of India received its sanction through religious authority. Caste is acquired by birth and there is no possibility what so ever for giving up one's caste and acquiring another. Caste in India is not only a ritual phenomenon, but it is a socio-economic category. Caste structure is complex, a mixture of religious and non-religious socio-economic dimensions. That caste sustains the economic activity is known to all. It is necessary to understand each of them, dynamically a social formation and process in the context of historical development and to analyse the interaction among these social formations.

Caste may be defined as a "small and named group of persons characterized by endogamy, hereditary membership and a specific style of life which some times includes the pursuit by tradition of a particular occupation and usually associated with a more or less distinct ritual status in a hierarchical system".³

As noted above, caste is a unique Indian phenomenon, which has engaged the attention of scholars throughout the modern period. Number of studies of high distinction have appeared from time to time dealing with various aspects of the caste system. The literature on Indian caste system is extensive and includes general ideological discussions as well as specific studies carried out in different social science disciplines.

The study of caste acquired a practical focus in the perspective of its role and future in modern politics. What by and large took place, however, were torrents of ideological and speculative writings. This continued throughout the 1950's and 1960's. The question raised was whether caste is disappearing? Was caste serving the functions of modern politics or vice-versa. In 1962 M.N. Srinivas wrote "I must confess that I was some what

² Jogendra Nath Battacharya: *Hindu Castes and Society*, Thacker Sprink and Company, Calcutta. p.2.

³ Andre Beteille. *Caste, Class and Power: Changing Patterns of Stratification in a Tanjore Village*, University of California Press, 1971, p.23.

disturbed by what I felt was an increased activity of caste in certain areas of public life".⁴ Since the Mid-60's the Pendulum seems to have taken full-swing. Now caste began to be viewed as a medium of mobilization of masses in organised politics and even as an instrument of political education of the masses.

The social status of a group, however, is not always commensurates with its ritual status. This is revealed in the phenomenon of a dominant caste. M.N. Srinivas defines, 'Dominant Caste' as follows. "A caste may be said to be dominant when it preponderates numerically over other castes, and when it also wields preponderant economic and political power. A large and powerful caste group can be more easily dominant if its position in the local caste hierarchy is not too low".⁵ In a village community, usually there is a dominant caste. Besides, its ritual status, its dominance is derived from several factors such as numerical strength, economic and political power etc. The importance of these factors has lately increased with the introduction of modern political institutions. Similarly expansion of economic frontiers of a village and democratic decentralization of political power have undermined hereditary prerogatives of some status groups to political and administrative officers.

The basis of understanding of caste system in its empirical reality is to locate caste groups as Jatis in a specific rural/urban context. Caste is seen as a status group in these contexts. It is a source of placement in this social set up. But at a macro-level, caste is also a means of identity. Is caste an interest group? Can common interests bring together men of different castes from various regions and states more smoothly than those of the same caste? Caste is certainly a resource, but its resourceability varies from caste to caste depending upon the status of a given caste in a given area. Caste identity, membership has become a liability for the members of higher and middle castes in recent years as a certain percentage of jobs. Seats in parliament and state legislatures and admissions in institutions of higher learning have been reserved for the weaker sections of Indian society.

There is no uniform pattern of caste structure in actual terms throughout India. There are thousands of castes in India with different names and nomenclatures, but there are only about 5 or 6 classes throughout the country.

⁴ M.N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India ... Op.Cit.*, p.1.

⁵ M.N. Srinivas. *Dominant Caste and other Essays*, O.U.P.Delhi, 1987, p.4.

Since we are probing the role and position of caste in our society as a whole, we should bear in mind that caste structure has not developed uniformly in all the regions of the sub-continent. Similarly, caste rules had been more rigidly observed in south India than in north India. The number of castes also varied from region to region. Different historical experiences of different regions have contributed to the shaping of present day socio-political process. Moreover there is uneven economic development in the country and also within the states, providing uneven economic opportunities to different social groups. And all castes do not have uniform numerical strength and concentration. Some are scattered throughout the state and some are heavily concentrated in some regions. Hence the role and position of castes varies from area to area and from caste to caste. What is attempted here is to present a broad pattern regarding caste, the role it plays and the position it occupies in society to day.

In the recent period much attention has been paid to the role of caste in the process of political development in India. The purpose of the study is to study the political behaviour of the single largest caste in Andhra Pradesh i.e., the Kapus. The study includes the mobilisation of the Kapu caste for economic, educational and political purposes and its influence in social and political spheres in Andhra Pradesh.

The group of Kapu castes currently referred to as Kapus by the Kapunadu movement includes, Telaga, Ontari, Baliija, besides other minor groups. The Baliija caste is an endogamous group and were originally traders who settled down by the 19th century as cultivators. Telaga, Ontari and Kapu castes are usually classed as a single unit. All the three inter-dine and inter-marry. The kapus were originally lower in rank compared to Telaga and Ontari. Kapus in Telangana area are a backward class, while in Andhra region they are not so classified.

The 'Kapus' of Andhra Pradesh have been selected for the present study, for three reasons:

1. Andhra was considered a bastion of caste politics by social scientists who have worked in the field.
 2. A number of leaders belonging to Kapu community have contributed in no small measure
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- to varied fields like administration, education, journalism, science and technology, sports and other acultural aspects like music, theatre, films etc.
3. Since almost all castes except perhaps Brahmins are region specific. The Kapu community belongs to Andhra region. As so far studies on Kapu community were over looked by the scholars, it is my endeavour to bring out this particular study.

Hindu society based on varnas and castes has been undergoing both horizontal and vertical mobility since a long time. Horizontal means migration from one place to another. Vertical means lower groups pushing up to the top and higher groups going down below. Even if there is no conscious vertical mobility the very process of migration to new areas and regions automatically leads to some vertical mobility, due to economic and social factors.⁶ Superiority and inferiority complex, the basic evil of varna system, cannot be eradicated either by horizontal or vertical mobility. The lower groups with inferiority complex, pushes up to the top and develops superiority complex.

In the history of Andhra desa, the period between the establishment of Eastern Chalukyas and that of the Kakatiyas witnessed far reaching changes in the nature of political, social, religious and economic institutions resulting in a new social formation. Further, it is also suggested that this period witnessed vertical social mobility in the emergence of Chaturtha Kulajas as new political elites of Andhra desa.⁷ This new social formations that took place during this period were not based on the varna-model-based brahmanical ideology.

In the history of Andhra desa, the Chalukyan period experienced political instability and crisis. The constant wars and threat to their political power made the Eastern Chalukyas to enunciate the policy of rewarding loyal subordinates belonging to any caste by offering incentives in the shape of military pief or a position in the army. In the annals of the Andhras, until the early phase of the medieval centuries i.e. from 7th century to 11th century, the sudras, who belonged to the lower strata of the society did not aspire for high position. After the downfall of the Chalukyas of Vengi, these sudra families entered into politics.⁸ M. Soma Sekhar Sarma noticed a great change in the attitude of the

⁶ Y. Balarama Murthy. "Social Mobility - Horizontal and Vertical", cited in *Andhra Pradesh History Congress*, (hereafter A.P.H.C.) Nagaram, 1987, p. 167.

⁷ K.S.Kameshwara Rao. "Social mobility in Medieval Andhra; Emergence of new political elites". *Paper Presented at the 5th session of South Indian History Congress at Mysore, 1985*. Also see K.S. Kameshwara Rao "Social Formation During Eastern Chalukyan Period" *A.P.H.C.*, Nagaram, 1987, p.59.

⁸ Kolluru Suryanarayana: *History of the Minor Chalukya Families in Medieval Andhradesa*, Delhi, 1986, p.

civil law, with the rise of Sudras of this period of political power.⁹ This policy was pursued by all the dynasties that fought for political supremacy. In this context, the observation of Romila Thapar appears to be pertinent. She says:

“Mobility within the ranks of bureaucratic office was related to mobility within the wider context of society itself. Bureaucratic status becomes, a means of obtaining social status for kingroup, therefore, upward mobility even when possible was slow. Acceleration of this process would occur during periods of political crisis and instability”¹⁰. Social mobility of the Chaturtha Kulajas in the medieval Andhra country correctly proves the observation of Romila Thapar.

From about the 10th Century A.D. members of the fourth caste are found occupying high positions not only in the army but also at the court. Most of the officers at the court of the Durjayas of Velanadu were of the Sudra Caste including the Boyas.¹¹ On the other hand, the members of the fourth caste provided the mainstay of the administrative machinery and military system of the Kakatiya kingdom. Even the Kakatiya court was dominated by the Velamas and Reddis.¹²

One important characteristic feature of the medieval period in the history of Telugu country as other parts of south India, is a perceptible change in the social system. The social structure underwent a considerable change in which the non-Brahmin communities, especially belonging to the fourth varna became a factor to be reckoned within the political and social organisation. In the long course of social evolution, each caste got divided into a number of sub-castes, communities, each of which had its own distinctive character and status in the social hierarchy depending on the creed, profession, community, birth or locality to which it belonged. The fourth caste may be, as referred to above, broadly divided into two divisions basing on their main profession i.e., agriculturists and artisan groups. Among the land oriented agriculturist caste groups, important being the Velamas, Reddis, Kapus and Kammas. Velamas and Kammas were the agriculturist Kapu families

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⁹ M.Soma Sekhar Sarma. *History of the Reddy Kingdoms. 1325-1448*, Trinethra Publications, Srisailam reprint 1993. p. 277.

¹⁰ Romila Thapar. *Ancient Indian Social History*, New Delhi, 1980, p.142.

¹¹B.S.L. Hanumantha Rao: *The Boyas in Medieval Andhra History*, JAHRS, No.36, p.iii.

¹²B.S.L. Hanumantha Rao: *Socio-cultural History of Ancient and Medieval Andhra*, Telugu University Publication, Hyderabad, 1995, p.213.

originated from Velanadu and Kammanadu areas respectively and *Reddi* was the professional name.

Thus, we find during this period some of the Sudra sub-castes like Reddis, Velamas, Kammas and Baliyas, the land owning communities, had attained higher social status, of some of their members acquired political power as independent rulers, administrators and military officers. In spite of the fact that some of them were performing the duties prescribed for the first two castes of traditional fourfold Hindu caste system, they never claimed equality with them. In fact they described themselves as belonging to the fourth varna only.

It was suggested that the social structure in India was based on the Varnashram model, which has the characteristics of status by birth, a hierarchical ordering of social units and rules of endogamy and ritual purity. But in contrast to the above beliefs, Romila Thapar suggests that "the varna concept may always have been largely a theoretical model and never an actual description of society".¹³ Y. Balarama Murthy also is of opinion that Hindu society based on varna and castes has been undergoing mobility both horizontal and vertical from since long time.¹⁴

In this chapter an attempt is made to analyse the actual status of the sudras or Chaturtha Kulajas in the social structure of medieval Andhra in relation to their vertical social mobility as new political elites. It is also attempted to explain the factors that made this vertical social mobility possible and inevitable.

R.S.Sharma is of the opinion that of the four-varnas-the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas constituted the ruling class and the remaining two the ruled class.¹⁵ But contradicting the opinion of R.S. Sharma, B.M. Bhatia argues that only some categories of Brahmins and Kshatriyas enjoyed the ruling class status and power, but not all.¹⁶

¹³Romila Thapar, *Op.Cit.*, p.125.

¹⁴ Y. Balarama Murthy, *Op.Cit.*, pp.164-71.

¹⁵ R.S. Sharma: *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions*, Delhi, 1989, p.200.

¹⁶ B.M. Bhatia: "History of Social Development", Vol. I Delhi, 1874, (p.39) cited in *A.P.H.C. Nellore*, 1991, p.80.

Yuwanchang the Chinese pilgrim who visited India in the 7th century observes that all the four castes were ruling the various parts of the country.¹⁷ Medhatithi, the commentator on Manu, of the 19th century also observed that the office of the kingship could be extended to any one who had acquired the throne.¹⁸ The statement of Yuwanchang and the approval of Medhatithi reveals that the office of kingship was not the monopoly of any particular community, but open to those who are capable of ruling the people.

Jaimal Roy observes, "the social mobility" in the context of Indian History has to be studied in its dual aspects,

- a. change in social competence along with change in the caste.
- b. change in social competence without change in the caste.¹⁹

In this work, the second aspect of the community of the chaturtha Kulajas who moved from the status of the tillers of the soil to that of the rulers is studied. We find a gradual social mobility of the social group and finally it culminated in the non-Brahmanisation of religion and politics under the Kakatiyas and during the later period.²⁰

The beginnings of the process of vertical social mobility of this social group started from about the middle of the 3rd century in Andhra desa, due to economic revolution that took place during that period. Decline of external trade with the west resulted in the decline of industry internally also.²¹ Consequently, agriculture became the chief occupation of the people and the main source of income to the state. This resulted in the growth of the class of people engaged in agriculture. This also coincided with the issue of land grants to Brahmins as Agraharas, Brahmadeyas and Devabhogas. The Brahmins in turn allowed the Chaturtha Kulajas to till the lands in the Agraharas and Temples. And also at this time, the Brahmins were attracted by the royal service. By the time we come to the Vengi Chalukyan period, "most of the prominent features of medievalism-domination of economy by agriculture, the so called self-sufficient village economy, internicine warfare, administrative system geared to the military requirements of the states appears to have

¹⁷ T. Walters "On Yuwanchang's travels in India" London, 1905, cited in *A.P.H.C.* 1991.

¹⁸ Romila Thapar, *Op.Cit.*, p.180.

¹⁹ Jaimal Roy, "The Rural-urban economy and social change in Ancient India" cited *A.P.H.C.* 1991, p.81.

²⁰ B.S.L. Hanumantha Rao. Presidential Address. *A.P.H.C.* Srisailam Session, 1988.

²¹ H.S Sarkar. Presidential Address *A. P.H.C.* Guntur, session,1986.

taken concrete shape”²² The political expediency made the Eastern Chalukyas to try to build up their strength by granting lands and villages to soldiers and generals. While the expansion of agriculture in the pre-chalukyan period must have steadily improved the economic position of these social groups, the chalukyan period made them as important levers in the state craft and to aspire for actual political power. Further with eagerness to reduce the influence of Jainism, this social group was given a place in temple rituals and in temple honours.

The role played by the Sudra subordinates and the importance they enjoyed can be understood from the following account. Kubja Vishnu Vardhana, the founder of the Eastern Chalukyas granted a territory called ‘Giripaschima’ consisting of 73 villages to one Buddha Varma, the first ancestor of the Kondapadamati family. Buddha Varma prides in proclaiming himself as “an ornament of the fourth caste” and received from the king the country to the west of the hill, which contained 73 villages along royal emblems²³. Buddha Varma's proclamation as an ornament of the fourth caste becomes significant because we find a Chaturtha Kulaja taking pride in his caste. This rise in his economic and social status must have made him to proclaim confidently with pride about his original caste. Perhaps, this may be considered as the beginning of the Chaturtha Kulajas claim to superior politico-economic and social status against the injunctions of the Dharmasastra literature which gives a low social, economic and ritual status.

Thus the Eastern Chalukyas who claimed to be Kshatriya kings giving Sudra subordinates an important place and allowing them to treat them at par reveals a change in the social ideology of the times.

Thus the rise of Sudra families to greater prominence in the politics of the country started from the time of the fall of the Chalukyas of Vengi. The rise was steady and within two centuries political power almost completely passed into the hands of Sudra families. Almost all the states that had come into existence during this period were founded by members of the fourth caste.²⁴

²²B.S.L. Hanumantha Rao, *Socio Cultural History.... Op.Cit.*

²³ *Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society*, Rajahmundry, Vol.19, p.49.

²⁴R. Narasimha Rao,, *Life in Medieval Andhra Desa 1000-1450*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Osmania University, 1990, p.178.

The main occupations of the Sudras, who constituted the bulk of the population, were agricultural labour, handicrafts, military service and trade. The bulk of the army, specially, the infantry branch, seems to have been drawn from the Sudra caste. The fact that the rulers themselves were Sudras greatly facilitated the rise of Sudras of humble origin to positions of great importance and responsibility not only in the army but also in various other branches of the state service.

The Sudras like the members of the other three varnas, were divided into a number of exogamous and endogamous clans called jatis, varnas, kulas or samayas. Contemporary epigraphic records²⁵ contain references to the people of the 18 samayas or communities, which including the various sub-sects of the Sudra caste, are traditionally, said to have constituted the Hindu society. Occupation, trade and territorial nomenclature were the main factors contributing to this sub-division among the Sudras as among the other three varnas. Kamma and Telaga are examples of caste groups formed on a territorial basis, while velama, Balija, Veerabalija and Reddi are examples of occupational or trade groups.

In contemporary epigraphic and literary records²⁶ the Sudras are spoken of as belonging to the 'Chaturdha kula' sprung from the feet of Vishnu or Brahma, and composed of different communities such as Padma Nayakas, Velamas, Kammas, Ontaris etc.²⁷ Some of these 'Chaturdha Kulajas' describe themselves 'Durjayanvas' i.e., descended for Durjaya. Whatever the differences between these communities, the lines of demarcation do not seem to have been hard and fast. Example: the terms 'Reddi' and 'Velama' are used synonymously.

Again all Reddis are Kapus (though) all Kapus may not be Reddis.²⁸ The Reddi - Velama - Kapu community were divided into a number of sub-sects. According to a catu verse current in the country since the 15th Century, these sects, 14 in number are:

Ayodhya Kapus, Bhumanci Kapus, Desati Kapus, Gandikota Kapus, Kuriceti

²⁵South Indian Inscriptions, (hereafter S.I.I.) Vol.X, No.495.

²⁶S.I.I. *Ibid.*, , Vol.IV, Nos.971, 1068, Vol.V, No.113, and also Epigraphic India, Vol.IX, pp.39, 318-327.

²⁷S.I.I, *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, No.123.

²⁸M.S.S. Sharma, *History of.....Op.Cit.*, p.50.

Kapus, Munnuti Kapus, Motati Kapus, Morasa Kapus, Nereti Kapus, Oruganti Kapus, Panta Kapus, Pakanati Kapus, Pongalinati Kapus, Velanati Kapus.²⁹ Some more lists of the divisions in the Kapu community are also available.

Though originally agriculturists, the Reddis, Kapus and Velamas in course of time gave up the plough for the sword and through distinguished military career rose from position in the service of the state. Though the Sudras provided the rank and file of the armies of the country, some communities like the Velamas pursued the military profession exclusively and won the favour of the rulers who accorded them equal status.

The Nayakas:

Nayaka literally means royal officers or a ruling chief or a local leader or a person of prominence. Even a subordinate ruler takes the title of Nayaka³⁰ The Nayakas of a locality enjoyed some power and authority.

The system of Nayakas had its origin during the early Kakatiya period. In the region of Prataparudra it took the shape of 'Nayankara' system paving the way for the 'Amarnayaka' system of Vijayanagara period.

The Kakatiya inscriptions mention 18 castes and their number steadily multiplied. The Sudras who had already emerged as the most important fighting community came to be sub-divided into four sects namely the Velamas, Reddis, Nayudus and Kammas. These sects started competing with one another for gaining political power and each tried to dominate the court. As a natural consequence, there developed mutual jealousy and hatred among them. These rivalries, as it appears, continued even afterwards and history of Andhra during the post-Kakatiya period was blackened by Velama-Nayaka, Velama-Kshatriya and Velama- Reddi conflicts.³¹

The caste and community composition of the Nayakas of the period appears to have

²⁹*Ibid.*, pp.51-52.

³⁰ Nayaka - an honorific title indicating martial leadership was by far the most frequently appearing status titles among offices, S.I.I. Vol. IV, No.705, S.I.I. Vol. X, No.501, also see, P.S. Kanaka Durga, "Role of Nayakas in Medieval Andhra 1000-1259", *A.P.H.C.* 1989, p.40.

³¹M. Soma Sekhara Sarma, *A Forgotten Chapter of Andhra History and The Reddi Kingdoms*, Passim..

been varied from time to time. The Kakatiya Nayankara system seems to have been dominated mostly by the Reddis and the Velamas besides a few of other castes who were the most prominent peasant castes in Telangana region, the core area of the kingdom. This is aptly indicated by Hanumakonda Kaifiyat which narrates how the mutual jealousy that existed between the velama and Reddi Nayakas led to the final defeat of Kakatiya Prataparudra in his war against the Tughluq emperor and how a certain Terala Buchcha Reddi withdrew his forces in the midst of the war expecting his rival velama nayakas to be perished first in the war.³² Pratapacharitra confirms the dominant position of the Velama Nayakas during the period of the last Kakatiya ruler. It records that the majority of the Nayakas who were entrusted with the defence of the 77 bastions of the Warangal fort during the period of Prataparudra were Velamas and 1/4 of the Kakatiya kingdom was allotted to them.³³ The names of some of the Nayakas, mentioned in the contemporary epigraphs, like Mayidevalenka, Deveri Nayaka and Vakiti Errayalenka³⁴ do not indicate their caste.

The 75 Nayakas of Musunuri Kingdom of Warangal probably included among them many Kmmas, Velamas, Reddis and Balijas. Epigraph mentions prolaya Vema Reddi as one of the 75 Nayakas of Kapayya's kingdom. The Nayakas of the Kondaviti Kingdom belonged mostly to the Reddi, Velama and Balija castes and some were Muslims. Their names along with their caste and community are mentioned in several village Kaifiyats of Coastal Andhra.³⁵

Military Tenures:

The most important of the military tenures was known as the Nayankara or Amaranayaka tenures. Kakatiya Prataparudra is said to have maintained the Nayankara system. These Nayakas must have paid some stipulated amount to the monarch every year. These Nayakas belonged to Velama, Reddy, Balija etc. castes and included a few Muslims also.³⁶ The agricultural communities of the period were mostly the advanced communities

³²H. Heras: *Aravidu Dynasty of Vijayanagara*, pp.132-135.

³³Mackenzie Manuscripts - 18, p.93.

³⁴G. Yazdani, *The Early History of Deccan*, O.U.P. London, 1960. p.681 also see S.I.I., Vol.X, p.520.

³⁵S.I.I., Vol.X, No.509.

³⁶ Mackenzie Manuscripts, *Grama Kaifiyathulu* (Telugu), Guntur.II, pp.33, 35,52.

among the sudras. They included the Reddis, Velamas, Kammas, Balijas etc. all referred to as 'Kapu' only.³⁷

Derret refers to the term 'Nayaka' in the inscriptions of late 11th century and interprets the word as 'captain' implying a military officer. He also states that Nayaka was a personage of local power. Kakatiya records of 11th and 12th century refers to Nayakas as descendants of great families of local dominance. In Andhra inscriptions, there are references to "Grama Nayakulu"³⁸ and the term means village Nayakas.

The term Nayaka also shows that it is a general designation of power or a warrior who was at times associated with military enterprise of the kings, but who at all times was a territorial chief in his own right.³⁹ During this period many persons who belonged to different castes were in service of state in various cadres. Their names were suffixed with the word 'Nayaka' indicating the position of authority.⁴⁰

The use of the suffix 'nayaka' is not determined by caste. It means a man in authority and power. A study of the Eastern Chalukyan records reveals the fact that the brahmins who were appointed to a 'Niyoga', commission, charge or office, were called 'Niyogins', officials or functionaries. The term 'Niyogikavallabha' finds mention in a record⁴¹ of Eastern Chalukyan king Mangi Yuvaraja of the early 8th century A.D. In this way 'laukika' sect of brahmins came into existence. Though there is evidence to show that there were such 'laukikas' from the Eastern Chalukyan times or from a still earlier date. The communities other than brahmins who joined the service of the state would have been called as 'Nayakas' or the officers.

R.Narasimha Rao held the view that Nayakas as a separate and distinct groups were

³⁷ T. Damodar Reddy. *The Agrarian System in Andhra Desa From 1300-1687*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, O.U., 1990, p.281.

³⁸ The term Grama Nayaka means same as the Grama Mukhya (I.A.P. Cuddapah dt. No. 109/AR/196, 1968) and Grama Svamis (Perur Inscriptions No. 12, pp. 14-18, L.104) the members of the village councils or Heads of Sabha.

³⁹ Burton Stein. *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*. O.U.P. Oxford, 1980, p.408.

⁴⁰ S.I.I., Vol.I, No.263, also see P.S.Kanaka Durga, *op.cit.* p.41.

⁴¹ *Epigraphica, Indica*, Vol.III, p.239.

the Sudra, counter parts of Brahmin Niyogis.⁴² But the suffix was not the monopoly of the sudras during the period.

The sections of society that held the Nayaka designation was largely from the fourth varna. But at that time it is interesting to note that even the Brahmins were referred as Nayaka, indicating some authority. For example Raja Nayaka of Upparalli epigraph was Brahmin and he was the minister of Racherla Rudra the celebrated Commander of the army of Kakati Ganapati Deva. From this, it can be assumed that caste is not the criterion to become a Nayaka. Any person who held a position of some authority became a Nayaka.

Since the term Nayaka was generally held as a suffix by the Velama, Baliya and Telaga who formed the peasant community,⁴³ the Grama Nayaka post might have been hereditary. Some one in them holding authority over a particular territory. The *Palanativeera Charitra* refers to Veera Nayakas of all communities that took active part in the battle of Karempudi.⁴⁴ This indicates that the fighting forces were largely made up of the above communities.

Caste system during this period was in a very petrified condition. On the one hand, hereditary professions had become impracticable and therefore ceased to be a binding force. On the other hand, each caste was sub-divided into a number of sub-castes observing various endogamous groups of varying sizes.⁴⁵ The fourth caste normally following agriculture as an occupation and forming the bulk of the population, took to arms whenever there was a chance. They even posed as Kshatriyas when they rose to positions of power and the priests and poets composed long genealogies tracing the ancestry of their pattern to the Sun or the Moon. Even the Kakatias were not Kshatriyas, though they claimed to be such in later inscriptions.⁴⁶

The sudras representing the great mass of people formed into several endogamous

⁴² R. Narasimha Rao, *Corporate life in Medieval Andhra desa*, Secunderabad, 1967, p.108.

⁴³ P.S. Kanaka Durga, *op.cit.* p. 44, also see, P. Narasimha Rao, *Ibid.*, p.108.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵ K. Satyanarayana. *A Study of the History and Culture of the Andhras*. Vol.2. Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1983, p.77.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p.78.

groups or communities, called 'jatis', varnas, kulas or samayas. Two important factors seem to have chiefly operated in giving rise to these divisions in the fourth caste, namely occupation and trade and geographical divisions. The Corporate activity in the fields of trade and occupation manifested itself in the formation of some communities, endogamous in nature. The ancient divisions of the country were responsible for some communal divisions among the fourth caste like Panta, Kamma, Telaga and Velama⁴⁷. Almost all the states that had come into existence during this period were set up by the members of the fourth caste. They bore the brunt of the struggle in the war of Independence in this period, and held the reins of Government, after its re-establishment.⁴⁸

After the down fall of the Kakatiyas, almost all the states that had come into existence during this period were set up by members of the fourth caste. The main occupations of the sudras were agricultural labour and military service. It was in fact this fourth caste that supplied the great bulk of infantry to the rulers of the country.

The medieval period is unique in many ways in the history of Telugu speaking people. It is during this period an attempt is made to realise the linguistic and cultural identity and politico-geographical identity and unity. It is also a period where profound changes took place in the socio-economic cultural spheres, which led to the Chaturtha Kulaja political hegemony at local, supra local and regional levels. It is also a period when caste consciousness among the Chaturtha Kulaja crystallised in their assertion of their status through the composition of Kulapuranas and long prasastis. It is also a period of inter-state and internecine warfare that weakened the political power structure⁴⁹. It is also a period where we find the beginning of claim of newly emerging dominant peasant groups and marginal groups for their due share in political power structure. Further it is also a period, when the middle ranking Chaturtha Kulajas like Velamas, Nayakas, Kammas and Reddis began to indulge in constant warfare to establish their political hegemony. It is also a period of expansion of material base and opportunities which resulted in the rising aspirations of cultivating artisan and labouring classes.⁵⁰

⁴⁷M.S.S. Sharma, *History of ... Op.Cit.*, p.276.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p.277.

⁴⁹ K.S.Kameswara rao, Presidential Address: "Political Mileau and Social Formation in Medieval Andhra - A Perspective". *A.P.H.C.* 1996, Guntur, p.53.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p.53.

The policy of assigning land grants to religious and secular beneficiaries started by Satavahanas became very common in the troubled early medieval period and it resulted in the growth of a new class of landed aristocracy and dominant peasant groups and landed intermediaries who became influential local leaders. In this new class we find mostly non-Brahmins. Amassing of considerable wealth and control over local resources made the Sudras claim Sat-Sudra social status and a share in political power structure. Realising that they had lost coercive authority, the medieval rulers evolved a strategy to utilize the services of this new classes for their own advantages.⁵¹

Epigraphy from 10th to 14th century A.D. refer to various types of guilds. Trade guilds - the Pekkandru, the Nakaram, Crafts Guilds, the Panchanamvaru, the Telika Vevuru, the Kampulu, the Salevaru; Professional Guilds, the Mahajanulu, the Karnalu, the Reddis, the Nayakulu in Andhra desa.⁵² They have become so powerful that the kings were forced to incorporate them into state apparatus by giving them certain rights and privileges. These guilds were not confined to a particular caste and we find members of different castes joining a guild. Just as some sudras referred to them as 'Sat Sudras' all these guilds claimed equal or higher status than the Brahmins in social hierarchy. In course of time they took titles Setti, Naidu, Needu, Nayaka and Reddi.⁵³ The New institutions such as Kavaliguards and Polygars came into existence. Boyas, Gollas, Kapus and Reddis became prominent polygars and Kampulu and Ayya or Boya Lineage rose to the Position of Mahamandaleswaras⁵⁵.

The establishment of Vijayanagara brought about many important changes in the political, social and economic life of the people. The Vijayanagar empire embraced the whole of South India. The rulers decentralised their administration in all spheres.

Another important development of this period was the rise of the Sudras to power.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.55.

⁵² R. Narasimha Rao, *Op.Cit.*, p.112.

⁵³ Y.A. Sudhakar Reddy. *Agrarian relations in the ceded districts of Madras Presidency*, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, submitted to IIT, Madras, 1986, p.82.

⁵⁴ S.I.I., No.4 and No.765.

⁵⁵ P.S. Kanakadurga & Y.A. Sudhakar Reddy: "Kings Legitimation and Autochthonous communities" in *Journal of Economic and Social History Orient*: Vol.35, pp.143-166.

Many internal and external factors, transformed this neglected section of the society into a powerful class. The Baliya merchants who had acquired good experience in administering justice and managing local administration were ideally suited for this purpose. They became chieftains of small principalities. They received Nayakattanas and Amara maganis from the Vijayanagara rulers and administered many regions in various parts of the empire.⁵⁶ The ascendancy of the Sudras were an important characteristic feature of Vijayanagara society.

As Vijayanagara empire underwent many traumatic changes, the fortunes of the Baliya community also changed correspondingly. The Baliyas who were primarily traders gradually entered the political scene in the 16th Century. They had the rich experience in military and judicial administration, having served as judicial officers in the country and also with excellent experience as soldiers and fighters in the medieval period. With this experience it was not difficult for this community to manage the affairs-political, social, economic and judicial of a region big and small. Those who were not born as Kshatriyas, but were endowed with military prowess, could acquire a piece of territory, expand and graduate into Kshatriyahood, through a process of legitimation by Brahmin priests. For instance, as Ghurye, notes that the Chera, Chola and Pandya kings belonged to the Vellalas. The Nayaka Kings of *Madura and Tanjore* were Baliyas.⁵⁷

From the advent of Tuluva dynasty, their fortunes rose to a great height, that this dynasty came from the Baliya community.⁵⁸ After the fall of the dynasty, several Baliya Nayudu chieftains rose into prominence. Tanjore and Madura Kingdoms were the most important of such new kingdoms. Shivappa Nayudu married Murthiamma, Sister-in-law of Achuthadevaraya. He got Tanjore as part of the dowry. Tirumala Nayudu married daughter of Shivappa Nayudu. Then followed a string of principalities listed and unlisted. They controlled thus a large portion of South India. While Tamil Nadu witnessed the rise of Madura, Tanjore, Trichurapalle and other major kingdoms. Karnataka had many small ports and principalities under the Baliya chiefs.

As far as Vijayanagara empire is concerned, it appears that the Nayakas belonged to

⁵⁶T.V. Mahalingam, *South Indian Polity*, Vol.1, Madras 1967, pp.319-322.

⁵⁷G.S. Ghurye, *Caste and Race in India*, Popular Prakasan, Bombay, 1969, p.106.

⁵⁸N. Venkataramanayya, *Studies in the History of Third Dynasty of Vijayanagara*, Madras, 1935, p.31.

many castes such as the Kshatriyas, Balijas, Kammas, Velamas, Brahmins and Boyas. Contrary to the statement of Nuniz who states that all the Nayakas (captains) in Vijayanagara were Hindus,⁵⁹ there were also Muslims holding these military tenures.

Here it is to be observed that we do not find any prominent Reddy Nayakas either in the service of the Vijayanagar or of Qutub Shahis. In spite of the Reddis ruling over Coastal Andhra as independent rulers simultaneously with the Velamas in Telangana, none of their descendants could rise to the level of the Velamas, Kammas and Balijas who played a very prominent role as Nayakas during the later Vijayanagara period and some of who could establish the independent Nayaka kingdoms like that of Madura, Tanjore, Ginjee and Vellore.⁶⁰

In the Vijayanagara period, the traditional four fold caste system continued to hold sway, though not as cohesively as before. The rights and duties of each caste were not adhered to strictly, while the number of sub-castes increased as never before. The name Kshatriyas is conspicuous by its absence in the history of Vijayanagara. We know for certain that the founders of the empire belonged to the fourth caste⁶¹ Members of the Vysya or Komati caste confined themselves to trade. Some among the Brahmins, the Lingayats and the Balijas, besides Muhammadans, were their competitors. The sudras composed of several sub-castes each having its own rules enforced with great vigour. "They formed the backbone of the nation, and the prosperity of the nation depended upon them to a very great extent".⁶²

The Reddis mainly belonged to this category. The Kammas and Velamas were military communities. Their main occupation was fighting, though they owned lands and got them cultivated. The Balijas and Telagas also followed their example, though their main occupation was trade. It was mainly the leaders of these sub-castes that were appointed as Amaranayakas, rent farmers, Kavalgars etc.⁶³

⁵⁹Robert Sewell, *Forgotten Empire*, 1925, p.370.

⁶⁰R. Soma Reddy, 'Nayankara System in Medieval Andhra: Some Observations', *South Indian History Congress, 14th Annual Session, 1994, Tirupati*, p.311.

⁶¹K. Satyanarayana, *Op.Cit.*, p.399.

⁶² N. Venkata Ramanayya. *Studies in the History ...* p.360.

⁶³*Ibid.* pp.400-401.

The Sudra caste was a heterogeneous body comprising several sub-castes both higher and lower. Agriculture was their main occupation. They formed the back-bone of the Country. Several of them entered the army and eked out a living by serving the state. Some of the Sudra communities should be termed, strictly speaking military. The Kammas and the Velamas of the Telugu country were military communities par excellence. The Baliyas also emulated to some extent their example, although the main occupation of the caste appears to have been trade. They appear to have been a very enterprising community during the 16th century. The leaders of these military castes were appointed as Amaranayakas and they became in course of time, rulers of small principalities.⁶⁴

The peasantry during the time of Qutubshahi's was not a homogeneous community. Although large number of castes existed among the peasants, in general peasants of one village usually belonged to one caste.⁶⁵ For example, most of the villages in the Coastal area i.e., Murtazanaḡar pargana and Kondapalli and Machilipatnam were accommodated by Kamma community and the areas in Telangana, Warangal, Khammammet provinces were accommodated by Velamas, Reddy communities and the Southern part of the kingdom were accommodated by Reddy and Kammas and Rajahmundry and Chikakole provinces were accommodated by Kapus, Kammas and Gavaras.⁶⁶ Nonetheless the major land owning class during the time of qutubshahi's came from five major castes i.e., *Kammas, Kapus, Velamas, Reddis and Gavaras.*

There had been great changes in the social and economic spheres as well. The advent of the Europeans during the 17th and 18th centuries drastically changed the political as well as social structure of the country. Under these circumstances the traditional professions and occupations underwent a great change. The Baliya merchants also had to give up their caste professions.

The village community in Andhra during the colonial period was a combination of

⁶⁴N. Venkata Ramanayya, *Op. Cit.*, p.360.

⁶⁵ They either belonged to a single caste or formed a coalition of two or more elite castes: see V.K.Bawa: *Aspects of Deccan History*. Hyderabad.1975.pp.100-101.

⁶⁶ All the four castes except that of the Gavaras resemble one another in appearance and seem to have branched off from one and the same Dravidian stock. They were very enterprising castes and were mostly depended on agriculture. see E. Thurston *vol.111 velama pp.336-421;kamma vol.11 pp.44-105, and kapu vol.111 pp 222-249.*

many caste groups based on ritual hierarchy, each caste was following its hereditary calling and enjoying a fixed social status.⁶⁷ In course of time a number of sub-castes had emerged from the original varna system.

At the lower levels, local Brahmins chiefly Niyogis, tended to monopolise positions requiring clerical skills, while local warrior castes such as Kammas, Reddis, Kapus, Telagas and Rajus dominated military occupations. Competition for position or for power between castes possessing special skills between pen-holders and sword-holders at each level and between concentrations of power at different levels marked an arena of local controversy which was very complicated.⁶⁸

In terms of caste, the Zamindars in Andhra were a mixed lot. The land lord class in Coastal Andhra primarily consisted of the Non-Brahmin upper castes viz, the Kshatriya, the Velama, the Kamma and Reddy and also Telaga. There were few Kshatriya Zamindars, mainly found in Visakhapatnam district. The important Velama Zamindars who controlled extensive areas included the kings of Panagal, Mirzapuram and Nuzvid and Estate holders of Challapalli, Vuyyuru, Muktyala etc. were Kammas, while the Munagala Zamindar belonged to the Reddy caste. Narasaraopet Zamindar belonged to Telaga caste.

It was probably during this period that a local Telaga family was raised to a position of power. Presumably as a counter-poise to the rapidly growing strength of the Vasireddy Zamindar. The Malraju were given Deshmukhi and Mannavari authority over the Vinukonda and Bellom-konda paraganas. Malraju Narasa Rao built his Fort (kota) in the heart of the district and called the town which grew up around it Narasaraopet.⁶⁹

Only the Malraju, however, was able to compete with the grandeur of the Vasireddy. Malraju Gunda Rao kept 100 elephants in his stockade and became hereditary sponsor of the huge Kotappa Konda Mela (a position he still retains).⁷⁰ An efficient

⁶⁷Firminger (ed) *Fifth Report*, Calcutta, 1918, Vol.III, p.85.

⁶⁸Robert Eric Frykenberg: *Administration of Guntur District: With Special Reference to Local Influences on Revenue Policy 1837-1848*, London, 1961, p.31.

⁶⁹Firminger (ed), *Op.Cit.*, p.64, also see Gordon Mackenzie: *A Manual of Krishna District*, Madras, 1833, p.42.

⁷⁰Firminger, *Ibid.*, p.59.

zamindar Malraju Gunda Rao was a good example-skilfully employed rewards and sanctions. Head ryots, Ijaradars and Karnams were invited to feasts, petty darbars (audiences), tamashas (frolicksome occasions) and Melas (festivals or fairs). They and their wives would be recognised and flattered with clothing and Jewellery.⁷¹ Generous loans for seed or for special need would be advanced to them through the village moneylender.⁷²

With the consolidaton of the colonial authority there was a change in land relations. The change in property relations of land badly affected Brahmins for two important reasons. First, they lost the traditional patronage from the rulers which they were enjoying earlier. This was the first development that had its serious bearing on land. Second, political control over land was grabbed by the colonial authority which displaced the local rulers. For the British who were primarily interested in land revenue they were not inclined towards extending patronage to any social group. As a result it was Brahmins who were adversely affected. The loss of political patronage further aggravated the problems for Brahmins. As a result, the relative isolation of these people from land in the earlier period was gradually giving way to their total alienation from the same. The non-Brahmin castes began, thus, in asserting their supremacy over land. By the middle of the 19th century the emergence of Non- Brahmin castes as landed magnates picked up momentum. Further, the construction of Godavari and Krishna anicuts was a major development which largely contributed to the rise of Non-Brahmin castes.⁷³

The socio-economic transformation during the colonial period (1802-1947) resulted in the formation of new classes, formally seperated from the traditional caste-system. (Yet the categories of caste and class were, to a large extent, converged and continued to be inter linked) Broadly speaking, the fusion and convergence of caste and class in the colonial context contributed to the emergence of two distinct groups of people namely, landlords (zamindars) and peasants/tenants.

⁷¹*Madras Revenue Proceedings* (Consultations 280:7, 2613-14) No.30 of April, 16, 1841.

⁷²Firminger, *Op. Cit.*, p.67.

⁷³G.N. Rao: *Transition in the Agrarian Economy of Andhra*, Presidential Address to Modern Andhra Section, A.P.H.C., 1988.

As a result of the British colonial policies in the 19th century with respect to the structure of land holding and as a consequence of the impact of new economic forces, Andhra districts (Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema) evolved a distinct system of land tenures namely Zamindari and Ryotwari.⁷⁴ Intermediaries with control over land had been a historical phenomenon in coastal Andhra. Colonialism for its sheer survival had propped up these rent -squeezing intermediaries and for a century and half yielded to their pressure tactics.⁷⁵

Below the land lords was found a large peasant community comprising owner-cultivators, occupancy tenants and various types of under tenants. The tenant cultivators in the Zamindari and Ryotwari areas also belonged to the Sudra varna which included peasant castes as well as artisan castes, namely Reddy, Kamma, Kapu, Raju, Telaga, Balija.

After describing the position of different castes in terms of land holding, we shall now turn to the interrelationship between caste, land and power in rural Andhra during colonial period.

The evolution of the land tenure system under colonialism strengthened the position of Zamindars as well as the big ryotwari land holders in terms of their control over land. It may be pointed out that for years the Zamindars had been able to command and exercise immense power and authority in the countryside mainly because of their grip over land. Thus, the Zamindars power was further reinforced since they acquired enormous wealth and affluence and control over resources enabled the landlords to maintain their higher status. It also sustained their hold and hegemony over rural society, economy and polity.

It has been pointed out earlier that the peasantry beneath the landlords predominantly belonged to the Sudra varna. Of course, the peasant society (both in the Zamindar and Ryotwari areas) was stratified and differentiated in terms of caste and class.

There were rich, middle and poor peasantry as well as upper and lower or (forward

⁷⁴The permanent settlement was introduced in the Northern Circars (Coastal Andhra) during 1802, the ryotwari system had come into being during 1820-40. See for details M. Pattabhi Ram Reddy. *Peasant and State in Modern Andhra History*, Kavali, 1986.

⁷⁵G.N. Rao: 'Dimensions of Land Control in Coastal Andhra: A Historical View' in *Andhra Pradesh Economic Association Conference Papers*, Warangal, 1984, p.61.

and backward) caste peasants (tenants, the peasants/tenants) belonging to the upper castes (numerically preponderant Kammas and Reddys) enjoyed certain advantages. The Kamma, Kapu and Reddi peasantry in Andhra were/are known for their hard work and enterprising nature. The ryotwari land tenure, the widespread prevalence of peasant proprietorship and the development of irrigation system contributed to the rise of stable middle level peasantry in Coastal Andhra.

The opening of fresh irrigation works by means of anicuts over the Godavari and the Krishna during 1850's of the 19th century considerably changed the fortunes of the peasants. With the construction of Godavari and Krishna many ryots rose from poverty to independent cultivation.⁷⁶

The middle peasantry which was substantial in its size and numbers was enterprising and displayed its capacity to move upwards.⁷⁷ As Srinivas Raghava Iyengar pointed out the tendency during the post anicut period was the formation of powerful middle peasantry class, in between the small section of the richest persons and the great mass of people who were always poor. This middle peasantry class, which emerged as the most powerful in these regions, consisted of dominant peasant castes namely, the Kammas, Razus, Kapus and also to some extent the Velamas.

Thus during the second half of the 19th century we can see many changes in economic and social spheres. In the economic sphere, it led to the rise of the dominant peasant castes, rich peasantry and a middle class. Balijas have been traditionally a trading community and the rate of literacy among them was quite high. As said earlier some of them were warriors from the medieval times. Among them the Kapus are Gazula Laxmi Narasu Setty of the Madras Native Association, Raghupati Venkata Ratnam of the Andhra Brahma Samaj and K.V. Reddy Naidu of the later day justice party belonged to this caste.⁷⁸

⁷⁶The Collector of the Godavari District stated in 1859 that "it is very gratifying to me to be able to bear testimony to the rapid increase of prosperity among the people of the district" cited in S. Srinivas Raghava Iyengar, *Memorandum on the Progress of the Madras Presidency During the Last 40 Years of British Administration*, Madras, 1883, p.37.

⁷⁷G. Haragopal: "Evolution of Modern Andhra : A Socio-Economic perspective", *Presidential Address*, Modern Section, A.P.H.C., 1985.

⁷⁸V. Rama Krishna, "A Background Study to the Emergence of Caste Consciousness in Coastal Andhra Pradesh" in *Caste and Communal Politics in South Asia*, (ed) Sekhar Bandopadhyay and Suranjan Das, 1993, p.107.

In the next chapter we will concentrate and their contribution to the society in general and in particular to the Andhra society.

Economic and social advancement among the non-brahmin castes and the gradual migration of Brahmins to urban areas leaving the land ownership primarily to the dominant peasant castes, made the latter to enjoy immense social power.⁷⁹ Due to the economic changes brought about by the beginning of the 20th century caste groups like the Kammas, Reddis and Telagas (Kapus) became prosperous peasant proprietors and enjoyed economic and social prominence.

Of all these communities Kammas of the Delta districts strike out as unique case of the emergence of rich peasant class in Andhra. In Coastal Andhra the other castes like Gavaras in Visakhapatnam district, Telagas, Kapus and Balijas in Godavari districts are only prosperous to the level of Kammas. But in other districts of Coastal Andhra the Kapus, Telagas and Balijas are small peasants and tenants.

Thus, by the 30's of the 20th century tenancy both on Zamindari and Ryotwari lands appears to be in existence at a significant level. In the post-depression period, with a weakened bargaining power, the small peasant/tenants were at the receiving end. Not only they were hard pressed in the credit market but even in commodity and land markets the domination of the rich peasants ever eager to consolidate and strengthen their land-base appears to be complete. Thus land control was increasingly passing on into the hands of the rich peasants at the expense of the small peasantry.⁸⁰

Curiously, this process appears to be reversed in parts of Delta-districts in recent times, ie., in the post-1960 period. While the Brahmin land holders drifted away from villages to the nearby towns in search of jobs in the urban areas from the 50's of this century, the Kamma rich peasantry has of late, developed a taste for money making avenues in the urban and semi-urban centres. They are drifting to professional services construction, business, film-making, real estate, hotels and industry. As they are losing touch with the land, the other middle peasant cultivating castes like Kapus, Goudas etc., are buying up the lands and houses of the Kammas, thus bringing in a new caste balance into

⁷⁹*Ibid.*,

⁸⁰G.N. Rao: "Dimensions of Land Control ...*OP. Cit.*, p.64.

operation. The process has just started in recent times.⁸¹

Under the influence of the western civilisation, the caste system was losing its rigidity. New groups were taking up various professions displacing old ones. The Balijas were now forced to seek new pastures and took up agriculture, where they encountered stiff competition from agricultural communities like Vokkaligas in Karnataka and Kammas and Reddis in Andhra. Besides, under the changed political conditions farming was not as profitable as it used to be. Thus the community gradually lost its predominant position socially and politically and became one of the backward castes in South India.

Ethnography of Kapu Caste:

An attempt has been made in this chapter to present a brief outline of the ethnographic profile of the Kapu community. Different sub-sects of the Kapu community are briefly dealt with and a profile of the Kapu community in general pattern is given. As a backdrop to this, a brief description of the caste system in Andhra Pradesh is presented.

Caste System in Andhra Pradesh:

Society in Andhra Pradesh is based on the hierarchical ordering of innumerable castes and sub-castes. A number of sub-castes had branched off from the original varna system in course of time due to a variety of reasons. The most important of them were geographical expansion and growth of new crafts. In this respect Brahmins came first. The Brahmins were at the apex of this social hierarchy and held monopoly in traditional learning. The Andhra Pradesh Brahmins were divided into vaidikis and Niyogis. In this respect it may be noted that certain sub-castes among the Brahmins in Andhra Pradesh bear names denoting to a particular area inhabited by them in the past⁸² The Vysyas (also called Komatis) came next to the Brahmins occupying a middle position between the Brahmins and the Sudras. There were several sub-divisions among the Vysyas also on the basis of territorial, occupational or religious considerations⁸³

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.70.

⁸² Edgar Thurston: *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Govt. Press, Madras, 1909, is the best general descriptive account of the characteristics, historical, mythologies and background of many of the castes. Edgar Thurston: *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* Madras, 1909 Vol.1.p.366

⁸³ Abbe J. Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*. London, 1972, pp.14-15.

Next in the caste hierarchy came sudras who were divided into a number of castes such as Reddis, Kammas, Telagas (Kapus), Rajus, Balijas, Mangalis (Barbars), Chakalis (Washermen), Kummaras (Pottermen) and so on.⁸⁴ These were mostly peasant and artisan classes ranking below the Brahmins and vysyas in social status but above the untouchables.

The Reddis had an initial advantage over other castes and communities, which indeed was one of the decisive factors in their political dominance in Andhra Pradesh, in that they are distributed in all the three regions of the state. The Reddis are themselves divided into innumerable sub-castes such as *Motati*, *Panta*, *Murikinati*, *Padakanti*, *Pakanati velanati* etc. As the proverb goes there are as many Reddi sub-castes as the variety of the paddy. Even now they meticulously observe the sub-caste endogamy. These various sub-castes may stand united in matters of political expediency but they are poles apart in matters of marriage between them⁸⁵ For instance the Reddis of Rayalaseema do not intermarry with those of Telangana (though there was no prohibition) and the Reddis of Nellore district are generally regarded as a sociological species all by themselves.⁸⁶

Among Kammas, there are two divisions, namely Illuvellani and Gampa Kamma. At times they are also called pedda and chinna Kamma. Kammas have been the quickest to sense the march of time and hence they were the earliest to encourage marriages between sub-castes. They have resolved the differences in the social status so much so that today we find no distinction being made between these sub-castes; the youngsters of the present generation are not even aware of the differentiation within the caste which existed some decades back.⁸⁷ Velamas have emerged as a separate caste though they also assume the titles of 'Naidu' and are much akin to 'Naidus' (Kapus) in customs, manners and mores. Among them also, there are divisions like Padma Nayaka Velama, Koppula Velama, Katcha-Katha Velama, Pedda Velama, Yanadi Velama and Thothadi Velama who confine their marital relations among themselves. They often as rich as the Reddis and the Kammas and are largely concentrated in a few areas.

⁸⁴ Edgar Thurston. *Op.cit.*, Vol.III, 1909, p.145; V. Rama Krishna "A Background study to the Emergence of Caste Consciousness in Coastal Andhra Pradesh' in Suranjan Das and Sekhar Bandopadhyay(ed) *Caste and Communal Politics in South Asia*, K. A. Bagchi & Company, Calcutta, 1993, p.100.

⁸⁵C.Lakshmana. *Caste Dynamics in Village India*. Nachiketa Publications, Bombay, 1973, p.60

⁸⁶K. Balagopal: *Probing in the Political Economy of Agrarian Classes and Conflicts: Perspectives*. Hyderabad 1986, p.183.

⁸⁷C. Lakshmana: *Op.Cit.*, P.61.

The next social division consisted of the 'untouchables', called Malas and Madigas (also called Panchamas) who were at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Among the Malas and the Madigas, as it was the case with other castes, social inter mixture was totally ruled out.⁸⁸ Lastly, a brief mention should be made of the tribal population of Andhra Pradesh, though they are outside the caste system. The total tribal population of Andhra Pradesh, according to 1981 census, constitute about 6% of the state. The tribals of Andhra Pradesh include Koya or Gound, Yenadis, Yerukulas, Gond, Lambadis, Kondadoras, Savaras, Jatapus, Bagata, Konda Kapus, Konda Reddis, Kondhs, Valmiki, Kolam, Gadabas, Chenchu, Mukhadora etc.

The Kapu Community:

The Kapus are said to be the numerically largest community in the state of Andhra Pradesh, scattered both in rural areas and urban areas. They constituted 18.6% of the state's population, which we will give out the details in the end of the chapter. Outside Andhra Pradesh they are also found in small number in the states of Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Maharashtra. "The Kapus are the largest in the Madras Presidency, numbering more than two millions and are the great caste of cultivators, farmers and squireens in the Telugu country".⁸⁹

The Kapu caste currently referred to by the 'Kapunadu' Movement includes several castes-Telaga, Ontari, Baliya, Kapu besides other minor castes. Kapus like Reddy and Kamma are an agricultural caste with martial origin. The term Kapu used to be a general term to refer to peasant communities in Andhra Pradesh.⁹⁰ Census reports reporting on castes upto 1931 did not differentiate between Kapus and Reddis dominant castes numerically strong in Rayalaseema and Telangana areas of the state.

The term 'Kapu' which means a 'protector' is very broad in sense, and the Kapus consider themselves as those who look after or protect the soil. They are different from the Kammas and Reddis who are also agricultural castes though it has been pointed out that the term 'Kapu' can be broadly used for all agriculturists. It is loosely applied to all landed

⁸⁸ W.Francis: *Madras District Gazetteers*, Bellary, 1904, pp.76-77, Edgar Thurston *Op.cit.* Vol. II, p. 232.

⁸⁹ W. Francis. *Madras District Gazetteers: Madras*, 1907, Vol.1p.84.

⁹⁰ Edgar Thurston: *op.cit.* Vol.III, pp.22.

castes in the state in the context of Jajmani system of inter-caste relations. However, the Kapus, are a separate caste in the Coastal districts of Guntur, Krishna, Prakasam, East and West Godavaries, Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam. They are middle class peasantry with a substantial numerical strength in all these districts.⁹¹ The Kapus are found all over Andhra Pradesh and they are sub-divided into the Turpu Kapus and Telagas. The Kapus of the East and west Godavari call themselves Telagas or Pedda (Big) Kapus and claims to be superior to the Turpu (East) Kapus. The Turpu Kapus are those belonging to the districts of Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam. The Balijas are in Nellore, Prakasam and Rayalaseema and the Munnuru Kapus in Telangana area.

Reddis or Kapus were a peasant sub-caste, part of the complex of sub-castes that also included the Kammas and the Velamas (usually considered to be off shoots of the kapus)⁹² The following sub-divisions among the Kapus are recorded by Mr. Stuart, (Census Commissioner, 1891) as being the most important among the Kapus are, "Ayodhya Balija, Bhumanci, Desuru, Gandi Kottai, Gazula, Kammappuri, Morasa, Nerati, Oruganti, Pakanati, Palle, Peda Kanti and Panta"⁹³ An example of exogamous sects among Kapus, the following may be cited.

Avula	Gudise,	Mungaru,	Yeddulu,
Alla	Guntaka,	Nagali,	Yenuga ⁹⁴
Bandi,	Kodla,	Tangedu,	
Dandu	Mekala,	Udumala,	
Gorre,	Kanugula,	Variga,	

The Balija Naidus, another Telugu caste, also probably had a former connection with the Kapus.⁹⁵ Balija Naidus were found throughout the province. They were originally classified as Telugu speaking traders but the majority were in fact cultivators. Many Balijas who maintained trade connections in various parts of the province were often only of necessity bi-lingual. It is said that the successors of the Vijayanagara empire, the

⁹¹ V.Shivaji: *A Study of Power Structure in the East Godavari District*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis submitted to Osmania University (O.U.) 1990, p. 47.

⁹² *Census of India*, 1891, Madras, Vol. XIII, p.237.

⁹³ M. Somasekhara Sarma: *History of.... Op. Cit.*, p.52.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p.52, also Thurston: *op.cit.* Vol. III. p.231.

⁹⁵ *Census of India*, 1891, Madras, XIII, p.236.

Nayakas of Madura and Tanjore, were Balija Naidus.⁹⁶

The Madras Census report of 1911 has mentioned Kapu and Reddis as synonymous terms, but it is far from truth. Reddis are also an agricultural caste along with the Kammas and Velamas, but kapus cannot be called Reddis. In this connection according to Harrison, "Reddis are also referred to by anthropologists as Kapus. However, the terminology is confusing in contemporary Andhra Pradesh; Kapus is loosely applied to other non-Brahmin peasant castes"⁹⁷ The term 'Telaga' however, seems to have a clear economic connotation. The wealthier 'Kapus' refer to themselves as Telagas rather than Kapus.⁹⁸

For instance, Reddis who formed a division of the Kapus were the dominant agrarian caste of the ceded districts. Rather confusingly the term Kapu was commonly used also for the ryot or cultivator and in some areas the term 'peddakapu' also meant the head of the village⁹⁹. The term was used, however, to refer to Reddi and Balija cultivators also. These were distinct from the Kapu caste, also a caste of cultivators. The social position among the chief cultivating castes in the Godavari-Krishna area seemed to be as follows. Velamas were called Velama Doras and were followed by Kammas called as Kammavaru and were followed by Kapus who were called simply Kapus without any title¹⁰⁰

The Kapus have a number of sub-castes of which Balija, Telaga, Ontari, Munnurukapu and Turpukapus are predominant. All these sub-castes appear to have been named after either their occupation or place from which they hailed. Balijas are classified as other Backward classes (OBC) in Karnataka, Tamilnadu and Maharashtra. In Andhra Pradesh, while only Munnurukapu and Turupkapus are in OBC list, the rest of the Kapu sub-castes including Balijas are non-OBCs. Though these sub-castes are spread all over the Andhra Pradesh, the concentration of Turpukapus in North Coastal Andhra Pradesh i.e.,

⁹⁶ *Census of India, 1901; Madras XV, Part I, p. 144, and also see, John Kelsell, Manual of the Bellary District, Madras, 1872, p.82.*

⁹⁷ Harrison Selig, "Caste and the Andhra Communists"; *American Political Science Review*. 1956, Vol.50, pp.378-404.

⁹⁸ Y. Subhashini Subramanyam: *Social Change in Village India. An Andhra Case Study.*, Prithvi Raj Publishers, New Delhi, 1975, p.75.

⁹⁹ W.H. Wilson: *Glossary of Judicial and Revenue terms and of useful words occurring in official documents relating to the administration of the Government of British India*, Delhi, 1968, p. 262.

¹⁰⁰ Edgar Thurston. *Op.cit* Vol.7, p.341.

in Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam, the Kapus and Telagas is more in the Coastal districts, the Balijas in Rayalaseema and the Munnurukapus in Telangana area.

Among the various sub-sects of the Kapu community, it is difficult to give a description of all. Hence an attempt is made here to briefly describe the major sub-sects. Here Kapu, Telaga, Balija, Ontari, Munnurukapu and Turpukapu are dealt with. In Andhra Pradesh the major kapu sub-sects and their spatial distribution is shown in the table below:

Table No.II-1
Spread of different Kapu sub-sects in Andhra Pradesh

Place(District)	Name of the sub-sect
East and West Godavari Krishna, Guntur	Kapus, Telagas, Naidu
Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam	Turupukapus
Visakhapatnam, East Godavari	Ontaris
Rayalaseema, Nellore, Prakasam	Balijas
Hyderabad, Telangana	Munnurukapus, Telagas

Source: V. Venu, Backward Class Movement. A Study of Kapus in Andhra Pradesh. M.Phil. Dissertation, University of Hyderabad, 1996, p.45.

Burton Stein in his book *All the Kings Mana: Papers on Medieval South Indian History*, stated that in Salem district, Tamil Vellalas and Telugu cultivating castes accounted for about 30% of the total population in almost equal proportions and comprised a majority of the district's agricultural population. Telugu speaking landed groups in Salem included Reddis, Kammas, Telagas and Velamas of whom 80% were concentrated in the Hosur Taluk. These Telugu people are called "Kapus or Tottiyans" a generic terms for Telugu speaking people in Tamil country.¹⁰¹ From this we may infer that all the peasant castes of Andhra Pradesh belonged to a single major caste i.e., Kapu.

In Andhra Pradesh for instance there was time a crystallization into four separate castes of Kammas, Reddis, Velamas and Kapus or Telagas. However, "all four of these large castes closely resemble one another in appearance and customs and seems to have

¹⁰¹ Burton Stein: *All the Kings Mana: Papers on Medieval South Indian History*, New Era Publications. Madras, 1984, p.147.

branched off from one and the same Dravidian stock. Originally soldiers by Profession, they are now mainly agriculturists and Traders and some of them in the North are Zamindars".¹⁰² The differences between Peasant Jatis included different origin of legends, different linkages to traditional Andhra Pradesh conditions and a marked regional distribution.

Reddis are found more in Telangana and Rayalaseema region, while Kammas are only in Coastal Andhra and partly in Rayalaseema. Velamas are primarily in Telangana and Kapus or Telagas are seen in all the three regions.

Regarding the formation of castes and sub-castes in Indian society, Ghurye argues that castes were formed through occupational specialisation in a casteless society and greater specialisation led to further splitting of bigger groups. Ghurye says, "A close study of the name of various minor units, the so called sub-castes, within the major groups reveals the fact that the basis of distinction of these groups were... occupational dis

tinction... some peculiarity in the technique of one and the same occupation.. dissimilarity of customs".¹⁰³

Kapus have a number of sub-castes based on their place of residence (Grama) and minute differences in occupations (vruthi)¹⁰⁴. Perhaps this is the only caste in Andhra Pradesh which has more than 20 different names. The names are so numerous that "it is a common saying among the Kapus that they can easily enumerate all the varieties of rice, but it is impossible to give the names of all the sections into which the caste is split up"¹⁰⁵

Kapu:

The economically and socially powerful group of the generally known 'kapu' community found in the agriculturally prosperous districts of East and West Godavari are

¹⁰² Edgar Thurston. *Op.cit* Vol.III, pp.94-98, 222-247.

¹⁰³ Ghurye, G.S. *Caste and Race in India*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1961, p.33.

¹⁰⁴ Deshmukh Narayana K. *Balija Kula Charitra* (Telugu) Publisher not available, 1958, p.9.

¹⁰⁵ Thurston, *Op.Cit.*, Vol.III, p.226.

the Kapus. The migrants from these districts to other areas of Andhra Pradesh are also known by the same name.

In the Gazetteer of Anantapur (1919) Kapus are described as being the great land holding caste in the Telugu districts, who are held in much respect as substantial and steady going Yeomen. The economically well-off Kapus claim themselves as 'Naidu'. The term 'Naidu', has a kingly tone.

Baliya:

Like Ontari which will be discussed in the succeeding pages, a great majority of the fourth caste were employed in agriculture and its allied works. Some sects like Balanjas (Corruption-Baliya) followed both trade and military service.¹⁰⁶ In the term Vera Balanja, Vera is an honorific term indicating bravery. Balanja or Balanje is the real name of the Samaya. That these Ayyavoles and others of the Vira Balanja Samaya are to-day represented by the Balanjes, commonly called Baliyas, is proved by the following lines in a catu, in sisametre, preserved in palm leaf manuscript.¹⁰⁷ It was composed in praise of the Baliyas of Simhavikramapura (Nellore).

Many of the Baliyas are now engaged in cultivation and this accounts for so many having returned Kapu as their main caste. It is not improbable that there was once a closer connection than now between the Kapus and Baliyas¹⁰⁸ and the claim of the Baliyas to belong to the Kapu caste may have a foundation in fact. In their customs there is very little difference between the Kapus and Baliyas.¹⁰⁹

The Baliyas are described by Mr. Francis as being the Chief Telugu trading caste, scattered throughout the Madras Presidency. The first of these include those, whose ancestors were supposed to have been the Baliya (Nayak) kings of Madura, Tanjore and Vijayanagara or provincial governors in those kingdoms; and to the second belong to those like the Gazula (Bangle-sellers) and Perika (salt-sellers) who live by trade. In the Tamil

¹⁰⁶ M. Somasekhar Sarma, *History of.... Op. Cit.*, p.277.

¹⁰⁷ *Mackenzie Manuscript*. No.10-16-10. The Government Oriental Manuscript Library, Madras, also see M. Soma Sekhar Sarma, *Ibid.*, p.396.

¹⁰⁸ Edgar Thurston, *Op.Cit.*, Vol.III, p.227.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol.I, p.236.

districts Balijas are known as *Vadugans* (Telugu peoples) and *Kavarais*. The descendants of the Nayak or Balija kings of Madura and Tanjore claim to be kshatriyas and of the Kasyapagotra, while the Vijayanagara Rayas say they were lineal descendants of the Sage Bharadwaja. The name Kartakkal (Governors) was returned by those who claim to be descendants of the Nayak Kings of Madura and Tanjore¹¹⁰. They are said to have been in Trade in the Ikshawaku and the Chola dynasties. In the social hierarchy, Balijas were placed along with the Velamas, Kammas, Reddis and Kapus who belonged to the fourth group, the Sudra.¹¹¹

Balijas though generally known as trading castes were also known to be cultivators. Balijas had sub-sects like Gajula Balija, Telagas, etc. One particular ceremony performed by this caste before every auspicious occasion was Parvati puja that is, the worship of their female ancestors.¹¹²

Balija Naidus:

Concerning their derivation, there are several traditions. It is also stated that at first the Balijas were probably an off shoot of the Kapus. The general name of the caste is 'Naidu'. The title 'Setty' is used by some in preference to Naidu. Now Balijas are in many walks of life besides trade. They worship particularly 'Gouri'.

'Vanija' in sanskrit literally means trade and those who are engaged in trade are 'Vanijas'. 'Balija' is said to be the prakrit form of 'Vanija' and 'Vanijas' became Balijas', the name they got during the reign of the Chalukyas. The surname Shetty or Setty (Trader) among majority of the Balijas is an ample illustration of the fact.¹¹³

It is noted in the Bellary Manual that "the Balijas have by common consent obtained a high palce in the social system of south India. Some are land owners, residing on and working their own property with the help of members of inferior castes, but the

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, p.134.

¹¹¹D.F. Caribrichal: *A Manual of the Vizagapatam District, Madras Presidency, Madras, 1869*, pp.62-63.

¹¹²Edgar Thurston *Op,Cit*, pp.138-139.

¹¹³ Some of the surnames were as follows: Example Ammisetty, Tirumalasetty, Kalisetty, Polisetty, Sanamsetty, Ramisetty etc.

majority live by trade". At Tirupati, a number of Balija families are engaged in the red sanders wood, carving industry.

The concentration of the Balijas is more in the Rayalaseema area and the adjacent coastal districts of Nellore and Prakasam. They use 'Nayudu' and 'Rayudu' as suffixes. Some of them have to use 'Reddy' as suffix in their name.¹¹⁴ This suffix should not be confused with the Reddy caste of Andhra Pradesh.

Origin of the Term:

The name Balija is said to have derived from the Sanskrit word 'Bali' (a sacrifice) and Ja (born) signifying that the Balijas owe their origin to the performance of a yagam. Legend has it current that on one occasion Siva wanted his consort Parvati to appear before him in all her glory. But when she stood before him, fully decorated, he laughed, and said that she was not as charming as she might be. On this she prayed that Siva would help her to become so. From this braid of hair, Siva created a being who descended on the earth, bearing a number of bangles and turmeric paste, with which Parvati adorned herself. Siva being greatly pleased with her appearance, told her to look at herself in a looking-glass. The being, who brought the bangles, is believed to have been the ancestor of the Gazula Balijas.

According to another version of the legend, Parvati was not satisfied with her appearance when she saw herself in the looking-glass and asked her father to tell her how she was to make herself more attractive. He accordingly prayed to Brahma, who ordered him to perform a severe penance (Thapas). From the sacrificial fire, arose a being leading a donkey laden with heaps of bangles, turmeric, palm leaf roots for the ears, black beads, sandal powder, a comb, perfumes etc. From this "Maha purusha" who thus sprang from a sacrifice (Bali). From this the Balijas derived their name.¹¹⁵

Mr. Stuart in his 1891 Census Report writes that the Balijas employ Brahmins and

¹¹⁴ They are: Sangeetam Venkata Reddy, Ex-Congress Minister in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly; Yerra Narayana Reddy from East Godavari district.

¹¹⁵ Edgar Thurston, *Op.Cit.*, Vol.I, pp.137-38, also see, *Castes, Communities and culture in Andhra Desa 17th and 18th Centuries* (ed.) R. Somareddy, M.Radhakrishna Sarma, A. Satyanarayana, 1996, p.105.

Satanis as their priests. The Chief object of their worship is 'Gowri', their caste deity.¹¹⁶ It is said that the Malas are the hereditary custodians of the idol of 'Gouri' and her Jewels, which the Balijas get from them whenever they want to worship her. The following story is told to account for this. The Kapus and Balijas, molested by the Muhammadan invaders on the North of the Northern Pennar, migrated to the South when the Pennar was in full flood. Being unable to cross the river, they invoked their deity to make a passage for them, for which it demanded the sacrifice of a first born child. While they stood at loss as to what to do, the Malas who followed them boldly offered one of their children to the Goddess.

Immediately the river divided before them and the Kapus and the Balijas crossed it and were saved from the tyranny of the Muhammadans. Ever since that time, the Malas have been respected by the Kapus and Balijas, and the latter even deposited the image of 'Gouri', the Bull and Ganesa, which they worshipped, in the house of a Mala. That the practice of leaving these images in the custody of Malas is even now observed in some parts of the Cuddapah district and elsewhere.¹¹⁷ Telugu or Telaga is a synonym for Balijas in the Northern circars.

Like other Telugu castes, the Balijas have exogamous sects (Surname) and gotras. The following are examples.

Tupakala (Musket)	Miriyala (Pepper)
Samudram (Ocean)	Mutyala (Pearls)
Pappu (Split pulse)	Narikella (Coconut)
Gantla (Bell)	Nemili (Peacock)
Puli (Tiger)	Pagadala (Coral)
Balli (Lizard)	Pattindla (Silkhouse)
Avula (Cow)	Ratnala (Precious stones)
Gandham (Sandal Paste or Powder)	Ungarala (Rings)
Jilakara (Cummin seed)	Yenumala (Buffalo) ¹¹⁸

The Balijas are very familiar about the worship of their female ancestors (Perantalu) and no auspicious ceremony can be commenced until perantalu puja has been performed. It is said that, in olden times, the Balijas used to worship the dagger and sacrifice sheep or

¹¹⁶Madras Census Report 1891, Vol.III, p.172.

¹¹⁷Edgar Thurston, *Op.Cit.*, Vol.I, pp.138-139.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, pp.140-42.

goats at marriages.¹¹⁹

The Desayis or leaders of the right-hand faction, are said to be Balijas by caste. In former days, they had very great influences, and all castes belonging to the right-hand faction would obey the Desai faction. Even at the present day, the Oddes and others refer their disputes to the Desai, and not to their own caste headman. The economically better classes of Medaras (cane-splitters and mat-makers) are also calling themselves Balijas and assume the title Setty. Oddes and Upparas sometimes style themselves Odde Balija and Uppara Balija. They belong to the right-hand section, which is headed by the Desayi, who is a Balija and so describes themselves as belonging to the Setty or Chetti Samaya (Section). But they are not original Balijas of what we are referring. For example, some members of the Mila and Vada fishing castes have adopted ode or vada (Boat) Balija as their caste name, though they are not belong to the branch of Balijas.

The following castes and Tribes are recorded as having assumed the title Chetti or its equalent Setty. Among them some are Balijas. They are

Balija	:	Telugu trading caste.
Janappan	:	Said to have been originally a section of the Balijas and manufacturers of gunny-bags.
Kavarai	:	Tamil equalent to Balija ¹²⁰

Balija, a sub-sect of Kapu community also has several sub-divisions. Some of the sub-divisions of the Balijas indicate the professions pursued by them.

Gazula Balija: (Glass Bangle makers):

A sub-division of the Balijas, they have two sections, called Naga (Cobra) and Tabelu (Tortoise) and in some places they keep their women in Gosha.

Gonuguntla Balija:

This is the name derived from the place of their origin. Originally they belonged to the Gonuguntla village of Ongole district. Their descendants who spread over to other parts of the state are called by this name.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp.141-143.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, p.94.

Perika Balija:

Perika means a convoy of Bullock carts. When the Transport was not developed, some sections of the Balijas traded in a convoy of bulls. Hence they are called Perika Balijas. They are popular with the names Rao, Verma, etc.

Pagadala Balija:

The sub-division of the Balijas engaged in coral (Pagadalu) business is known as pagadala Balija. They are said to be the finest division of the Balijas. Similarly Ralla Balijas are the Balijas trading in precious stones, pusa Balijas are traders of beads.

Apart from the above, there are other sub-divisions among the Balijas namely Thota Balijas, Vada Balija, Setty Balija and Krishna Balija, Kavara Balija, Linga Balija. In Cuddapah district the Balijas are divided into three groups, namely Settibalijas, Gajula Balijas and Rajamahendravaram Balijas.

Of Balijas and Kapus J. Charles Molony, has made some enquiries. Here too locality and occupation are put forward as the main causes of sub-caste difference. The difference may find expression in refusal of inter marriage or of commensality or of both. A Balija correspondent from the Deccan quotes the names of Sundry sub-divisions of the caste to be found in the Northern Circars observing that he considers himself distinct from such people in as much as he has never had, and probably never will have, occasion to mix with them. Another from the Northern Circars puts the cause in a more concrete form, when describing to a visit to Madras city where he met a fellow Balija, and was by him invited to a meal. "Theoretically" said my informant, "the would-be host was an undoubted Balija. Practically, he came from a different part of the country, and I felt that

we differed, in India this difference finds expression in refusal to eat together, so I refused the invitation".¹²¹

The sub-caste difference due to the actual following of different avocations is easily intelligible. Among the trading Balijas are the Ralla Balijas (traders in precious stones),

¹²¹ J. Charles Molony: *Census of India*, 1911, Vol. XII, Madras, Part - I, Madras, 1912, p.176.

Gazula Baliyas (traders in Bangles), Gonala Baliyas (manufacturers of or traders in gunny cloth); these three eat with one another, but will not inter marry, and will neither eat with, nor marry with the Pusala Baliyas, who are supposed to travel about the country selling beads.¹²²

Telaga:

The Telagas according to Stuart are “a Telugu caste of cultivators, who are formerly soldiers in the armies of the Hindu sovereigns of Telangana. This may perhaps account for the name, for it is easy to see that the Telugu soldiers might come to be regarded as the Telugus or Telagas par excellence”,¹²³ The Telagas are vaishnavites and have Brahmins for their priests. Their customs closely resemble those of the Kapus. They are usually farmers now, but many still serve as soldiers, though their further recruitment has recently been stopped. Their common titles are Naidu, Rao and Dora.¹²⁴

According to Balarama Murthy, the Baliyas residing in one part of Telugu Desa, i.e. Andhra Pradesh are addressed as Telagas. The Telagas reside in Krishna, Guntur and adjoining districts¹²⁵

A poor Telaga or Vantari often gives his daughter in marriage to a rich Kapu. The Telagas and vantaris are highly brahminised and will have a Brahmin, for their guru and get themselves branded at his hands. A Kapu is invariably a cultivator; a Vantari was in olden days, a sepoy and as such, owned Inam (rent-free) lands. Even now has a prejudice against ploughing *Jirayati* (originally assessed) lands, which a Kapu has no objection to do. Similarly, a Telaga takes pride in taking service under a zamindar, but unlike the vantari, he will plough any land. Kapu women will fetch their own water and carry meals to the fields for their fathers and husbands. The woman of the other classes follow the “gosha system” and the men carry their own food, and fetch water for domestic purposes or if well-to-do, employ Kapus in these services. It may be added that rich Kapus often exhibit a tendency to pass as Telagas.¹²⁶

¹²²*Ibid.*, p.176.

¹²³M.Stuart, *Census of India, 1891*, Madras Presidency, Vol.XIII., p.272.

¹²⁴E.Thurstan, *Op. Cit.*, Vol.III, 1909, pp.13-14.

¹²⁵ A.Balarama Murthy, *Andhrula Charitra, Part III*, Visalandhra Publishing House, Hyderabad, 1976, p. 113.

¹²⁶E. Thurston. *Ibid*, pp.14-15.

The Telagas comprise the following groups arranged in accordance with their social grades, as far as they are known.

1. Racha Telaga
2. Hajari Telaga
3. Bobbili Telaga
4. Telaga Chetti
5. Telaga Thota Baliija
6. Chalika Telaga
7. Chambu Telaga
8. Sevak Telaga
9. Kasa Telaga
10. Telaga Uppara
11. Munnuru Telaga
12. Mutrasi Telaga
13. Sanai wad
14. Sadalwad
15. Waral Wandlu
16. Butti Telaga¹²⁷

We can briefly summarise the customs and relations among these groups:

Racha Telaga groups are found in large number in the Nalgonda district. The name 'Racha' which is derived from the word Raja (King) is probably given to the members of this group in consideration of the highest rank they are supposed to have held among the Telaga classes. Their supposed descent from those who served the ancient Telugu sovereigns on military tenures or as personal attendants, may also account, for their dignified name. The members of the group still maintain the dignity of their rank of observing (Gosha seclusion) among their woman and by taking girls in marriage from the other Telaga sub-castes but not giving their own maidens in return. **Hajari Telagas** are so called because, their ancestors rendered service to the great zamindars. The Hajaris rank with the Rachas and the Bobbili Telagas. They are now either cultivators or tailors. Some have entered the government service. **Bobbili Telagas** take their names from a village Bobbili in the Godavari district. Being soldiers and commanders of armies, they were elevated in social rank, above the common folk and are at present known to enjoy as high a social position as the Hajari and Racha Telagas. **Telaga Chetti's** are divided into the 10 exogamous groups, which are entirely borrowed from the Kapu castes. **Chalka Telagas** are the cultivators of dry land (Chalka means dry land) and as such are distinguished from

¹²⁷ *Castes and Tribes of the Nizams Dominion* is the only book which gives full details about the Telagas of various types. No other book contains all these information. See Syed Sirajul Hassan, *Castes and Tribes of the Nizams Dominions, Vol.II*, 1990, pp.603-604.

Tota Telagas, who are gardeners. This group has two sub-divisions, those who complete their marriage ceremony in 3 days and those whose marriage ceremony extends over 5 days. This is interesting as it furnishes a curious example of the process by which high endogamous divisions are formed. **Chambu Telagas** are a servile class attached to the houses of rich land holders and Zamindars and are so designated because the members of the group are supposed to have been engaged to wait upon their masters with chambus (water pots) when the latter went to relieve nature. **Sevak Munnuru** (Synonyms Ghulam, Khidmatgar) The word 'sevak' means 'ghulam' or 'slave'. During the prevalence of scarcity or famine, individuals who, in the extremity of hunger, sold themselves or were sold, as slaves, as also persons who were enslaved in consequence of their inability to pay their debts, originally composed this group of the Telagas. Among **Kasa Telagas** the respectable and educated members of the community are known as 'Naidus'. One remarkable point in connection with the 'Channagiri' section of the 'Kasa' Telagas may be mentioned. The girls of this section are married to trees and swords and the children of such girls take the family name of their mothers. **Telaga Tota Baliyas** are Cultivators or gardeners probably a branch of Chalka Telagas who are tillers of dry land. Superior, in a social rank, not only to all the Telagas but to the Kapu and Munnuru castes from whom the Telagas originally sprang. It is curious to mark the stages of development through which the Tota Baliyas have passed. The fact, that all the Tota Baliyas belong to one Gotra, paspu-nollu, supports the inference that a number of families of the same gotra raised their social level by initiating the usages of Brahmins. The Tota Baliyas are industrious cultivators. **Munnuru Telagas** are an illegitimate branch of Munnuru mothers and Brahmin fathers. They are divided into two classes i.e. one those who allow their widows to remarry and second those who do not recognise this practice. These two classes interdine and intermarry, but a tendency towards complete separation is discernible. It is also said that the Munnuru Telagas are a socially elevated branch of Chambu Telagas. **Sadalwad Telaga** claim to be branch of Munnurs who follow the occupation of weaving Navar (Tape) and appear on this ground, to have been degraded from the main caste. They themselves insist on being called Telaga. **Mutrasi Telaga** may be either Mutrasi or illegitimate descendants of the Mutrasis. They have adopted the trade of liquor vendors and toddy drawers. **Sanaiwad Telagas** so called because they play on the Sanai, a sort of musical pipe. They are Vibhutidharis and prefer to worship of Mahadeva to that of any other deity. Aradhi Brahmins serve them as spiritual guides. The dead are cremated with faces downwards. **Uppari Telagas** As their name indicate they are dealers in salt occupation. The wealthy

and educated members of the community are known as 'Naidus', Who follow learned professions and have distinguished themselves in all branches of Government service. The great majority of Telagas are cultivators and hold all sorts of land tenures. Some however, earn their livelihood as landless day labourers. Members of this caste do not wear the sacred thread.¹²⁸

Ontari:

Ontari or vantari means mighty and brave. These people showed bravery as soldiers in war and the kings under whom they were called them vantari.¹²⁹ Two inscriptions from Vellaturu in Guntur district belonging to the reign of Peda komati Vema Reddy dated 1418 register gifts of lands etc. to two temples by 'Ekkatlu'.¹³⁰ They gradually formed themselves into a military caste, now called vantarlu. 'Ekkatlu' were brought into the battle-field during the last-stages of war when the chances of success were meagre. The 'Ekkati' forces served probably as the reserve army, and each fighter in this division was probably a great wrestler and wielded also heavy weapons like maces and the like. There were 'Ekkatis' in every important town and village in the kingdom. The Ekkatis of Velanturu (Vellaturu), Tangeda and Polepalli are mentioned in the records of the Reddi Period¹³¹ From the way in which these Ekkatis made gifts to local gods, we come to know that they were remunerated for their services by grants of land. All these sections of infantry are mentioned in the *Palanativira Charitra*, produced in the Reddy period.¹³² In this work Ekkatlu are referred to as Ontarlu (Selagola Prajalanu heccu vantarlu; vantari is the corrupt form of Ontari). Ekkati and its synonym Ontari seem to have been the vernacular equivalents of the sanskrit word. Ekangavira, the hero who fights the combat single handed. These Ekkatis of the Reddi period gradually formed into a separate military caste or community and are now popularly called vantarlu. These now form one of the three sections of the Telaga community of the fourth caste, the other two being the Telaga (proper) and the Kapu.¹³³

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.604-610.

¹²⁹ K.Deshmukh Narayan, *Balijakula Charitra* (Telugu) 1958, p.28.

¹³⁰ *Annual Report of South Indian Epigraphy (hereafter ARSIE) 1936-37; Stone Inscriptions*, Nos. 327 & 328.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* and also 1926, Nos.367 and 380.

¹³² M.S.S. Sarma, *History of the Op. Cit.*, p.241.

¹³³ H.A. Stuart writes "Telagas are a Telugu caste of cultivators who are formerly soldiers in the armies of

Some 'Ekkatlu' of Vellaturu, serving under Peda Komati Vema Reddi granted lands to temples, a Commander granting a plot of land to a temple at Tangeda in Palnad taluk¹³⁴, attest to the zeal of the upper sections of society to acquire religious merit by grants of land to temples and Brahmins. It was in fact this 4th caste that supplied the great bulk of infantry to the rulers of the country. Some of the sects of the Sudra caste like Ontarulu (vantarlu)¹³⁵ exclusively took at military service. Similarly a great majority of the 4th caste were employed in agriculture and its allied works. Some sects like Baliija¹³⁶ followed both trade and military service and others were engaged in handicrafts.

Another version is that Ontari in Telugu means lonely. In the remote past the Baliija sub-division who were living a lonely existence on the fringes of Agency areas became popular as Ontaris. The Ontaris are found in Visakhapatnam, East and West Godavari and Guntur districts of Andhra Pradesh. In modern days the caste of Vantarulu are considered to be sub-caste of Kapus.

Srinatha mentions in his *Bhimesvara Puranam* the different communities comprising the Chaturdha varna. They are *Padma Nayakas, Velamas, Kammas and Ontaris etc.*¹³⁷

Munnuru Kapus:

Munnur, Munnurwad, Munnuru Kapu a widely diffused-cultivating caste, probably an offshoot of Kapu and indigeneous to H.E.H. the Nizam's Dominions. This is a caste of cultivators found in all the Telangana districts. Their traditional occupation is agriculture and many are small cultivators. Some are landless labourers, some have entered Government service or became traders. A few have taken up building works and a few

the Hindu sovereigns of Telangana" ... "A vantari was, in olden days, a sepoy, and as such owned Inam (rent free) lands. Even now he has a prejudice against ploughing jirayati (ordinarily assessed) lands." E. Thurston: *Op. Cit.*, Vol.II, pp.13-14, also see, M.S.S. Sarma, *History of...* *Ibid.*, , p.241.

¹³⁴ ARSIE, 1937, Stone Inscriptions, No.309.

¹³⁵ In Modern days the caste of vantarulu are considered to be sub-caste of 'Kapus'. In those days vantarlu took exclusively military service. They were considered as great warrior class.

¹³⁶ In Modern days Baliijas were considered to be a sub-caste of Kapus (Among Baliijas we find many sub-sects).

¹³⁷ M. Somasekhar Sarma: *History of...* *Op. Cit.*, , p.50.

others have temporarily migrated to collieries. The rich people of this community call themselves as Telagas. Many stories are in existence pertaining to the origin of this subdivision.

According to one version at the time of Sita's swayamvara lord Shiva's bow had to be brought to the stage. Munnuru (Mun+nuru = three hundred) Balija community warriors of king Janaka brought the bow to the stage. These three hundred warriors were given special distinction and the descendants of these Munnurs came to be known as Munnuru Kapus.

Another version is that Telangana area of Andhra Pradesh being a rocky area and deficient in water, has acute water scarcity. The people of the sub-division of the Balija community who are water diviners (Munnuru = Mun + Neeru = water diviner) are called Munnuru Kapus.¹³⁸

Deshmukh Narayana explains that the Aruvelu (Aru+velu = six thousand) sect of the Brahmins constituting six thousand families is a special sub-division of the Brahmin community. In a similar pattern (Munnuru = Mun+nuru = Three hundred) number shows that the Balija sub-division residing in Telangana area with 300 Gotra names came to be known as Munnuru Kapu.¹³⁹

Some of the Munnuru Kapu sections are as follows.

Totemistic Sections	Territorial sections
Akulollu (Leaves)	Kondapurmothu - Pasuladuwandhlu
Ambatolu (Conji-water)	Bakaramothu - Darpathiwandlu
Gondalalollu (Gondalalu chain of a door)	Rachapalollu - Palnawandlu
Puvulu (flowers)	Medikondollu - Baswadwandlu
	Sangaya pelollu - Domatollu

Eponymous sections

Modisetollu - Singamsetollu

¹³⁸Kapu Samkshema Sangh, 1994, Vijayawada, p.9.

¹³⁹K. Deshmukh Narayana, *Op.Cit.* p.43.

The Munnurus are said to form a hypergamous group with the Tota Balijas, to whom they give their daughters in marriage, but they themselves do not enjoy the same privilege in return. The Munnurus observe the simple rule that a man may not marry a woman of his own section and supplement this by a simple table of prohibited degrees. But he was allowed to marry the daughter of his elder-sister. The Munnurs do not, in general marry their daughters in families from which they have already taken girls in marriage.¹⁴¹ The marriage ceremony resembles that of the Kapu caste. The ceremonies that follow correspond, in all respects, to those observed at a Kapu marriage.¹⁴² The social life or rank of the Munnurs is much the same as that of Kapus, Reddy, Velamas and Gollas, with whom they exchange cooked food.¹⁴³ Agriculture is said to be the original occupation of the caste and the bulk of them still cling to this. A few are village patels and have risen to high status as landlords and zamindars, but the majority are ordinary cultivators, holding lands on permanent tenure. Some of them are landless day-labourers and are employed as menial servants, in rich families. A considerable portion of the Munnurs have, from recent date, given by their original occupation and have entered Government service or become traders. Members of this caste do not wear the sacred thread.

Turpu Kapus:

Turpu Kapus are so called because they stay in the Eastern (Turpu) side of the state of Andhra Pradesh. They are found in Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam. Their traditional occupation is also agriculture. Most of them are working as agricultural labourers or coolies and live in thatched huts. In view of their low social status and educational backwardness, they are listed under the backward classes in Andhra Pradesh.¹⁴⁴

While demarcation is not so sharp and marked in the case of the sub-castes among these castes (i.e., Reddy, Kamma, Velama which we discussed earlier in this chapter) it is at its height in the case of Kapus, Telaga, Balijas and Munnuru kapus etc. who may be

¹⁴⁰Syed Siraj ul Hassan. *Op.cit.*, Vol.II, p.519.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.* p.519.

¹⁴²*Ibid.* p.520.

¹⁴³*Ibid.* p.523.

¹⁴⁴*Anantaraman Commission Report, 1968.*

classified as 'Naidus'. Until recently when some efforts were made to unite all these sub-castes through a caste organisation. Though there is some awareness of unity among these various sub-castes in the face of political and economic challenges, yet it is hard to find any appreciable degree in relaxation in matters of marriage. This is because, these various sub-castes live in different regions. For example, the Kapus (Naidus) who are mostly spread on Coastal Andhra and who are also some times called Telagas and Balijas have sub-sections like vantari, who enjoy the highest social status among Kapus and Turpu Kapus, who tend to be endogamous in their relations. These differences in status have their basis in valour displayed in the past, by the ancestor families or they are based on differences between the native and immigrant populations¹⁴⁵

Social Status:

Gotra:

Like other Telugu castes, the Kapus have exogamous clan (intiperu) and Gotras. Some of them are pappu (split-pulse), Janakam, Gantla (Bell), Avula (Cow), Gandham (Sandal Paste) or (powder), Miriyala (Pepper), Mutyala (pearl), Pagadala (coral) yenumala (Buffalo), Gorre (sheep) and Mekhala (goats). There is a saying that a Kapu who has no gotra must take the name of the Pasuleti or pasupuleti gotra, in like a manner, a Brahmin orphan, whose Gotra cannot be traced, is made to adopt the vatsa gotra¹⁴⁶ We can observe that majority of the surnames and Gotra names of the Kapus represent the agricultural implements and domestic animals, by filling their respective occupations.

Family:

Family type among the Kapus is patriarchal, patri-local and patri-lineal. It is joint and agnatic in certain regions of Andhra Pradesh. But it is undergoing changes. Now majority of the Kapu families are 'fissioned' family type¹⁴⁷ Even when sons are separated from the parental family because of their job, education etc. their bonds with the parental unit remain unbreakable. We can also observe neo-local nuclear structure among two types of domestic organisations. The first is neo-local households which retained corporate obligations, primarily with regard to maintenance of and cooperation with the circle of

¹⁴⁵C. Lakshamanna: *Op.Cit.*, p.60.

¹⁴⁶E. Thurston: *Op.Cit.* Vol.I, 1909, p.141.

¹⁴⁷ Ahuja, Ram: *Indian Social System*. Rawat Publicatins, NewDelhi, 1993, p. 22.

kinsmen who are traditionally regarded as members of joint family. The second, is house holds that are neo-local as above but where co-partnership respecting joint family property is still maintained.

Marriage:

In case of marriage, caste, endogamy is generally followed among the Kapus. Exogamous marriages of Gotra, etc. are strictly adhered to because they believe that members having common Gotra are agnates having a common ancestor. Male can be either close or distant relative or completely non-kin, cross-cousin marriages and uncle-niece marriages are widely prevalent. While fidelity in thier would-be partner is highly insisted, other desirable qualities in the brides are beautiful facial features, efficiency in house hold duties, respectable family history and economic soundness of the family.

The Prevalence of Dowry:

The origins of the dowry system found among the rural urban elite can be traced to the late 19th century when the construction of an irrigation network and the consequent spread of commercialised rice cultivation in the delta districts of Coastal Andhra produced important social transformations including the emergence of a substantial rich peasant class out of the dominant cultivating and land-owning castes. (Kapu, Kamma, Reddy, Raju and others). The new found economic prosperity of these cultivators led to changes in social organisation and practices, such as the withdrawal of women from outdoor work (particularly in the fields) and the introduction in some groups of the custom of female seclusion (ghosha). At about the same time 'Dowry' payments at marriage began to appear. The earliest reports by British administration indicates that 'bride price' was still the norm at the beginning of the 20th century¹⁴⁸. This transformation appears to have taken place between 1920's and 1940's and by the 1960's. Dowry was the dominant marriage practice among all the middle peasant castes¹⁴⁹. One explanation for this might be that the institution of private ownership rights in land and the development of a land market facilitated the transfer of land in various forms as gift, dowry, inheritance and so on. What is unusual about the dowry system that developed in this region among the peasant class is

¹⁴⁸ E. Thurston: *Op.cit. Vol.I,1909*, p.101. and also see Carol Boyack Upadhya "Dowry and women's property in Coastal Andhra Pradesh, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol.24, No.1, Jan.-June, 1990. p.37.

¹⁴⁹ Government of India. (Superintendent of Census Operations) 1964. *Census of India, 1961. Vol. II, Andhra Pradesh, Part VI. Village Survey monographs, Monograph No.20.* and also see N.G.Ranga *Economic Organisation of Indian Villages*, Vol.I, Bezwada, 1926, pp.33-34.

Kinship:

Both affinal and consanguineous types of kinship bonds exist among the Kapus. Avoidance between father-in-law and daughter-in-law, mother-in-law and son-in-law, joking relationship between devar-bhabhi, jija-sali and Teknonymy between wife and husband are among the kinship usages commonly found. Social ties with their kith and kin in different areas are maintained through occasional visits.

Status of women:

Earlier the Kapu girls were married both before and after puberty. The remarriage of widows was forbidden. The Kapu families being patriarchal, woman had an under hand throughout.¹⁵³ As some Kapus have still joint families, subordination of women is found in them. Women are assigned all the domestic responsibilities and kept busy looking, cleaning, washing and child-rearing roles. Lower class Kapu women also help their husbands in agriculture and allied activities.

But in recent years there has been an improvement in the status of the Kapu women as well. Although the women is looked down upon as an inferior being, the mother is nevertheless the chief person and worthy to receive honour.¹⁵⁴ According to the census commissioner of Andhra Pradesh there is an increase in the number of women getting out of the four walls of the household and becoming workers in both cities and villages. Thus with dual carrer families on the increase, women are also appearing in the public sphere and attending both office and domestic chores effectively. Also in neo-local family and fissioned family - the family types emerging rapidly women have an upper hand in the domestic domain. Divorce and remarriage of women are now freely permitted among the Kapus.

Food Habits:

Dietary prescriptions, restrictions, habits and practices form a integral part of the econmic life of a community. Andhra Pradesh being mainly a rice producing area, the staple food of the Kapus is rice, though wheat is used in preparations of break fast. The Kapus are both vegetarian and non-vegetarian. While eggs, meat, chicken and fish are

¹⁵³E. Thurston: *Op.Cit.* Vol.I, 1909, p.136.

¹⁵⁴ Ramabhai, Saraswati: *The High Caste Hindu Women.* Inter-India Publication, New Delhi, 1984, p.51.

edible, pork, beef and carrion are at taboo. Preparations of non-vegetarian dishes are usually made at ritual observations and Sundays, providing non-vegetarian food is regarded as a mark of honour to the visiting guests. But teelotalism and vegatarianism are observed on auspicious days. Most of the Kapus whose family deity is Lord Venkateswara observe vegetarianism on Saturdays - it being the day dedicated to Lord Venkateswara.

Recently there also has been a considerable change in the food habits among the Kapus. Consumption of tea with biscuits and snacks or cold drinks is on the increase. Smoking is finding favour with the Kapu youth. Occasional visits to a canteen or a restaurant are made by many. "Due to the rub of culture and economic prosperity the villagers are also fast getting acquainted with new food habits and styles of life".¹⁵⁵

The above are some of the major sub-divisions of Kapu community found in various parts of Andhra Pradesh. Though they are addressed with different names, they can be considered as a single homogeneous unit for the following reasons.

1. Members of all the sub-divisions admit that they are identical.
2. collation of the Intiperu or septs shows that the same names recur among all the sub-divisions.
3. Inter marriage and interdinning are not rare among them.¹⁵⁶

Also to know whether all the people known variously as Telaga, Baliija, Kapu and Ontari constitute a single homogenous entity, the following tests laid down by the Supreme Court in Vasanth Kumar's case quoted with approval by the special Bench of 9 Judges of the S.C. in its land mark Judgement in the case of Indra Sahney vs Union of India may be applied.

The essential features of any caste which maintain its homo hierarchicus character are (1) Commensality (2) Endogamy and (3) Hereditary occupation.¹⁵⁷

In the case of Kapu sub-sects though they are called with different names, Kapu is a name for all the sub-divisions. There are no taboos on commensality and connubiality. These endogamous groups are not hierarchically arranged and consider them as in groups. Agriculture is their hereditary occupation in which bulk of the people are involved. Thus these sub-divisions are all rivulets and streams in the ocean of Kapus.

¹⁵⁵ Suresh Kumar: *Social Mobility in Industrializing Society*, Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 1986, p.45.

¹⁵⁶ Thurston, *Op.cit.* Vol.I, 1909, p.14.

¹⁵⁷ A.I.R. 1993, S.C.473.

In the changing context of political scenario in the state in the last decade the Kapus are now trying to assert their identity and are demanding their share in the power structure. In search of a separate new identity they are now trying to bring together under the rubric of Kapus with similar cognite groups. As mentioned earlier spread in different regions of the state, they are digging out their historical roots of their common origin. They formed a common platform known as "Kapunadu" to articulate their grievances. One of their immediate demand is that they should be included in the list of Backward classes.

Demography of the Kapus:

All the sub-divisions of Kapu community put together form the numerically single largest community in Andhra Pradesh. According to Sherring "The Kapus form a preponderating element among the Hindu population"¹⁵⁸

Systematic attempts were made earlier to estimate the population of various castes in Andhra Pradesh by social scientists. The only data base, we have is the reports of the census of India 1921, and census of H.E.H. Nizam's Dominions 1921. On the basis of these data G. Ram Reddy (1989) has made an analysis of the caste structure of Andhra Pradesh.¹⁵⁹

According to Ram Reddy, Kapus and Reddys together account for 15.2% of the total population of the state.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ M.A. Sherring, *Hindu Tribes and Castes*. Vol.III, Cosmo Publications, Delhi, 1874, p.169.

¹⁵⁹ G. Ram Reddy, "Caste, Class and Dominance in Andhara Pradesh" in *Dominance and State Power in Modern India: Decline of a Social Order*. Vol.I, (ed) Francine R. Frankel and M.S.A. Rao, 1989, Delhi, O.U.P. pp.265-321.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* p.369.

Table No:II . 2.

Percentage of Different Castes to Total Population of Dist. merged into A.P.

Forward castes %	Backward Castes %	Backward Castes %	SC and Minorities %
Brahmin 3.0	Baliija 3.0	Kummari 0.9	Madiga 7.3
Kapu 15.2	Boya/Besta 0.7	Kurma 1.3	Mala 9.7
Kamma 4.8	Chakali 4.2	Munnuru Kapu 0.8	Muslims & Christians 7.0
Komati 2.7	Devanga 2.1	Mangali 1.3	
Kshatriya 1.2	Dudekula 0.4	Mutrasi 3.3	
Velama 3.0	Goundla 2.0	Sale 2.9	
	Gavara 0.4	Telaga 5.2	
	Golla 6.3	Uppara 0.6	
	Idiga 1.0	Waddera 1.8	
	Jangam 0.4	Others 5.4	
	Kammara/ Viswa Brahmin 2.1		
Total 29.9		46.1	24.0

Source : G.Ram Reddy. "Caste, Class and Dominance in Andhra Pradesh" in *Dominance and State Power in Modern India : Decline of a Social Order*, Volume-1, Francine R. Frankel and M.S.A. Rao., 1989, Delhi, O.U.P. p.269.

Further he said these 15.2% include,

1. Reddys of the four Rayalaseema districts where they are known as Kapus and
2. The Reddys of Telangana Districts and
3. The Kapus of Coastal Districts.

Table No:II.3.

Distribution of Castes in the Andhra Districts of the Madras Presidency
Percentage of castes adjusted to '000s

Caste	Ganjam	Vizag	Godavari	Krishna	Guntur	Nellore	Cuddapah	Kurnool	Anantapur	Chittoor
Baliija	4.6	7.1	4.5	2.3	6.4	14.3	13.2	10.3	10.4	19.0
Boya/Besta	-	-	-	-	-	1.5	4.5	4.5	6.0	4.3
Chakali	3.5	8.3	5.0	7.2	7.7	4.5	3.0	3.2	2.6	3.3
Golla	6.3	13.1	4.2	9.3	8.9	9.5	4.9	5.2	4.2	5.6
Kummari	2.2	4.9	3.8	10.3	12.1	8.8	4.7	5.9	3.7	5.9
Mangali	4.8	14.5	7.3	9.9	9.6	5.6	4.8	5.7	5.7	5.7
Mutrasi	-	-	0.3	4.5	3.3	4.7	1.8	0.7	1.7	4.7
Sale	2.6	11.7	7.0	6.4	7.4	2.7	3.0	1.7	1.7	2.2
Telaga	5.2	12.4	8.4	14.6	15.5	-	-	0.3	-	-
Uppara	2.9	2.9	5.7	21.9	11.0	-	7.6	10.5	11.4	1.9
Velama	15.3	59.1	5.8	6.7	0.6	2.8	0.3	-	-	1.9
Mala	3.8	8.0	15.4	18.3	7.4	9.6	3.3	2.7	1.3	8.7
Madiga	0.4	3.0	4.9	9.9	4.2	6.4	4.1	4.7	8.0	3.6
Brahman	4.1	12.3	12.5	19.8	18.8	7.5	1.9	2.1	1.8	1.9
Kamma	-	-	6.4	25.8	36.0	12.5	2.3	0.9	4.5	10.7
Kapu/Reddi	5.7	19.6	9.8	7.7	12.1	7.1	7.2	4.1	4.6	6.4
Komati	6.6	7.7	5.4	14.9	-	7.5	4.9	7.6	4.3	4.1
Kshatriya	1.6	1.31	19.4	23.6	3.3	2.3	3.5	0.8	1.2	10.7

Source: G.Ram Reddy opcit p.270.

Above table gives the District-wise distribution of the combined category of Kapus and Reddys. From it, it is clear that more than 55% of these are located in the 9 coastal districts. And as such it is safe to assume that at least 55% of the combined category are Telaga Kapus because Kapus in coastal districts are sub-caste or equivalent to Telagas. Hence 8.4% of these 15.2% are Telaga Kapus and the remaining 6.8% are only Reddys. When the Percentage of those listed as Telagas 5.2% is added to 8.4% we get the figure of 13.6%. The Baliyas account for 3%. When they are added to 13.6% the combined percentage of Telaga, Kapu and Balija would be 16.6%.

There is no proper estimate of Ontari population who are concentrated in Visakhapatnam and East Godavari districts in large numbers. If their proportion is estimated to be 1.0% and added to 16.6% the total percentage of Ontari, Kapu, Telaga and Balija would be 17.6%. The percentage of Munnuru Kapu population in Telangana is estimated to be 1.0% and thus added to 17.6% it would be 18.6%.

Thus the combined strength of all the sub-castes of Kapu is almost equivalent to the combined percentage of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Reddy and Kamma put together.

We may conclude by saying that the Kapus are said to be the numerically largest community in Andhra Pradesh, with 18.6% of the State population. As we mentioned earlier, the Kapus have a number of sub-castes of which Balija, Telaga, Ontari, Munnuru Kapu and Turpu Kapu are predominant. All these sub-castes appear to have been named after either their occupation or place from which they hailed. Though these sub-castes are spread all over the state of Andhra Pradesh, the concentration of the Kapu and Telaga is more in the Coastal Districts, the Baliyas in Rayalaseema and the Munnuru Kapus in Telangana area. Further in the case of Kapu sub-sects though they are called with different names, Kapu is a name for all the sub-divisions. There are no taboos on commensality and connubiality. These endogamous groups are not hierarchically arranged and consider them as in groups. Agriculture is their hereditary occupation in which bulk of the people are involved. Thus these sub-divisions are all rivulets and streams in the ocean of Kapus.

Traditionally these groups have occupied a similar position in the caste hierarchy, below the dominating castes, but above the Dalits. By the early 20th century most of these

groups had settled down as cultivators, their differences seem to originate in slightly different ritual status, as well as class and occupational differences which prevailed in earlier times, but there has never a taboo on inter- marriages and inter dining among these jatis. However the tendency towards cross-cousin and maternal uncle-niece marriages has meant that in practice, there have not been as many marriages among the different jatis as there were among the sub-castes of the dominant peasant castes.

CHAPTER - III
KAPU LUMINARIES : EARLY PHASE

Towards the middle of the 19th century Telugu and Tamil non-Brahmins alike began to press upon the preserve of the non-Brahmins setting the pattern for the later politics of Madras.¹ The latter half of the 19th century in the Andhra saw the emergence of important literary figures, educationists and social reformers, who left an impact on the social consciousness of the people of Andhra. Prominent among them, the Kapus are Gazula Laxmi Narasu Setty, Samineni Mattu Narasimham Naidu, Sri Raghupati Venkata Ratnam Naidu and K.V. Reddi Naidu. They were able to contribute to the revival of cultural life in Andhra, because of the impetus which the new educational system gave to the growing social consciousness in the region.

The Coastal Andhra region, during the second half of the 19th century, underwent many changes in economic and social spheres. In the economic sphere there emerged of the dominant peasant castes, rich peasantry and a middle class. Among them the Kapus or Telagas are middle class peasants. And Balijas have been traditionally a trading community. Further, by the beginning of the 20th century National Movement gained momentum as its social rank was extended to the lower middle classes,² Kapus or Telagas, Kammas and Reddis. As in other places, in Andhra also the leadership in the early stages of the freedom movement was largely confined to Brahmins. The peasant caste of the fertile delta had the surplus and the necessary leisure to participate in social reform movements and politics.

The mercantile elite of Madras first began to respond to western style associations and petitioned politics in 1830's and 1840's. One of the earliest organisers in Madras was Gazula Lakshmi Narasu Setty, (hereafter G.L.N. Setty) who had founded the first Indian owned news paper in 1844 entitled the *Crescent*. He came from a Balija mercantile family that founded one of the Madras Telugu Agency houses dealing in cloth and indigo.³ Although the issues that drew the commercial elite together during this period centered around old concerns, it has been

¹1881 Census, Madras, Part-I, p.104.

²Sarojini Regani, *Highlights of the Freedom Movement in Andhra Pradesh*, Hyderabad, 1972, p.26.

³R. Sunthara Lingam, *Politics and Nationalist Awakening in South India, 1852-1891*, Tuscon, Arizona, 1974, pp.40-41.

argued that the agitational meetings that took place in Madras city represented a new form of political activity.⁴ The influence of the commercial elite was felt strongly in these early secular associations. However, the disintegration of the Madras Native Association in 1862 which was controlled by Tamil and Telugu Non-Brahmin Merchants, signified a contraction of commercial influence in the growing public political sphere.⁵ G Lakshmi Narasu Setty, and P. Soma Sundaran Chettiar, the Association's Secretary, were the prime movers and they kept the association busy squabbling with the Christian Missionaries of the South⁶ Further G.L.N. Setty was also associated with the *Hindu Literary Society*.

Gazula Lakshmi Narasu Setty 1806-1868:

In the Madras province particularly the Andhras are proud to have pioneers in the freedom movement beginning even before the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny, as is illustrated in the example of an Andhra merchant settled in Madras, by name Gazula Laxmi Narasu Setty. His efforts were directed to protesting in a peaceful but effective manner against the encroachments on the civil liberties of the Indians by East India Company's Government.

G.L.N. Setty was born in Madras in 1806 at Periamet. He belonged to Gazula Baliya caste (Gazula Baliya is a sub-caste of Kapu community of Andhra Pradesh)⁷ Their ancestors migrated from Andhra and settled down in Madras. He was the son of Siddhula Setty a flourishing Indigo merchant. Lakshmi Narasu was educated in a small Elementary school. Though not educated in English, he was taught in all the essentials required for the business. On the completion of his education, he carried on business along with his father under the name "*Siddhula Setti Company*". They dealt not only in Indigo but also in Madras Kerchiefs. Siddhula Setty's business firm was

⁴*Ibid.*, p.57: G.L.N. Setty others started Madras Native Association in 1852 to present their problems to the East India Company.

⁵*Ibid.*, Appendix, pp.352-353.

⁶Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, S. Chand and Co., New Delhi,, 1965.

⁷D.V.Subba Rao, *1857 Poorvarangamulu*, (Telugu) Vijayawada, 1957; Also see, M. Paradesi *Gazula Laxmi Narasu Chetti and Political Awakening in South India in the 19th Century*, unpublished, M.Phil, dissertation, Sri Venkateswara University 1989; K. Sundaram, *Studies in Economic and Social Conditions in Medieval Andhra 1000-1600 Machilipatnam*, 1968.

the only one which could be compared to the British business firms in Madras in those times.⁸ He also had a flourishing trade in cotton in view of the great demand then and soon became a very prosperous merchant. Following the traditional family lines, Siddhula Setty intended his son to look after the family business. After the death of his father, G.L.N. Setty inherited family trade and soon cut a very impressive figure in trade and commerce. He was one of the very few Indians to be represented in the Madras Chamber of Commerce.⁹

G.L.N. Setty first launched the *Crescent* and the organisation of the Madras Native Association. He purchased an English paper, the *Native Circulator* from Sri Narayana Swami Naidu, and named the same as the *Crescent*. The first issue came out on 2nd Oct, 1844. It was intended to act as a corrective on the record the declared missionary organisation. The editor of the paper the *Crescent* was a Britisher, called Harley.¹⁰ The columns of the press produced a great stir among the company servants and the Christian Missionaries.

Besides trade G.L.N. Setty was interested in the welfare of the country, as seen in the varied activities to safeguard the interests of religion and rights and liberties of the people. Like Raja Ram Mohan Roy of Bengal, in Madras also, in the time of the East India Company there were leaders like G.L.N. Setty actuated by genuine patriotism, liberalism and humanitarianism. He was responsible for bringing home to the company authorities certain wrongs and irregularities in the company rule. It was he, who started the "*Channapatna Swadesa Sangham*"¹¹ The very name would indicate the motive to serve the country against foreign encroachments. The main aim of the association and the paper was to make known to the government about the people's conditions in a peaceful manner by frequent conferences and deliberations and presenting Mahajars to the company authorities in England. Thus,

⁸The contemporary Directories and Documents attest this fact. For details see, *Madras Almanacs 1839 onwards*.

⁹*Madras Almanac 1857*, p.438. Another Telugu man Parthasarathi Naidu was there on the chamber along with G.L.N. Setty.

¹⁰G. Parameswara Pillai, *Representative Indians*, George Routledge and Sons, London, 1897, p.196.

¹¹*Andhra Sarwaswamu*, p.159.

an Andhra Merchant whose family was settled in Madras laid the foundations for the formation of what is called public opinion which is the bed-rock of any good government. The people's voice in India under the company in the province of Madras could be heard long before the time of the Mutiny and the efforts to free from foreign domination in every way had their beginning in the work of this association.¹²

Around 1845, when the Government was contemplating to introduce *Caste Disabilities Removal Act* in order to remove disabilities of the Hindus to have property rights when they were converted to Christianity. This was intended to favour the Christian Missionaries attracting people to become converts to Christianity. The missionary efforts in the sphere of education, it is necessary to state, were neither completely altruistic nor reformatory. It was undertaken with the conscious motive of spreading Christianity. Bible was necessarily taught in schools and scripture stories were used regularly. There were objections and organised protests against this. In this regard G.L.N. Setty's efforts are worth mentioning. G.L.N. Setty, became the earliest popular leader in Madras. He was the guiding spirit as president behind the Madras Native Association which was the precursor of the Madras Mahajans Sabha. He opposed the teaching of Bible in schools and also fought against the introduction of *Caste Disabilities Act* which was favourable to converts to Christianity. In order to prevent this, G.L.N. Setty convened a conference in Madras on 9th April 1845 and prepared a Mahajar appealing to Government not to pass the Act, for it would be against the Hindu's interests. Moreover, in spite of the efforts of G.L.N. Setty, the Christian Missionary Educational Institutions began to teach the Bible and made it compulsory for all. This was protested in a conference held on 7th Oct, 1846. The main resolutions of the conference were (1) though the government assured non-interference with the Hindu religious affairs the ex-Governor acted quite to the contrary, (2) Christian Missionaries encouraged by the Government Officials were converting Hindu children into Christianity. (3) They were also discouraging the Hindu boys from getting through the examinations and getting jobs. (4) Even though schools were set up in the Madras Presidency, English was not imparted to them. (5)

¹²Y. Vittal Rao, *Gazula Lakshmi Narasu Setti: A Pioneer of the Freedom Movement* in *Journal of Andhra Historical Research Society*, Rajahmundry, Vol.XXII, 1952-1954, p.64.

The Indians were not appointed to the high posts in the Government and (6) In the law courts justice was not administered properly.

Besides the above, some other points relating to the difficulties of the people under company's rule were specified in the Mahajar. G.L.N. Setty presided over the conference and with nearly 12,000 signatures, the Mahajar was sent to England.¹³ The result of this peaceful agitation was that the teaching of Bible was prohibited temporarily in schools. When an attempt was made to revive the practice, a checkmate was given by G.L.N. Setty along with John Burce Norton, a famous Madras Barristor and G.L.N. Setty's best companion in this movement .

Another event at that time was the visit of a member of British Parliament named Danebay Seymour to India to know the Indian conditions first hand. He had already been acquainted with the name of G.L.N. Setty. The Indian merchant took him round the places in Cuddalore, Kumbhakonam and Coimbatore. The English M.P. saw with his own eyes the inhuman punishments and penalties inflicted upon the poor ryots who could not pay taxes. He recorded what he had seen and returned home with some specimen implements used in punishing the ryots in order to show them to his countrymen. This resulted in the appointment of a commission namely *Madras Torture Commission*. Such inhuman ways of inflicting penalties on the ryots who fell into arrears were prohibited.¹⁴

It was time that the company should get the renewal of the charter. In 1852, before the renewal was made, G.L.N. Setty prepared another Mahajar, which while stating the lack of proper facilities for means of communication, education, sanitation and proper steps for development, gave an account of the corruption of the officials, uselessness of the courts of Justice and the undesirable activities of the Christian missionaries. Just as the *Chennapatna Swadesa Sangham* was busy in this way, in Calcutta there was the British Indian Association and a like organisation also in Bombay. Each in its way was busy sending Mahajars to the company authorities in

¹³G. Parameswara Pillai, *Representative Men of Southern India*, Madras 1896 pp.145-46; Y. Vittal Rao, G.L.N. Setty Op.Cit., pp.65-66, B.R. Mazumdar, *History of Indian Social and Political Ideas*, Calcutta, 1967, p.10.

¹⁴Y. Vittal Rao, *Op.Cit.*, p.66.

England. It was urged that the company rule must change for the better and that the parliament must show greater concern in the affairs of India and that there must be periodical review of the company's rule whether it was in the interests of the country or not. The Mahajar was presented in the parliament in the House of Lords by Lord Nellimbra on 25th Feb. 1853. He told the House about the letter of G.L.N. Setty on 25th Feb. 1853. The letter suggesting the appointment of a committee to enquire into the Indian affairs. Mr. Bryde another member of parliament also attested the authenticity of the letter of G.L.N. Setty. Any way, the sepoy mutiny resulted in the company's rule coming to an end and the crown assuming direct responsibility for administration.¹⁵

G.L.N. Setty was elected to be a member of the Trustees of the Pachiappa's Charities. Because of his part in the agitation for the cause of the people he was suspected by the Government and was regularly haunted by the C.I.D. and the police. Several attempts were made to impair his business. But with undaunted courage, indomitable will and steadfastness of purpose, he continued to fight for people's liberties. During the mutiny, he never advocated violence. He was for peaceful methods of agitation and reform from within. Strangely enough, his policy excited the admiration of his enemies even in Britain. Out of recognition and realisation of the real spirit of the merchant, the British Government conferred on him the honour of C.S.I. He was also made a member of the Governor's Executive Council in 1863. This appointment was universally applauded by all sections of the people. Even though he was honoured by the British he never changed his attitude and he carried on his mission of service to the people.¹⁶

One of the most significant services of G.L.N. Setty was what he had done to the ruler of Mysore. He persuaded the childless Rajah to adopt a son. The state had been under the charge of the British Government since the time of Bentinck, which was taken over on account of misrule. The adoption must be recognised by the British, who might restore Mysore to its ruler. There was also a possibility of the

¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp.66-67.

¹⁶*Ibid.* p.67.

British not recognising it and annexing it. It must be prevented from being annexed by the British. So he carried on diplomatic negotiations with the minister of the Nizam of Hyderabad Salar Jung. The result of all this activity of G.L.N. Setty was that it was agreed that Mysore if not restored to the British must be shared equally by the Nizam and the British as per the previous agreement. On this, the English were forced to recognise the adoption of the Rajah of Mysore. He also strove to relieve the distress of the queens of Tanjore and the family of the Nawab of the Carnatic in 1864. In his every work of , G.L.N. Setty got the unstinted support of John Bruce Norton.¹⁷

G.L.N. Setty's health was shattered on account of severe strain. He sacrificed his all for the paper *The Crescent*. The huge income that he derived from his trade was consumed by the paper. His son did not prove equal to the father's expectations. G.L.N. Setty left the mortal soil in 1868. But he has become immortal by his services, actuated by patriotic fervour and spirit of sacrifice, seasoned by peaceful agitation with effective results. He has won a permanent place in the roll-call of public men who fought for freedom and liberties of the people. He got the appreciation of the Maharajah of Travancore and his good Minister T. Madhava Rao. To commemorate the fair name of G.L.N. Setty the citizens of Madras decided to erect a statue at the Pachiappa's College. Not only that, it was also decided to institute a scholarship in his name to deserving students of sanskrit in the Presidency College Madras.¹⁸

G.L.N. Setty was a true patriot in the sense that he fought against the injustices of the British even at the stake of his trade. His activity was all-embracing, not only in the political field but also in the social economic and religious spheres of native states. Peaceful methods of agitation under the name of Satyagraha adopted later by Mahatma Gandhi had the beginning in the methods followed by G.L.N. Setty. At a time when elected bodies were not introduced, when public opinion in its true sense was absent, when there was no means of association between the government and the governed, G.L.N. Setty played the part of the people's leader. Without allying himself with the vested interests, G.L.N. Setty became the friend of the

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸*Ibid.* p.68.

people. In the history of the Freedom Movement G.L.N. Setty occupies a prominent place, for his efforts could be seen before the Mutiny period. He is one of these unnoticed and forgotten gems which shine with lustre only when they are discovered and noticed by the world.¹⁹

In Andhra region, a whole generation of leaders, even before Kandukuri Veeresalingam, took up the issues of reform and worked for the upliftment of the untouchables.²⁰ The first to evolve a systematic programme were the Brahma Samajists. Prominent Brahma Samaj leaders, like Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu and Raja of Pithapuram were active in providing education and starting many charities.

The non-Brahmin protest was not a unique phenomenon under the East India Company and this form of social protest was witnessed both during the ancient²¹ and medieval periods.²² Under the British rule there was a perceptible change in the socio-economic conditions. The new education, social and moral values introduced by the colonial state created an altogether different atmosphere where one has to look for and carefully analyse the new social interactions and relationships. On the other hand, the growth of non-Brahmin consciousness was fairly witnessed during 19th century in Andhra. The demand for equal rights in education, jobs and local bodies

¹⁹*Ibid.* p.68.

²⁰Vennelacunty Subba Rao (1748-1839): Samineni Muttunarasimham Naidu (1800-1858): Vembakam Raghavacharyulu, Gazula Lakshmi Narasu Setty (1806-1868) and Ananta Ramaswamy are some of the other reformers who described untouchability irrational and inhuman and worked for female education, widow remarriages. For details see, V. Rama Krishna, *Social Reform in Andhra, 1848-1919*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1983, pp.57-58.

²¹R.S. Sarma, *Sudras in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1980 p.200, Romila Thapar *Social Mobility in Ancient India with Special Reference to Elite Groups*, in R.S. Sharma and V.N. Jha(ed) *Indian Society, Historical Probings*, New Delhi, 1977, B.N.S. Yadava, *The Accounts of Kali Age and the Social Transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, in *Indian Historical Review*, Vol.V, 1978-79, pp.31-63 and R.N. Nandi, *Client, Ritual and Conflict in Early Brahminical Order*, in *Ibid* Vol.vi, 1979-80, pp.64-118.

²²V. Rama Krishna, *Op.Cit.*, pp.37-48. Taking the example of Andhra the author tried to show how social protest movements of Medieval Andhra which drawing their sustenance from non-Brahmin lower castes, were increasingly attacking the traditional and caste ridden Hindu society. But under changed economic conditions during the colonial era, the upper caste non-Brahmin's emerged as dominant economic groups and their demands disputing equal status with Brahmins were different from earlier period. Apart from questioning the superiority of Brahmins, they started adopting Brahmanical rituals and began to demand equal opportunities in education and employment.

was a major factor in the emergence of non-Brahmin consciousness and this was witnessed more among the upper non-Brahmin castes like Reddi, Vysya, Baliya, Kapu, Kamma and Velama.²³ The non-Brahmin consciousness during the 19th century was not influenced by narrow casteist tendencies despite the fact that the non-Brahmin sections of the society stood opposed to Brahminical influence.²⁴ Such consciousness was positive in the sense that its attack was not aimed at a particular caste and remained mainly as a social protest measure. The non-Brahmin consciousness during the entire 19th century did not fructify into a caste movement. It is attested by the fact that non-Brahmin sections worked together with Brahmins when both of them were demanding a relative autonomy to local bodies on the eve of local self-government campaign.²⁵ Even during the 20th century, the non-Brahmin social reform endeavours primarily remained serious social protest measures. Many of the leading personalities of non-Brahmin movement proclaimed that the movement was aimed at cutting the Brahminical domination to size and that it was not against Brahmins. Even the activities of justice party and its government concentrated primarily on those aspects which the early non-Brahmin social reform endeavours wanted to achieve.

Samineni Muttunarasimham Naidu 1800-1858:

The newly found urge among Non-Brahmin sections towards self-enlightenment had its positive consequences manifested in a rational outlook. The work of Samineni Muttunarasimham Naidu best exemplifies this. His work *Hita Suchini* is perhaps the earliest work promoting rational and scientific ideas in society much before Veeresalingam. The book was a monography written in spoken dialect of Telugu and put to print in 1862.²⁶ The work represents how the newly educated

²³*Ibid.*, p.13.

²⁴Sripada Subramanya Sastry, *Anubhavaloo - Janapakalunu*, (Autobiographical Reminiscences in Telugu) Vol.III, 1966 - Rajamahendravaram, pp.99-100. He says that, "The Political life was not yet poisoned by partiality of social approach and did not still assume the narrow casteist nature."

²⁵K.H.S.S. Sundar, *Origins and Growth of Political Consciousness in Andhra During the 19th Century*, Ph.D. Thesis submitted to University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, 1994, pp.253-282.

²⁶V. Ramakrishna, *literature and Social Consciousness; Examination of a Lesser Known Telugu Monograph of the Early 19th Century*, in the Proceedings of Andhra Pradesh History Congress, 18h Annual Session, Tenali, 1994.

intelligentsia was drawn towards social problems under the influence of emerging social and intellectual movements across the country.²⁷

With the British introducing the Ryotwari system, alongside improved irrigation in the present coastal districts, a strong peasant caste, Kapus, began to emerge, carving out its own socio-economic and literary space. The Kapu community was an agrarian archpin around which Kammas and Reddis in the Coastal Andhra Province of Madras state began to construct an anti-Brahmin consciousness, rooting itself in sudra agrarian productivity, language and ideology. Such a consciousness was first expressed in the form of Samineni Muttu Narasimham's first secular prose text entitled *Hita Suchini*. Narasimham lived between 1800-1858 at Rajahmundry and constructed this text in what he calls a *grama bhasha* (Colloquial language) as against the Brahminical writing of *grandha bhasha*. (Bookish Language) He himself gave an English title to the book - "Moral Instructor in Prose".²⁸

Among the new trends of Modern Telugu literature, essay writing occupies a prominent place. The first essayist is Samineni Muttu Narasimham Naidu, who with his knowledge of English and Telugu wrote his essays during 1850-1860 on about eight topics and published in 1862 by his son Ranga Prasad a collection of them under the caption of *Hitasuchini*. He adopted the spoken language of the learned, deliberately in opposition to the archaic literary language used by Chinnaya suri, his contemporary.²⁹

The monograph contains altogether 8 *prameyas* (subjects or issues) and, in the discussion of these subjects the author displayed high rationality of mind and scientific out look on all matters relating to society like women's education, superstitions, attack on the notions of super natural powers, modern approach

²⁷Such a process was common to many regions of the sub-continent. Apart from educated intelligentsia, some of the enlightened rulers of princely states under took reform campaign. For example, the rulers of Rajasthan were in the forefront in effecting reformist campaign among traditional sections and Raja Sajjan Singh of Mewar was instrumental in founding the first ever reform society, *Shri Desh Hitaishini Sabha*, in 1877. The sabha was concerned about various social evils prevailing among the Rajput and Charan communities of Rajasthan.

²⁸Kancha Ilaiah, Muttu Narasimham's Gramabhasha, A.P. Times, Hyderabad, 31 Jan, 1997, p.5.

²⁹Telugu Culture: International Telugu Institute, Hyderabad, 1975, p.74.

towards medicine, advanced ideas regarding the need for mutual consent of bride and groom in marital alliances and the like.³⁰ It is stated that the pioneer of social reform in Andhra, Kandukuri Veeresalingam, owed much to this monograph and a crucial scrutiny of his writings would bear out this relation.³¹ The attack on blind beliefs and traditions by Muttu Narasimham Naidu represent the budding spirit among non-Brahmin intellectuals in questioning the established norms of traditions. The modest and sober approach of Naidu's period was to assume more aggressive stand taken by other non Brahmin intellectuals in the later period. During the later period, to probe deep into traditional world of Brahmins and direct attack on their superiority, had assumed status in the eyes of non-Brahmins.

Narasimham was born in a Kapu family in 1800 at Rajahmundry and with great difficulty got English education and became a second class, District Munsif, in Rajahmundry court.

Though Veeresalingam was the accredited leader in the field of social reform, yet long before him there lived Muttu Narasimham Naidu who raised his voice of protest against superstitions in people and economic inequalities in society through his book *Hitasuchini*. He protested against '*Kanyasulkam*' and the custom of compulsory widowhood which only induced such unfortunate women to lead an immoral life. He advocated remarriages for widows, marriages of girls only after the age of puberty and pleaded for mutual consent between contracting parties before a marriage is finalised. He protested against child marriages. It looks as if Veeresalingam was inspired by the writings of Muttu Narasimham Naidu. Veeresalingam canvassed for exactly the same reforms which were supported by Muttu Narasimham Naidu. But it is surprising that, no where in his voluminous writings did he make even a passing acknowledgement to his predecessor in this field of social reform.³² The most important contribution in this direction (well organised system of education with English as a part of it) was made by Samineni Muttu

³⁰V. Rama Krishna, *Literature and Op.Cit.*

³¹*Ibid.*

³²N. Putali Krishna Murthi, *The Changing Condition of Women in Andhra*, (from the middle of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century) Navayuga Publishers, Hyderabad, 1980, pp.16-17.

Narasimham Naidu, who in the book *Hita Suchini*,³³ succeeded in drawing the attention of his contemporaries to the social inequalities connected with marriage and female education. The book according to the author was meant for women, “as women need a certain type of knowledge concerning their problems”. He pleaded for the introduction of scientific education and for the translation of scientific work from English into Vernaculars. He went on to condemn popular superstitions like the belief in the existence of evil spirits and in the efficiency of the methods adopted by witch-doctors. He exhorted the people not to worship village deities in order to escape from epidemics like cholera but to observe cleanliness and appealed to them to take proper medical care for their cure. With regard to his ideas on marriage he was much in advance of his contemporaries. He stressed mutual love and affection between the bride and the groom and severely criticised wasteful expenditure in the name of marriage ceremonies. He mentioned and proved with the help of *slokas* (read during marriage ceremonies) that marriages were in the past, performed only after girls attained proper age and maturity of mind. He thus condemned the system of child marriages and suggested a marriageable age of 12 for girls and 16 for boys. Further he attributed the practice of *Kanyasulka* (brideprice) to the system of early marriages which resulted in widowhood and immoral practice like debauchery and cruel practices like infanticide etc.³⁴

According to Kancha Ilaiah, Brahmanical pandits of Narasimham’s period and also of subsequent times “killed” Hitasuchini with total silence. Throughout the nationalist period, while writers like Veeresalingam and Gurzada Appa Rao got projected as *Sanghasamskartalu* (Social Reformers), Narasimham’s name never figured. Even in the post-Independence India, not a single lesson was taken from this text for any level of school or college education nor did anybody write about him so that his contribution could come to the light. The reason is obvious. Narasimham’s text in every respect challenged the Brahmanical notions of life. While it was aimed at

³³S.M. Naidu’s *Hita Suchini* (Moral Instructor in prose), Madras 1862. The author was one of the earliest English educated persons in Andhra. As he died in 1858 the book was probably written around 1850. There are 8 essays in this book, each dealing with 8 different topics like education, marriage, medicine and the like. These essays were earlier printed in a Telugu journal, *Hitavadi*, published from Machilipatnam.

³⁴V. Ramakrishna, “Kandukuri Veeresalingam: Social and Political Ideas” in *The Indian Historical Review* Vol.II, Aug 1-2, 1979-80 pp. 187-188.

addressing the Sudras, Mala, Madigas, Tribals, apart from Brahmins, its language, idiom and content were chosen to educate and reform the whole Telugu society, not a particular caste or social group. But such a reform challenged the interests of the Sanskrit - English centred neo-Brahmins who were emerging as the new elite who also made use of the colonial perks. The very emergence of Narasimham as an English-Telugu knowing judge was an unacceptable development and on top of it, his writing of a book that addressed the Telugu masses was much more unacceptable to the Brahminical society.³⁵

The most interesting feature of social reform in the first three decades of the 20th century was the sway it had on the peasant caste groups - Kamma, Kapus and Reddis. This period represents the urge and the efforts of the newly emerged rich peasantry - comprised of non-brahmin castes like Kammas, Reddis and Kapus - to modernise their social and cultural outlook through internal reform, for this was seen as a necessary condition for them, playing an effective political role in the national movement. Even to articulate their class demands vis-a-vis colonial state as part of national liberation struggle they had to develop an educated 'elite' of their own. The numerous peasant caste associations and the non-Brahmin movement after 1915-16 took up precisely this task of developing education, internal reform, women's education etc. and made a determined bid to uplift their ritual status by breaking the framework of the traditional ritual and social hierarchy. This in fact explains the dominant position which the rich peasantry - Kamma, Reddis, and Kapus later acquired during the non-cooperation movement.³⁶

Though the Brahmins were holding a predominant position in the Indian National Congress in the Andhra region, non-Brahmins were evincing keen interest in the district level conferences, using them as platforms to voice their grievances and also to get benefits from the Government for their economic, social and educational growth. The district conferences afforded an eminent opportunity to these non-Brahmin castes to demonstrate their newly acquired social position and consciousness. A few individuals belonging to Kapu caste like K.V. Reddi Naidu

³⁵Kancha Ilaiah, *Op.Cit.*

³⁶A. Murali, *Social Change and Nature of Social Participation in National Movement in Andhra 1905-1934.*, Ph.D. thesis submitted to JNU, Delhi, 1985, p.758.

from the Godavari district, S. Subba Naidu of Guntur district, A.V. Jagga Rao of Visakhapatnam, M. Satya Lingam Naicker and K. Basivi Reddi of Kakinada and also the Kommi Reddi family of Godavari district are worth mentioning in this context.³⁷ Raghupati Venkata Ratnam Naidu of the Andhra Brahma Samaj also belonged to this caste.³⁸

In the Cocanada riot case, the accused were defended by K.V. Reddi Naidu (High Court Vakil) P.S. Narayana Rao and B. Surya Prakasa Rao B.A.B.L.³⁹ Following the anti-European riots in Cocanada in 1907, for example, the police reported that there are 3 or 4 very influential men such as K. Basivi Reddi, K. Surya Narayana (Kapus), Pydah Ramakrishnaiah's son Krishna Murthy and Nalam Padmanabham (Vysyas), all merchants and money lenders and others who are in entire sympathy with the Swadeshi movement. It is said that it is on account of these people that it ended so smoothly. But for these merchants, people say the whole lot of Europeans in Cocanada would have been massacred on that day.⁴⁰

The Telaga ex-peasant traders of the Kakinada, Rajahmundry area produced the families of K. Basivi Reddi and K. Suryanarayana Murthy Naidu.⁴¹ In Cocanada K. Basivi Reddi, built a school and founded 3 choultries.⁴² Further, M. Satyalingam Naicker of Kakinada on his death left Rs.9,00,000 to charity.⁴³

³⁷D.A. Washbrook, *The Emergence of Provincial Politics: The Madras Presidency 1870-1920.*, C.U.P. Cambridge, 1976, chapter-3.

³⁸V. Rama Krishna, "A background study of the Emergence of Caste Consciousness in Coastal Andhra Pradesh" in Suranjan Das and Sekhar Bandopadhyay,(ed.) *Caste and Communal Politics in South Asia* New Delhi, 1993, p.102.

³⁹*History of the freedom struggle Andhra Pradesh (hereafter H.F.S.A.P.)* A.P. State Archives, Hyderabad, 1907, p.227.

⁴⁰Confidential Report No.1, R.W.D. Ashe, Collector and District Magistrate Godavari District, dated 8 July, 1908, in M. Venkata Rangaiah, *The Freedom Struggle in Andhra Pradesh (Andhra)* Vol.III, 1965, p.225.

⁴¹Sastri(ed), *Encyclopaedia of the Madras Presidency and the Adjacent States*, Cocanada, 1920, p.510.

⁴²*Report on the Famines in the Madras Presidency during 1896 and 1897*, p.47.

⁴³Sastri. *Op.Cit.*, . p.505.

“Factors such as the spread of western education, the rising spirit of social reform, a prosperous middle class (Brahmin and non-Brahmin) actively participating in the district conferences and the Swadeshi Movement, strengthened the political consciousness among the Andhras, particularly in the coastal districts.⁴⁴ During the period of Swadeshi Movement many people of Kapu caste participated. For example, the people of Ramachandrapuram taluk of East Godavari district consisting mostly of agriculturists were already dissatisfied with the recent introduction of earthen-ware water spouts.⁴⁵ In Someswaram, the Kapu village munsif of the place is the only Swadeshi - spirited man in the village.⁴⁶ “The government is in trouble at Rajahmundry and Kakinada which arose out of the machinations of the rich Nayudus there.⁴⁷ There is one Dasara Ranga Swami Nayudu at Ammaiah Pet, whose father was employed at Cuddalore, South Arcot district. This man is an agent of K. Basivi Reddi and seems to be connected with Swadeshi Movement in the place. He is one of the organisers of political meetings.⁴⁸ And also there are very rich Kamma and Kapus at Tapeswaram in Godavari district who were very active in the Swadeshi Movement.⁴⁹ One Mathu Parri Ramaswami Naidu has opened a Swadeshi stationary shop. This man calls himself M.R. Shivaji and talks much of Swadeshi”.⁵⁰

In Guntur there were 7 or 8 Swadeshi shops, but only two of them namely V. Subba Rao and Company Book sellers and Commission Agents and G. Venkaiah and Brothers were worked with a capital of Rs.5000/- and more. The Shops managed by Narasimhulu Naidu and others were on a small scale, their capital ranging between Rs.,500/- and Rs.1,000/.⁵¹

⁴⁴K. V. Narayana Rao. *Emergence of Andhra Pradesh*, Bombay, 1973, p.97.

⁴⁵*H.F.S. A.P. From 1908-1911*, p.59.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p.62.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p.63.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, p.64.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p.71.

⁵⁰*H.F.S.A.P. 1905-1911*, p.86.

⁵¹*H.F.S.A.P. 1905-11*, p.114.

Kandula Veera Raghava Swami:

Kandula Veera Raghva Swami,⁵² a Telaga from Rajahmundry, who passed the F.A. examination in 1907 and early 1908 went to England to study law.⁵³ In England he passed Bar-at-Law. In London he made friendship with the famous revolutionaries like Savarkar and Syamji Krishna Varma. In legal practice he was very successful and was elected as Municipal Chairman of Rajahmundry for three times.⁵⁴ He was the President of Provincial Conference of Visakhapatnam district in 1918 and President of Eighth Andhra provincial Conference in 1926.

During the non-cooperation movement he resigned from his legal profession and participated in the congress activities and was jailed in 1922. In the beginning of the Andhra University he was elected as Senate member in 1926 and continued upto 1930. In 1926 Madras provincial elections, he contested on Swarajya Party and defeated his rival Justice Party candidate K.V. Reddi Naidu who also belonged to his caste. He worked in that post as well as member of Madras legislature upto 1930. He was also elected as the President of Andhra Rastra Maha Sabha.⁵⁵

In 1927 once again he was jailed in 'Simon Go Back' movement. In 1926 when the Madras Government imposed heavy taxes upon the ryots, when the people protested for their inability to pay the same. Mr. Swamy established Ryots Associations particularly in the districts of Godavari and protested against the imposition of heavy taxes. Feared by this the Madras Government appointed an unofficial committee under the chairmanship of Sri Arogya Swamy Mudaliar. He was a member in that unofficial committee and suggested that taxes should not be raised upto 60 years.

He was elected as member of Congress Working Committee. In the 1937 elections he was elected to Madras legislature as a congress member. He underwent

⁵²H.F.S.A.P. 1908, p.87.

⁵³Ibid., p.227.

⁵⁴The Hindu, Friday, May 2, 1919.

⁵⁵Sri Rebba Pragada Mandeswara Sharma, *Veera Samsarana Mandiram* (Telugu), Kovuru, 1953, p.69.

one year imprisonment in 1940 for his participation in Individual Satyagraha. Again he was elected as member of legislative assembly from Rajahmundry constituency.⁵⁶ When he was on death bed he wrote a will and according to it, his property was divided between congress party and his sons equally. He died in 1945.

For Telugu readers, the South Indian people's Association acquired a well-established Telugu paper, founded in 1885, the Andhra Prakasica. A.C. Parthasarathi Naidu was the founder and editor of Andhra Prakasica. Andhra Prakasica, under A.C. Parthasarathi Naidu's editorship helped in promoting the non-Brahmin movement.⁵⁷ A classic case of the diversity to be was that of A.C. Parthasarathi Naidu, who was a founder of the Naidu Sangam, but also at various, a leader of Hindu religious revivalist, a social reformer and a protector of mercantile interests, an advocate of Telugu cultural revival, Andhra movement apologist, a congressman and a justice party journalist and a spokesman of the United Indian Union.⁵⁸ By 1880's he was making his presence (along with T.V. Iyer, G. Guruswami Chetty) felt in several arenas of city government and was member of the Madras Corporation. In 1907, for example, A.C. Parthasarathi Naidu, had the tenacity to advocate an increase in municipal taxation in order to improve social services and was severely beaten at polls.⁵⁹

In Madras city in 1910, for example, A.C. Parthasarathi Naidu attempted to establish an association of the Naidus. However, the word Naidu was an honorific applied loosely to a variety of historically and socially separate Telugu castes and it was by no means clear who precisely the Naidus were, let alone what interests they could be said to hold in common. To solve the problem, and to register his association to use the definition of Naidu supplied by the Dr. Brown's Anglo - Telugu Dictionary.⁶⁰

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 70.

⁵⁷N. Innaiah, *State Government and Politics: A study of A.P. Politics 1885-1985*, Scientific Services, Hyderabad, 1986, p.43.

⁵⁸C.J Baker and D.A. Washbrook, *South India: Political Institutions and Political Change 1880-1940*, The Macmillan Company, Delhi, 1975, p.179.

⁵⁹*The Hindu*, 3 Sept, 1907.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 10 June, 1910.

Kurma Venkat Reddi Naidu 1875-1940

Sri Kurma Venkat Reddi Naidu (hereafter K.V.R.Naidu) incessantly worked and rose to the highest position of a Governor of the State and continuously held one important position after another which enabled him to fight for the cause, to which he was dedicated. He was both a liberal and a democrat. Added to this he was quite modern in his views. His speeches if read even today breathe so much of modernity and have a relevance to our problems now. In the issues he dealt with, whether agriculture or industry or education or defence, his ideas sparkle with freshness and upto dateness.⁶¹ In short he was also known as Sri Kurma.

Sri Kurma was a fine speaker who used to make a thorough study of the subject before he delivered his speech. Nature had not only endowed him with a pleasing personality that had good looks with attractive features and a fine figure but had sharp brain to answer difficult questions on the spur of the movement with accuracy and precision. This he must have acquired after some years of practice in law, that had made him one of the leading lawyers at Eluru.⁶²

K.V. Reddi Naidu was born in a middle class Kapu family at Rajahmundry in 1875 although his forbears were pretty rich owning a couple of villages called Gangavaram and Kurmapuram in the Ramachandrapuram taluk of the modern-East Godavari district.. It is said that one of his paternal ancestors Sambhanna Naidu served as a military officer on the side of the English against the Dutch towards the end of the 18th century and earned the title of commandant (*Kumandan*) which became a family appellation .⁶³ K.V. Reddi Naidu's family had served the East India Company in the 18th century and spent most of the 19th century in the Krishna district Police Department.⁶⁴ His father Bapanna Naidu was in the Police service; his mother Venkatarathamma was a pious lady devoted to religion.

⁶¹ S. Shridevi, *Luminaries of Andhra Pradesh*: World Telugu Conference Publication, A.P. Sahitya Akademi,Hyderabad, 1976.. p.87-88.

⁶²*Ibid.*, p.88.

⁶³S. Shri Devi, *Ibid.*, p.88.

⁶⁴David Washbrook, *Op. Cit.*, p.280.

K.V. Reddi Naidu had his schooling both at Rajahmundry and Madras. He joined the Men's Christian College, Madras and graduated in Mathematics in 1894. Soon he joined the Rajahmundry Arts College and taught statistics and dynamics. This again he left to become an assistant in the Board High School at Amalapuram. He married Smt. Lakshmi Kanthamma in 1896 who bore him 5 children two daughters and three sons. (The sons were highly educated both in India and England and have been holding high positions in life. The daughters have been married into good and well-to-do families). Soon after his marriage, he gave up his teaching position and went to Madras to do his law. After finishing his Bachelor of Law course in 1900 from the Madras University, he set up his legal practice first at Rajahmundry, and later he shifted his practice to Eluru. Further he took much interest in the public life. He was a member of the Municipal Council from 1901 - 1905 in Rajahmundry and in course of time became the acting Chairman of the council. He was also elected to the Polavaram Taluk Board and the Godavari District Board. He devoted a good bit of his time and energy to public work while pursuing his profession of law in which he had an abiding interest. This sustaining interest, he recalls after years, when he visited Eluru as a law member and was happy when he was honoured there with a civic address and the city's citizenship.⁶⁵

His public spiritedness was not content with his work at the local bodies. His energy needed more venues for work. From 1901 to 1916 he attended several of the district and provincial political conferences and the Indian National Congress (hereafter I.N.C.) sessions. He attended the I.N.C. meetings every year in the districts and large cities like Calcutta and Madras and fully participated in their deliberations. Later he left the congress and joined the non-Brahmin movement of which he soon became an ardent advocate and reputed leader for a long time.⁶⁶ Justice Party had its origin through the non-Brahmin movement. The Justice Party mainly consisted of Velama, Kshatriya, Kamma, Kapus, Telaga and Reddi

⁶⁵S. Shri Devi, *Op.Cit.*, p.89.

⁶⁶D. Suran Naidu, *The Congress Party in Transition: A Study of Srikakulam District in Andhra Pradesh*, 1991, p.41. Also see G.V.Subba Rao, *Life and Times of K.V.Reddi Naidu*, Rajahmundry, 1957, pp.10-11, Shri Devi *Op.,Cit.*, p.90.

communities.⁶⁷ During the initial period of the Justice Party, leaders like K.V.Reddi Naidu created some euphoria in the Coastal Districts and won some support among the rich peasantry.⁶⁸ In the Justice Party from Srikakulam district apart from the Raja of Bobbili (Velama), A.P. Patro (Kalinga), Pakanati Narayana Rao, a Kapu were the leading lights of the Justice Party. With the formation of the Justice Party in 1916 a competitive style of politics came into existence.

Thus K.V. Reddi Naidu along with the T. Ethirajula Mudaliar was prominent congressman until about 1915.⁶⁹ The initiative thus taken by the few leaders in Madras encouraged several non-Brahmins in Andhra to organise conferences of like nature in the respective localities. The Bikkavole (East Godavari) conference held on 27th Oct, 1917 was attracted by notable non-Brahmin leaders. Among the Kapus were K.V. Reddi Naidu and R. Venkata Ratnam Naidu. In this conference K.V. Reddi Naidu, who was a founder member of 'Justice Party' from the East Godavari district expressed that each caste should try to uplift its members. He set out the agenda of the Justice Party thus:

“Social equality must be established. The stain of untouchability shall be removed. The dictates of Priest Craft must be silenced. Paracheries (Harijan Wadas) must be purified. Agraharams must be humanised . The portals of temples must be thrown open. The contents of sealed scriptures should be brought to light”.⁷⁰

The greatest support for Justice Party agitation came from the main non-Brahmin caste Hindu groups in the presidency from the Vellalas in the Tamil districts, the Reddis, Kapus and Kammars in the Telugu districts, from the Nair's of Malabar district and from the trading groups such as the Beri chettis and particularly the Baliya

⁶⁷N. Innaiah, *Politics for Power: The Role of Caste and Factions in Andhra Pradesh 1880-1980*, Scientific Services, Hyderabad 1981, p.5.

⁶⁸D. Suran Naidu, *Op.Cit.*, p.61.

⁶⁹David Washbrook, *Op.Cit.*, also S. Shri Devi, *Op.Cit.*

⁷⁰*The Hindu*, Special Issue Titled India, August 15, 1997, p.97-98.

Naidus who were settled all over South India.⁷¹ Of course, there were few in the party who were poor.⁷²

On one occasion at Nagapatnam, in Tanjore district for example K.V. Reddi Naidu argued that “the iniquitous laws, that for ages, maintained an invidious distinction between Brahmins and non-Brahmins, with regard to marriage, adoption, inheritance and the like, must be altered”⁷³

The Justice Party, having been committed from the first to the principle of communal representation did not have to contend with any opposition from its own membership. In fact, K.V. Reddi Naidu, soon after Montague’s announcement, cited the grant of Muslim communal representation under the 1909 Morley-Minto Reforms as an adequate precedent for Justice party claims.⁷⁴ When the Secretary of State Montague came to Madras along with the Viceroy Chelmsford a representation was made to them on behalf of the non-Brahmin community. They pleaded with the Montague Committee to provide adequate safeguards for the non-brahmins in the form of communal representation.⁷⁵ The Justice Party delegation met the Joint Select Committee. Two members, K.V. Reddi Naidu and Ramarayanigar played a key role in persuading to provide special representation to the non-Brahmins. Consequently, on 17th Nov, 1919 Joint select Committee recommended separate representation for the non-Brahmins of Madras Presidency by means of reservation of seats.⁷⁶

In 1919 all political parties sent their representatives to England to give evidence before the Joint Parliamentary Committee that was appointed to hear their views and submit recommendations to the parliament. The Justice Party also sent its

⁷¹Eugenic F. Ireschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India: The Non-Brahmin Movement and Tamil Separatism 1916-1929*, University of California Press, Barkely and Loss Angeles, 1969, p.176.

⁷²*Ibid.*, p.177.

⁷³G.V. Subba Rao, *Op.Cit.*, pp.78-79.

⁷⁴*The Hindu*, (Weekly Edition) Oct.5, 1917.

⁷⁵G.V.Subba Rao, *Op.Cit.*, p.38.

⁷⁶Eugene F. Irschick, *Op. Cit.*, pp.141-146.

deputation with Dr.. T.M. Nair as its leader and K.V. Reddi Naidu as a member. Unfortunately, within a week of their arrival in England, Dr. Nair fell seriously ill and passed away. So the mantle of leadership fell on the shoulders of K.V. Reddi Naidu who had to make a special study of the problem and give evidence.⁷⁷

After he returned from England in 1919, K.V. Reddi Naidu was nominated to the Legislative Assembly. Added to the responsibility, he has now to tour and make electioneering speeches. The Justice Party owed its victory in 1920 elections partly to the congress boycott, but it had also done some effective campaigning. K.V. Reddi Naidu, for example, toured a number of the Tamil districts in October 1920. On the eve of voting, he urged people to cast their ballots for the Justice Party.⁷⁸

The first general elections in Madras Presidency was held at the end of November 1920. During these elections, the non-Brahmin leaders campaigned vigorously. K.V. Reddi Naidu, for instance, addressed many election meetings in the southern districts. At the Tanjore district he spoke with prophetic vision:

“The coming elections afford one great opportunity for us to be rid of that (Brahmin) tyranny and to become once more free citizens. The fortunes of our party and of the great non-Brahmin Community well, for a long time, largely depend upon the results of these elections and the extent to which we avail ourselves of this opportunity..... If the Brahmins come into power they will consolidate it and work it out to our further disadvantages. It is a case of now or never. If we are not returned to the legeslative council in large numbers, we loose the opportunity. The hand on the dial of our progress will be set back by at least two decades. The work of the last 3 years would go all in vain. Therefore my friends, go to the country, educate the voter and impress upon him the value of the vote. The non-Brahmin voters form an over whelming majority and the secrecy of the ballot will protect them from the sinister influence of the official, the vakil and the priest.”⁷⁹

⁷⁷S. Shri Devi, *Op.Cit.*, p.91.

⁷⁸*Madras Mail*, Sept.18 & 20, 1920, Oct.9, 1921. cited in Eugene F. Irschick, *Op.Cit.*, pp.176-177.

⁷⁹G.V. Subba Rao, *Op.Cit.*, p.76.

After 1920 elections, when Tyagaraya chetti was asked by the Governor Lord Willingdon to form a Ministry, he declined the offer, but he suggested 3 other candidates. They were (1) A.Subbarayulu Reddiar, a Telugu Reddi who had been the president of Cuddalore Municipality in South Arcot district. (2) P.Ramarayaningar, a Telugu speaking Velama Zamindar from Chittoor district and (3) K.V. Reddi Naidu, a Kapu from Godavari District.

Finally Willingdon appointed Subbarayulu Reddiar as C.M. in December 1920. In his Ministry K.V. Reddi Naidu was appointed as Minister of Development.⁸⁰ He was also incharge of Agriculture, Cooperation, Industries and Fisheries.

What made the situation particularly significant in Madras Presidency during the Justice Ministries in 1920 and 1923 was that the Justice Leaders who under took the responsibility for the transferred Departments were experienced in Municipal Government. Dr. Nair, K.V. Reddi Naidu and A.P. Patro had written about Municipal Governments. K.V. Reddi Naidu contributed many articles on local government to the Indian Patriot and these were published under the title, The New Municipal Rules with questions and Answers in the Madras Legislative Council (Madras, 1910).

K.V. Reddi Naidu was only one of many Justice leaders who toured the province giving speeches against non-cooperation. For example, the Justice Party which was opposed to the non-cooperation movement did not get any response from the Guntur district. Sri K.V. Reddi Naidu its leader and a Minister visited Tenali on Sept. 15, 1921. In a public meeting there he referred to the non-cooperation and said "by following the ways of the non-cooperators India would not gain what she wanted. Boycott of Schools would only serve to sleep India in ignorance. Again to give up foreign trade would also be a piece of Madness. Foreign trade meant the increase of wealth."⁸¹ The neighbouring Guntur town gave a devastating reply to the K.V. Reddi Naidu. P.C.N. Yathi Rajulu Naidu leader of the Justice Party in the Guntur district

⁸⁰Eugene F. Ireschick, *Op. Cit.*, pp.179-180.

⁸¹G.V. Subba Rao, *Op.Cit.*, pp.112-113.

and Chairman of the Guntur Municipality during 1918-1921 lost the election to the non cooperators in 1921.⁸²

In 1921, two years after the Montagu-Chelmsford Report, Councils came to existence, a motion was passed unanimously in the Madras legislative council condemning the heavy impositions. K.V. Reddi Naidu, the Minister of Development, who was to become the great protagonist of Madras rights in this matter, protested that Bengal had always been treated as the "Prodigal son" for whom Madras, "the fatted cow" was slaughtered".⁸³

K.V. Reddi Naidu who was incharge of Industries in the first Justice Ministry took earnest efforts to promote the industrial growth of this presidency by bringing forth an act called *State Aid to Industries Act* which is considered the Magnum opus of his life. The Act was intended mainly to assist the establishment and development of industries that had an important bearing on the economic development of the presidency.⁸⁴ Further, K.V. Reddi Naidu, Minister for Development was enthusiastic about the Development of Sugar industry in the coastal Andhra. He said that "this attempt to raise the sugar cane crop, to build a factory and to manufacture of sugar ought not to be given up. For this purpose, however, fertile land not in possession of ryot must be secured. There is any amount of land in the Godavari Agency and Peddapuram Taluq. All this is waste land".⁸⁵

Acting on the councils proceedings in Sept. 1921 the government issued the first Communal G.O. asking the heads of the Departments to furnish twice year, a report showing the caste representation of all new recruits in their respective departments.⁸⁶ The second communal G.O. was issued on Aug.1922 adding strength

⁸²D. Veeraiah, *Guntur Mandal Sarvaswamu* (Telugu) not dated p.153.

⁸³*Madras Legislative Council Proceedings*, I.B. 1st April, 1921, p.1548.

⁸⁴*Proceedings of the Madras Legislative Council*, Volume.XXIV, Aug.1922, p.618.

⁸⁵*G.O. Development No.390*, 16th March 1923.

⁸⁶*Public G.O. No.613*, 16 Sept, 1921 also see Ireschick *Op. Cit.*, pp.368-370.

to the first one. Even Committees have been constituted in colleges to give due representation to the students of the non-Brahmin community.⁸⁷

The second general elections to the Madras legislative council and the legislative assembly were held on 31st Oct, 1923. In 1923 elections, there were a few who campaigned vigorously. K.V. Reddi Naidu toured the Telugu area several times, speaking in Telugu. He chiefly sought to publicise the work of Development Minister, including the Department of Industries and Agriculture and the doctrines of the Justice Party.⁸⁸ In the second Ministry K.V. Reddi Naidu was dropped in preference to T.N. Sivagnanan Pillai.⁸⁹ This is because of organisational problem. This was due to the Justice Party and ministry had different leaders. Having two men, one operating as party leader and the other as Chief Minister diffused responsibilities and weakened rapport between the Chief Minister and his colleagues. Two significant leaders were lost to the party as a result of this system. One was K.V. Reddi Naidu, Minister for Development (1921-23) who was abruptly dropped after the elections of 1923 without any discussion. Second was P Subbarayan, a progressive, who questioned Naidu's removal, he became the second leader lost to the party.⁹⁰

K.V. Reddi Naidu, himself a former Minister in the Justice Cabinet, also expressed his disappointment with the working of the party. In a letter to the party leader P. Thayagaraya Chetti, in Sept.1924, he remarked "Our party had been too much observed in either attacking our opponents, the Brahmins or in defending ourselves against their attacks. We must agree to be not merely passive and verbal supporters of Swaraj, but active participators in all constitutional agitations to hasten its grant something must be done to assure the public that we as a party stand for real democracy....and not merely for the ascendancy of Zamindars and the

⁸⁷Public G.O. No.658, 15Aug.1922, also see Ireschick, *Op. Cit.*, pp.370-372.

⁸⁸Ireschick. *Op.Cit.* p.261.

⁸⁹P. Raja Ram, *Justice Party: A Historical Perspective*, Poompozril Publishers, Madras, 1988, p.217.

⁹⁰Indhu Rajagopal, *The Tyranny of Caste: The non-Brahmin Movement and Political Development in South India*, Vikas Publishing House, N.Delhi, 1985.p.50.

aristocracy".⁹¹ K.V. Reddi Naidu further argued that if the party was to survive and prosper it needed to close its ranks and that it should ask Natesa Mudaliar and others who had resigned in disgust to come back. Reddi Naidu also complained that the party no longer had any programme of action and no policy to present either to the electorate or to follow in the legislative council. He urged that intense and serious efforts be made to start new branches of the party and to revive the old once throughout the presidency.⁹²

The most important conclusion that he drew from his own experiences was that the Justice Party had no alternative but to plunge into the National movement. To attain a national out look and status he suggested that the party should join the congress. Several justice leaders shared his views.⁹³

One of Reddi Naidu's most interesting points was his recommendation that the Justice Party should take on a more national look. "We never cared", he wrote, "to send our representatives to the Legislative Assembly (in Delhi). (The Honourable Mr. C.P. Rama Swami Iyer will tell you in what esteem we are held in Simla.) To attain a national out look and status, he suggested that the party should Join the congress for purposes requiring All India United Action:. For my part I will not spin to join the Congress"... but he warned, "we are ignored now by the rest of India". "That no representatives of the Justice Party had been invited to the Unity conference in Delhi in Sept. 1924 indicated to Reddi Naidu, the degree of the non-brahmins isolation from all India happenings. Two years ago, Reddi Naidu said the organisers of the unity conference, "would not have dared to ignore us in this fashion."⁹⁴

K.V. Reddi Naidu warned the party that its fortunes "were at a low ebb" and that serious efforts must be made to establish branches in the Towns and Villages of

⁹¹Ireschick, *Op. Cit.*, p.260 also see S. Gopala Krishnan, *Political Movements in South India 1914-1929*, New Era Publications, Madras, 1981, p.134.

⁹²Ireschick, *Ibid.*, p.261.

⁹³S. Gopala Krishnan, *Op. Cit.*, p.134.

⁹⁴Ireschick. *Op. Cit.* P.261.

the province or the party would lose disastrously in the coming elections.⁹⁵ As he expected in the 1926 elections, many of the Justice Party stalwarts faced failures. Among them K.V. Reddi Naidu was one.

From 1923-28 Sir Kurma had no specific position although he was extremely busy with work pertaining to various institutions. He was a member of the senate of Madras and Andhra Universities. He was a member of the Madras Law College Council. He was the Chairman of the Court of Visitors to the Indian Institute of Sciences, Bangalore. He was a special lecturer on Constitutional law at the Madras Law College. He was the Chairman of the Madras Fisheries Committee. So he had handful responsibilities. He was appointed by the Government of India a delegate to the League of Nations at Geneva in 1925.⁹⁶

In 1929 K.V.Reddi Naidu was appointed as Agent General to the Government of India in South Africa. During the 3 years stay there, Sri Kurma did a marvellous job of his work. One of the local papers the "Rand Daily Mail" wrote "by the departure of Sir Kurma Reddi, the Indian community of South Africa has lost a sincere friend who has always strenuously upheld their cause. Sir Kurma also won the cordial esteem of European section of the population by his unflinching tact and moderation and his outstanding social qualities" All the news papers wrote kind words of esteem and praised his work there.⁹⁷

Sri Kurma's tenure of office in South Africa was marked by his consummate skill and sagacity in dealing with the South African Indian problems. As a member of the Second Round Table Conference he had rendered meritorious service to the South African Indian community.

Sir Kurma had an occasion to write to Mahatma Gandhi during his stay there. Sir Kurma's biographer says, in regard to this in reply to a communication from Sir Kurma Mahatma Gandhi wrote a letter in his own hand which reveals the extent to

⁹⁵*The Hindu*, June, 1, 1925.

⁹⁶S. Shri Devi, *Op.Cit.*, p.93.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, p.93.

which each of them could sink their political differences in furtherance of a common national cause. It is interesting to read Gandhiji's letter to Sir Kurma:

"I know how true you are when you tell me about our people's apathy in matters in which they are expected to exert themselves. I knew, even in my time, the difficulties of the poor vegetable hawkers. It was their amazing industry that I thought enabled them to walk long distances early in the morning and dispose of in the best manner they could, their produce before 9 A.M. May success attend your effort on their behalf."⁹⁸

Greater honours awaited Sri Kurma on his return from South Africa. He went to England to represent the claims of the Andhras of Berhampore and Parla Kimidi before the British Parliament. He became the law member of the Madras Government from 1934-37. During 1936 he became the acting Governor of Madras during leave vacancy of H.E. Lord Erskin (Went to England on leave). The titles of K.C.S. I and Honorary D. Litt of the Andhra University were conferred on him in 1937. In the same year he became the first C.M. of Madras, under the Government of India Act 1935 and continued till the congress Government took it over⁹⁹. Till the end of his life Sir Kurma held very high positions one after the other.¹⁰⁰

In his 65th year in 1940 Sri K.V. Reddi Naidu took ill for a short time in Madras where he had gone to Annamalai University for a meeting of the Syndicate held in Chattinad House and on the 9th Sept, 1940 he passed away.¹⁰¹

A colourful career of great responsibilities came to an abrupt end. The Governor of Madras said, it is with great sorrow that I learned this morning of the death of Sir Kurma. It could be idle for one to recall all the many services he performed in his long career culminating in the Governorship of this presidency; they

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, pp.93-94 This letter finds in G.V. Subba Rao 'Life and Times of K.V. Reddi Naidu' which was cited in S. Shri Devi's book.

⁹⁹*The Hindu*, July, 15, 1937, also see M. Venkata Rangaiah, *Op.Cit.*, Vol.IV, p.98, G.V. Subba Rao, *History of Andhra Movement*., *Andhra Region*, Vol.II, 1982, p.52.

¹⁰⁰S. Shri Devi, *Op.Cit.*, p.95.

¹⁰¹*Ibid*, p.97.

are too well known. He never flagged in his devotion to the state or in his service to the people in war and peace and now you may well be proud that he was on the eve of taking up further patriotic work on the National Defence Council. My wife and I tender our deepest sympathy to you and your family. Madras has lost one of her best citizens and one whom it will be impossible to replace.¹⁰²

Brahmarishi Venkata Ratnam Naidu 1862-1939:

Brahmarishi Venkata Ratnam Naidu was one of the great luminaries. He rose to great heights in the public life of the country and made a mark as a great educationist, social reformer and a saint par excellence. No name has been so revered and respected as Sri Raghupati Venkat Ratnam Naidu's in the first four decades of this century in Madras Presidency.

Venkata Ratnam was born on 1st October 1862 on Mahanavami, an auspicious day in Telaga Caste at Machilipatnam. He comes from a well known family marked for its honesty, courage and faithfulness. His father Subedar Appaiah Naidu served as a military officer under the British and is known for his qualities of head and heart. He belonged to the faith of Ramanuja, the well known Vaishnava saint. His mother Seshamma was deeply religious in her nature. She managed her family with unusual ability. She fed the poor and downtrodden and honoured the priests and pandits. Not only she was devoted to her faith but she used to respect and pray before the tombs of Mahammaden saints. Venkata Ratnam was influenced to a great extent by his mother rather than by his father.¹⁰³

Throughout his formative years he displayed a keen interest in sufism and a sensitivity to social reform. His views on reform were modelled not just on the views of Bengali philosophers, especially Brahmo philosophers, whose writings no doubt exercised a considerable influence on him, but also on western philosophers,

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, p.97.

¹⁰³M.R. Appa Rao, "Brahmarishi Venkata Ratnam Naidu", *Telugu Vani: Journal of the International Telugu Institute*, Vol.1, No.3, Sept, 15, 1976. p.19.

especially Carlyle and Emerson, while at Madras in the 1880s he started the movement for social purity.¹⁰⁴

Raghupati entered the school at the age of twelve in Zilla High School, Banda (U.P). He learnt Persian, Urdu and Hindustani. While learning Persian language, he learnt that God is only one. He began to raise doubts about the traditional method of worship. After his father's transfer to Hyderabad, he joined the Nizam's High School, Chaderghat. Dr. Aghornath Chattopadhyaya, father of Sarojini Naidu, was the Principal of the School and his influence was also there to some extent. Later he joined Madras Christian college whose principal was Dr. Miller. He was the founder of the college and one of the greatest educationists of modern India.¹⁰⁵ He admired and revered Dr. Miller who remained till the end of his life, his chief perceptor and Guru. He had the privilege of dedicating his two volumes of speeches and addresses called 'Message and Ministrations' in these words "Unto the gratefully cherished memory of my ever revered Pradhanacharya Reverend William Miller". His admiration for him was so great that he imbibed his ideals and absorbed many a great quality from him. He gave a donation of Rs.10,000 to Madras University to establish what is known as Dr. Miller Commemoration Lectures every year.¹⁰⁶

Raghupati Venkata Ratnam Naidu was a great student of a great teacher indeed. Presiding over the Miller Memorial meeting at Kakinada which was after hearing the sad demise of Rev. Dr. William Miller at Edinborough, he spoke movingly about his master, whom he called the Mahamahopadhyaya of Southern Indian and went on describing his qualities of head and heart. He said "His natural talents and cultivated abilities were of a magnitude quite ample to place him on the fore-front of his contemporaries".¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴V. Rama Krishna, *Social Reform.....Op. Cit.*, pp.136-137.

¹⁰⁵M.R. Appa Rao, *Op.Cit.*, p.20

¹⁰⁶S. Shri Devi, *Op. Cit.*, p.36.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, pp.36-37.

Now turning to the career of Venkata Ratnam he took his M.A. and L.T. Degrees from Madras University and joined for his law which course some how he did not finish.¹⁰⁸

Naidu chose the career of teaching. He taught in colleges at Ellore, Rajahmundry and Machilipatnam. Later he became the principal of Mahboob College, Hyderabad, in 1889 and continued till 1904. Veeresalingam's departure for Madras in 1897 affected the social reform movement in Andhra region. The scene of the reform movements during the absence of Veeresalingam, shifted from Godavari to other districts in particular to Krishna district.¹⁰⁹ This was because of Raghupati Venkata Ratnam Naidu, who was a student, was an active participant of the 'Social Purity Movement' and a staunch Brahmo at Madras was now a teacher at Machilipatnam.

From 1905 to 1919 he was the principal of Pithapuram Raja's College at Kakinada and earned fame and name not only for efficient administration but as a rare teacher of excellence, a teacher who proved that his main concern was the welfare of his students. It was while serving in these colleges and especially in the last one that he left his deepest impression on students. He was never content merely with teaching in the class room but used to meet the students outside the college and by example and percept he succeeded in shaping their conduct and character and making them lead really puritanical sort of life.¹¹⁰ Further, as a principal, by inspiring students laid the social foundation for the Nationalist Movement in the East Godavari district.

The Northern Circars Students Conference:

This Novel Institution in the student world was inaugurated in the December 1908 by the students of the Maharaja's College Vizianagaram and it was successfully

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.37.

¹⁰⁹ Guntur was a part of the Krishna District till 1904.

¹¹⁰ P.Siva Shankar Reddi, "Influence of Social Reformers on Women's Education in Andhra During the 2nd half of the 19th Century" *Itihas*, Jan.-June, 1984, Vol.XII, No.1, p.25.

conducted there under the Presidentship of Dr. R. Venkata Ratnam Naidu.¹¹¹ He was the first one to have started helping the Harijans and others of depressed classes. His one ambition was to see that all his students became good citizens of the country. So he devoted all his time in this direction. No wonder the parents and their children were not merely grateful to this model of a teacher but were deeply devoted to him till the last..¹¹²

Recognising his merit not only as a great teacher but as one whose ideals had made the profession of teaching the foremost. The University of Madras elected him as its distinguished Vice-Chancellor. In fact Venkata Ratnam was the first one to have been on elected chief executive of this University. During his regime of about four years he had introduced many a laudable change to the benefit of both the teacher and the taught and the welfare of the society in general. He gave prominence to the South Indian languages and bestowed untold facilities and encouragement for their development. As for research, it gained unprecedented importance at University.¹¹³

The great philanthropist and towering intellectual R. V. Naidu had done yeomen service to the Hindu society in general and women's education in particular. We can not forget to mention his great works which influenced the then women in recognising their position in society.¹¹⁴ His experience gained by working as a teacher for several years helped him much in understanding the need of education for women orphans and widows of the day. For the first time in Andhra, while he was working as the principal of the Pithapuram College in 1904 he allowed and admitted the women to study in his college successfully and that too without fees. This was greatly responsible for the promotion of co-education in other colleges and later it gradually attracted the attention to the needs of co-education even at all India level. He pointed out the need of education as a first step and started a printing press in 1881, through which he ran two journals named *Brahma Prakasica* and *Fellow*

¹¹¹H.F.S. A.P. from 1905-1911, p.70.

¹¹²S. Shri Devi, *Op.Cit.*, p.37.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, p.38.

¹¹⁴P. Siva Sankar Reddi, *Op. Cit.*, pp.22-25.

Worker. These journals served much in emancipating the people and the country from the evils of social segregation and discrimination and also helped the women's education through his articles and in journals.¹¹⁵

Venkata Ratnam Naidu was outstanding in his kindness and while he met four orphan girls at Machilipatnam he took them to his house and fed them and educated them till they reached high positions. Naidu brought these 4 Harijan orphan girls as his own children and if any body even asked him, he said they are his own children. Two of them married brahmins. Imagine highly educated brahmin marrying a Harijan orphan girl in the early decades of this century. No one except Naidugaru was capable of this achievement.¹¹⁶

Naturally, honours came to him spontaneously. The title of Rao Bahadur was conferred on him in 1912 and Dewan Bahadur in 1918. Kaiser-I-Hind gold medal was presented to him in 1923. Finally he was knighted in 1924. This was the first occasion when a knighthood was conferred upon a non-official educationist. He was honoured by the teachers as Kulapathi. Andhra University in its first convocation in 1927 conferred the *Honorary Degree of Doctorate of Literature* on him. His life-size portrait was unveiled in the Madras University by Sir George Stanley, the Governor in 1928. On the occasion of his 70th Birth day, all his former pupils and many admirers conferred upon him the honoured title of Brahmarishi for he was full of upanishadic wisdom, Buddistic compassion and the Christian concept of service to humanity.¹¹⁷

Venkata Ratnam Naidu could convince the ruler of Pithapuram and explained the need of orphanage for the indigent persons in the society to provide them minimum necessities and education and could succeed in doing so. He was appropriately called Brahmarshi by his admirers. To students and teachers he was a Kulapati.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, p.25.

¹¹⁶M.R. Appa Rao, *Op. Cit.*, p.23.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, p.22.

¹¹⁸P. Shiv Shankar Reddi, *Op. Cit.*, p26.

Naidu was outstanding in the pragmatic view and implemented his ideas in practice as a teacher, principal and Vice-Chancellor and his services were priceless. The teachings of Raghupati greatly inspired several individuals, voluntary associations, christian missionaries and even the British Government and these in turn had started a large number of schools and even colleges for women and had been greatly responsible for the women's education..¹¹⁹

On account of his zeal in public activities and reforms, he was nominated as a member, by the Madras Government to the provincial legislative Council. In 1920 Ministry of non-Brahmins, R. Venkata Ratham Naidu assured the house that the eagerness shown in the matter of communal representation was not born of an inordinate craving for the loaves and fishes of office" but as emanated from the conviction that such a representation will serve as a "powerful stimulus to education and a sure index to the civil recognition and the social responsibility of the country as a whole" ¹²⁰ The resolution was unanimously accepted. He was also a member of the Senate and fellow of the Madras university. He was able to introduce many far-reaching reforms after becoming the Vice-Chancellor of the Madras University. He opened the Department of Oriental Studies and made the study of Indian History compulsory. He sponsored chairs in Philosophy and Mathematics. He also introduced compulsory Physical training and study of second language. He inaugurated lectures on South Indian Languages by eminent Scholars. He honoured Indian Scholars by conferring the degree of doctorate. He framed and guided the Andhra University bill through the legislature.¹²¹

Venkata Ratnam Naidu was for the people and of the people. He served the people as a Municipal Councillor of Machilipatnam. Apart from his social and educational fields he got in touch with the I.N.C. along with varied activities. As the

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, p.26

¹²⁰*Proceedings of the Madras Legislative Council*, 1921, Vol II, p.431.

¹²¹M.R. Appa Rao, *Op.Cit.*, p.21.

President of Hithakarini Samaj, Rajahmundry, he managed a widow's house (or) home, a High School¹²²

Venkata Ratnam's tender care of the orphan and the widow, and affectionate concern for the oppressed in society was something phenomenal. The orphanage, the college, and the Brahma Samaj Mandir at Kakinada, "the Nursery, the Rosary and the Sanctuary, as he lovingly used to call them, constituted the tripod on which his glory rested for ever".¹²³

The appointment of Raghupati as the principal of P.R. College 1905 made Kakinada the centre of Brahma activity. Venkata Ratnam and the Raja of Pithapuram extended a good deal of cooperation to Veeresalingam in spreading the ideals of the Brahma Samaj. Venkataratnam was also responsible for inculcating the Raja into the Brahma faith and it was under the influence of Venkata Ratnam that the Raja rendered great help in building a number of choultries, hospitals and providing free boarding and lodging for the depressed classes.¹²⁴

The year 1905 was very significant in the history of the Brahma Samaj Movement in Andhra. It witnessed three events, namely (1) assumption of Venkata Ratnam of the Principalship of the Pithapur Rajah's College, Kakinada.¹²⁵ (2) the return of the Yuva Raja of Pithapuram, R.V.K.M. Surya Rao Bahadur back to Pithapur after his education at Madras and (3) return of Veeresalingam to Rajahmundry after his stay at Madras. From now onwards till 1919 when Venkata Ratnam retired from the Principalship, Kakinada became the centre of the Andhra Brahma Samaj under the leadership of the Venkata Ratnam. With Rajahmundry

¹²²*Ibid.*, p.22.

¹²³*Andhra Mahila Sabha Silver Jubilee Souvenir*, Madras, 1962, p.34.

¹²⁴*Kakinada Brahma Samaj History: Sixty Years, Special Number 1888-1949*, (Souvenir) Kakinada, 1949, pp.22-26.

¹²⁵The appointment of Venkata Ratnam to the Principalship was a sensational affair. The two applicants for the post were - Venkata Ratnam and U.S. Srinivas Sastry. Though some members of the College committee opposed Venkata Ratnam's selection as principal. Finally he was appointed. See K. Suryanarayana, *Sir R. Venkata Ratnam, Rajahmundry, 1952*, pp.35-36.

(Veeresalingam) and Pithapuram (Raja Surya Rao) as the two other important centres in the Godavari district. From that time (1905) till the death of Venkata Ratnam (1939) the Rajah of Pithapur was drawn into Venkata Ratnam's magnetic field. Virtual filial-parental love existed between the two of them. Venkata Ratnam was to describe their relationship as follows:

"My first born was a boy. He was resumed to the Divine Mother's bosom as yet a child here. But just then was born another son in 1885, a prince there in distant Pithapuram.... Turning to the inter-relation between Sri Maharajah garu and myself that he and I have been drawn intimately together so much so that it is not common sentimental indulgence but the bare simple reality that he has been unto me a child of my heart that our strings have come to be inextricably inter woven All that I hold is dear to him and all that he holds is dear to me"¹²⁶

The Rajah expressed similar feelings when he said:

"God has vouchsafed unto me a great preceptor in Brahmarshi Venkata Ratnam Naidu garu An embodiment of all graces, a Saint with pure life, a prodigious intellectual a staunch promulgator of all beneficent causes If I could do any little service to humanity, it is preeminently owing to his influence"¹²⁷.

Under the compelling influence of his life long friend and revered guru, the late Sri R. Venkata Ratnam Naidu, the Maharaja of Pithapuram helped progressive movements in Andhra and distinguished himself as a patron of education and letters and as a philanthropist..¹²⁸

However, the two main causes that cut at the roots of the Brahmo movement were the Nationalist Movement, which became vigorous after 1920 and the non-Brahmin movement. On account of the overriding influence of the former movement almost all other movements were submerged and their issues and problems got absorbed into its programme of action. The non-Brahmin movement perhaps did

¹²⁶That the relationship was mutually influential could be seen from the fact that Venkata Ratnam in his later years joined the Non-Brahmin movement under the influence of the Rajah of Pithapur who identified himself with it. See, V. Rama Krishna Rao (ed.) R. Venkata Ratnam message and Ministrations Vol.III, Kakinada, 1924, p.XXV.

¹²⁷J. Ganganna, "The Maharajah A Tribute", *Shastipurti Souvenir of Sri R.V.K.M. Surya Rao, Bahadur, Maharaja of Pithapuram*, Vol ,VII, p.84, also see V. Ramakrishna, *Social Reform in Andhra, 1848-1919, Op. Cit.*, p.168.

¹²⁸K. Iswara Dutt, *The street of Ink*, Triveni Publishers, Masulipatnam, 1956, p.79

more damage as Venkataratnam joined the Justice Party which was the political expression of the non-Brahmin movement. It was a rude shock to the Brahmo movement. prominent members of the Samaj protested and appealed to Venkata Ratnam to reconsider his decision, but in vain.¹²⁹ Nevertheless there was an irreconcilable contradiction between the anti-British Nationalist Movement and the pro-British Justice Movement which Venkata Ratnam failed to realise.

R. Venkata Ratnam Naidu was the leader of the 'Social Purity',¹³⁰ (The Social Purity movement had, as its chief objects "the total abstinence from intoxicating drinks, purity of private life, the abolition of the Devadasi system) movement in Andhra and in Madras city. He belonged to the second generation of Brahmos in Madras state and was a strong protagonist of the purity movement there. while at Madras in the 1880's he started the movement for social purity".¹³¹

Venkata Ratnam carried an a country-wide campaign propagating anti-nauch activity and social purity. He had a lofty conception of social purity and to him "Purity is to character, what symmetry is to beauty-not an accident of adornment but an essential of structure".¹³² social purity decries the custom that invites undisguised shame to halls of honour or restores convicted impurity to places of position. It silences the song that defies the brute, prescribe the picture that perpetuates the immodest. piety without purity is grosser than rank superstition. It is sanctified sin. He believed in "the sinner of today becoming the saint of tomorrow" and "that love

¹²⁹The appeal dated December 4, 1917 was signed by 17 members of the Kakinada Brahmo Samaj including his close associates like V. Rama Krishna Rao, U.P. Raju, Peddada Ramaswamy, Kamaraju Hanumantha Rao. They said that non-Brahmin movement with its emphasis on caste discrimination was narrow in its nature and scope and thus incompatible with the Brahmo Samaj which rose above the distinctions based on caste and creed. Venkata Ratnam convened an informal meeting of the Kakinada Brahmo Samaj of which he was the President and tried to convince its members that by joining the non-Brahmin movement he did not intend to observe caste distinctions. Not as a non-Brahmin he joined Justice Party, as it was reported of him, but as a Brahmo, since the party stood for 'Social Justice' which was dearer to the heart of the Brahmos. The members, by that time also came to know that he was a member of the caste association.

¹³⁰The Phrase 'Social Purity' was coined by R. Venkata Ratnam Naidu.

¹³¹K. Suryanarayana, *Op. Cit.*, Rajahmundry, 1952, pp.4-7.

¹³²V. Rama Krishna Rao, (ed) *Op.Cit.*, p.17.

stoops where righteousness stands stiff".¹³³ Dancing becomes a grace when it will have ceased to be a disgrace. These epigrams show the man who never believed in punishment but only in purification. He was a great believer in prohibition and considered drink as distilled damnation.

Naidu challenged the current religious beliefs and social practices of the Hindus as not being in consonance with the scriptures. He advocated female education, supported widow remarriages, denounced polygamy and tried to rationalise Hindu doctrines.

R. Venkata Ratnam Naidu did his best to remedy the evil of Deva Dasi System.¹³⁴ He believed that though there is however, legislation against prostitution, in any form under custom crippled all attempts to help the down-trodden. He strongly believed that "to train immorality with fashion, to furnish it with facility, to countenance it with an apology, to provide it with a passport or to characterise it with a custom, is to get a premium on vice and to condemn the state of society as organised selfishness."¹³⁵ A state or society is not bound to procure for carnal cravings of the sensual, any more than to provide for gambling tendencies or the thieving propensities of the avaricious. "On the other hand nations or communities are no less amenable than individuals to the ethical law, that not to rebuke or protest against an open vice is half sanctioning it". The government that under takes to protect this base gratification from its natural sting or merited stigma incurs the responsibility of furthering the vice by making impurity venial.¹³⁶

In difference of the state to prostitution and superfluous efforts to regulate it, is nothing but "drilling barracking and licensing vice"¹³⁷ Similarly a society that

¹³³N. Putali Krishna Murthy, *Op.Cit.*, p.24.

¹³⁴V. Rama Krishna Rao, (ed.), *Op.Cit.*, p.17.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*, p.34.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, p.35.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*,

“assigns in its fold a recognised place and a decent position to professional lewdness only confers on it the dignity of a caste and sticks it out with a catching name, condemns itself as procuress to hell”.¹³⁸ The future of a nation depends on its estimate of man, its hopes of human possibilities and a community that counts social impurity not as a temporary failing to be strenuously overcome, but a lasting frailty to be reduced to a custom, looks down on man as “appetite incarnate”.¹³⁹ Any public recognition given to social impurity by state or society is nothing but culpable presumption of in chastity.

With such strong views about social purity, Venkata Ratnam Naidu launched a ‘purity movement’ in the form of an anti-nautch movement. In the beginning he was misunderstood by his own friends, who startled by its novelty gave fantastic interpretations. Some called the movement unwarranted hatred for the dancing girl. To some others it appeared as a crusade against music. To others it was a graceless exposure of a small natural weakness. Even among his friends, few realised that to discourage nautch who to demand purity in other respects and to refuse to employ the dancing girls for entertainment was to disapprove open impurity wherever found.

With such strong views against prostitution and nautch parties, he carried on relentless tirade against this social evils. He started in the historic town of Machilipatnam a *Social Purity Association* for watching or improving the moral character of its members and others.¹⁴⁰ Its members were required to take a pledge to stop nautch parties and not to attend them. In this crusade against prostitution another great man Darisi Chenchayya stands prominent. He was responsible for many reforms of this period. Himself a Vysya he knew that most of the prostitutes were patronised by the rich Vysyas.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*,

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*,

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.70.

In 1909 Veeresalingam founded the *Hita Karini Samaj* to maintain the widow homes, orphanages and girl schools started by him in several places. Veeresalingam was its founder president and R. Venkata Ratnam Naidu was the Vice-President.¹⁴²

Social purity was for him “chastity in body and chastity in mind stern up uncompromising resurgence to what ever is base and vulgar, speech or song, faith or sentiment, thought or life stout, unrelenting opposition to every habit or custom, regulation or institution that defeats or tends to defeat the high purpose of human life by grilding shame with fashion or condones carnal longing as venial. On the one hand, it honours the life that never deviates into guilty pleasure and counts him a hero who always keeps the citadel of his senses. It upholds the law that vindicates morality and espouses the custom that conforms to righteousness. It welcomes the song that softens the savage in man ... and lives by the faith that adores the All Holy.”¹⁴³

Securing up his position on the “nautch” question, Venkata Ratnam envisaged two changes which if induced would lead to the healthy moral regeneration of the race. These were the allotment of temple service for sacred purposes of any one with a “proven record of chastity and secondly, the education and improvement of the male members of the community who were mostly ‘drones’ or ‘parasites’.”¹⁴⁴

Venkata Ratnam Naidu was the President of the Metro Politan *Temperance and Purity Association* and in that capacity he visited many places in Andhra and spoke on the subject. At the 8th Annual Session of the Indian Social Conference, he moved the anti-nautch resolution. As a social reformer, he was a member of Sadharana Brahma Samaj and came under the impact of its preacher Pandit Siva Nath Sastri and further himself became President of Madras Brahma Samaj. He laid stress on social purity: “To pursue pleasure as the purpose of life is the animal, to subject

¹⁴¹N. Putali Krishna Murthy, *Op.Cit.*, pp.207.

¹⁴²Kandukuri Veeresalngam, *Sweeya Charitram Vol.ii. Madras, 1915, Appendix- A. p.2*

¹⁴³R. Venkata Ratnam Naidu: “Social Purity and the Anti-Nautch Movement” C.Y. Chintamani(ed.) *Indian Social Reform*, 1901, Madras, p.260.

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p.279.

pleasure to the purpose of life is man for whom the spectacle of public and temple nautch dancing by women (devadasis) of doubtful chastity and liquor consumption by cultivated men, were disgraceful blemishes on Indian Society".¹⁴⁵

Venkata Ratnam Naidu was a great scholar and a silver tongued orator. After his graduation he joined the faculty of Pachiyappa's College, Madras. His high intellectual calibre and the purity and nobility of his character made him an ideal teacher of youngmen.¹⁴⁶

The Prarthana Samaj Movement in Andhra (the name given to Brahmoism in Andhra) was a part of the religious reform movements like Brahmoism in Bengal. Thus social reforms became an integral part of religious reform movements in Andhra as elsewhere in India.

A beginning was made in this direction at Madras in South India, in the year 1864 when Keshub Chandra Sen visited Madras in the course of his missionary tour of India and delivered lectures on Brahmoism. Under the influence of these lectures which stimulated religious inquiry, 'the Veda Samaj' was established in the same year. Around 1869 Chembeti Sridharlu Naidu of Cuddalore became the Secretary of the Veda Samaj. He succeeded in converting the society into the Brahmo Samaj of Southern India and preached the new covenants, in the true spirit of Brahmoism, which replaced the old ones of the Veda Samaj. Sridharlu Naidu produced Brahmo literature within the reach of his countrymen. He revived the Brahmo monthly Journal 'Tatva Bodhini' and conducted it as "the organ of all the Brahmoists in Southern India. After his death in 1874, the South Indian Brahmo Samaj was affiliated to the Sadharana Brahmo Samaj and was formally inaugurated on June 17, 1882 and its secretary was Mannava Butchaiah Panthulu who imbued the Samaj with life and dynamism. He started the Journal, the 'Brahmo Public Opinion' and published it in English, Telugu and Tamil. He was helped in his efforts by people

¹⁴⁵Charles H. Heimsath, *Indian Nationalism and Hindu Social Reform*, O.U.P. Bombay, 1964,p.259., also see Ch. M. Naidu, *Nationalism in South India*, Mittal Publications, Delhi, 1988, p.145.

¹⁴⁶His influence on students was phenomenal. Generations of students passed under him infected with the ideals of 'Social Purity' and spiritual enlightenment.

like Raghupati Venkata Ratnam who was then a student at Madras and who was actively drawn towards the Brahmo Samaj through the efforts of Panthulu.

Thus the combined efforts of Telugu and Tamil workers at Madras contributed to the origin and growth of Brahmo Samaj in South India in the last two decades of 19th Century. Butchaiah Panthulu being a Teluguman, toured Andhra and established contacts with reformers like Veeresalingam and Raghupati and preached Brahmo ideas in Andhradesa.

Due to the efforts of people like Veeresalingam and Raghupati, Peda Bapaiah and the liberal munificence of the Rajah of Pithapuram, the movement was spread throughout the coastal districts of Andhra.

The spread of the Prarthana Samaj movement (otherwise known as the Brahmo movement) could be indicated in the words of Venkata Ratnam who was candid and balanced in his estimate. "Speaking however, of Andhradesh, I believe it may be observed that there is a wider spread interest in the Brahma Samaj than elsewhere in Southern India, thanks to the devoted labours of some selfless souls, the foremost amongst them being my honoured leader, Veeresalingam Panthulu garu, almost all Samajas are comparatively small in size, and many of them pivoted in single individuals. But geographically they form a net work beginning from Ganjam district and stretching right down to Nellore. We, in the Andhra districts, have been endeavouring to give some stability to the movement by ensuring permanence to it in particular localities by means of 'Mandir Constructions' Thus the Telugu country is dotted over with Brahmo Mandirs beginning with the northern most at Berhampore. We have among us a set a small band, of young men consecrated to the gospel work of the Brahmo Samaj. Their field of work ranges over a fairly large area between Ganjam and Nellore districts. And these young men form connecting links between the several Samajas".¹⁴⁷

Venkata Ratnam's assessment about the spread of the movement was broadly correct. The samajas were small and dependent upon a few dynamic individuals.

¹⁴⁷V. Rama Krishna Rao(ed.) *Op. Cit.*, p.95-99.

Venkata Ratnam's services to Machilipatnam Samaj are worth noting. He was a member of the Samaj during 1887.¹⁴⁸ (The first Prarthana Samaj to be started in Krishna district was at Machilipatnam in 1882) Chronologically speaking this was the second Samaj to be established in Andhra, the first being at Rajahmundry. Machilipatnam was one of the important reform centres in Andhra outside the Godavari district. It was in the area covered by the Krishna anicut and was one of the earliest Towns that had the benefit of modern education with its well known Noble College. He left for Madras in 1888, but he came back in 1894 as a lecturer in the Noble College, and stayed there till 1899. This was an eventful period in the history of the Samaj at Machilipatnam. Through his personal example and charisma Venkataratnam left a lasting impression on the minds of a number of youngmen who were drawn towards the Brahmo ideas. Among them mention may be made of a few prominent persons like Bhogaraju Pattabhi Sitaramayya, Mutnuri Krishna Rao, Vemuri Ramakrishna Rao, Ayyadevara Kaleswara Rao, Desiraju Peda Bapaiah, Duggirala Rama Murthy and others.

The college authorities brought pressure upon Venkata Ratnam to resign, as the orthodox sections of the Town raised a hue and cry that "Hinduism was in danger", and appeals were sent to the higher missionary authorities to relieve him of his lecturer post in the Noble College. After having been made to resign, Venkata Ratnam went to Secunderabad to become principal of a college there.¹⁴⁹

Ranade considered him as "the born prince among the educated sons of India".¹⁵⁰ He was a great educationist and in the words of Prof. Ramaswamy, one of his old students, "Naidu garu was a teacher who made the interpretation of higher literature the vehicle for the infiltration of deep ethical influence into the mind and

¹⁴⁸During the Period he was a teacher in the local Hindu High School.

¹⁴⁹His influence with the students in favour of Brahminism classed with the proelytising zeal of the college authorities who compelled him to resign .

Note: It is interesting to note that Eddy demanded his dismissal. Clarke, the Principal of the Noble College, where Venkataratnam was working took him into his confidence and explained the situation. Venkataratnam had no alternative except to resign.

¹⁵⁰V. Rama Krishna Rao (ed.) *Op. Cit.*, Vol .II, p.XIX.

heart of his students and who by his communion with the spirit of the poet made his lessons one cautious act of reverant worship by master and pupil, blended into one, before the shrine of his wisdom.¹⁵¹

Naidu's name is for ever associated with the rehabilitation of the orphans and the reclamation of the untouchables. To him "an orphan is a challenge from God to man and a philanthropist is His own response".¹⁵² In answer to this challenge, he endeared himself as the 'Nayana' (Father) to hundreds of orphans in the home, which he called his 'paradise'. He was greatly helped in his orphan rescue movement by the Maharajah of Pithapur, who built a home for orphans at Kakinada. In his own house, the Rajah fostered a number of orphan children and opened a number of comfortable lodges for boys and girls.

To Venkata Ratnam, the "out castes cannot be wiped out unless caste itself is wiped out" and for him "social reform was not a fashion but a faith, not a convenience but a conviction".¹⁵³ As the Principal of the Kakinada College he introduced free education to Harijan boys and girls and worked in many ways for their uplift. In the words of Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, he became "our John, the Baptist before Gandhi, the Mahatma".¹⁵⁴

Raghupati, the Andhra Brahma leader, started schools and lodges for Panchama boys and girls with munificence from the Raja of Pithapur. Raghupati who later became a member of the *Telaga Caste Association* and subsequently of Justice Party, was presiding over the conferences of the *Depressed Classes In Andhra*.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ *Andhra Mahila Sabha Silver Jubilee Souvenir, Madras, 1962, p.71.*

¹⁵² *Ibid., p.34.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid., p.71.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid., p.34.*

¹⁵⁵ V.Rama.Krishna, *Social Reform in Andhra, Op. Cit., see 6th Chapter.*

Ramineedi Ranga Nayakulu:

He was born in Rajahmundry in Telaga family and working for Congress from 1920 during the non-cooperation movement for four years. He propagated Congress ideology not only in the Rajahmundry town but also in the Rajahmundry taluk. And also he was a member of the Rajahmundry town Congress member. Participated in picketing in front of arrack shops and burning of foreign cloth. For that he was imprisoned once. Took to medical practice in later stages due to financial problems.¹⁵⁶

Bitragunta Venkanna:

He was born at Papayapalem village in Guntur district in 1850 in a Kapu family. Though illiterate he was well versed in various aspects. He was a landlord and very much interested in agriculture. He was very close to Konda Venkatappaiah. He was the head of the village and people of nearby villages also were giving importance to his words.¹⁵⁷

During the non-cooperation movement he was the leader of the no-tax campaign in the Sattenapalli taluk of the Guntur district. He took active part in the non-cooperation movement and no vote campaign. During this campaign, he was the right hand supporter of Konda Venkatappaiah. Further there is no exaggeration if we say that there is no village he did not travel in the taluk. He was imprisoned for 6 months. After release from jail he was taking active part in Khaddar movement.¹⁵⁸ His son Pakiraiah also was imprisoned during the movement.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶Rebba Pragada Mandeswara Sharma, *Op.Cit.*, p.107.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, pp.199-200.

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p.200.

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p.201.

Kanneganti Hanumanthu:

Palnadu in Guntur district was an important area where the experiment of non-cooperation movement was tried in a national context. It began on Feb, 1921 as a spontaneous protest by the peasants who borrowed "the weapon of non-cooperation" to secure the removal of forest grievances. The Forest Satyagraha of Palnadu is a glorious event in the history of the National Movement in Andhra. Palnadu is a backward area in the Guntur district. The people of the area had a number of grievances regarding the administration of the forests. The Government imposed fees on the people of Palnadu for grazing their cattle, for cutting wood from the forests for fuel and for getting leaf manure. Further the subordinate officials were to be bribed for allowing the people into the forests. The failure of rains in 1921 added to their troubles. The people wanted free access to all water sources in the reserved forests. The people of Palnadu taluq appealed to the Government to reduce the collection of fees. The government made no efforts to redress the grievances of the people. They decided to launch the non-cooperation movement defying the forest rules.

The peasants organised a scheme of non-violent non-cooperation by which they have entered into an agreement, i.e., not to render any help to any forest official, not to pay fees or fines etc.¹⁶⁰ This boycott of officials in the forest and revenue departments acquired an organised shape once the local level congress leadership came on the scene by July 1921. Once these spontaneous peasant protests were integrated into the general non-cooperation movement by the local level congress leaders like Uannava Lakshmi Narayana, Macherla had emerged as main centre of the movement. By mid 1921 Narasaraopet, Karempudi, Gurajala and Rentachintala also emerged as active centres of Forest Satyagrahas.¹⁶¹

This agitation temporarily undercut the tenuous hold of law and order in the forest tracks. Since the people were sending their cattle frequently into the reserve forests without paying the usual grazing fees, destroying the forest boundaries and

¹⁶⁰*Deshabhimani* (Guntur) July 2, 1921.

¹⁶¹K.V. Ramana Reddi, *Unnava Rachanalu Konni*, (Telugu), Kavali, 1979, p.136.

collecting wood for fuel and leaves for manure without authorisation, the government strengthened the number of forest guards and also stationed additional police force in the area.¹⁶² Fearing for this, the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee appointed a three member committee to enquire into the conditions which had prompted the Palnadu movement.¹⁶³ After their arrival to Macherla, they were prosecuted and, on refusing to give security, sentenced for one year imprisonment.¹⁶⁴ These arrests resulted in a strong agitation not only in Palnadu but all over the Guntur district. Particularly, in Palnad taluq the masses reacted spontaneously resorting to no-tax campaign.

Meanwhile, government stepped up its repressive policy. Forest officials asked the grazers to pay the grazing tax. When the latter refused to do so, the former forcibly took away some 175 cattle. It was reported that the "cattle were given neither grass nor water and kept in confinement. Some died and some were in dying stages".¹⁶⁵ Still the people refused to pay grazing and compound taxes. To help those who had sacrificed their cattle by refusing to pay taxes, an association named Palnad Gorakshana Sangham (Palned Cattle Saving Committee) was formed. But in some cases or occasions the impounded cattle were forcibly rescued by peasant 'mobs' and force was used by the government to disperse these 'mobs'.¹⁶⁶

During this period two sensational cases of forced resume of cattle found illicitly grazing in reserves and of assault of subordinates. On account of this state of affairs, punitive police were appointed by Government. In one case 40 men were arrested of which 19 were subsequently sentenced to terms of imprisonment varying from 3 to 6 months besides a total fine of Rs.40,000; an another, after repeated

¹⁶²M. Venkata Rangaiah, *Op.Cit.*, Vol.III, p.37.

¹⁶³The members are Unnava Lakshmi Narayana, Madabhusi Narasimhachari and Kammanuri Lakshmi Narayana.

¹⁶⁴K.V. Ramana Reddi, *Op.Cit.*, pp.146-149 also see M. Venkata Rangaiah, *Op.Cit.*,

¹⁶⁵*Andhra Patrika*, 22 Sept. 1921, *Krishna Patrika*, Sept 24, 1921 and also M.Venkata. Rangaiah, *Op.Cit.*,

¹⁶⁶Annual Administration Report of the Forest Department of the Madras Presidency 1921-22 pp.14-15, also see, M. Venkata Rangaiah, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. III, pp.37-38.

warnings against the violence of rioters the police had no alternative but to open fire. Two rioters and one sub-inspector who had got mixed up in the crowd were killed.

The second case was none other than the famous Minchalapadu firing incident in which the legendary leader Kanneganti Hanumanthu a Kapu was killed. Before coming to the incident it is essential to note that in some villages peasants resorted to non-payment of land revenue due to the failure of crops. Initially confined to Tumru Kota and surrounding five or six villages, the movement spread to Karampudi, Gurzala, Mutukur, Rentachintala, Macherla, Mandadi, Veledurthi and other villages in Palnadu at a time when no-rent campaign was at its height in Pedanandipadu firka in Guntur district in 1922.

On Feb.26, 1922, the cattle were as usual sent for illicit grazing in a forest reserve near Minchalapadu. A party of reserve police accompanied by some forest officers imprisoned 120 buffaloes and 50 goats and arrested two grazers and a woman who were in charge of the cattle. A mob of more than 200 people stoned the police party to rescue their impounded cattle and arrested grazers. The police opened fire on the crowd which numbered 2 to 3 hundred and included women and children. At this stage Kannaganti Hanumanthu, the local leader of the non-cooperation movement, had joined the villagers and was leading the attack. In the ensuing police firing on the 'mob' Kanneganti Hanumanthu, his servant Yellampelli Seshaiyah, and a police sub-inspector were killed.¹⁶⁷

Manne Nagayya:

He was born in 1902 in a Telaga Family at Papayapalem. Cattle rearing was his livelihood. He was inspired by the Gandhi's call for non-cooperation movement. In 1921 he told his village Karanam that he would pay 'Pullari' to Gandhi instead of

¹⁶⁷M. Venkata Rangaiah, *Op.Cit.* Vol.III. document Nos.67 and 68 also Annual Administration Report of the Madras Presidency 1921-22.

to the government. ¹⁶⁸ His cattle was kept in the shed but he did not listen to them. Government banned him from going to the forest but he disobeyed the 144 section and took his cattle to the forest land and campaigned the same in villages. Further he propagated the same ideas in those villages. For this reason in 1922 he was lathi charged, arrested and sent to jail for 6 months. In the jail he fall ill and died after he was released in 1923. ¹⁶⁹

The village officers sought new avenues after the non-cooperation movement. In the mid-1920's many of them turned up as members of the legislatures and as prominent members of the major political parties. For example, Mallipudi Pallam Raju became President of the West Godavari District Board, M.L.C. and congressman; B. Venkata Ratnam became a congress leader in East Godavari district both were Kapus and came from village munisiff families. ¹⁷⁰

During the civil disobedience movement 1930-32, in the report on the happenings of 1932, the Collector of Guntur district pointed attention to the part played by the people with special reference to the Tenali Division. He stated "the bulk of the land owning people are Kammas. There are important groups of Telagas, Reddis, Rajus and Brahmins who also own lands. The area comprising, this division had at least 10 years history of anti-government agitation. Like Kammas, Telagas, Rajus, Reddis and Brahmins are completely and aggressively in sympathy with the civil disobedience movement". ¹⁷¹

In the Guntur district it was the Brahmin community that was in the forefront of the freedom movement during the non-cooperation days. During the subsequent stages of the freedom struggle, as education made rapid strides among all sections, economically stronger castes came to the forefront politically. The government of Madras concluded that in the 1932 movement the Kamma caste had been "specically prominent in hostility to the government. "Apart from Kammas, important groups of

¹⁶⁸Rebba Pragada Mandeswara Sharma, *Op.Cit.*, p.201.

¹⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p.202.

¹⁷⁰ C.J. Baker and D.A. Washbrook, *Op. Cit.*, p.149.

¹⁷¹M. Venkata Rangaiah, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. IV, 1974, Document No.70, 1931, pp.591-592.

Telagas, Reddis, Rajus and Brahmins also enthusiastically participated in the 1930 and 1932 movements".¹⁷²

As P. Seetharamaiah pointed out in Machilipatnam, the Kapus took an active part in Salt-manufacturing, just as the Kammas had played the main role in Khaddar revival.¹⁷³ During the Salt-Satyagraha period on 30th April, 1931 police arrested Kotagiri Venkata Krishna Rao along with K. Lakshmayya Chaudhary followed by Sawmi Tatva Nanda and M. Satyanarayana on 13th May, Thota Narasayya on May, 2, D.V. Hanumantha Rao on May 26, (already Pattabhi and kaleswara Rao were in the jail).¹⁷⁴ There are so many atrocities committed by police during this period.

Another incident reflective of police atrocity was that of Thota Narasaiah¹⁷⁵ a Telaga who created a sensation in Machilipatnam on May 5th 1931 when Mahatma Gandhi was arrested. All the people of Machilipatnam became indignant and protested. Tatwa Nanda Swami, Gurajada Raghava Sharma and a few others went to hoist the swaraj flag on the night at Robertson park. But the terror striking police had already camped there to prevent the flag from being hoisted. The leaders, since they were of weak, could not lift the flag; but Thota Narasaiah a well known wrestler and body builder, came forward to hoist it. But the dreadful police at once caught hold of him and had beaten severely until he fell on the ground crying 'O Mahatma May you save me'. Those who saw it or heard the incident were so moved that they called since then as the *Flag Hero of Andhradesa*.¹⁷⁶

The Collector of Krishna district expressed the view that the following classes of persons sympathised with the civil disobedience movement. They are the majority

¹⁷²Guntur District Megistrate to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras dated, May 31, 1932. A.P. State Archives, History of Freedom Struggle section.

¹⁷³*Andhra Patrika*, 6th May, 1930.

¹⁷⁴Ch. Muthyalayya Naidu, "Salt Satyagraha in the Krishna Dt." in *ITIHAS*, Jan-Dec.1985, Nos.1 & 2, p.18.

¹⁷⁵Thota Narasaiah resident of Machilipatnam, studied upto 6th class, was a good wrestler and so dedicated to Gandhi that when the latter was died in 1948, he shaved off his hair on head, as if he had lost his father.

¹⁷⁶Ch. Muthyalayya Naidu, *Op. Cit.*, p.19, *Krishna Patrika*, May 10, 1930.

of the Kammas, a number of intelligentsia, particularly the Brahmins, some of the Vysyas and a few of the Kapus and other castes.¹⁷⁷

In Srikakulam district in the civil disobedience movement of 1930 Gedala Chandrayya Naidu, 41 years age, a Kapu belonging to the Irapadu village in Pathapatnam Taluk was sentenced for two years rigorous imprisonment for defying government orders.¹⁷⁸

Eedu Thaviti Naidu:

He was born in 1901 at Loharujola in Srikakulam district in a Kapu family. He belongs to a middle class family and was very brave from child hood. Due to family problems, he had to stop his education at primary level and indulged in agriculture. He became a member of Congress in 1930 and has propagating spinning on Charkha. Being a farmer he has acquired good skill in cotton farming and propagating it throughout the taluk. In 1941 he participated in individual satyagraha and got arrested.¹⁷⁹ He was sentenced for four months imprisonment by Srikakulam first class magistrate and was kept in Srikakulam subjail. He fell ill in the jail itself and was not provided with proper medical treatment. After his release he suffered a lot with the same illness and died on 8th Aug. 1941.¹⁸⁰

Regarding the Andhra Province there was a difference of opinion between Andhra and Rayalaseema. To settle the differences, a committee was appointed in 1937. Among the members M. Pallam Raju was one who belonged to a Kapu caste.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷Document No.71, 131, cited in M. Venkata Rangaiah, *Op.Cit.*, Vol .IV, 1974, pp.595-596.

¹⁷⁸D. Suran Naidu, *Op. Cit.*, p.46.

¹⁷⁹Sri Rebba Pragada Mandeswara Sharma, *Op.Cit.*, P.40.

¹⁸⁰*Ibid.*, p.41.

¹⁸¹G.V.Subba Rao, *History of Andhra Movement (Andhra Region)* Vol.II Padmavati Art Printers, Hyderabad, 1982, p.56, also N. Innaiah, *State Government and Politics ... Op.Cit.*, p.60.

After the 1937 elections, the congress came to power in Madras. Soon after the communists organised a massive Kisan Protection March under the banner of the Andhra Rashtra Ryot Sangam. Kommi Reddi Surya Narayana Murthy was the leader of this march which started from Ichapuram (then North Vizag district) and took more than 4 months to reach Madras on 27th March, 1938. At the end of the March, a memorandum was submitted to the state assembly, and as a sequel, a Zamindari Enquiry Committee was appointed under the chairmanship of T. Prakasam the then revenue minister.¹⁸²

For acts of arson committed on the Dendulur Railway station during the quit India movement, collective fines were imposed on the inhabitants of two neighbouring villages-Dendulur and Kovvali. The communities which were made liable to pay the fines were Brahmins, Kammas, Telagas, Kapus, Vysyas, Setti Balijas and Kshatriyas.¹⁸³

In the above survey, the following conclusions may be drawn. The movement was spear headed by the people in the prosperous districts of Godavari, Krishna and Guntur. The castes which played a prominent role in it were Brahmins, Komatis, Kammas, Telagas, Reddis, Rajus and Velamas.

The District Magistrate, West Godavari, Eluru, has written a letter to the Chief Secretary to Government of Madras, like this: The following classes of persons residing in the two villages may be made liable to pay the fine. These communities are generally supporters of the congress party and are believed to have either taken part in the commission of the offence or abetted the offence or to be failing to render assistance to discover or apprehend the offenders. They own properties and have resources to pay the fine of Rs.1600 proposed by me. They are:

¹⁸²T.S.R. Krishnayya, "Peasant Movements and Organisations in the Andhra Region" (ed) B.A.V. Sharma *Political Economy of India: A Study of Land Reforms Policy in Andhra Pradesh*, Light and Life Publishers, New Delhi 1980, p.203.

¹⁸³Document No.153, cited in M. Venkata Rangaiah, *Op.Cit.*, Vol.IV.

In Dendulur village	Kammas, Telagas, Kapus, Kalalies, Brahmins and Vysyas and
In Kovvali village	Kammas, Telagas, Kapus, Setti Balijas, Brahmins, Vysyas and Kshatriyas. ¹⁸⁴

Likewise the same Collector wrote one more letter. That is as follows:

On the night of 17th Aug. 1942, at about 11.10PM a mob of about 200 residents armed with lathies, marched on the Railway station at Undi and burnt the records and furniture and destroyed the block instruments and the Telegraph sounder. They burnt some sleepers and removed some rails between Undi and Akeedu. The total cost of damage caused to the railway property has been estimated at Rs.2,920. The Tahsildar, of Bhimavaram made enquiries in the village in regard to the persons responsible for committing the offences. The police also made enquiries and have arrested a few men. These enquiries have revealed that the Kshatriyas, Turpu Kapus, Brahmins and Adi-Andhras of Undi-village took part in the Committing of the Offences. Under section (3) of the collective fines ordinance, the collective responsibility of the inhabitants of Undi village is thus established and they may be liable to pay a collective fine. On these grounds the members of the following communities may be made liable. They are, the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vysyas, Telagas, Turupu Kapus, Kalalis, Kalingas and Adi-Andhras.¹⁸⁵

During the Quit India Movement in West Godavari people destroyed the Railway Stations. They are Attili, Relangi, Undi, Dendulur, Lanka Koderu. At Dendulur Maganti Chakrapani and U. Koteswara Rao instigated the people. Among the people, Turpu Kapus came forward (when Muslims refused for help) and about six of them agreed to set fire to the station.¹⁸⁶

At the same time, Palakollu police station was the target for attack. When the masses heard that Mahadev Desai, Gandhiji's secretary died in prison itself, the Palakollu people were excited. Datla Sitarama Raju gathered about 2000 people in a

¹⁸⁴R.O.C. CI-921/M/Confidential/42 cited in M. Venkata Rangaiah, *Op.Cit.*, Vol.IV, pp.990-991.

¹⁸⁵G.O. No.3416, Public (General Department) 1942, 24th Oct. Cited in M. Venkata Rangaiah, *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp.992-993.

¹⁸⁶G.O. No.2843, *Public General Department*, 12 Sept. 1942.

local Municipal High School and asked them to support the AICC's Quit India Resolution passed in Bombay. The students agreed enthusiastically and boycotted classes for 10 days.¹⁸⁷ As the tempo increased, the police arrested Sitaramaraju, but his followers particularly students fell on the quarters of a sub-Inspector and the police constables and assaulted a policeman on duty and sub-jail and sub-treasury. The reserve police intervened and opened fire killing one person on the spot. But this repression exerted its impact on students. They picketed at the Municipal High School on 21st September 1942, but the police again arrested some more, among them G. Venkata Vijaya Rama Rao and Allu Ramalingaiah were Kapus. And filed a nuisance case against them. The sub-Divisional Magistrate at Narasapur fined each of them about Rs.20/-. But the student leaders felt it to be a prestige question and refused to pay but went to prison.¹⁸⁸

As regards the East Godavari district it would not have come into notice all over India but for the Andhra circular distributed by Kala Venkata Rao, a native of this district. He along with Krovodi Lingaraju, M.Pallam raju and others went to Bombay to attend the A.I.C.C. session and once they reached this district they were arrested. In East Godavari first Kala Venkata Rao was arrested. On 13th Aug.1942 M.Pallam Raju¹⁸⁹ a Kapu along with Krovodi Linga Raju were arrested.

The police arrested Kadiriseti Subbarao at Anakapalli in Oct.1942 on the ground that he wrote some prejudicial letters to a government officer¹⁹⁰. As the leaders were thus taken into custody, the students covered the gap. At Vizianagaram, a city popularly known as a centre of learning, about 250 students of M.R. College, one of the oldest colleges in the Madras Presidency, they went round the town and

¹⁸⁷ *Andhra Patrika*, May 28, 1942, also see, Ch.M. Naidu, *Mathatma Gandhi's Leadership and Quit India Movement in Coastal Andhra*, Andhra University Publication, Vizag, 1996, p.72.

¹⁸⁸ *The Hindu*, Sept.22, 1942.

¹⁸⁹ Mallipudi Pallam Raju was born at Balantram, Ramachandrapuram Taluk, East Godavari District. He studied at the Agricultural College, Coimbatore. After completion of his studies he was joined as Village Munisiff Post, but resigned from his position in 1920 to become active political worker. In 1929 he became the President of East Godavari District Board. He organised Hindustan Sevadal Camp at Kakinada in 1931 and also offered individual Satyagraha in 1940. For details see Ch.M. Naidu, *Op.Ctit.*, p.101.

¹⁹⁰ *The Hindu*, 6th October, 1942.

shouted slogans on quit India under the leadership of Rokkam Venkat Narasimham a Kapu.¹⁹¹

Just as in other districts, in Visakhapatnam also, communications were targets of attack. On 14th Aug.1942 they disconnected telegraph lines between Amudalavalasa and Kalingapatnam. On 17th August they removed 5 railway telegraphs wires near Sitanagaram on the Raipur line and two days later fish plates and bolts. As a result, railways just like in other districts were seriously hit. Actually it was the intention of rioters to dislocate some trains coming in that way, but suddenly it turned out to be a militant one and this made the government very serious over the rioters. The government arrested Durlabh Sahu, Naini Vallabh Rao, Karri Appa Rao. Among them the later was a Kapu.¹⁹²

Mallipudi Pallam Raju, was arrested and sent to Vellore Jail.¹⁹³ In 1946 elections to the congress president Mallipudi Pallam Raju was defeated by Ranga in a straight context.¹⁹⁴ In 1947, M. Pallm Raju Naidu was a M.L.A. along with A. Kaleswara Rao, Chandra Mouli choudary, M. Bapineedu etc.

In 1947, Raghava Das, of Telaga caste, a Kisan activist was elected as general secretary of the Srikakulam District Congress Committee.¹⁹⁵ When Ranga established his K.L.P.Raghava Das left the Congress to join the newly formed K.L.P. of N.G. Ranga. After the creation of Andhra state Rokkam Lakshmi Narasimham Dora was a speaker in 1952. He was a Kapu.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹¹*Andhra Patrika*, 28th Oct. 1942.

¹⁹²G.O.1014, *Public General Department*, Oct.18, 1942.

¹⁹³N. Innaiah, *State Government and Politics.... Op. Cit.*, p.61,

¹⁹⁴*Ibid.*, p.61.

¹⁹⁵D. Suran Naidu, *Op.Cit.*, p.63.

¹⁹⁶N. Innaiah, *State Government and Politics..... Op.Cit.*, p.65.

TELANGANA

Keelukani Venkata Narayana 1918-1947:

He was born in a Telaga family in Sirikonda village in 1918. He had elementary education only. He was a hard working middle class farmer. He worked for a long time as representative of village congress committee. Actively participated in Khaddar campaign and the movement started by Hyderabad state congress from Aug.15, 1947 in Hyderabad state. His assets were confiscated by the Razakars. Worked in the movement against Razakars for 10 months from underground and fought with Nizam forces with arms and was killed in an encounter at Ananthagiri Hills.¹⁹⁷

Basi Reddi Narasaiah 1919-1948:

He was born in 1919 in a Telaga family in Samudrala near Janagaon in Warangal District and had primary education only and belonged to a poor family. Even though those were the days of Nizam's autocratic rule, he inspired nationalism among public of 10-12 villages with the 'Rama Bhajana' programme. Imprisoned for 1 year during the Hyderabad state congress led Satyagraha movement (he was also one of the Satyagrahi) in 1947. When he was in Nizambad jail Razakars have attacked the jail and tortured Hindus. His hand got fractured in the incident. After his release he again started congress campaign which the communists did not tolerate and was shot dead by the communists on 27-11-1948 night.¹⁹⁸

Battena Mutyalingam 1925-1948:

He was born in 1925 in a Kapu family at Warangal. Initially he was worked as Gumastha for a businessmen. Later in 1941 he joined military and returned in 1946. In the same year he established 'Warangal Volunteer Team' and ran on nationalistic lines. He led one 'Congress Dal' in 1948 at Jonnalagadda in the same district to protect the frontiers of the district.. In 1948 he died the reasons we dont know.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷Rebba Pragada Mandeswara Sharma, *Op.Cit.*, pp.251-252.

¹⁹⁸*Ibid.*, p.253-254.

¹⁹⁹*Ibid.*, p.268.

One might say that with the formation of linguistic states the politics of each state became more intensely regional and caste-ridden. The following summarises the situation in Andhra State around 1953. "One state where politics can be merely equated with the rivalry of two great castes in Andhra. Before the days of Universal suffrage, the congress party in Andhra was Brahmin dominated. A caste of wealthy landowners, the Kammas, began to produce western educated leaders in the 1930's who in the face of the Brahmin control of the congress, joined anti-Brahmin parties like the justice party and in due course turned to communism in its militant phase, the C.P.I. was compelled to issue directives to take care of its Kamma landlord supporters. To other great landowning 'middle' caste was that of the Reddis, whose emergence into political literacy came later. Their main political objective was to get even with the Kammas, and so they joined the congress; first as junior partners with the Brahmins and then as their supplanters.

Dube's pioneering study²⁰⁰ of a village and its comprehensive social life was the first sociological study of the caste system in A.P. The study concentrated on a single village and a generalisation of the caste system for the entire state is not possible out of it. N.S. Reddi was the pioneer in this direction. He studied the structural position of two Harijan Castes, namely the Malas and Madigas, adopting a cultural area approach covering four districts in A.P. Though his attention was only on two castes, from the view point of this researcher's study, the above study is an invaluable one.²⁰¹ C. Lakshamanna's²⁰² study under taken in the late 1950's was the first to study comprehensively total aspects of the caste system covering the entire Andhra region (Namely the Rayalaseema and the Coastal area) of the state.

The Madras Presidency and especially the Andhras are proud to have pioneers in the Freedom Movement beginning even before the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny,

²⁰⁰S.C. Dube, *Indian Village*, Cornwell University Press, New York, 1955.

²⁰¹N.S. Reddi, "Community Conflict Among the Depressed Castes of Andhra" *Man in India*, Vol. XXX, No.4, p.1-12.

²⁰²C.Lakshamanna, *Caste Dynamics in Village India*, Nachiketa Publications, Bombay, 1973.

as in illustrated in the noble example of G.L.N. Setty. He belonged to 19th century and his efforts were directed to protesting in a peaceful but effective manner against the encroachments on the civil liberties of the Indians by East India Company Government. His activity was all embracing not only in the political field but also in the social, economic and religious spheres of native states. Peaceful methods of agitation under the name of Satyagraha adopted later by Mahatma Gandhi had the beginning in the methods followed by G.L.N. Setty. At a time when electoral bodies were not introduced when public opinion in its true sense was absent, when there was no means of association between the Government and the governed, G.L.N. Setty played the part of the people's leader. Without allying himself with the vested interests, G.L.N. Setty became the friend of the people. In the history of the Freedom Movement, G.L.N. Setty occupies a prominent place, for his efforts could be seen before the mutiny period. He is one of these unnoticed and forgotten gems which shine with lustre only when they were discovered and noticed by the world..

Thus by the middle of the 19th century, we can see the emergence of important personalities in the Kapu caste, who excelled in literary and social reform activities and who left an impact on the social consciousness of people of Andhra. They are apart from G.L.N. Setty, Samineni Muttu Narasimham Naidu, Raghupati Venkata Ratnam Naidu and K.V. Reddi Naidu.

With the British introducing the ryotwari system, along with the improved irrigation, in the present coastal districts, a strong peasant caste, Kapus began to emerge, carving out its own socio-economic and literary space. Such a consciousness was first expressed in the form of Samenini Muttu Narasimham Naidu. Why was Samenini Muttu Narasimham Naidu unknown in the academic, literary circles, while many who wrote mystical texts before him and after him became known figures? Why did even the communist literary movement overlook Narasimham?

Another prominent Kapu was K.V. Reddi Naidu. Apart from Kurma's distinguished positions and his invaluable individual contribution to every one of the portfolio's he held, his views on one or two matters deserve special attention. They are first as for industrialisation of the country, and it was industrialisation alone that was going to liquidate poverty in our country. This has been one of his favourite

subjects. Sir Kurma's one great desire was to see that India became an important country by solving all its internal problems such as caste and other social problems, poverty and a host of other.

No name has been so revered and respected as Sri Raghupati Venkat Ratnam Naidu's in the first four decades of the present century. Brahmarishi Venkata Ratnam Naidu was one of the great luminaries of . A.P. born in a Kapu caste. He rose to great heights in the public life of the country and made a mark as a great educationist, social reformer and a saint par excellence. During the British days, persons having good qualifications got better prospects of life. But unlike the man of his age, he was not interested in money or power. As a Brahma Samaj leader he was spreading the gospel of Brahmoism preaching its tenets and himself living according to them. As a social reformer, he laid stress on social purity. Apart from the above personalities, there are persons who came from Kapu caste and were participated in the National Movement.

CHAPTER - IV
EMERGENCE OF KAPUS IN ANDHRA POLITICS

The Non-brahmin movement in the South has to a large extent sidelined the Brahmins from positions of power and from educational institutions.¹ The Congress leadership in Andhra during the freedom movement came essentially from the Brahmins, but over the years it gradually shifted to the dominant agricultural castes of Reddis, Kammas and Velamas. As an electoral study puts it "The party's leadership gradually shifted in the 50's and early 60's 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 castes to middle peasant castes".²

The Kamma quest to capture power suffered a serious blow with the defeat of N.G.Ranga at the hands of N. Sanjeeva Reddy in the election of the President of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee in 1951. That marked the end of Brahmin dominance and made the Kammas to enter into industry, business and education where they were to make a mark later. It was the beginning of the rise of Reddy strength.³

With the formation of linguistic states, the politics of each state became more intensely regional and caste ridden. The following summarises the situation in Andhra state around 1953.

"One state where politics can be nearly equated with the rivalry of two great castes in Andhra. Before the days of universal suffrage, the Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh

¹In the pre-Independence days, the nationalist movement was the preserve of the Brahmin caste and the economically strategic Kammas in the circars and the Reddis in Rayalaseema were fighting Brahmin dominance. Some Kammas found in the Communist movement a vehicle for the advancement of their political ambitions and most of the communist leaders in the circars happened to be Kammas while the Rayalaseema communist leaders were Reddis. In sharp contrast to the Kamma control of the Andhra communist party, the rural land holding Reddy sub-castes dominated the Congress party. See for details. B. Padma Nabha Reddi "Watershed" The 1984 election to the Lok Sabha in A.P. " Agarala Eswara Reddi and D. Sundar Ram (ed.) *State Politics in India: Reflections on A.P.* New Delhi, 1994, p.252. Further as seen in the historical perspective the communist party in A.P. and Telangana, it was widely held that the party was essentially built by the middle and rich land owning upper castes particularly Kammas from Andhra Area. for details see, K.B. Choudary, *Kammavari Charitra* (Telugu) Sangam Jagarlamudi, A.P. 1955, p.98.

²B.A.V. Sharma and K.Madhusudan Reddy "Electoral Politics and voting Behaviour" (ed.) G. Ram Reddy and B.A.V. Sharma *State Government and Politics*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1979, p.469.

³A. Reddappa Reddi, "A Study of Politics in A.P. " (ed.) A. Eswara Reddy and D. Sundar Ram, *Op.Cit.*, pp.201-202.

was Brahmin dominated. A caste of wealthy land-owners, the Kammas, began to produce western educated leaders in the 1930's who in the face of the Brahmin control of the Congress joined anti-Brahmin parties like the Justice party and in due course turned to communismin its militant phase. The C.P.I. was compelled to issue special directives to take care of its Kamma land-lord supporters. The other great land owning 'middle caste' was that of the Reddis, whose emergence into political literacy came later. Their main political objective was to get even with the Kammas, and so they joined the Congress; first as junior partners with the Brahmins and then as their supplanters. However, in the 1955 election, when the Congress was fighting back after the communists had scored on the language issue, it was decided that the caste game must be played with even greater finesse. The coastal delta region was Kamma territory, the uplands were held largely by Reddis. The Congress held off until the C.P.I. had filed its list, and then candidate for candidate, it matched the CPI slate with a slate of congress supporters belonging to identical castes. That way, with superior organisation and funds, the congress could successfully trade upon caste loyalties every where.

Before independence the Congress Party was dominated by the educated urban elite who were predominantly Brahmin lawyers . After independence, particularly after 1955, the influence of this class considerably declined and the party drew its leadership from the non-Brahmin castes mainly the Reddis, Kammas, Kapus, Kshatriyas and Velamas.⁴

The controversy over the location of the state capital surfaced the Reddy- Kamma rivalry and it was a prelude for the caste politics in the state.⁵ In the words of Selig Harrison. "The Kammas and Reddis, their strength diffused in the Welter of Madras, became vigorous advocates of Andhra State, in which their place in the power structure was sure to enlarge".⁶

⁴Rashiduddin Khan, *Political Participation and Political Change in A.P.* , (Mimeograph) Department of Political Science, Osmania University, Hyderabad, 1969, p.42; A. Narasimha Reddy, "Congress Parties and Politics" (ed.) G. Ram Reddy and B.A.V. Sharma *State Government and Politics*, 1979, p.202. U. Hanumantha Rao, *Party Politics in A.P. 1956-1983*, ABA Publications, 1983, p.6.

⁵U. Hanumantha Rao, *Ibid.*

⁶Selig S. Harrison, *India: The Most Dangerous Decades*, Oxford University Press , Madras, 1965, pp.110-111.

Before the formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1956, there was little scope for interaction between Reddis of Rayalaseema and Telangana. After the emergence of Andhra Pradesh both were brought on a common political platform which provided opportunities to extend their kinship ties by inter-marriage.⁷

The merger of Telangana with Andhra resulting in the formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1956 further emaciated the Kammas strength and Brahmin influence. Since then till 1983, the Reddis dominated the political life in Andhra Pradesh, that non-Reddy Chief Ministers like D. Sanjeevaiah (1960-62) and P.V. Narasimha Rao (1970-72) found it most difficult to survive in power. J. Vengala Rao, partly succeeded in containing the influence of Reddis in politics, with the support of Kammas.

But the mischief of caste system does not end with that. The non-brahmins themselves are not a homogeneous unit. They are split into various sub-castes. In the Telugu areas the most dominant non-Brahmin communities are the Reddis, Kammas, Velamas and Rajus and the merchant communities like Vysyas. But there are various other non-Brahmin communities apart from this. They did not get their share out of the spoils of the non-Brahmin movement. They call themselves the other Backward communities. Some of them like the Kapus of Godavari are not as backward, economically speaking.⁸ All these aspire for power and have been organising themselves. N.T. Rama Rao mobilised the people on the basis of Telugu unity and obtained financial strength from his own community, for whom he had to give preference. As a result he could not check the rising resistance of these communities who feel that they must get their due share.⁹

Though N.T. Rama Rao was in power from 1983-1989 he lost the power in 1989 elections due to the policies which antagonised the other backward classes particularly the

⁷Satyanaarayana Murthy, *Patterns of Social Stratification in Rural A.P.* M.Phil, J.N.U., Delhi, 1980, p.44.

⁸K. Seshadri, *Social Ethos of South India*, Arihant Publications, Jaipur, 1991, p.107.

⁹*Ibid.*, p.108.

Kapus. The return of Chenna Reddy to state politics in 1989 had again revived the Reddy influence.¹⁰

Thus the trend of Andhra Pradesh politics depends on the Chief Minister and his caste, even though other castes have their representation in the Ministry. The state has seen 13 Chief Ministers, out of whom 7 were Reddis, 3 Kammas, 1 S.C., 1 Brahmin and 1 Velama.

More or less a definite alignment of various castes can be observed in the party politics. For example, dominant castes like Reddis and Brahmins aligned themselves with the congress, where as the Kammas show their loyalty to the Telugu Desam Party.

Caste has been very important force in the congress party politics in Andhra Pradesh. Caste politics in congress party generally surface on 4 important occasions. They are firstly, at the time of the election of the party president. Secondly, at the time of awarding tickets for State Assembly elections. Thirdly, at the time of election of the leader of legislative party and Ministry making and fourthly at the time of the election of Zilla Parishad Chairman.¹¹

Caste as a status group determining the hierarchical interactions and inter-relationships in traditional India has in the post-Independence era, been transformed into a political group to articulate the social and economic interests. So increasingly the caste affiliation of the position seekers became important at the time of elections. The caste group numerically dominant in a particular constituency or a combination of caste groups have considerable influence on the election outcome. In Andhra politics, caste always played a predominant role in regional politics. So it was not surprising that the leaders of Congress (I) tried to discredit the Telugu Desam party by branding it as the party of Kammas one of the dominant groups in Andhra Pradesh.¹²

¹⁰A. Reddappa Reddi, *Op.Cit.*

¹¹G. Ram Reddy and B.A.V. Sharma, *Op.Cit.*, p.208.

¹²G. Srinivas, M. Shatrugna and G. Narayana "Social Background of Telugu Desam Legislators" (ed.) George Mathew, *Shift in Indian Politics, 1983 elections in A.P. and Karnataka*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1984, p.114.

The relationship between caste and political power has to be examined in the context of change, because change has been an important feature of this relationship over the last few decades. Further, such changes as have been taking place within the villages are, in many cases, reflections of shifts in power, in regional society. It is necessary, therefore to undertake a broad survey of the changing role of caste in the politics of Andhra Pradesh, over the last 40 or 50 years in order to place in their proper perspective the events which are taking place in Andhra Pradesh .

A recurrent problem in India in the years since Independence has been the integration of social and political structures at all levels of society, but especially the state and region. Hence, an important topic for research is the extent to which units larger than districts exhibit significant degrees of social and political integration. The present study suggests that where such integration exists, political participation is enhanced.

The Reddy community in Andhra Pradesh has only 12% of the state population. The Reddy power in Andhra Pradesh is exercised with awe some totality. Every 4th M.L.A. in the state is a Reddy and so is every 3rd Panchayat Samithi President. Majority of the Chief Ministers so far of the state belonged to the Reddy community. They are spread out on different factions, but struck together when Reddy interests are really threatened. If Andhra Pradesh had been an impregnable state for the Congress, the Reddis were its ever vigilant caste clan.¹³

The Kammas though occupying a pivotal position in the Andhra Society with 8% of the state population, dominated the state's farming and trading fields, but never really tasted power and no Chief Minister of the state ever came from this community before 1983. N.T. Rama Rao's challenge assumes new meaning in this context, because he was a Kamma himself and had come to symbolise the Kamma aspirations and made them rally round him.¹⁴ In other words, the two dominant castes in Andhra Pradesh both politically

¹³Rasheeduddin Khan, *Political participation and Political Change in A.P.* (Mineographed) Osmania University, Hyderabad, 1972, p.9, also see, N. Innaiah *State Government and Politics: A Study of A.P. Politics 1885-1985*, p.304.

¹⁴Babulal Fadia, *State Politics in India*, Vol.II, Radiant Publishers, N. Delhi, 1984, p.21, also see N. Innaiah, *Ibid.*.

and economically are the Reddis and Kammas in the state are comprising of 12% and 8% of the population respectively.¹⁵

Further Andhra Pradesh is Union of 3 geographical regions, namely, the Circars, Rayalaseema and Telangana and these differ in their political culture, social ethos and economic standards. Features that are specially noteworthy in the electoral politics of Andhra Pradesh are firstly, the impact of caste on politics. It is no doubt misleading to say that Andhra Politics coincides with the major caste contours of the Andhra Political landscape.¹⁶ But there can be no denying of the fact that all political parties exploit caste at the time of elections.

Caste as a political factor in free India was first used by the Congress strategist S.K. Patel in the 1957 elections in Andhra Pradesh. He matched the communist 'caste' by 'caste' and was succeeded.¹⁷ In 1961 June, E.M.S. Namboodripad wrote in the monthly 'New Age' that whereas caste as a social bar had weakened, it has increased in the 'Political sphere and has in many cases decided the fate of elections and even selection of ministers. In 1964, at the Vijayawada Conference of the CPI its general Secretary Ajoy Ghosh reported that caste sentiments instead of loosening have grown tremendously. There was a greater tendency to use caste in all elections. The Congress Party had set the example which was being followed by others.¹⁸

The role of caste in state politics has often been the subject of detailed study. Indian and foreign scholars have written a great deal on this important aspect of politics. At times two extreme views were taken-that caste alone is the dominant factor in the politics of Andhra Pradesh and the other point of view being that the influence of caste is

¹⁵*Data Andhra Pradesh*, Feb.23, 1982.

¹⁶Selig S. Harrison, *OpCit.*, p.206.

¹⁷Sharif K. Bhowmik, 'Caste and Class in India' *E.P.W.*, Vol.XXVII, Nos.24-25, June 13-20, 1992, p.1248.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

negligible. It is, therefore, no easy task to assess the role of caste in determining issues and political developments in the politics of Andhra Pradesh.¹⁹

The Caste politics may be viewed in two dimensions. One, caste solidarity on a horizontal dimension and two, factional mobilisation on a vertical one. Carolyn M. Elliot observes:

“The basic structure of both horizontal and vertical mobilisation exist in the traditional village society. The village society is marked by cross-cutting alignments, providing different basis for conflict, integration and authority. She further contended that the representations of Reddis and Kammas in Andhra Politics was much higher than their representation in the population and increased at higher levels of Politics”.²⁰

O.P. Goyal observed that “in a society where politicization has assumed some stable effect, the study of the impact of politics on caste rather than the study of the impact of caste on politics has greater validity and relevance”.²¹ Further Lloyd and Susan Rudolf Visualised the absorption of castes in the mainstream of modern democratic process in India.²²

Much of the political history of Independent India can be read in caste terms, Brahmin power at the centre upper caste non-Brahmins in state Governments.

Caste did not enter politics all at once with independence, but it made its presence strongly felt in the first general elections and increasingly with each successive election. Although the subject of caste and politics was initially of interest to only a handful of social anthropologists, it soon attracted the attention of political scientists and others.²³

¹⁹A. Prasanna Kumar, 'Caste and Leadership' (ed.) A. Prasanna Kumar, V. Linga Murthy and K. Ravi, *Government and Politics in A.P.*, S. Chand and Co., Ltd., New Delhi, 1982, p.46.

²⁰Carolyn M. Elliot, 'Caste and Faction Among the Dominant Caste', *The Reddis and Kammas in Andhra* (ed.) Rajni Kothari *Caste in Indian Politics*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1970, pp.131-132.

²¹O.P. Goyal, "Caste and Politics: A Conceptual Framework". *Asian Survey*, Vol.5 No.10, Oct, 1965, pp.522-25.

²²Rudolf and Rudolf, "The Political Role of India's Caste Association", *Pacific Affairs*, Vol.33, No.1, March, 1960, p.5.

²³Ranji Kothari, 'Caste In Indian Politics, *Orient Longman, 1970*, M.S.A. Rao, *Dominance and State Power in Modern India. Decline of a Social Order*, Vol.1, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989.

and there is a large literature on it. Even after the subject had been taken up by scholars in various disciplines in the 1960s and 1970s some differences remained between the ordinary run of social scientists who saw and stressed the importance of caste in politics, and what are called “left intellectuals” who were inclined to treat it lightly. Today, many more scholars, both Marxists and non-Marxists acknowledge the importance of caste in politics, although they draw different policy conclusions from it.²⁴

In 1950s and 1960s the leaders of all political parties condemned in public the use of caste in politics. Politicians freely acknowledged that caste was being extensively used in the politics of post-independence India, but they said that it was being used by other parties, not their own. When it was shown that their party too was using caste, their reply was that they did not start the process, but were being forced to accommodate caste in order to survive. For in politics, or at least in Indian politics, one could not afford to be too idealistic as one wished to remain in business. In other words, they sought to defend the use of caste (unlike for instance, the use of class) on tactical rather than ethical grounds.²⁵

Another major point is that caste solidarity is often more important at elections than political views. Political leaders or parties some times use this fact by presenting a candidate from the largest caste in the area. The election, on the other hand, expects those elected to surround themselves with members of their own caste. M.N. Srinivas has remarked “that the caste system is so closely involved in India’s social and political affairs that every one, including the leading politicians, tacitly accepts the need for a Minister to represent each main caste in the provincial cabinets.”²⁶ M.N. Srinivas also pointed out that in the first Government of Mysore state not only were the ministers chosen on a caste basis, but each had a secretary representing the Ministers’s sub-caste, and that (at the time of writing of his book in 1955) caste still determined political nominations and even influenced the allotment of places in schools.

²⁴C.J. Fuller, *Caste Today*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1996, p.168.

²⁵*Ibid.*, pp.168-169.

²⁶M.N. Srinivas, “Castes Can they Exist in the India of Tomorrow?” *Economic Weekly*, December 15, 1955, p.1250 cited in W.A. Caswell *India Independent*, Khosla and Co., 1977, pp.41-42.

The politics of Andhra Pradesh during the 50's witnessed 3 general phenomenon. First was the progressive mobilisation of different castes. The circle of political participation gradually widened. Beginning with Brahmins and Kammas, it incorporated the Reddy, the BC's and finally SC's. Each phase of mobilisation resulted in a changed structure of competition for control of the congress. The process of caste mobilisation was accompanied and helped by introduction of Panchayati Raj institutions formed not only to encourage development but also to provide an institutional mechanism for social guidance and control. Finally Congress was being a party that represented and was controlled by generally middle and well to do peasant castes.²⁷

As we discussed in the second chapter, there are 4 types of Kapus in Andhra Pradesh. called Turpu Kapus in the North Coastal districts of Srikakulam, Vijayanagaram and Visakhapatnam, Kapus or Telagas in the agriculturally prosperous districts of East and West Godavari, Krishna and Guntur, Balijas in the Rayalaseema and Prakasam and Nellore districts and Munnuru Kapus in the Telangana districts. Among them Turpu Kapus and Munnuru Kapus are listed in backward classes list. Now the remaining Kapus are demanding for their inclusion in the backward classes list.

However, the Kapus are a separate caste in the coastal districts of East and West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Visakhapatnam, Vijayanagaram and Srikakulam. They are middle class peasants with a substantial numerical strength in all these districts. Further a quite welloff and politically dynamic Godavari district Kapu look down upon the backward Kapus of Visakhapatnam, Vijayanagaram and Srikakulam districts.

The Kapus in East Godavari district rank first in numerical strength with 18% of the total population. Although the Kapus are spread all over the district except the Agency Area. However, their main concentration is on the upland taluks which are less fertile and largely inaccessible to the Godavari canal system. Therefore, the Kapu land lords and zamindars are not able to compete in different spheres of activities in the district with their kamma counter parts, who are the owners of the fertile lands of the district.

²⁷F.D. Vakil, "Patterns of Electoral Performance in A.P. and Karnataka" (ed.) Richard Session and Ramashray Ray, *Diversity and Dominance in Indian Politics: Changing Bases of Congress support*, Vol.I, Sage Publications, New Delhi, pp.253-254.

Table No. IV - 1

**Caste Wise Distribution of Population in
East Godavary District in Terms of Percentage²⁸**

Caste	Populati on in %	
F.C. Peasant upper castes		38.5
Kapus	18.0	
Kammas	06.0	
Velamas	03.5	
Rajus	02.5	
Reddis	02.0	
Non-peasant upper castes		06.5
Brahmins	04.0	
Komatis(Vysyas)	02.5	
Backward Castes and Minorities		40.0
Setti Balijas	13.0	
Agnikula Kshatriyas	05.0	
Gollas	05.0	
Weaver castes	04.0	
Chakalis	03.0	
Christians	02.5	
Kamsalis	02.5	
Muslims	0.15	
Mangalis	01.5	
Others	02.0	
Harijans and Tribals		21.5
Scheduled Castes	17.5	
Scheduled Tribes	04.0	
Grand Total	100.0	100.00

Source: Estimates based on 1911 census details on different castes and 1991 census details on S.T. and S.C's, Muslims and Christians.

Like Jats and the other peasant castes in North India, the Kammas are largely landholders. Some of them are money lenders. A few of them have also entered the Industrial field in a big way .

²⁸ N.V.S.S. Reddy, *Caste and Class in Andhra Politics: A Study of East Godavari District 1950-1980*, M.Phil. J.N.U. New Delhi, 1981, p.116 also see, Satya Narayana, *Sangita, Politics, Bureaucracy and Rural Development in A.P.* , Ph.D. JNU, Nelhi, 1984,

On the other hand, the Kapus, the largest group in the district are behind them in both industry and business. However, their control over land and their numerical strength (18%) help them in playing a fairly forceful part in district politics.²⁹ The Kapus and Kammas are the dominant castes of the district. They claim the lion's share in the power structure. It is now a well established practice for the state leadership to select members of these two castes for the two unreserved L.S. seats from the district and in the state cabinet. The Kapus who constitute 1/5 of the district population did not enjoy any significant measure of power in the initial years. Gradually, however, their numerical strength helped them gain in importance vis-a-vis the economically more powerful Kammas. Their representation in the state Legislative Assembly increased from a bare 6.3 per cent in 1952 to 56.4 per cent in 1978 and also in 1994.

In East Godavari district, the peasant castes together with a share of 32 per cent population corner 60% of the seats in the state legislative assembly. The political leadership is dominated by the upper agricultural castes. The Kammas and Kapus constitute 20 and 40% of the political leadership respectively; they are equally represented in the administrative leadership ie., 11% each.³⁰

²⁹N.V.V.S. Reddy, *Ibid.*, p.252.

³⁰*Ibid.*, pp.374-375.

Table No.IV-2
CASTE COMPOSITION OF A.P. , CABINET 1956-1994 PERCENTAGES

Year	Brahmin	Reddy	Kamma	Kahatriya	Vellama	Kapu	Muslim	BC	SC	ST	Others
1956	23.07	38.38	7.69	-	7.69	7.69	7.69	-	7.69	-	-
1960	7.14	35.75	14.28	14.28	7.14	7.14	7.14	7.14	7.14	-	7.14
1962	6.25	37.50	12.50	6.15	12.50	-	6.25	-	6.25	-	6.25
1964	11.12	33.34	7.14	2.14	7.14	-	7.14	-	7.14	-	7.14
1969	7.14	28.60	10.71	7.14	7.14	10.71	3.57	10.71	10.71	-	7.14
1971	8.00	20.00	16.00	8.00	8.00	12.00	4.00	12.00	12.00	4.00	4.00
1972	10.34	13.80	13.80	6.89	6.89	20.72	2.44	20.72	13.80	3.44	3.44
1973	5.55	16.66	11.11	5.55	5.55	22.26	5.55	22.26	11.11	-	5.55
1978	6.06	24.25	12.12	3.03	6.06	18.18	9.09	18.18	12.12	-	6.06
1980	6.66	20.00	15.55	2.22	-	22.22	4.45	22.22	13.32	4.48	4.45
1982	5.88	24.67	14.70	2.94	-	29.41	2.94	29.41	8.82	2.94	2.94
1982	3.12	18.75	15.62	3.12	3.12	28.12	6.25	28.12	9.37	3.12	6.24
1983	6.66	26.60	13.33	6.66	6.66	13.33	6.66	13.33	13.33	-	-
1985	4.16	20.83	16.66	4.16	4.16	8.33	4.16	20.83	8.33	8.33	-
1989	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1994	2.6	28.9	7.9	2.6	2.6	9.5	5.2	18.4	15.8	2.6	2.6

Source: G. Ram Reddy, "The Politics of Accommodation: Caste, Class and Dominance in A.P. " (ed.) Francine R. Frankel and M.S.A. Rao, *Dominance and State Power in Modern India: Declining of a social Order*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1989, Vol.1, 306, and also see, *Eenadu*, Hyderabad Edition, Oct.12, 1995, p.2

With regard to the representation of Ontaris, Kapus, Telagas and Baliyas (OKTB) in the cabinet there has been no substantial improvement between 1956-1994. The corresponding percentage increased from 7.7% in 1956 to 28% in 1982 but gradually fell down since then and further to 10.5% in 1994.

Socio-Economic and Political Developments in Modern Andhra:

While trying to understand the Kapu development in Andhra Pradesh it is necessary to analyse the process of socio-economic and political developments that have been taking place in Andhra for the past one and a half centuries. This will help in understanding the general conditions under which the Kapus are trying for their rights.

Reddy, kamma and Kapu together constitute the major peasant castes of Andhra Pradesh while majority of the Kammas and Reddis are big landlords (Maliks) owning large

tracts of lands, the numerically largest Kapus are either working as peasants (Kisans) or labourers (Mazdurs).³¹

The construction of the major irrigational projects on Godavari and Krishna in 1847 and 1853 resulted in the agricultural prosperity of these coastal districts. These anicuts qualitatively influenced the dynamics of Andhra's economy and politics. According to Niranjana Rao the pre-anicut conditions of the agrarian economy of the Krishna and Godavari districts were characterised by stagnation or decay. Natural calamities, arbitrary extractions by Zamindars, severe burden of taxation, heavy competition from imports, depression of agricultural prices, decay in handloom industry were the major features of the area during the mid 19th century.³² After the development of irrigational facilities, agriculture became remunerative for peasant castes. They began intensive cultivation of rice and cash crops like cotton, sugarcane and tobacco for growing market. The rise in agricultural production transformed the stagnant economy into market economy.³³

Due to large scale production of cash crops by the big landlords like Kammas and Reddy, their wealth had gone up. However, the benefits of the growth process in agriculture obviously did not reach the majority of the small Kapu farmers who constituted nearly 1/5 of the population of Madras presidency in the initial stages. But after independence particularly after 1970, there is a tremendous change in the life styles of Kapus, especially in the Godavari districts. Commercialisation of agriculture increased by the end of the 1920's. The most important outcome of these economic changes, was the emergence of a relatively large class of prosperous peasants or owner cultivators. There are several major land owning cultivating castes in Coastal Andhra, the dominant one over all in terms of land and number being Kammas. Kapus are probably more numerous than Kammas but they own less land. The other peasant castes include Reddis, Kapus, Telagas

³¹V. Venu, *Backward Class Movement: A Study of Kapus in A.P.*, M.Phil, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, 1996, p.91.

³²G.N. Rao, *Changing Conditions and Growth in Agricultural Economy in the Krishna and Godavari Districts 1840-1980*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 1973, Andhra University, Vizag, p.75.

³³*Ibid.*, p.76.

or Naidus, Razus, Velamas.³⁴ In addition to agricultural growth there were other changes in the late part of 19th century and early 20th century that contributed to the development of this class, rural urban migration, the spread of education and the development of caste consciousness.

Since profit in agriculture was limited, Kammas and Reddis started agro-based industries like rice mills, tobacco grading and sugar mills.³⁵ Thus by the early 20th century a new stratum of rich peasants had emerged in the delta that was rapidly developing into an entrepreneurial commercial farmer-capitalist class.

One of the important factors that contributed to the economic development of these dominant castes (Kammas and Reddis) is the caste-based social net-work in business, industry and agriculture. The caste consciousness and identity became instrumental for successful economic development. Their caste consciousness and solidarity have given them an edge in business and industry because of their propensity to help one another as a means of improving the status of caste as a whole.

Also Kammas and Reddis have been adept in utilising the new opportunities created in economic and political spheres by the new political system. The spread of cooperative credit societies, land development banks, sugar cooperatives, substantial price support for farm products, subsidised inputs like water, power, fertiliser and industrial credit helped the consolidation of the rich farming class. These castes could effectively corner all the political positions created by the new polity. They were able to capture political positions such as Panchayat Presidentships, Samithi Presidentships, Membership of Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council.³⁶

³⁴Carol Boyack Upadhyaya: "The Farmer Capitalists of Coastal A.P." *E.P.W.*, Vol.XXIII, N.27, July 2, 1988, p.1377.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶G. Ram Reddy, "Politics of Accommodation: Caste-class and Dominance in A.P." , Francine R Frankle and M.S.A. Rao, (ed) *Dominance and State Power in modern India: Decline of a Social Order*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1989, p.297.

The economic dominance and caste solidarity of Kammas was further strengthened by the emergence of T.D.P. in 1983 under the stewardship of N.T. Rama Rao. The emergence of T.D.P. also provided a source of inspiration for the Kapus to mobilise on similar lines.

But only the Kapus of Coastal Andhra, particularly the Godavari area were in a good position in all walks of life. The Kapus of Rayalaseema and Telangana area are in a developing stage generally after 1970's more markedly after the emergence of T.D.P.

The introduction of reforms in the Panchayat Raj system has to be seen against the background of the changes in rural society. The changes pertain to the emergence of a class in the countryside. Next in class stratification to the rich landed class which can be described as rural 'middle class'. It is worthwhile to make a few observations on the composition and interests of this class, in order to understand its significance in the changing social structure and rural politics. In terms of the nature of social composition, its rural middle class belongs predominantly to what can be described as 'Backward castes'. It includes hundred and odd castes and sub-castes.

In the post-green revolution period it was not only the rich peasantry gained new economic power, but new technology gave rise to another group viz., intermediate peasantry belonging to the backward castes like Munnuru Kapus, Goudas and Padmasalis, Gollas etc. These social groups could generate agrarian surplus which gave them leisure and a bit of economic strength to stake their claims for a share in political power and dominance. The strength of these classes also lay in their numerical and changing political consciousness of the large majority of the rural pool.³⁷ The castes which have made their presence felt in rural politics as a consequence of the developmental process are the Munnuru Kapus, Padmasali and Gouda communities.³⁸

What is more important to note in the present context is that Munnuru Kapu caste is a predominantly land owning and cultivating caste next only to the Reddis and Velamas

³⁷M. Kistaiah, *Administrative Reforms in a Developing Society*, Sterling Publishers, Hyderabad, 1990, p.56.

³⁸*Ibid.*, pp.74-75.

in Telangana region and Kammas in Coastal districts. Benefitting from the process of development initiated after independence, it has come to assume importance in the non-agrarian sectors of trade services. It is this fact of entrenched interests in the diversified fields that has given it a position superior to the other backward communities and led to its competition with the dominant castes.³⁹

Among the Backward classes out of 93 caste groups identified there are certain castes which both in terms of numerical strength and also in their growing economic clout, spread of education, recruitment to services and consequently political awareness are trying to assert their identity in different spheres, particularly politics. In recognition of their political clout political parties apart from practice of accommodation have also provided for reservations at grass roots level for the elective bodies in the Panchayat Raj institutions one can broadly identify the emergent groups among the backward castes who are in a position today to challenge the dominance of the traditional land owning classes in the political as well as in the rural economic spheres. They are Yadavas, otherwise known as Gollas, Weavers, Munnuru Kapus, Gouds and Boyas known recently by different names as Mutrasi, Telaga and Bantu.⁴⁰

Thus, as a result of the political economy of development, the expansion of the tertiary sector, and the new opportunities we witness the emergence of a 'middle class' from the backward communities like Yadavas, Gouda, Munnuru Kapu, Padmasali in a significant way during 1970's. These castes which till then played a second fiddle to the dominant landowning castes begun to assert themselves in village politics because of the latest political awareness of the power of their number in electoral politics. N.T.Rama Rao's (hereafter N.T.R) Mandal system was specifically meant to draw in this section and carve out a political base among these castes.⁴¹ The restructuring of the Panchayat Raj system, as part of it, the creation of 1058 Mandal Parishads in the place of large panchayat samithis has to be seen in the context of changing rural social structure in the state.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p.75.

⁴⁰F.D. Vakil, *The New Voter, A Study of the Voting Behaviour of the Youth in Andhra Pradesh*, Book Link Corporation, Hyderabad, 1994, pp.15-16.

⁴¹K. Srinivasulu, 'A.P: B.S.P. and Caste Politics, *E.P.W.*, Vol.XXIX, No.40, Oct.1, 1994, p.2583.

From among the "Dominant Cultivating" castes it was the Velamas who controlled the extensive Zamindary areas in Bobbili, Pithapuram, Nuzvid, Venkatagiri and other estates in Coastal Andhra. It so happened that large portions of these Velama Zamindars were in the 'Dry Zone' not benefitting from anicut water. But other estates (Zamindaries) in Coastal Andhra like Vasireddy in Guntur, and numerous estates small and big like Chintapalli, Vuyyuru etc., in Krishna district and a few in Godavari district were controlled by the Kamma Zamindars. And large portion of these estates had the benefit of irrigation.⁴² The vast masses of tenants in the Velama Zamindars in the 'Dry Zone' were non-Velamas, being Reddy, Kamma, Kapu/Baliya/Telagas etc., from the dominant cultivating castes and Gouda, Yadava and other communities from the non-dominant cultivating castes. (Velamas known for their military prowess and being the ruling caste for a long time, imbibed this feudal type culture and refused to touch the plough.) As against this 'ethos' the other sections of the cultivating castes like Kammas, Baliyas, Telagas, Gavaras and a section of the Coastal Kapus were not averse to cultivate their own lands or lease in lands and employ family labour.⁴³

However, in Krishna, Guntur and Godavari districts, because of the prosperity ushered in by irrigation from the mid 19th century, Kamma women ceased to participate in the agricultural operations. But in the upland tracts of Bezwada, Nandigama, Jaggayapeta, Kamma women did help their menfolk in the field for a long time. This is still a case in Nellore, Chittoor and Anantapur districts. It should, however, be mentioned, that there was a section of Kammas who did not go for farm work; called 'Illuvellani Kammavaru' since long.⁴⁴

By the 30's of the 20th century tenancy both on the Zamindary and Ryotwari lands appears to be in existence at a significant level. In the post-depression period, with a weakened bargaining power, the small peasant/tenants were at the receiving end. Not

⁴²G.N. Rao, "Dimensions of Land control in Coastal Andhra: A Historical View", *A.P. Economic Association*, 2nd Annual Conference, 1984, p.62.

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴Carol Boyack Upadhya, "The Farmer - Capitalists of Coastal A.P.", *E.P.W.*, vol.XXIII, No.27, July 2, 1988, p.1384.

only they were hard pressed in the credit market but even in commodity and land markets the domination of the rich peasants ever eager to consolidate and strengthen their land-base appears to be complete. Thus land control was increasingly passing on into the hands of rich peasants at the expense of small peasantry.

Curiously this process appears to be reversed in parts of Delta districts in recent times ie., in the post-1960 period. While the Brahmin land holders drifted away from villages to the nearby towns in search of jobs in the urban labour market from the fifties of this century: the Kamma rich peasantry, had of late developed a taste for money-making avenues in the urban and semi-urban centres. They are drifting to professional services, construction, business, film making, hotels, real estate and industry. As they are losing touch with the land, the other middle peasant cultivating castes like Kapus, Goudas etc., are buying up the lands and houses of the Kammas, thus bringing in a new caste balance into operation. This process has just started in recent times.⁴⁵ A group of cultivators among the Kapus had become rich and acquired higher caste-status compared to the other Kapus who were pushed downwards and gradually reduced to a lower status in the villages.

During the late 19th century conditions conducive for the development and growth of agriculture were created. Apart from guaranteeing legal ownership over land through patta rights the land revenue assessments... fixed for 30 years helped the peasantry to effect improvements in agriculture.⁴⁶ This kind of change was clearly reflected in the new status term 'Asami' which came into currency in rural Telangana during this period. Even some of the 'backward castes' like Perika, Goundla; Golla, Telaga and Munnuru Kapus seem to have acquired the status of 'Asamis' during the inter-war period. Kesava Iyengar had noticed the tendency for dry land to pass into the hands of persons actually cultivating in 1930.⁴⁷ According to the committee on Rural Indebtedness about 10% of the total cultivated area was transferred to the Ryots.⁴⁸ These Telaga and Reddy ryots as rural

⁴⁵G.N. Rao., *Dimensions of Land Control* *Op.Cit.*, p.70.

⁴⁶*Report on Agricultural Indebtedness*, Hyderabad, 1937, p.20.

⁴⁷S. Kesava Iyengar, *Economic Investigations in the Hyderabad State 1929-1930*, Vol.I, Hyderabad, 1931, p.120.

⁴⁸*Report on the Agricultural*, *Op. Cit.*, p.10.

agriculturist creditors received about 86% of the transferred land from the indebted peasants in Telangana.⁴⁹

Caste and Politics in Andhra:

In the changing context of political scenario in the state in the last decade the Kapus are now trying to assert their identity and are demanding their share in the power structure. In search of a separate new identity they are now trying to bring together under the rubric of Kapus with similar cognate groups. As mentioned earlier, spread in different regions of the state, they are digging out their historical roots of their common origin. They formed a common platform known as 'Kapunadu', to articulate their grievances. One of their immediate demands is that they should be included in the list of Backward classes.⁵⁰

In his perspective analysis Rasheeduddin Khan says 'all the dominant castes particularly the Reddis and the Kammas, in varying proportions are members of the different competing parties, though it is true that there are more Reddis in Congress than in other parties.⁵¹ The same is the case with the Kammas of Telugu Desam Party.

Those who have analysed the social background of the new T.D.P. legislators of A.P. have noted the following: "Although T.D.P. is not dominated by the Kammas, the caste has improved its political position compared to what it was under Congress Rule"⁵²

Before we launch into the problem of the interaction between the social structure and the electoral process, it is to be borne in mind one or two significant complications in the situations. The first, is that the social structure is not a static structure, and it must be seen as moving in a specific direction. The second complicating factor is that we should not regard the impact as a one-way traffic. This means that we should not only concede the impact of social structure on the electoral process, we should also be prepared to

⁴⁹S. Kesava Iyengar, *Op.Cit.*, p.116.

⁵⁰F.D. Vakil, *The New Voter: A Study of the Voting Behaviour of the Youth in A.P.*, Book Link Corporation, Hyderabad 1994. p.14.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p.10.

⁵²N. Innaiah, *Saffron Star over A.P.* Book Links Corporation, Hyderabad, 1984, p.105.

concede the reciprocal impact of the electoral process on the social structure. It should be conceded that the very exigencies of the electoral process mobilises individuals and groups in directions away from the existing social structure.⁵³

One practical difficulty encountered by anyone trying to relate the social structure in Andhra Pradesh to the voting process is the total absence of the relevant census data. The Indian census system does not collect any data about caste groups in general. Only the S.C. and S.T. groups are officially enumerated. But there are however, other sources based on other non-census agencies. For instance, some of the Backward Classes Commissions have estimated their own data on caste demography in the state. Such data though short of absolute authority, may be accepted for the purpose of broad analysis of the interaction between caste groups and the electoral process.

Caste has been an important factor in the politics of Andhra Pradesh. Of late, particularly, after the formation of T.D.P. the significance of the caste has become more and more pronounced and open. Allegations against the government based on caste, once limited to by and large to private discussions, now are matters of open discussion in the state legislature and High Court too.⁵⁴

Some tried to understand the T.D.P. phenomenon in terms of caste. According to them the T.D.P. is a party of the Kammas, who were thirsting for power because Reddis dominated the political scene for long in the state. It is argued that the Kammas never had a Chief Minister in the State before 1983. It is further stated that since the chances for a Kamma to become Chief Minister in the Congress were bleak, the Kammas sided and supported the T.D.P.⁵⁵ A more plausible explanation of the T.D.P. electoral sweep lay in its support base that had cut most of the communities. It is perhaps true that a majority of the Kammas sided with T.D.P.⁵⁶

⁵³George Mathew, *Shift in Indian Politics...* Op.Cit., p.19.

⁵⁴K.V. Narayana Rao and D. Sundar Ram, "Political Developments in Andhra Pradesh 1978-1989 A study", *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol.II, No.11, Jan.-March 1990, p.556.

⁵⁵Atul Kohli: "The N.T.R. phenomenon in Andhra Pradesh : Political Change in a South Indian State" *Asian Survey*, Vol.28, No.10, Oct.1988, pp.991-1017, also see K.C. Suri, "Andhra Pradesh : Politics of Confrontation *The Indian Journal of Political Science*", Vol. LV, NO.13, Jan.-March, 1994, p.199.

⁵⁶K.C. Suri, *Ibid.*, pp.199-200.

"The rich peasant and capitalist land lord class - caste that emerged in the fertile Coastal Andhra region over a period of time and crystallised into a nouveau rich stratum with multiple economic interests in cinema production and distribution, agro-industry and the tertiary sector (in social terms predominantly belonging to the Kamma Caste) but denied access to the corridors of power during the 3 decades of Congress rule found in N.T. Rama Rao who could rally the masses in the electoral battle field and further the political interests of this class"⁵⁷

Close observation showed that caste was a persistent factor all along, it was never a basis for mobilisation and targetting for attacks until the 1980's.

According to Atul Kohli,

"the decline of Congress popularity in Andhra Pradesh is traced to both social structure and political change. More specifically, the so called dominant castes of the region have lost their capacity to influence the political behaviour of those below them in the caste hierarchy, creating a fluid political situation. The old, seemingly 'consensual' pattern of politics that revolved around dominant caste leaders and their dependent followers has gone, probably for ever"⁵⁸.

Among the reasons behind the Congress decline in Andhra Pradesh was the changing political sympathy of various socio-economic groups within the state. The Reddis and the Kammas have been the two competing 'Dominant Castes' of Andhra Pradesh who over the years have continuously Jockeyed for power. As long as the Congress was in power, the Reddis - who constitute about 12% of Andhra Pradesh population and are spread throughout the state always had the upper hand.⁵⁹ This was due to "their higher proportion in terms of their numbers among the peasant proprietor castes in Andhra Pradesh; their traditional power in many parts of Andhra desa, their political initiatives and involvement in the congress and the congress parties, during the last

⁵⁷K. Narendra Mohan, "Caste and Politics in Andhra Pradesh" *E.P.W.*, Vol. Jan. 14, p.124.

⁵⁸Atul Kohli, "The N.T.R. Phenomenon in Andhra Pradesh : Political Change in a South Indian State: *Asian Survey*, Vol. XXVII, No.7, July, 1988, p.992.

⁵⁹G. Ram Reddy: "Andhra Pradesh: The Citadel of Congress" (ed.) Iqbal Narain, *State Politics in India*, Meenakshi Prakashan, Meerut, 1976, p.4.

decades, the availability of better caste leadership from the village, taluk, district to the state level and above all, their firm base in agricultural wealth".⁶⁰

The Kammas who constitute about 8% of the state's population, had always resented the fact that the Reddis dominated the state's politics. Two factors at work throughout the 1970's changed the nature of these caste rivalries and of their relative power position. First, the Kammas proved to be more enterprising than the Reddis. They utilised their land wealth and spread into numerous commercial activities such as rice-milling, sugar production, hotels, tobacco processing, news papers and the film industry. This changing economic base strengthened their clout and while some of this economic gains found expression in the increased number of ministerial positions secured by the Kammas. Of the 9 Chief Ministers before N.T. Rama Rao, six had been Reddis and none had been a Kamma. Second this growing disjuncture between economic power and the failure to capture the highest political office with all the symbolic and the real gains that involves alienated the Kammas and they threw their support behind N.T Rama Rao, himself a Kamma and well connected with other wealthy Kammas in the movie, hotel and Newspaper industries.⁶¹

It is obvious that the electoral game can only be won by securing the support of some of the other backward classes, numerically critical groups, until the early 1960's the Backward Classes and the Scheduled Castes did not emerge as independent political forces. During the 1970's however, while the S.C.'s more or less maintained their support for the congress party, many of the backward classes became alienated and a survey showed that there was a significant decline in Congress's electoral support among the backward classes by the early 1980's.⁶² As long as the Congress also had the support of the backward castes, it could win elections, but as many backward castes moved away from the Congress, its electoral hold on Andhra Pradesh became precarious. By the early

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

⁶¹ Atul Kohli, *Op.Cit.*, p. 996, Atul Kohli had an interview with V.B. Raju and A. Madan Mohan, Former Presidents of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee, 1982 and 1986.

⁶² F.D. Vakil, "Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh : A Review: (ed.) George Mathew, *Shift in Indian Politics 1983 Elections in A.P. and Karnataka*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1984, p.68.

1980's Congress had lost considerable support amongst "Younger age groups educated urban elite, middle income groups and backward classes".⁶³

The issue that had done the most to harden this caste cleavage within Guntur is the fact that until N.T. Rama Rao, Andhra Pradesh had never had a Kamma Chief Minister. What further exacerbated their frustrations was the fact that a Guntur Reddy, Brahmananda Reddy, had been Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister during 1963-1971 and subsequently remained an important political figure both within Guntur and the State. This gave local Reddis not only better access to state resources than the Kammas but also the psychological advantage of being in power. The elevation that Kammas have felt since N.T. Rama Rao's victory thus becomes comprehensive. According to the Atul Kohli. "I heard comments from the Kamma elite throughout Guntur suggesting in one form or another that, finally, it is our opportunity".⁶⁴

In the initial stages after the formation of the T.D.P. a view was expressed that it was a Kamma Party intended to check the political dominance of Reddys. Further, the electoral results did not totally rule out the caste factor. In Guntur, Krishna, East and West Godavari districts where Kammas are dominant, T.D.P. captured all the seats. In Telangana where the Reddys are dominant T.D.P. secured 43 out of 106 seats, only in Telangana, the Congress(I) stood on par with T.D.P. by securing 43 seats.⁶⁵ When we observe the 1983 Assembly Elections, there are 47 Kamma M.L.A's, of them, 45 belong to T.D.P. only. At the same time out of 75 Reddy M.L.A's there are only 4 Reddy Ministers in N.T.R.'s Ministry.⁶⁶

The rise of N.T.R. and his T.D.P. is generally seen as the long overdue assertion of this class (usually further vulgarised as the rise of the Kamma caste). It is true that N.T.R. and his most voracious followers belong to this class, whether the main body in

⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁴Atul Kohli, *Op.Cit.* P.1007.

⁶⁵V. Linga Murthy, "The 7th General Elections to the Legislative Assembly in Andhra Pradesh : End of an Era" (ed) Agarala Easwara Reddy and D. Sundara Ram, *State Politics in India: Reflections on Andhra Pradesh*, M.D. Publications, New Delhi, 1994, p.230.

⁶⁶N. Innaiah, *Andhra Pradeshloo Kula Rajakeeyalu*, (Telugu) Vijayawada, 1985, p.69.

the coastal districts or the expatriates settled along with irrigation canals and around perennial tanks in Telangana and Rayalaseema. It is true also that most of his ardent voters belongs to these 4 districts. It is further true that one man who almost single handedly led his campaign - Ramoji Rao, editor of the largest circulated Telugu daily *Eenadu* which functioned as a pamphlet for N.T.R.both at the time of his election and during the crisis.⁶⁷

Table No.IV - 3
1983 Andhra Pradesh Assembly Elections. Elected Members and their Caste

Caste	Nos.	T.D.P.	Percentage
Reddy	75	33	25
Kamma	49	47	16
Kshatriya	14	13	5
Velama	13	3	4
Kapu	22	22	7
Brahmins	7	1	2
Vysyas	8	3	3
Muslims	9	3	1
Jains/Christians	4		1
Backward classes	40	32	13
Scheduled Caste	40	25	13
Scheduled Tribes	16	5	5
Total	297	187	100

Source: F.D. Vakil, Op.Cit. p.18.

Of the 202 candidates who won on T.D.P. in the 1983 assembly elections, the caste affiliations of 187 was available. They are as follows.⁶⁸

⁶⁷In 1984 Sept 15, when Ram Lal the then Governor of Andhra Pradesh dismissed the N.T.R.'s Government, the press not only in state level, but also at National level played a key role. But at state level the *Eenadu* columns becomes more attractive. For details see K. Balagopal, "A Flase Resurrection: Rise and Fall of N.T.R.", *E.P.W.*, Vol. XIX, No.45, Nov.16, 1984, p.1901.

⁶⁸M. Shatrugna and G. Narayana, "Social Background of T.D.P. Legislators", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XVIII, Nos. 52 & 53, December, 24-31, 1983, p.2204.

Table No. IV - 4
Caste Affiliations of T.D.P. Legislators

Caste Status	No. of Legislators	Total
A. Upper Castes		
1. Brahmins	1	
2. Vysya	3	4
B. Middle Castes		
1. Kamma	47	
2. Reddy	33	
3. Raju	15	
4. Velama	3	96
C. Backward Classes		
1. Kapu	13	
2. Telaga	6	
3. Balija	3	
4. Golla	7	
5. Gouda	4	
6. Other backward class	21	54
D. Scheduled Castes	25	25
E. Scheduled Tribes	5	5
F. Minority Community	3	3
Total	187	187.

Source: F.D. Vakil, *Op.Cit.*

These caste groups are divided into 5 major categories as shown in the Table-IV-1, Of the 187 legislators, nearly 1/3rd are drawn from the backward classes, while the backward classes category represented various small caste groups, the single dominant group among them is that Kapu with 13 representatives in the legislature.

The selection of candidates also reflects the numerical strength of these caste groups in each district while some of the caste groups like Reddi, Kamma and Kapu are widely dispersed, a few others like Raju, Velama, Telaga and Golla are confined to a few districts. So it is clear that each district has been taken as a unit for the selection of candidates.⁶⁹

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p.2204.

Table No.IV-5
Region Wise Caste Members

Name of the Caste	Coastal Andhra	Rayalaseema	Telangana	Total
Brahmin	-	-	1	1
Vysya	2	1	-	3
Kamma	33	8	6	47
Reddy	8	16	9	33
Raju	11	1	1	13
Velama	-	-	3	3
Kapu	9	2	2	13
Telaga	6	-	-	6
Baliya	1	1	1	3
Golla	6	-	1	7
Gouda	2	1	1	4
Other B.C's	16	2	3	21
S.C's	14	7	4	25
S.T.s	4	-	1	5
Minorities	-	2	1	3
Total	112	41	34	187

In 1983 Assembly elections, among the T.D.P. candidates who won were 46 Kammas, 39 Reddis, 33 from B.C's, 28 SC, 14 Kapus, 12 Kshatriyas, 7 ST's, 2 Brahmins, 4 Minorities and others 2. And for the first time in the history of Andhra Pradesh, 8 candidates from the Kamma community were elected from Telangana.⁷⁰

Further the caste composition of the Congress (I) was also slightly altered in the 1983 elections. Tickets were given to some members of the Kamma Community to which N.T.R. belonged. This was done to win over the Kamma community. There were 35 Kammas in the new list. The Reddys who always dominated the Congress (I) in Andhra Pradesh had to suffer losses because 69 of them were given tickets as against 81 in 1978 elections.⁷¹

⁷⁰N. Innaiah, *State Government and Politics*, *Op.Cit.*, p.191.

⁷¹K.S. Padhi, "Functional Regionalism: A Study of T.D.P. in A.P." (ed.) S.A.H. Haqqi *Democracy, Pluralism and Nation Building*, N.B.O. Publishers, New Delhi, 1984, p.407.

In the 1985 Assembly Elections T.D.P. gave tickets to 49 Reddi candidates. They were closely followed by Kammas with 45 candidates (34 from Coastal Andhra, 5 from Rayalaseema and 6 were from Telangana). Single caste wise the Kammas and Reddis with about 20% each have predominant position in the party's list. Though the Kamma population is mostly confined to Coastal Andhra region, the party had fielded them even in Rayalaseema and Telangana regions. The fielding of so many number of candidates from this community is an indication of party's thinking that they would be more loyal to the top brass of the party. Comparatively Reddis do not seem to have got due share in the distribution of tickets. This has to be understood in the changing dynamics of politics in the state where in the conscious attempts have been made to cut down the importance of that community by the T.D.P.⁷² Even in the case of most of the candidates selected from that community, care has been taken to ensure their loyalty to the party leadership. Next to them there were 18 candidates from Kapu community and 7 from Kshatriyas.

Caste in Contemporary Politics

It is necessary to understand the nature of the caste system at present to analyse its role in contemporary politics. Caste identity is openly acknowledged and is made a basis of political bargaining and electoral calculation. This enhances the status of caste as an ethnic variable. The numerical strength of a caste, its various sub-groups and factions are taken into electoral calculation and intense bargaining is done on that basis. This makes caste important but not omnipotent. Further castes today form federations not on grounds of strict ethnicity but on social homogeneity and goal identification. Because of this interaction of various castes coming together for the achievement of specific goals, a broader and more secular consensus emerges. Today we have caste federations or caste constellations of power and not an inclusive rigid caste system resting on primordial ethnic, ascriptive and familial ties.⁷³

Caste has played a decisive role in the 1994 Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections. Never in the past had the caste factor come to the fore so openly as it has in the 1994

⁷²V. Satyanarayana, *Political Elite in Andhra Pradesh : A Study of Recruitment Process in the 8th Assembly Elections in Andhra Pradesh 1985*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Osmania University 1991, pp.283-285.

⁷³Bhawani Singh, *Indian Politics: Ideology and Ecology*: Printwell Publishers, Jaipur, 1990, p.26.

elections, though it has played an important role in deciding the destiny of political parties.⁷⁴

There is a big clamour by almost all the caste groups for a fair share of tickets of different contending parties. Caste based associations aligned with various parties are exerting pressure for more tickets to candidates belonging to their castes.⁷⁵

The Congress and the Telugu Desam Party seem to be under tremendous pulls and pressures from the various caste groups. To a lesser extent, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Bahujan Samaja Party (BSP for the first time entered the election fray in A.P.) have also played the caste card to bolster the chances of their candidates, especially in places where the contests will be keen and the split of votes may cause surprises.

In the case of the Congress, representatives of various caste based associations have been rushed to New Delhi to plead the case of their respective caste groups with the party High Command for allocation of tickets "in tune with their population and political aspirations". What is more, even the sub-caste groups within the major castes are now-making noises for a fair share of the cake.

The spectre of caste unleashed by Kanshi Ram has undoubtedly began a new phase in the post-independent India's political history. Caste has been brought to the centre stage as never before and has become a legitimate paradigm of subaltern political assertion. It is important to note that caste has been a vehicle of the political consolidation of the dominant caste/class and an important means of the mobilisation of the subalterns as vote banks, for the elite politics. But this mode had been generally resorted to on the sly, never in a politically explicit manner. What has been underneath so far in dominant politics, the U.P. experimentation has brought to the centre of political discourse and made it a legitimate political agenda.⁷⁶ After its initial innings in U.P. the caste spectre has traversed and descended in the Andhra Pradesh political landscape.

⁷⁴*Deccan Chronicle*, 28-10-1994 also K.R. Acharya's Article "Kula Prabhavamin Elections" *Andhra Bhoomi*, 2.1.98.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*

⁷⁶K. Srinivasulu, "A.P. : B.S.P. and Caste Politics" *E.P.W.*, Vo.XXIX, No.40, Oct 1, 1994, p.2583.

Given the historical background of anti-Brahmin caste articulation during the freedom movement through which the Sudra peasant castes like Kammas and Reddis emerged as the dominant communities in Andhra Pradesh economy and politics and the emergence and development of the dalit movement against the dominant caste structure and the resurgence of political aspiration among the backward castes during the last decades. Andhra Pradesh provides a unique case of emergent caste polarisation and politicisation.⁷⁷

Between March and August 1994, the Congress organised a series of caste rallies-the Golla Kuruma (Yadavas) rally, Gouda rally, Besta rally, Chakali rally, Vaddera rally, Madiga rally etc. Thousands and lakhs were mobilised in these caste rallies and the Chief Minister went on promising different economic programmes to different caste associations. By the time of ticket distribution in Nov, 1994 Assembly elections, the Congress seems to be better connected with the caste leaders with different O.B.C. castes.⁷⁸ Further Kotla Vijayabhaskar Reddy, the Congress Chief Minister of the State, mobilised Congress leaders of each of the toiling castes to hold rallies of that caste at Hyderabad to which he himself would be invited as chief guest and would promise all things under the sun to that community.⁷⁹ And simultaneously, upper caste leaders for the first time started acknowledging caste openly. They gave up the earlier practice that they had been dominating politics by virtue of sheer merit. Brahmins held meetings at Vijayawada, Nellore and Hyderabad in which one demand was that they should be allotted the tickets to certain specified constituencies, as the Brahmin population therein was sizeable.⁸⁰ In fact, Dronamraju Satyanarayana, a Congress titan from the North Coastal Andhra Pradesh, participated in two Brahmin Mahasabhas organised at Vijayawada and Nellore.⁸¹ This is the kind of argument that in the past only Muslims, Christians or Backward Castes would have used and would have been branded narrowly casteist or

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, p.2583.

⁷⁸*News Time*, 5 Nov. 194, p.2.

⁷⁹K. Balagopal, "Andhra Elections: What Happened and what did not Happen", *E.P.W.*, Vol.3, Jan.21, 1995. p.138.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*

⁸¹*Indian Express*, Sept. 28,1994.

sectarian by Brahmins.⁸² The Kammas of Congress, the politically dominant section met in Hyderabad. Kamma leaders, who met at the residence of Major Industries Minister U. Rambhupal Choudary, decided to submit a memorandum to the then prime minister and party president seeking more seats than in the past. Ministers like Alapati Dharma Rao, Maganti Vara Lakshmi and others attended. Interestingly, the C.M. attended a launch hosted by the Kamma leaders of the party.⁸³ Kamma congress men who have always felt overwhelmed by the Reddis in that party held a meeting and resolved obliquely that all castes should be given tickets in proportion commensurate with 'their importance' which in their case means not only numbers but also economic power of which they have plenty. And the Reddis took visible pains to explain away their embracing preponderance in the Congress⁸⁴

Almost every senior ruling congress partymen is thus publicly identifying himself with his caste and taking pains to safeguard the interests of that group.⁸⁵

The forward castes, too, are quite active in seeking their pound of flesh in terms of tickets. The caste associations of these groups are not quite active in articulating their aspirations but the task is left to the care of the power-brokers of these castes operating in the political parties. The upper castes in the ring are the Kshatriyas, the Velamas, the Brahmins and the Ysysyas, besides the politically dominant Reddis and the powerful Kamma lobby.⁸⁶

In the meantime, the Kapus and their associate caste groups like the Balijas, the Telagas and the Ontaris have successfully sought B.C. status for themselves, albeit for the purpose of reservations in Govt. jobs and professional educational colleges (This is discussed in the following chapter) By extension, they have also tried to secure more political representation in proportion to their numerical strength.

⁸²K. Balagopal, *Op.Cit.*, p.138.

⁸³*Indian Express, Op.Cit.*,

⁸⁴K. Balagopal, *Op.Cit.*.

⁸⁵*Indian Express, Op.Cit.*,

⁸⁶*Deccan Chronicle*, , 28.120.94.

As things stand on the eve of the 1994 assembly elections, the Kapus are demanding a bigger share of tickets for their community not only from the Congress but also from T.D.P. A section of Kapu leaders is also hobnobbing with the B.S.P. and to some extent, the B.J.P. to further their political bargaining strength.⁸⁷

However, all the major caste groups seems to be ridden with factions based on the political and personal predilections of their leaders for whom the pelf for self and positions of power are the real thing, rather than the larger interests, of their respective communities. Even among the Scheduled Castes the traditional rivalries between the politically dominant Mala community and the numerically strong Madiga caste have got accentuated in recent times. The Madigas are sore that the Malas have been cornering the lion's share in terms of party tickets and hence assembly seats all these years, leaving the other castes to pick up the crumbs.⁸⁸ It is thus apparent that caste played a key role in the 1994 assembly elections. The B.Cs, Kapus, S.C's, S.T's and also FCs and the minorities are clamouring for more representation.

It has become customary on these caste groups to harp on the non-representation or inadequate representation given to their castes for long. The office bearers of these caste-based associations have a penchant for submitting memoranda to the powers- that be in the various political parties and to address the press to highlight their grievances. They are ready with facts and figures to focus on the neglect that these caste groups have been subjected to and also to substantiate their demands for a bigger slice of the political cake.

The most vociferous of the lot seem to be the backward classes and the Kapu associations. They are coming out with their demands day in and day out and are making doomsday predictions for the parties which ignore their interests. Several backward classes Sanghalu (associations) are active and they have the single point programme. Laying claim to no less than one-third of the total seats to be more precise 110 seats. And

⁸⁷*Deccan Chronicle*, 28.10.1994.

⁸⁸*Deccan Chronicle*, 28.10.94.

a sub-caste among the BCs has even come out with the demand that major parties like the Congress and the T.D.P. and second line parties such as the BJP and the BSP should nominate no less than 100 candidates each from the BC's.

Cuddapah district has a society based on a traditional life with firm roots in the age old caste system without any major deviation. Another significant feature is the single caste domination right from the inception of democratic process. The domination of Reddis in the leadership at all levels from village to the district level is total and unchallenged. However from 1950 onwards, we can see some castes particularly Brahmins, Balijas, Komatis and sale etc, playing their role in their pockets of influence. This can be seen in the emergence of Balija caste. Though this particular caste is not in a position to dethrown the dominate caste, it must be said in fairness that its impact is significant.

The Balijas of the district are divided into 3 groups namely, Setti Balijas, Gajula Balijas and Rajamahendravaram Balijas. Of them Setti Balijas form the major group and are concentrated in Mydukuru and Duvuru Mandals of Proddatur Taluq and Kodur mandal of Rajampet Taluk and in the Towns of Badwel, Siddhout and Rayachoti.⁸⁹

It is well known that at the beginning of freedom movement as elsewhere, in Cuddapah also Brahmins dominated the scene. But the Nationalist movement was complete with the entry of leaders from Reddy, Vysya, Balijas and other communities. It was in 1937 elections that Reddis took complete control over the district politics and it was due to the active political participation of the Reddis that Congress emerged victorious.⁹⁰

About 25 of the local castes account for the 95% of the Hindus in the district.⁹¹ But 5 among them namely the Reddys, Balijas, Gollas and Dalits claim about 60% of the

⁸⁹M.L. Kantha Rao, "Emergence of Balija Caste in Cuddapah District: Its Role in Politics", *Paper Presented to the Rayalaseema History Congress, Cuddapah, 1996*, p.3.

⁹⁰M. Venkata Rangaiah, *Freedom Struggle in Andhra Pradesh, (Andhra) Vol.3*, Hyderabad, 1965, p.9.

⁹¹Edgar Thuston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India, Vol.1-VII, Madras, 1909*.

total number. According to 1881 census in Cuddapah district the caste-wise population is as follows:

Table No.IV-6
Population of the Cuddapah District

NAME OF THE CASTE	POPULATION
Reddys	1,73,928
Balijas	1,02,909
Brahmins	24,226
Kamma	23,669
Komati	33,067
Golla	54,223
Dalits	62,818

Source: Imperial Census of 1881, in the Presidency of Madras, Vol.IX, 1883, pp.140-143.

Reddis are numerically important and are the principal land owners. They constitute nearly 1/4 of the total population of the district. But in Rayachoti Taluq the caste is not quite so common, many cultivators on the plateau being Balijas and Kammas.⁹² In Rajampet division also the Balijas are highly concentrated. In the rest of the district they are mainly occupied in trade. One significant aspect about the Balijas is that, even though they are agriculturists, they concentrate in trade also. Many of them are Lingayats. The Komatis and Balija castes played an important role in taking the products from the village to urban centres, especially to those centres of political importance.⁹³ But at present the Balijas concentrate mainly on contracts, largely based on Bangalore and also in other important towns of Rayalaseema.

Examples of dominant castes which have played significant role in the politics of Andhra Pradesh are the Reddis and Kammas.⁹⁴ As the Kammas are of negligible percentage in Cuddapah district their place was occupied by the Balijas in the districts. Besides its ritual status, its dominance is derived from several factors such as numerical strength, economic and political power etc. The importance of these factors has lately increased with the introduction of modern political institutions particularly of

⁹²F.B. Brackenbury, *Cuddapah District Gazetteer*, (Reprint 1993), p.79.

⁹³K. Satyanarayana, *A Study of the History and Culture of the Andhras*, Vol.II, 1983, pp.339-400.

⁹⁴Norman D. Palmer *Elections and Political Development*, 1975, p.282.

parliamentary democracy. Similarly expansion of economic frontiers of a village and democratic decentralisation of political power have undermined hereditary prerogatives of some status groups to political and administrative offices.

Socio-Economic Status in Cuddapah District

Closely on the heels of the caste is the socio-economic status that play a dominant role in politics of the district. Education, occupation, professional and social relationships and land holdings come under the socio-economic status. Though the people of Balija community recently emerged in a few pockets of the district they are in a position to be next to the Reddis in all walks of life as far as Cuddapah is concerned.

After the Reddis, recently, the only caste which attracted the attention of the political parties is the Balija caste and the candidates of this caste is being tried in Rayachoti, Rajampet and Cuddapah assembly segments due to its numerical strength in these constituencies.⁹⁵ It is only this characteristic that has become advantageous to the Balijas to gain the favour of the political parties and to win their candidature. The predominance of the Balija community in 4 of the 7 assembly segments of Rajampet Parliament constituency is the main factor that is contributing to the choice of the candidature of this community by the political parties.

As stated earlier in Rajampet area Balijas are not only numerically the largest group but also financially well off. In that constituency Balija candidates were elected in all the Lok Sabha elections, except on two occasions. In 1957 Congress candidate T.N. Viswanatha Reddy was returned unopposed and in 1962 C.L. Narasimha Reddy of Swatantra Party got elected. The rest of the elections from 1967 to 1980 were won by P.Parthasarathy of the Congress Party and the 1984 election was won by S. Palakonda Rayudu of T.D.P. And from 1989 to 1998⁹⁶ all the elections were won by Saipratap, and all of them belong to the Balija caste.⁹⁷

⁹⁵*Andhra Prabha*(Telugu), Hyderabad Edition, 6th Oct, 1994, p.3.

⁹⁶In 1980, 1984, 1989, 1991, 1996 and 1998 Loksabha Elections both the parties Congress and T.D.P. nominated the Balija caste candidates for Rajampet parliamentary seat.

⁹⁷Election results of the concerned years.

Table No. IV -7
Lok-Sabha Members from Rajampet Parliamentary Constituency-Caset-wise

Year	Winning candidate	Party	% of votes	Defeated Candidate	Party	%of votes.
1957	TNV. Reddy	Cong.(I)	Unanimous	--		
1962	CLN Reddy	Swatantra	52.6	T.N.V. Reddy	Cong-I	47%
1967	Poturaju Prathasarathy	Cong-I	52.6	CLN.Reddy	Swatantra	34.2
1971	-do-	-do-	73.6	Yasodha Reddy	INC(O)	19.7
1977	-do-	-do-	52.5	P.Thimma Reddy	Janata	41.8
1980	-do-	-do-	52.5	B.Ratnasabha Pathy	Cong-U	41.0
1984	S.Palakonda Rayudu	TDP		A. Saipratap	Cong-I	
1989	A.Sai Pratap	Cong-I	51.9	C. Ramachandraiah	TDP	46.1
1991	-do-	Cong-I	57.9	S.Palakonda Rayudu	TDP	29.0
1996	-do-	Cong-I	49.3	P.Pratap	TDP	40.0
1998	-do-	Cong-I		-do-	TDP	

Source: Andhra Jyothi, Vijayawada edition, 9 Jan.1998, p.2.

The linkages of the Reddy caste have been maintained with their counterparts at the state level as long as the state leadership has also been dominated by the Reddis. It was during the period of their considerable diminishing importance at State level that is from 1973 to 1978 the district leadership of Reddies was caught in dark. But some of them however maintained relations with the leaders of their castes who were in power. There was no good relationship between J.Vengal Rao and the Reddis of Cuddapah district, as Vengal Rao developed close links with B. Ratna Sabhapathy who belonged to Balija caste. Actually Vengal Rao made a strong bid to project B. Ratna Sabha Pathy who as an alternative to Reddy leadership in Cuddapah district. In that he succeeded to a certain extent. However, with his elevation in the district politics Ratna Sabhapathy has been treated as a political guru of Balija community in the district.⁹⁸

There are some organised caste associations which are also politically active especially during the elections. The unification of various Balija sub-groups and other castes was the untiring effort of B. Ratna Sabhapathy. The Balijas still have their associations in the district and continue to vote as a bloc wherever they go to polls in the

⁹⁸M.L. Kantha Rao, *Op.Cit.*, p.11.

district. This caste got much importance after the emergence of Telugu Desam Party. For the first time this caste could win two assembly segments in the district in 1984 and 1985 elections⁹⁹ which no other caste has achieved so far in Cuddapah district except Reddis.

Kapus in Devapuram - A Case Study

Upward social mobility may be attempted by a caste, a family or an individual. The type of social mobility most often encountered in India is for the whole caste or a segment of a caste to claim higher rank than they had been previously accorded and to justify this claim by creating a mythology that the rank they held in the distant past was the real position and they are merely attempting to recapture what is rightfully theirs. Although much more frequently attempted than achieved, social mobility of a whole caste is possible over several generations, but as many social analysts have pointed out, this strategy does not seem to be successful unless the caste also effects a rise in its economic status.¹⁰⁰ Downward individual caste mobility in the form of outcasting or joining lower caste can be legitimate in India.

A caste movement became powerful only when there was a convergence of the two levels of consciousness, the aspirations of the elite and the grievances of the masses.

Telaga, Kapu, Balija:

These are also generally small land owning castes who pursue agriculture as their main occupation. Unlike the Reddis and Kammas, these castes are locally dominant in certain areas.¹⁰¹ These castes call themselves as Naidus. The Kapus who are mostly spread over in Coastal Andhra are also known as Balijas and Telagas. They are divided into 3 sub-castes viz., Vantari, Jagati and Turpu Kapus (Eastern Kapus), which are endogamous. Out of these, the first carry higher status. The wealthier Kapus call

⁹⁹*Ibid.* Also see *Kapu Diary*, Vijayawada, Dec, 1997, p.19

¹⁰⁰A. Harold Gould: "Sanskritization and Westernisation: A Dynamic View", *E.P. W*, Vol.13, No.25, 1965, pp.945-951.

¹⁰¹Satyanarayana Murty: *Patterns of Social Stratification in Rural Andhra Pradesh* M.phil, J.N.U. Delhi, 1980, p.48.

themselves as Telagas rather than Kapus and therefore, the term Telega has an economic connotation.¹⁰²

Changing occupational structure and caste:

It was noted that each caste is having its own traditional occupation. In recent times, the forces of urbanisation, modernisation, legislations on land etc., have made a deep impact on the occupational structure of castes. This has led to some shifts in the caste occupations. Some of these castes are taking up either entirely new occupations by discarding completely the traditional ones or following a new occupation to supplement the traditional occupation.

Subsidiary Occupations:

In the past, in all the Indian villages, there was a practice of the following some kind of subsidiary occupations related to their main occupations which were by and large, based on caste. For example, people belonging to the Kapu caste whose caste occupation is agriculture, also used to follow selling milk and milk products. As rearing cattle was easy for agriculturists, they started following it as subsidiary occupation. Besides, supplying vegetables and fruits, which happen to be auxiliary to agriculture was also followed by them. In other castes such as shepherds, whose caste occupation is sheep rearing, people used to supply sheep milk, and 'gongadi, made of sheep wool. In this way, most of the castes had some subsidiary occupations related to their main occupation. But by and large all the castes, whether high or low, used to follow agriculture because there was no exclusive right to any particular caste in the case of agriculture.

But now the position in this regard has been changed. It was observed that agriculturists such as Kapus, Reddis, Kammas and Velamas and other castes are showing any interest neither in their caste hereditary occupations nor in the subsidiary occupations. Though agriculture has been followed by many, it is so out of compulsion and not because of any profit motive. It has become a less important occupation while the subsidiary occupations have been replaced by profit oriented occupations, such as petty-business (Chillara-Kottu) and rice mill, which have transactions connected to the city. Thus there is

¹⁰²Y.Subhashini. Subramanyam, *Social Change in Village India: An Andhra Case Study*, Prithviraj Publications, New Delhi, 1975, p.73.

a change in following both the caste occupations and the subsidiary occupations. Milk is now supplied directly to the city dairy and vegetables and fruits are directly supplied to the city market.¹⁰³

Social change is a complex process and cannot be understood by any single formula accounting for change. However, attempts have been made by scholars dealing with society and social life to explain some factors where by change occurs. M.N. Srinivas Studying the changing Indian social scene has advanced the concepts of sanskritization and westernisation to understand the working of certain processes in Indian society which produce social change. Both these processes are complementary in nature to the degree that they are both at work in ways which culminate in change.

Today at Devapuram both these processes seem to be operative. There seems to be an attempt by the castes to improve their status within the hierarchy by resorting to a process like Sanskritization. At the same time, there is a tendency to approximate to modernised models of society by breaking away from traditional norms and ways.¹⁰⁴ The process of sanskritization is manifest today at Devapuram (East Godavari district) side by side with modernisation. The sale (weavers) of Devapuram using the sacred thread of the twice born castes inspite of their being Sudras, in an attempt to claim a higher caste status than that accorded to them by others. The Kapus are initiating the Brahminical and Komati model by changing the ritual of the village Goddess festival by substituting animal sacrifice with a vegetable offering.

The characteristics listed for a society being modernised are being exhibited in certain areas of Devapuram society. Mobility is evidenced in the Brahmin community turning to new avenues of occupation from their traditional priestly jobs towards white collar ones. Higher participation, interest articulation and interest aggregation along with the institutionalised political competition is seen among the Kapus (agricultural caste). The operation of the rural cooperative society and the Panchayat facilitate and help bring about the above four characteristics which go towards modernising a society.

¹⁰³G. Satyanarayana, *Changing Agrarian Structure and labour Relations*, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 1992, pp.97-99.

¹⁰⁴Y. Subhashini Subramanyam *Op.Cit.*, p.73.

There is a proverb in Telugu which when translated means that the Brahmin intellect makes him use the pen, while a Kapus strength befits him to wield the stick. This aptly brings out the traditional roles of each of these castes.¹⁰⁵

In Devapuram, taking the castes in the first category, that is those who have adhered by and large to their profession, the Kapus are the largest group comprising nearly 40% of the population, primarily they are agriculturists tilling the soil which they lease as occupancy tenants. In the late 50's and 60's and early 70's they have diversified their economic base by taking to vegetable growing. Thus they are able to sustain themselves by not changing from their traditional occupation. On the other hand they have taken to vegetable growing which is an extension of the traditional calling, agriculture.¹⁰⁶

The location offers Devapuram's inhabitants opportunities for employment and also for the sale of the vegetable produce which has become in the past 2 1/2 decades i.e., 1950-1975 a very profitable source of income. Devapuram villagers find in Kakinada a ready market for their vegetables and flowers. It is this proximity to Kakinada which makes, the Kapus who form the bulk of Devapuram's population have exploited this situation by engaging in large scale horticultural pursuits.¹⁰⁷ Further, the Kapus of Devapuram by means of the new occupational works like vegetable growing have consolidated their hold on the land.¹⁰⁸

Democratic decentralisation has given the caste groups a media to compete for power through institutionalised channels. Devapuram has been subjected to the influence of certain forces due to its proximity to a growing town i.e., Kakinada. The forces are of a

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, p.74.

¹⁰⁶The innovation of large scale vegetable growing was introduced in Devapuram approximately at the outbreak of the 2nd World War. since it was an important event, villagers remember and also associate it with what they consider important in their village context. This has proved to be an important business for the Kapu community. They have definitely increased their percapita income and some of them have also been able to invest in land. See for details, *Ibid.*, p.5.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, p.11.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, p.128.

social and political nature. The social forces can be traced to westernisation and education. The political forces are of fairly recent origin and can be linked to the advent of India's independence. This has raised a political consciousness and awakening among the lower castes. It has also made them aware that power which they considered to be a strictly Brahmin prerogative is no longer so.

Kapus became an active caste politically. They are concerned and aware of village activities and participate actively in village affairs. The old panchayat office was housed in a building given by one of the leading Kapu caste man. The offices of the presidents of both the panchayat and the rural cooperative society were held by members of the Kapu caste. This gave them a degree of power which otherwise could not have been possible. The Kapu rank fairly high ritually speaking in Devapuram context, since they are below only the Brahmin and Komati castes. Thus they have all ingredients of a dominant caste i.e., fairly higher ritual status, numerical preponderance and sufficient economic influence.¹⁰⁹

Even among the Kapus the "Pulla Lineage" seems to be the foremost in holding offices in the village. Both the presidents hail from this lineage. The lineage seems to be the strongest. In spite of that there are other lineage of the Kapu caste, yet, the 'Pulla' lineage men seem to be the King-pins of Devapuram's political structure. The other lineages are much smaller in size. Besides the 'pulla' lineage members, by virtue of being the oldest lineage, are also most powerful.

The smaller lineage have a strength of 25 to 30 individuals, while the larger ones 45 to 50. The Pulla lineage has 304 individuals. The solidarity and support of the lineage members can be seen from the fact that the president of the rural cooperative society is a 'pulla' and has been constantly re-elected. Since the loans are given by the society, it is useful for the interested parties to have their own man in power. The 'pulla' hence have made it their concern to see a member of their lineage voted in.

Hence we could find that even among the Kapu caste there seems to be one lineage, which is more prominent in village affairs than others. This lineage members have

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, p.153.

also been the first to start the cultivation of cauliflowers and cabbages at Devapuram on a large scale.

Viewing the political process at Devapuram one is conscious of the role of the Kapu caste. The other castes are numerically speaking in a minority except for the Mala who due to their lowly position in the caste hierarchy are unable to participate actively in village affairs. Being occupancy tenants and owners of land, the Kapu are thus in an advantageous position.

The Brahmins are experiencing a sense of alienation. Lack of numerical strength had not been a handicap few decades ago in their exercising power. Today, the Kapu are holding the reins of power and numerical strength is an important factor today's context. The other castes do not have the sense of belonging to the village which the Kapu have. This could be due to their not having vested interests in land.¹¹⁰

Thus, according to the author, caste is an instrument for gaining power. Numerical strength in a caste group gives added advantage in this direction. At Devapuram, the Kapu caste has been shown to be the politically active and conscious caste. Considering the equation of land and caste, the Kapus own half of the land out of the total owned by the residents of Devapuram. The other half also is cultivated by them. This indicates that control of cultivable land is a source of power for a caste group.

In a society where the emphasis is on agriculture it is but natural that a lot of importance and value is attached to the ownership and cultivation of land. Land cultivation has always been considered as a superior occupation and the dominant castes of Devapuram, the Kapus are agriculturists. Hence activities centering around land have been invested with a degree of prestige.¹¹¹

Most of the Kapus at Devapuram are tenants except for a minority who own the land. Those who own the land cultivate it themselves. It is the Brahmin land owners who give their lands for cultivation in Andhra Pradesh and also at Devapuram to Kapu tenants.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp.153-154.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, p.158

The Kapus cultivate the lands of the resident Brahmins as well as the land of the Brahmins living outside.

The land particulars below give an idea of the ownership of land and the amount owned by the residents and by each caste group.

1. Total land area acres 1715.91 cents.
2. Total and cultivated-do- 1216.17 cents.
3. Public land ie., Roads-do- 259.84 cents.
 And Canals
4. Land Waste, burial and -do 239.90 cents.
 uncultivable land

Out of 1216.17 acres of cultivable land, 820 acres belong to people outside Devapuram, 396.17 acres belong to the residents.¹¹² The break down is as follows.

105 acres owned by	9 Brahmin families
20 acres owned by	9 sale families
20 acres owned by	1 Kamsali family
5 acres owned by	4 Kummari families
20 acres owned by	10 Chakali families
20 acres owned by	5 Mangali families.

Source: Y. Subhashini Subramanyam, *Social Change in Village India: An Andhra Case Study*, Prithvi Raj Publishers, New Delhi, 1975, p.162.

Above table shows that 85 acres are held by the non Brahmin castes (excluding Kapus) and 105 acres by the Brahmins. The remaining 206.17 acres are held by the 91 families of Kapus. Average holding of Kapu ranges from 1 to 2.5 acres of land (wet and dry). The 105 acres of Brahmin land is cultivated by the Kapus. Similarly the land owned by the artisan castes is also cultivated by the Kapus. The land owned by the people outside Devapuram is also cultivated by the Kapus, who have got the land in lease as occupancy tenants.

Land has always been a prestige symbol in an agricultural economy and its cultivation is a source of pride to the peasant than any other job which has the same returns monetarily speaking.

¹¹²*Ib id.*, p.162.

Though Brahmin supremacy has been affected adversely, we see that caste is still being used to consolidate power. Caste hence is still a potent weapon which can be utilised. Change has been in the direction of shift of power from Brahmin to Kapu hands. Control over productive resources seems to be an important contributing factor in this shift of power coupled with numerical strength.¹¹³

The Kapus have diversified their economic base by taking up other activities connected with land in the past two and half decades. i.e., 1955 to 1975. This includes the growing of winter vegetables like cauliflowers and cabbages and selling them at Kakinada. Besides Kakinada some vegetables are also sent to Vijayawada and other neighbouring Towns. In the summer months 'Tandra' or 'Mango jelly' is made. The whole year is punctuated with agricultural activity in such a manner that the Kapus are kept busy throughout the year. Before the innovation of large scale vegetable growing the winter months were devoted to growing only flowers. Today the vegetables take more time and are a more profitable source of income.¹¹⁴

M.N. Srinivas coined dominance phrase to express a caste, pivotal position in a village structure. He gave certain criteria which if fulfilled entitled a caste group to be dominant. These included numerical superiority, a fairly high ritual status combined with the capacity to wield power over other castes. He also maintained that the dominant caste's role was to maintain the vertical unity of the village. This system of maintaining function was to be performed by the elders of the dominant castes who exercised a great degree of social control. Besides the system maintenance and political power of the dominant caste, its members should also be economically viable.¹¹⁵ In the traditional past numerically small castes, owning land in rural areas combined with a high ritual status gained dominance over other castes. This could be said of the Brahmin castes in South India, until a few decades ago. However, a significant change has been brought in the power relations of different castes. This is more conspicuous in some areas than others.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, p.167.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, p.163.

¹¹⁵M.N. Srinivas, "The Social System of a Mysore Village" (ed.) Makim Marriott, *In Village India*, University of Chicago Press, 1955, p.34.

The land owning Brahmin caste is being done out of its erstwhile superiority by the numerically strong, politically active agricultural castes.

In South India this has been a direct consequence of the anti brahmin movement. This gradually gave way to weakening of Brahmin dominance and replacement of this by Kapu dominance. This has been a case at Devapuram. Mayer points out that the concept of 'dominant caste' is a descriptive one since it groups together under one term the various fields in which a caste group is powerful in a village.¹¹⁶ He says that one trend runs through all contexts of dominance today. This is a change from the power based on ascribed sources to that based on members of the castes. Numerical strength is a must in today's context.¹¹⁷

With the inception of Panchayati Raj and parliamentary democracy, political power can be acquired today if a caste has sufficient numerical strength to support a candidate. Hence we find that here caste and kin ties are being used for consolidating political power.

Along with the other castes the Kapu set about further consolidating and improving their economic conditions by exploiting the structure of opportunity made available by the proximity of Kakinada. In this the Kapus were helped in two ways, to utilise the land possessed by them. In the traditional economy land sustained them at subsistence level. Utilising the same land they were able to raise their level by diversifying their economic base partly by the cultivation of cash crops like vegetables and flowers. These sources of money were directly related to the need of Kakinada in terms of its consumption potential.¹¹⁸ It is important to remember however that in Devapuram the particular situation tends to favour the Kapu due to their numerical preponderance.

Economic Aspects:

The occupational spectrum of the Kapus is varied and amorphous. According to Thurston the Balija Naidu is to be met with in almost every walks of life- Railway Station masters, head coolies, bakers, butchers, municipal inspectors, tappal runners, municipal

¹¹⁶A.C. Mayer, *Caste and Kinship in Central India*, Routledge and Kagan Paul Ltd., 1960, p.425.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, p.426.

¹¹⁸Y.Subhashini Subramanyam, *Ibid.*, p.195.

inspectors, hawkers, hotel-keepers, tailors and masons.¹¹⁹ They are historically attached to land as watchmen, agriculturists and farmers. Some are marginal farmers and others are agricultural labourers.

The economic disadvantages of the Kapu Community accrue from the large size of their families, division of land holdings into small and unviable units, dispersal of ownership, lack of expansion and diversification of economic activities. Even though the Kapu community is the numerically largest group, its numerical strength has not been translated into political power because of lack of economic resources as in the case of Reddis, kmmas and Rajus.

The medium and large scale private sector units that came up during the 1940s and 1950s and even 1960's were largely controlled by the national big bourgeoisie. In the 1970's and more recently we perceive the entry of 'regional' (Reddy, Kamma and Raju) capital into industry. However, it is not clear that all these entrepreneurs have accumulated capital in production. Several of them have accumulated capital in construction activity, trading and speculation.¹²⁰

The green revolution generated considerable surpluses in the irrigated sector. This surplus could not be absorbed by the agricultural sector. It was searching for green pastures. This made the capital to move into the cinema industry. This reached a saturation point by 1973. From 1973 it moved into industrial sector.¹²¹

It is this rapid industrialisation which created regional industrial class a new economic power in the socio-economic structure. The rich peasant, land-lord, contractor,

¹¹⁹E. Thurston, *Op. Cit.*, Vol.I, p.136.

¹²⁰Sanjay Baru, "Capitalism in Agriculture and growth of Manufacturing: Some Issues with Reference to A.P.", (ed.) Y.V. Krishna Rao, etal., *Peasant Farming and growth of Capitalism in Indian Agriculture*, Visalandhra Publishing House, 1984, p.381.

¹²¹M. Kistaiah, *Administrative Reforms in a Developing Society*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1990, p.52.

regional industrial nexus with support of the backward class intermediate peasant constitute to social base of N.T.Rama Rao who rose originally from the cinema capital.¹²²

The post-green revolution developments characterise the relationships of different social forces. The economic power placed in the hands of the rural rich gave rise to new political demands, calling for new alliances of social forces.

By the 1970's a middle class has emerged in the Indian village. This class, composite in its constitution, both social and economic having multiple vocations and with diversified sectoral vocations and interests in agriculture, service as well as education has been growing numerically and has come to possess a distinct political character. Over the years, it has come to see its interests to be in contradiction with the dominant caste-classes and the political power to be essential for the realisation of its economic interests and for its general development. With the replacement of traditional vote bank system and the pattern-client relationship therein by the charismatic wave-politics thus rural middle class has discovered a space for its political articulation. Its presence has become increasingly manifest over a period of time as is evident in the decline of the support to the dominant castes and an increasing occurrence of rural violence.¹²³ The castes which have made their presence felt in rural politics as a consequence of the developmental process are the Munnuru Kapus, Padmasali and Gouda communities.

A sample survey in 1971 showed that the Vysyas constituted 41.66% of the trading community. The Kammas owned 27.77% of the commercial establishments. The figures for Brahmins, Kapus and Nagara were 11.11%, 8.37% and 5.5% respectively.¹²⁴

Regarding the caste background of the industrialists, a study in 1971 found that the largest proportion were Kammas 28.30%, followed by Kapus 17.94% and Brahmins at 67.69%. A later study in 1974 found that Kammas and Kapus each owned around 17% of

¹²²*Ibid.*,

¹²³*Ibid.*, p.73.

¹²⁴B. Sarveswara Rao, *Commercial and Industrial Entrepreneurship in the Coastal Region of Andhra Pradesh*, ICSSR, New Delhi, 1974, Vol.2, p.421.

the units with Vysyas owning 15% of the units.¹²⁵ However, the major expansion has been in the post 1971 period which witnessed a large expansion in the economic activities of the Kamma community. Hence their share could be much higher.¹²⁶

A study of slums in the Vijayawada city indicate that many, communities have been unable to achieve any significant degree of mobility in spite of being long time residents in Vijayawada, primarily due to lack of resources. Contrarily, the dominant caste Kammas who migrated later, have achieved much greater mobility and dominance.¹²⁷ After the abolition of Zamindari, the Kammas became more powerful in rural areas. Many Kapus who could not compete with them, became marginalised and moved to towns such as Vijayawada. The 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.¹²⁸ The second generation of Kapu immigrants took up petty trading, skilled jobs and low paid white collar jobs. They live mainly in Krishna Lanka (where rich Kammas also live) as well as in numerous slums in the new party of the city.

For example, in Krishna district the numerical strength of the Kapu community equals to that of the Kammas, but their economic status is much lower. They are mainly small and marginal farmers. In the Godavari delta they are the numerically largest caste. Many kapus here are big landholders and businessmen.¹²⁹

According to parthasarathy, "people retain still their roots in the villages and maintain group solidarities. Therefore, it is not difficult for the citizens to be able to identify the most prominent members of the different communities. The use of the caste

¹²⁵*Ibid.*

¹²⁶V. Lakshmana Rao, *Industrial Entrepreneurship and Productivity in A.P.*, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, submitted to Andhra University, Waltair, 1984.

¹²⁷D. Parthasarathy, *Collective Violence in a Provincial City*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1977, p.32.

¹²⁸M.S.A. Rao and K. Ranga Rao, *Cities and Slums*, Concept Publishers, New Delhi, 1984, p.94, also see U. Tataji, "Migration and Work Organisation in a Slum" (ed.) M.S.A. Rao, *Studies in Migration*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1986.

Note: Kapus in these reports are referred to as Telagas.

¹²⁹D. Parthasarathy, *Op.Cit.*

identity has been only for purposes of maintaining solidarity and for social mobility. It is perhaps a legacy of the radical movements that flourished in the city that caste is used mainly for secular purposes - for political power and economic advancement. The exact way in which traditional practices are either abandoned or retained depends on the particular stage of struggle for social mobility by different groups and their position in the social hierarchy. For instance, most communities, especially the Kammas resolutely supported inter-caste marriages during their initial period of mobility in the city. However, after they became dominant, they began opposing such marriages in order to maintain group solidarity. This was also the case with the Kapus and also of other communities.¹³⁰

According to Dr. Parthasarathy, the migrants into the Vijayawada city find it difficult to obtain jobs due to the rigid organisation of workers. Since the economy is oriented towards commerce rather than industry employment expands slowly. Although opportunities for self-employment are vast, limited financial support is advanced by the state. Private finance is available only to those with caste, kin or other net works. Since white and blue collar jobs are dependant on such net works and government jobs are few in a provincial city. Again Parthasarathy tells, that the Brahmin, Vysya and Kamma groups either had the resources or contacts necessary to advance their economic interests. Studies show that there is a lot of occupational mobility among scheduled castes in Vijayawada due to government policies. It is in this context that one can explain the successful mobilisation around the Kapu caste identity in the city.¹³¹ Thus it was only the non-Kamma intermediate castes and other lower castes who did not have the opportunity structure to enable upward mobility. Hence, the mobilisation of various castes against the Kammas around the slogan of *Backward Class Status for Kapus* was both a protest against caste net works and demand for caste based government programmes.¹³²

An over view of the city's economy leads to the conclusion that the economic structure reinforces social divisions and created conflict situations. By denying opportunities for mobility to the lower castes, the economic structure lays a base for

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, pp.55-56.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, pp.78-79.

¹³²*Ibid.*, p.79.

mobilisation on the basis of caste. At the same time the very structure of the economy creates a need for persons who could be willing to operate outside legal parameters.¹³³

A few officers in the I.A.S., I.P.S. and other services does not represent or reflect the true position of a caste group. Every caste group will have a small elite which is far more advanced than their brethren. No wonder then, that the largest category of castes of *Ontari, Kapu, Telaga and Baliya* in the state also has a small elite. The true position of a group should be judged on the basis of overall socio-economic position of the group as a whole. In this context it may be pointed out that according to a survey conducted by K.B.N.College, Vijayawada, in the Vijayawada city 32% of the beggars belonging to the Telaga caste, who are driven into it by poverty, disease and other factors. This is as follows: The N.S.S. members of K.B.N.College, Vijayawada conducted a survey of about 200 beggars in town covering Kaleswara Rao Market, Durga Temple, Bus Stand, Railway Station and Cinema Halls.

According to the survey most of the beggars are Hindus. They form about 91% of the beggar population here. Christians account for 4% and Muslims 2%. Among the Hindus, it is *Kapu or Telaga or Baliya or Naidu Community* that tops the list with 32%. Yadavas occupy the second place. Other castes in the begging profession are *Sali, Gavarlu, Brahmins, Vysyas, Goldsmiths and Harijans*.¹³⁴

The *Ontari, Kapu, Telaga and Baliya* group neither has the traditional skills like many backward castes, which give them protection from competition by other caste groups, nor has economic resources, educational achievements and dynamism of the forward castes. Hence, their dependence on agriculture and other forms of manual labour for their survival which often drove them into disguised poverty and destitution.¹³⁵

¹³³*Ibid.*, pp.79-80

¹³⁴*Beggardom Inerasable* Indian Express, Vijayawada Edition, 5th Aug. 1980. Also see, U. Tataji, *Kapu/Baliya/Telaga/ Ontari in Andhra Pradesh: Special Socio- Economic Profiles*, Paper submitted to Andhra Pradesh Backward Classes Commission, not dated, p.2.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*

However, in recent years, due to economic awareness and their yearning for political power, the Kapus are getting accustomed to changing situations like rapid industrialisation and modern methods of agriculture and coming out of poverty and social stigma.

Occupational mobility among them may be broadly conceived at individual level rather than at caste or sub-caste level. The reason being group mobility is gradual and requires conscious and sustained effort on the part of all the members of the community. The Kapus have not yet developed such high level of consciousness. On the other hand, individual mobility may be achieved with greater ease since it concerns only an individual.

More and more, Kapu families started sending their children to schools and colleges and getting government jobs. Presently the clerical employment of the Kapus is 65,000 in the Andhra Pradesh state, constituting 8% of the state employment. Their proportion in the non-proletarianised occupations like doctors and lecturers is also on the increase. As on December, 1998, there are two Vice-Chancellors, two Registrars of Universities, 16 IAS officers, 9 IPS officers and many white collar employees from the Kapu community. The emigration of Kapus to foreign countries especially the USA in recent years is also an indication of their efforts to develop in the material realm. In the matrimonial alliances column of *Eenadu* a leading Telugu daily 6% of the Kapu alliance offers are from the USA based grooms.¹³⁶

According to Miriyala Venkata Rao (President of the Kapunadu) on the basis of 1991 census, the total population of Andhra Pradesh is 6.85 lakhs. Among them the Kapus are (ie., Kapu, Telaga, Balija, Ontari) 1.64 lakhs. But the total number of state government employees are 11 lakhs. Among them Kapus are only 65,000. On the basis of their population, they should be in the government employment 24% but at present only 6% of the Kapus are in the state government employment.¹³⁷

Many of the Kapu villagers who began life in agricultural peasant and village artisan families are now adopting new occupations born out of the expanding industrial

¹³⁶V.Venu, *Op. Cit.*, p.76.

¹³⁷*Andhra Jyothi*, Vijayawada Edition, 13 April, 1994, p.3.

system. Channelising the surplus agricultural income into varied industries like theatres, bars, print media etc., the Kapus are now constantly improving their socio-economic conditions.

KAPU LEADERS IN RECENT TIMES

We have discussed some of the important Kapu leaders who belonged to the early phase of Indian National Movement. However there were quite a few significant leaders belonging to this community who dominated the political scene in Andhra Pradesh after independence. The most important among whom are: Bandaru Ratna Sabhapathy, Mandali Venkata Krishna Rao, Lakulapu Lakshman Das and P. Shiv Shankar.

Bandaru Ratna Sabhapathy

Bandaru Ratna Sabhapathy was born in Yallampet in Nandaluru Mandal of Rajampet taluq in Cuddapah district. He did his B.A. degree in Madras Presidency College in 1947. In 1949 he was married to Jaya Lakshamma of the same village. After completion of his education he entered politics, and in 1955 he was elected from Badwel assembly constituency in Cuddapah district on Praja Socialist Party. And in this election he was the only non-Congress winner as Praja Socialist Party candidate. He took a long time to join the socialist party leaving the Praja Socialist Party. Further he was the leader of the assembly socialist group of Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly in 1958. He was the first Balija leader who got elected to the legislative assembly from the Rayalaseema. He was known as 'Balija Ratna'.¹³⁸

After the formation of Andhra Pradesh an important event of the socialist party was the Satyagraha movement at Karavena, an agrarian estate in Kurnool. B. Ratna Sabha Pathy was incharge of this movement. This went on for nearly 6 weeks. The Congress Government was perturbed by the impact of the movement on the people. Alluri Satyanarayana Raju was sent to Kurnool to hold discussions with Ratnasabha pathy. Finally PVG. Raju and Ratna sabhapathy conducted negotiations with the Government.

¹³⁸Kapu Diary, Vijayawada, December, 1997, p.19.

Subsequently, the Congress government brought out a legislation abolishing the Jotedar system and restoring the rights of ownership over the lands to the tenants themselves.¹³⁹

In 1962 elections Ratna Sabhapathy was defeated in the Badwel constituency. But in 1967 elections B. Ratna Sabhapathy got elected on Swatantra Party from Rajampet. After 1967 elections A.C. Subba Reddy, unable to enter the Ministry, formed a Front along with other M.L.A's Jalagam Vengal Rao, N. Ramachandra Reddy, B. Ratna Sabhapathy, Bobbili Raja and Kaja Ramanatham. Kaja Ramanatham was made the leader and Ratna Sabha Pathy, was the deputy leader.¹⁴⁰ In 1972 elections again he was elected to the assembly from Rajampet Assembly constituency and he was the only one candidate who got elected on Swatantra party.¹⁴¹

But within a short time, he has resigned from his membership to participate in the Jai Andhra Movement in 1973. During the separate Andhra Movement except Bandaru Ratna Sabhapathy none of the M.L.A's and M.P's actually resigned from their membership.¹⁴² Under these circumstances 'The Jai Andhra Front' come into existence by the support of the opposition parties at Rajahmundry on 6th April, 1973.¹⁴³ Ratna Sabhapathy, N. Narasimha Rao, Tenneti Viswanatham, G. Latchanna, T. Choudary, A.B. Nageswara Rao and G.C. Kondaiah were associated with it.¹⁴⁴

After the formation of Bharatiya Lok Dal in August 1974, the state unit of Swatantra Party was automatically liquidated and one group led by G. Latchanna joined B.L.D. while the rest of the members like Ratna Sabhapathy and Purushothama Rao joined

¹³⁹D. Gita and M. Madan Mohan Reddy, 'Socialist Parties' (ed.), B.A.V. Sharma *Political Economy of India: A Study of Land Reforms Policy in Andhra Pradesh*, Light and Life Publishers, New Delhi, 1980, pp.152-153.

¹⁴⁰N. Innaiah, *State Government and Politics: A Study of Andhra Pradesh Politics 1885-1985*, Scientific Services, Hyderabad, 1986, p.106.

¹⁴¹S.P. Lyman and Shri Ram Mokkapat, "Bharatiya jana Sangh and Swatantra" (ed) G. Ram Reddy and B.A.V. Sharma: *State Government and Politics: Andhra Pradesh*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 1979, p.358.

¹⁴²N. Innaiah, *State Government and Politics* Op.Cit., p.133.

¹⁴³Ibid., p.107, also see, *Indian Express, Hyderabad Edition*, April, 7-8, 1973.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., p.134 also see U. Hanumantha Rao, *Party Politics in Andhra Pradesh 1956-1983*, A.B.A. Publications, 1983, p.264.

the Congress.¹⁴⁵ According to S.P. Lyman and Shriram Mokkalapati, Ratna Sabhapathy stalwart of Swatantra Party, became a friend of J. Vengala Rao, the then Chief Minister and later joined the Congress.¹⁴⁶

In 1975, bye-elections he was defeated. In the same year he was elected as Chairman of the State Cooperative Central Bank. In this capacity he visited Japan. For some time he was the Vice-President of the State Planning Commission. He also worked as the Director of Syndicate Bank.¹⁴⁷

The representatives of the socialist party who belonged to Kapu caste in the State Legislature are G. Raja Ram and Ratna Sabhapathy. Both played an active role in the State Legislature. Rajaram Played an important role in taking up the Anti-Zamindar Bill and Tenancy Acts, while Ratna Sabhapathy dominated the discussions on the sales tax bill.¹⁴⁸ The socialists waged a relentless war against corruption and called for a check on the spreading of the Birla empire in the state. Ratna Sabhapathy along with P. Narasinga Rao who were the members of the Public Accounts Committee pointed out from time to time, the omissions of the ruling party. They had the advantage of getting at the facts and they utilised this opportunity to the maximum. They not only questioned the government methods, intentions, sincerity and honesty but also made use of that information to their advantages in their speeches in the Assembly. They found out that of 50 crores spent on electricity, 50% was not accounted for and that there had been abundant patronage shown to political interests and to their own henchmen. In this connection the then Chief Engineer and the Chief Minister were bitterly attacked. But in those days, the impact of their contribution to legislature was limited to mostly making effective speeches.¹⁴⁹

It was no easy task for them to fight against much established leaders as Kala Venkata Rao, B. Gopala Reddy, Sanjiva Reddy and others. To quote Ratna Sabhapathy,

¹⁴⁵U. Hanumantha Rao, *Ibid.*, p.135.

¹⁴⁶S.P. Lyman and Shri Ram Mokkalapati, *Op.Cit.*, p.359.

¹⁴⁷Kapu Dairy, *Op.Cit.*, p.19.

¹⁴⁸U. Hanumantha Rao, p.104, also see, *Legislative Assembly Debates 1956-65* also see D. Gita, 'Socialist Parties' (ed), G. Ram Reddy and B.A.V. Sharma, *Op.Cit.*, p.431.

¹⁴⁹D. Gita, *Op.Cit.* pp.432-433.

“the socialist party’s performance in the legislature was built up not by any talent or the established reputation that the leaders of the socialist party in the legislature had, but brick by brick, by hard work and industry... We used to meet every evening, prepare notes, apportion the speeches that had to be made in the assembly and we never allowed a single occasion to go when we did not show our own imprint whether in the question hour or in the course of speech-making on legislation. That is how we started.”¹⁵⁰ Except in 1952 when the members of socialist party returned in considerable number to the state legislature, in the subsequent elections, their number has been gradually dwindling and left with no representation today. Its popularity has been limited to Adilabad and Karimnagar district in Telangana, Visakhapatnam district in Coastal Andhra because of P.V.G. Raju and Chittoor district because of Ratna Sabhapathy.¹⁵¹

For the failure of the socialist party in Andhra Pradesh in the opinion of Ratna Sabhapathy, “The leadership of socialist party was far below its requirements in Andhra Pradesh. I felt and feel now that they were more self-centred with squabbles aimed of self-advancement It was not the sort of leadership we expected”¹⁵²

When Ratna Sabhapathy also defected to Congress, Lohia commented that “ I have lost confidence on this mankind”¹⁵³

The Socialist Movement in Andhra , played a glorious part in the quit india movement and attracted youthful vigour and talent to the Socialist Movement. In 1948 M.Bala Krishna Rao from Tenali was made the General Secretary of the adhoc committee in the Andhra area. B.Papi Reddy, Chakradhar, Tilak, B. Sree Rama Murthy, N. Venkata Rao and Ratna Sabhapathy were all drawn into the organisational fold of the socialist party in Andhra area in its formative stage.¹⁵⁴ More or less, at the same time in Hyderabad

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*, pp.433-434.

¹⁵¹D. Gita and M. Madan Mohan Reddy, *Op.Cit.*, p.153.

¹⁵²D. Gita, “Socialist Parties”, (ed.) G. Ram Reddy and B.A.V. Sharma, *Op.Cit.*, p.438.

¹⁵³U. Hanumantha Rao, *Op.Cit.*, p.112.

¹⁵⁴D. Gita, ‘Socialist Parties’ in G. Ram Reddy and B.A.V. Sharma(ed.) *Op.Cit.*, p.424.

state, the committee consisted of G. Raja Ram, C.Madhava Reddy, A.Krishna Reddy, G. Gautam Rao and J.R. Gopal.¹⁵⁵

On Sept. 12, 1952, the two socialist parties viz., Kisan Mazdoor Praja party (K.M.P.P) and Socialist Party merged themselves to form the Praja Socialist Party.¹⁵⁶ After the formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1956 the Hyderabad and Andhra Units merged together and a single party was formed. P.V.G. Raju became the leader of the legislature Party and G. Raja Ram became the Deputy leader and Ratna Sabhapathy its secretary.¹⁵⁷ The latter two were Kapus.

There were many reasons for the debacle of the socialist party in the first general elections. To quote, Ratna Sabhapathy;

“all of us were in age groups which could not provide credibility to the masses that we will deliver the goods as against congress. Regarding election strategy it was based on abstract programmes and principles, no alliances, with any other parties. They fanatically stuck to their own party. No funds could be provided by the National Party. All most all of them had to depend on their own finances. This had become a major road block for the party. Many contestants sold off their property and fought the election”¹⁵⁸

Ratna Sabhapathy was the leader of the Socialist Party and P. Narasinga Rao was the Dy. Leader in the Legislature. It was rather the leadership at the National level that gave them both moral and intellectual support in so far as the requirements of the legislature were concerned than the local conditions.¹⁵⁹ Though most of the socialist members were active in the legislature, since their number itself was negligible, they could not make substantial contribution in other spheres.

In 1983 he joined the Telugu Desam Party. In the 1983 and 1985 Assembly Elections he was elected to the Assembly from the Rajampet assembly constituency.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p.423.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p.425.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 425.

¹⁵⁸*Ibid.* P.430.

¹⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p.434.

Particularly in 1985 elections, with kidney operation though he did not canvass in the election campaigns, he was elected with huge margin. After the elections, N.T. Rama Rao appointed him as Minister for social welfare. For the first time in the history of Cuddapah district the Balijas were given ministerships in the N.T. Rama Rao's government. They were B. Ratna Sabhpathy, C. Rama chandraiah and P.Brahmaiah. Because of his efforts Allwyn Factory was established in Nandaluru of Cuddapah district.

Although the Balija caste has backed the Telugu Desam Party there is a change in the political behaviour of the caste in some parts of the district mainly in Kodur and Badwel assembly segments of Rajampet Parliamentary constituency, where the Balijas have started supporting the Congress both from 1989 to 1998 parliament elections. The reason for this was that the Telugu Desam Party could not consolidate the Balijas of the Rajampet taluk because the Kammas of Kodur were pampered by the party. This alienated the Balijas and a major chunk of this caste is now with the Congress. In spite of all this Telugu Desam Party has been giving more importance to the Balijas. Even in 1994 Assembly elections, both P. Brahmaiah and Palakonda Rayudu were given tickets. But only Brahmaiah got elected. P. Brahmaiah also served as Minister in the N.T. Rama Rao Cabinet from 1994 Jan. to 1995 August. In 1998, Rajya Sabha elections, C. Rama chandraiah, a Balija was elected on Telugu Desam Party.¹⁶⁰

The most notable feature in the district party system is the emergence of Telugu Desam Party as an alternative to the Congress Party. This can be clearly seen from the choice of Candidates by the Telugu Desam party for the Assembly and Mandal elections. Another significant feature that can be observed is the consolidation of Balija caste by throwing their lot on the Telugu Desam party. It can be said that this caste has got identified itself with the Telugu Desam Party which never was the case earlier.¹⁶¹

Mandali Venkat Krishna Rao (1925-1997)

Mandali Venkat Krishna Rao was born in 1925 at Avanigadda in Krishna district. Because of his prominent, if not sensational role in the 1977 cyclone relief, the Congress

¹⁶⁰*Eenadu*, Hyderabad edition, March 1998, p.1.

¹⁶¹M.L. Kantha Rao, *Op. Cit.*, p.12.

Movement in Divi Seema was dominated by an individual encountered earlier. He was not only a Cabinet Minister in J. Vengal Rao's government but had achieved a considerable degree of fame as convener of the World Telugu Conference held in 1975.¹⁶² As we have seen, he offered his resignation from the Cabinet immediately after the cyclone struck, but was quickly reinducted as Minister for Rehabilitation, while retaining his Education and Cultural Affairs portfolios. Further, he established Gandhi Kshetra, under his control and made services to the people of Krishna district.

During the 1977 cyclone, he was pitched into rescue and relief activities by virtue of his presence in the area and his social and political prominence. During the 1978 elections also he won. Mandali Venkata Krishna Rao's campaign could be used as a text book example of what W.H. Morris Jones terms the "three political - Idioms" of Indian politics.¹⁶³ According to Stephon P. Cohen and Ch. Raghavulu¹⁶⁴ for each idiom or style he successfully wove in his involvement in cyclone relief and rehabilitation. In the spirit of Gandhi, Krishna Rao had always cultivated the appearance and image of a self-sacrificing, saintly figure. Despite his ministerial positions he had always proclaimed that he did not pursue power, that he was only serving for the sake of others. To his constituents Krishna Rao could claim that his actions during the post-cyclone period were in the highest tradition of Gandhian service, although his opponents charged that this 'Gandhism' was a facade for the establishment of a net work of controlled and subservient social workers and swamis.

¹⁶²Mandali Venkat Krishna Rao was born in 4th August 1925 at Pallevada in Krishna district. He passed his S.S.L.C. in 1945 at Avanigadda and did his college education in Hindu College Machilipatnam. He participated in the Quit India Movement and arrested. During this period when the British Government ban the Congress, Mandali as a Divi Taluk Congress Secretary did a secret services to the Congress. In 1945 Mandali appointed as Krishna District Student Congress Secretary. In 1946 he participated in the anti-Detention Movement and was arrested. In 1948 at Delhi there was a meeting on Asian Students Mahasabha, for it Mandali represented as a Madras state representative. Thus Mandali Venkat Krishna Rao has been in Congress from his student days and occupied several prominent positions; East Krishna district Congress Secretary (1952-1956); Member of Lok Sabha (1957-62), Vice-president, Krishna district Zilla Parishad (1968-69); State Congress Secretary (1969-72); President Avanigadda Panchayat Samithi (1970-72); M.L.A. 1972-78; 1978-83 and Minister in Andhra Pradesh cabinet (1972-73 and 1973-82) for details see *Mandali Venkat Krishna Rao; 50th Abhinandana Sanchika*, Hyderabad, 1st Feb, 1978.

¹⁶³W.H. Morris Jones, *Government and Politics in India*, Hutchison and Co., London, 1964.

¹⁶⁴Stephon P. Cohen and Ch. Raghavulu, *The Andhra Cyclone of 1977, Individual and Institutional Responses to Mass Death*, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1979, pp.103-104.

The saintly style did not inhibit Krishna Rao from resorting to the stock in trade of politicians around the world who are confronted with a multi-ethnic series of vote banks. "Rounding up the ethnics" required a skillfully tailored candidacy. For example, to his Kapu caste fellows, he is reported to have argued:

"Either we stand united or else we perish : I am your man look at the Agnikula kshatriyas who are united behind Arjuna Rao (he belongs to that caste and his opponent) why cannot we be like them? If I am defeated, the Kapus won't have a major figure in state politics. Chalapati Rao, the Congress(I) candidate (also a Kapu) does not stand the ghost of a chance, he will lose his deposit."

In addition to this Virtuoso performance upon the ethnic mosaic of Divi Seema, Krishna Rao also tried to project himself as a man of issues and progress, a thoroughly 'modern politician'. He naturally stressed his role in the World Telugu Conference, and his record as an opponent of state disintegration during the Andhra Separate Movement.¹⁶⁵ However, his main plank was the strategic position he would occupy (if elected) in a future Andhra Pradesh government and his ability as a "go - getter".¹⁶⁶ This would enable him:

"To turn Divi Seema (Divi Island) into Divya Seema (Island of Prosperity). When the cyclone and tidal wave struck, I moved the government machinery into action. Due to my resignation, I was able to get world recognition, there by attracting everybody's attention and aid from all nooks and corners. Some are making unnecessary allegations. Even if one of this is proved, I shall quit politics".¹⁶⁷

M.V. Krishna Rao, was indeed, a man for all reasons, who, assuming that the cyclone was a political boom, made it a central point of his campaign in appeals to saintly altruism, specific caste interest and the economic regeneration of Divi. However, he may

¹⁶⁵Prefers to the movement of separating Andhra from Telangana.

¹⁶⁶Rumours were set afloat that he would be the next Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. One of his enthusiastic supporters announced this during the campaign though Krishna Rao was quick to deny any such aspiration. See details Stephen P. Cohen and Ch. Raghavulu, *Op.Cit.*, p.105.

¹⁶⁷*Ibid.*

have pursued this strategy with too great a vigour. By gaining control over the management and distribution of aid and by generating too much publicity about his own activities, he succeeded in making himself a major campaign issue, one which his opponents were quick to exploit.¹⁶⁸

In P.V.Narasimha Rao's cabinet he was held the portfolio of Social Welfare. In J. Vengala Rao's ministry he was education minister, in Anjaiah's term again he was given the social welfare portfolio and finally in Kotla's first ministry he was held the portfolio of Cooperative Minister. He was died in 1997. At present his son Mandali Budda Prasad was President of the Krishna District Youth Congress.

Lakulapu Lakshman Das

Lakulapu Lakshman Das popularly known as L.L. Das hailed from the Kapu community and belonged to the middle class farmer family of Kommusani palli village in Pathapatnam Taluq in Srikakulam district. After his graduation from Andhra University in Commerce, L.L. Das joined the National movement and actively participated in the 1942 Quit India Movement. He was associated with the Kisan Group and its peasant struggles under the leadership of N.G. Ranga. Later he was elected as Secretary of the Pathapatnam Taluq Congress. For a short period he was in service as Asst. Panchayat Officer and resigned the job in 1947 to join politics again.

Though Known as a disciple of N.G. Ranga, he did not join the Krishkar Lok Party at the time of its formation in 1951, but remained in the Congress. There was a group of old guard in his place Pathapatnam taluq who never wanted L.L. Das to come up in public life. However, he entered the taluq politics as Secretary, Taluq Congress.¹⁶⁹

L.L. Das elected to the assembly in 1952 and also in 1955 and played an active role among the legislators at Madras, Kurnool and Hyderabad. In 1953 there was a proposal to take L.L. Das into Prakasam's cabinet at Kurnool. But Kurmanna (Kalinga)

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*, pp.105-106.

¹⁶⁹D. Suran Naidu, *The Congress Party in Transition : A Study of Srikakulam District in A.P.*, National Book Organisation, 1991, P.240 also see, Tripurana Venkata Ratnam, *Leadership, Faction and Rise of Radicalism in Srikakulam District of Andhra Pradesh : A Study of Congress Politics 1952-1972*, M.phil. J.N.U., Delhi, 1978, pp.128-129.

prevailed upon Sanjiva Reddy not to take Das.¹⁷⁰ He was the Vice-president of the Cooperative Central Bank from 1949 to 1956 and unsuccessfully contested for the election of the President of the District Board in 1950. He was the District Congress Committee President for some time and also the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee. Again he was elected to the Assembly in 1962 elections¹⁷¹ but he was defeated in the 1967 assembly elections by a Swatantra candidate. L.L. Das became Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee Secretary in 1964. Das's association with Brahmananda Reddy may have cost him his seat in the assembly and possibly a berth in the Ministry. For Das's home constituency ie., Pathapatnam was made a reserved constituency after its boundaries were re-drawn reportedly with the connivance of a member of the delimitation commission who was a Sanjiva Reddy supporter. Das, therefore, sought election from faroff Ponduru constituency but was defeated by a Swatantra candidate who incidentally was backed by a Congress M.P. owing allegiance to the Sanjiva Reddy and Sanjivaiah group in 1967 Assembly elections.

In comparison with the Kalingas, the Kapus were backward in political consciousness. In this context next to Brahmins, the Kalingas had greater political awakening than the other castes. Even the leaders of the Kapus were not as dynamic and dashing as the leaders of the Kalingas. L.L. Das, an M.L.A. being a Kapu, was not able to mobilise all his castemen to his fold. Since Das was not so caste minded and associated himself with other castes, as well, some of the non-Kapus used to extend their support to him.¹⁷² After the defeat he was the Panchayat Samithi President of Sarvakota from July 1970 to March 1972. In the 1972 Assembly Elections, he was again elected from same Pathapatnam constituency and was taken into P.V. Narasimha Rao's Cabinet, as Minister for Housing. For this elevation to the state level politics, he had the blessings from V.V. Giri, the then President of India, as he had been close to Giri since 1972.¹⁷³ Das continued to be in the Ministry till the time of his resignation in 1977 to join the Janata Party.

¹⁷⁰Tripurana Venkata Ratnam, *Ibid.*, p.115.

¹⁷¹It was a well known fact in the Srikakulam district political circles (after 1962 elections) that L.L. Das could have been inducted into the Cabinet of Sanjeeva Reddy.

¹⁷²Tripurana Venkata Ratnam, *Op. Cit.*, p.116.

¹⁷³*Ibid.*, p.129 also see D. Suran Naidu, *Op. Cit.*

During the period of his ministership, L.L. Das, however, encountered powerful opposition from his party colleagues, in particular, the other factional leaders in the district. Das therefore, could not mobilise followers to his side nor could he strengthen his position effectively by using his ministerial power as source of support building.

Temperamentally, he was mild, calm and soft spoken. He might or might not help many but was harmful to none. But he was known for his quality of doing a right thing, at the wrong time, there by suffering in reputation as an indiscrete politician. He could not mobilise the groups around him as he was unable to do things according to the wishes of his followers or associates. But he was capable of retaining his position some how or the other and maintained his relationship with various persons because of his vast contacts in public life for more than 30 years.¹⁷⁴

As a freedom fighter, he was sympathetic towards political sufferers and social workers. He was not a person to favour his own castemen or to depend upon them for his strength the vast community was there to support him. He was not in a position to spend money for political purposes as he was not rich. Thus he was a relatively less powerful factional leader in the district as against the others in the Congress Party.¹⁷⁵

P. Shiv Shankar (b.1929-)

P. Shiv Shankar was born in 10th August 1929 at Mamidipalli village near Hyderabad in a poor Kapu family. He did his school education at Hyderabad and got his B.A. degree from Amritsar. In 1952 he completed his LLB and started his practice at Hyderabad. Within a short period, he was elected as Secretary to City Civil Court Bar Association, Hyderabad. In 1965 he was elected as the Vice-President of Andhra Pradesh Bar Council. As a successful lawyer for some time, he was appointed as judge of Andhra Pradesh High Court in 1974. But he did not continue in it, and he resigned for his post in 1975 and started his practice both at Supreme Court and High Court.

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*, p.130.

¹⁷⁵*Ibid.*, p.130.

After the emergency, he was a legal aid for Indira Gandhi. Further, he was the Government Counsel in the Justice Bhargava Commission set up by the Janata Government to enquire into Naxalite killings in Andhra Pradesh. With Indira Gandhi advice he entered politics. In 1980 Parliamentary Elections he was elected from Secunderabad Constituency on Congress-(I) and he was a Cabinet Minister in the Indira Gandhi ministry. Defeated in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections, he was made a Rajya Sabha Member from Gujarat by Indira Gandhi.¹⁷⁶ He was a Cabinet Minister in the Rajiv Gandhi's ministry also. During the P.V. Narasimha Rao's Prime Ministership, he was appointed as Governor of Kerala State.

Again in 1998 Lok Sabha elections he was elected to the Parliament from Tenali on Congress ticket. At present he was the President of the Congress Parliamentary Party (C.P.P.) He has two sons and one daughter. One son was P.Sudhir Kumar, was an ex-Congress MLA and at Present he was one of the General Secretaries of Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee.

Kapu Ministers at Centre:

Indira Gandhi Cabinet: 1980-84

P. Shiv Shankar	Cabinet Minister, Law, Justice and Company Affairs with an additional charge of Fertilisers and Chemicals
M.S. Sanjeeva Rao	Dy. Minister, Electronics and Science & Technology
P. Mallikharjun	State Minister, Railways and Parliamentary Affairs.
P. Parathasarathy	Dy. Minister, in-charge of Education and Social Welfare

Rajiv Gandhi Cabinet 1984-89

P. Shiv Shankar	Cabinet Minister, dealt with Commerce, External Affairs, and Human Resource Development.
P. Mallikharjun	Dy. Minister, Railways.

United Front Government 1996-98

Uma Reddy Venkateswarlu	Dy. Minister, Agriculture.
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¹⁷⁶M. Shatrugna, "All Kapus are BC's Reducing Reservation to a Farce", *E.P.W.*, Vol.XXIX, No.37, Sept. 10, 1994, p.2398.

From 1956 onwards the Kapus are in the politics of Andhra Pradesh and also in almost all the major political parties, but nobody can not reach the high position. Though the Kapus are there in the Assembly, parliament and in ministries, they are not in a position to compete with the Reddies and Kammas. But this have been changed from 1983 onwards.

Thus the non-Brahmin movement replaced the Brahmins to such an extent by the other upper castes. Among these castes only Reddis, after the independence control the political power. But from 1983 onwards we can see the emergence of the Kammas to replace the Reddis. During the same period we can also witness the emergence of the other backward clase, particularly Kapus, Telagas, Baliijas, played a prominent role as the changers of the Governments at the state level. Simultaneously they also demanded for their inclusion in the B.C. list.

In Andhra Pradesh context, Kapus as the largest group in state are behind in all fields particularly education, politics, industry and business. However, in the district like East Godavari because of their numerical strength (18%) and control over land, they are playing a fairly forceful part in district politics. But in other districts they are picking up slowly both in education, economy and political spheres.

In other words, in the changing context of political scenario in the state in the last decade the Kapus are now trying to assert their identity and are demanding their share in the power structure. In search of a separate new identity they are now trying to bring together under the rubric of Kapus with similar cognite groups. As mentioned earlier, spread in different regions of the state, they are digging out their historical roots of their common origin. They formed a common platform known as 'Kapunadu' to articulate their grievances. One of their immediate demand is that they should be included in the list of backward classes. This we can discuss in the coming chapter.

Recently, some efforts were made to unite all these sub-castes through a caste organisation, ie., Kapunadu. Of course, there is some awareness of unity among these various sub-castes in the face of political and economic challenges, yet it is only a starting point. But the consolidation of Munnuru Kapus, Baliijas and Telagas had remained un-

consummated. In contrast the consolidation has been complete in the case of Kammas, but the Reddys are successful to a certain extent.

Thus, the participation of the Kapus in politics is relatively a recent phenomenon. They realised their powerlessness of their caste in the recent past. They also realised that access to modern political power means control over economic and educational opportunities. Being a largest caste in number wise, if they achieve caste solidarity, they will occupy the political power. For that, now they are concentrated on education and economic activities. This we can observe in the starting of educational institutions by the Kapus in some areas. And also as the people of most industrious in the urban areas they are mostly in the tertiary sector. Now they are improving their economic activities by spreading other spheres like cinema, paper, rice-mills etc.

Caste has been an important factor in the politics of Andhra Pradesh of late, particularly, after the formation of T.D.P. the significance of the caste has become more and more pronounced and open. Further, the encouragement of political parties also helped the caste to gain political prominence. It is now a well established practice for the state leadership of the various parties to select Kapu candidates for a number of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats because of their numerical strength.

In this context it is necessary to analyse the process of socio-economic and political developments that have taking place in Andhra in the past. This will help in understanding the general conditions under which the Kapus are trying for their rights. Further, they are in a position today to challenge the dominance of the traditional land owning classes in the political as well as in the rural economic spheres. It will take time for Kapus to raise their status on par with Kammas and Reddis. Because, the size of the Kapu families are more compare to that of Kammas and Reddis. Further the feeling of oneness among the Kapus was started just recently. It was a long term objective, which we could not expect within a short period.

One of the most important factors that contributed to the economic development of the Reddis and Kammas is the caste based social net work in business, industry and agriculture. The caste consciousness and identity became instrumental for successful economic development. Their caste consciousness and solidarity have given them an edge

in business and industry because of their propensity to help one another as a means of improving the status of caste as a whole. Now Kapus are also trying to achieve this.

Further, the economic dominance and caste solidarity of Kammas was strengthened by the emergence of T.D.P. in 1983 under the stewardship of N.T.R. The emergence of T.D.P. provided a source of inspiration for the Kapus to mobilise on similar lines. This we can observe in the increase of the strength of M.L.A.s from this caste. All this we can discuss in the fifth chapter.

We can also say that some Kapu personalities played their part in influencing the Kapus in increasing their consciousness. They are Mandali Venkata Krishna Rao, L.L. Das, Bandaru Ratnasabhapathy, P. Shiva Sankar, V. Mohan Ranga Rao, M. Padmanabham.

In this context, the contribution of V. Mohan Ranga Rao and M. Padmanabham was specially noteworthy. These two were responsible for the Kapu emergence in the recent period. The untimely death of V. Mohan Ranga Rao left M. Padmanabham to take the responsibility on his shoulders. This we can discuss in the next chapter. Without Mohan Ranga Rao and M. Padmanabham we can not expect the Kapu movement to this extent.

CHAPTER - V
FORMATION OF KAPUNADU AND ITS
ACTIVITIES

The characteristic feature of the social structure in India is the caste system. Social system is organised essentially around the caste structure and caste identities. The process of political mobilisation had resulted in identifying and manipulating the existing social structure. The indigenous social structures are closely involved in politics. According to Rajni Kothari:

“Politicians are mobilising caste-groups and identities in order to organise their power. They find in it an extremely articulated and flexible basis for organisation, something that may have been structured in terms of a status hierarchy, but something that is also available for political manipulation and one that has a basis in consciousness”¹

In fact, as the study of political behaviour becomes essential while describing the social structure of a community, M.N. Srinivas, has pointed out that political behaviour of Indian masses is generally influenced by caste and religion.²

As per the spirit of our constitution, there is no discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth in the fields of education and employment. However, Articles 15(4) and 16(4) are two facets envisaging reservations to the classes of citizens, socially and educationally backward. In so far as the state of Andhra Pradesh is concerned, it was originally formed a part of the composite Madras state, besides that of the state of Hyderabad. With the formation of the Andhra State on 1st Oct, 1953, a list of Backward classes as was existing in the composite Madras state was adopted with slight modifications. The Kapus enjoyed reservations in the policy.

In the wake of formation of the State of Andhra Pradesh including Telangana area as on 1st Nov. 1956, the list that was existing with the state of Hyderabad was continued, thereby maintaining two lists- one for Andhra and the other for Telangana area. The British Government in Madras Presidency had recognised Kapus as backward caste in 1915 and the backward classes list of Andhra region included Kapus also. In 1956 the then chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh N. Sanjeeva Reddy deleted Kapus from

¹Rajni Kothari, *Politics in India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1970, p.225.

²M.N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1964, p.2.

the Backward classes list on political grounds. Again, though D.Sanjeevaiah, the next Chief Minister tried to recognise them as other backward classes through a government order, the High Court struck down the G.O. on technical grounds.

Meanwhile, the President of India appointed a Backward Classes Commission on January 1953 under the Chairmanship of Kaka Kalelkar, to determine the criteria to be adopted for treating any section of the people, other than Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The said commission was also to draw up a list of such classes on the basis of the criteria laid down by it. It included Kapus in the other Backward classes list. On submission of the report of the Commission, the Central Government found certain tests applied by the commission to be vague, and therefore, directed the different state governments to choose their own criteria for defining backwardness.

The state of Andhra Pradesh issued G.O. Ms. No.1886 dated 21.6.1963 specifying a list of certain persons as belonging to backward classes for the purpose of selecting candidates to the seats reserved for backward communities in the Medical colleges in Andhra Pradesh. The said list was challenged in the High Court on the ground that the order of the Government of Andhra Pradesh offends Articles 15 and 29 (2) of the constitution.³ After that again through a G.O. Ms. No.870 dated 12.4.1968 the State Government appointed Anantha Raman Commission to prepare a list of Backward classes in the state as socially and educationally backward classes. The commission drew up a list consisting of 93 classes to be included in the backward class. The Government accepted the criteria adopted by the commission and issued G.O. Ms. No.1793 of 1970 declaring that the castes and communities specified by the commission to be socially and educationally backward for the purpose of Article 15(4) of the constitution and making 25% reservations for them.

³The High Court struck down the said G.O. holding that the State has placed no material before the court as to economic conditions of various castes, their occupation, habitation, social status and their educational backwardness and that the enumeration of persons as Backward has been made almost exclusively on the basis of the caste.

Table No.V-1

The Table showing the percentage of Reservation for each of the B.C. groups

B.C.-A.	Consisting of 38 castes	With 7% Reservation
B.C.-B.	Consisting of 31 castes	With 10% Reservation
B.C.-C.	Consisting of 1 caste	With 1% Reservation
B.C.-D.	Consisting of 23 castes	With 7% Reservation
Total Castes	93	25%

Source: Anantha Raman Commission 1968.

The Commission did not recognise the entire Kapu castes as backward classes, but recognised only two sub-castes of the Kapus, namely Munnuru kapus and Turpu Kapus as other backward classes and put them under B.C-D. category.

Meanwhile in 1979 the President of India again appointed a Backward Classes Commission. The Commission was headed by B.P. Mandal and submitted its report in 1980. The Commission recommended that caste be the criteria for determining the backwardness. Mandal Commission calculated 52% of the population of India as belonging to other backward classes. In the Commission report in an entry of 264 of the Andhra Pradesh other backward classes list identified Kapus as the other Backward classes.

The Government of India took a decision to include as backward classes, the castes whose names figure both in the lists maintained by state governments and in the state-wise lists of other backward classes appended to the Mandal Commission Report. But Kapu Community does not find place in the list maintained by the Andhra Pradesh government.

Again in the year 1982, the Government of Andhra Pradesh, appointed one man commission headed by N.K. Muralidhar Rao,⁴ to determine the nature of social and educational backwardness of different sections of citizens and submit its report. Accordingly the Commission submitted its report, but it did not recommend for inclusion of Kapus, Ontaris, Baliyas and Telegas in the list of backward classes. It observed

⁴G.O.Ms. No.12, dated 22.1.1982.

“They are land owners and enjoy social status in the villages. They are already politically conscious and socially forward. On the educational side also they are not backward as the students belonging to the Kapu Community are considerable number in the educational institutions in the state. The literacy in this community is higher than the state average.. There is a good representation from Kapu Community in the employment under the state government, semi-government and local bodies. The Commission thinks that it is not necessary to disturb this”.⁵

It was a one man Commission, further it submitted the report within 9 months of its appointment. No actual investigations were conducted. Hence without going into empirical data and field work, it made dry statements about Kapus. The state government itself set aside the report and the recommendations of the earlier Anantha Raman Commission are followed till today. The Kapus have been relentlessly trying to get their caste included under ‘BC’list.. There is also the attempt to get united to make the government to listen to their demands. The Kapunadu Movement evidently is an attempt in that direction.

The Kapunadu Movement:

Kapunadu is a conglomeration of several Kapu sub- castes who came together and began calling themselves as Kapus. For the first time, important leaders of various Kapu sub-castes were brought together on common platform under the name ‘Kapunadu’ in Vijayawada in 1982. In other words, the term was first used to denote an assembly of Kapus in the above year when members of Kapu, Telaga, Ontari and Baliya castes came together. Vangaveeti Mohan Ranga Rao first mobilised the Kapus who form the largest group in Andhra Pradesh. He received support from both the rich and poor sections of the Kapu group of castes. The main purpose of the conference was to bring all the Kapus together so as to formulate plans for the upliftment of their community. It also offered them an opportunity for establishing closer ties between various sub-castes. From then onwards Kapunadu has been organising annual/biannual meetings.

The ‘Nadu’ in the term ‘Kapunadu’ is a dravidian word which means both ‘territory’ or even an assembly which is either territorially or as in this case, community delimited. The deliberate use of this term was to account for several ambiguities in their identity and in the mobilisation processes. The first related to their demand was for

⁵N.K. Muralidhar Rao, *Report of the Backward Classes Commission Andhra Pradesh*, 1982, p.16.

backward class status. The very notion of a backward class by virtue of being some kind of a residual category has ambiguity built into it. Since the criteria for an Other Backward Classes (hereafter O.B.C.) status was more social and economic, caste became subordinated to the socio-economic status of communities claiming the O.B.C. status.⁶ This is reflected in the widespread use of the term “Backward Classes Communities” rather than “Backward Castes” in popular discourse. Secondly, since the Kapunadu actually consisted of several Jatis, the concept of community took precedence over caste as a self-referent for identity. The existing of class difference between a small prosperous rural elite and a majority of rural and urban poor was a third factor. Finally, since the Kapunadu Movement was built around an opposition to the Kammas who were seen as the dominant group, the Kammas themselves provided the term for self-identification of the Kapus. By virtue of their relation to the production process and ownership of property, the Kammas were the chief component of the ruling class in the region. However, their use of caste idiom in their rise to dominance and in their relationships with other groups has given them an ambivalent status in the social formation. Since the popular usage, the Kammas were referred to as a community reflecting their social, political and economic dominance, Kapus by a dialectical process referred to themselves as an exploited or dominated community rather than simply as a ‘backward class’. (The very nature of exploitation and treatment of the dalits due to their location with relation to the mode of production and social structures, enables them to mobilise both as exploited castes and classes). Likewise, we argue, the class situation of the majority of the Kapus, with a “widespread presence among the poor peasantry and the urban lower middle classes”,⁷ which are by nature alienated and insecure, made them to adopt the intermediate category of community rather than class or caste. The nature of the economic structure in Coastal Andhra with a high degree of dependence on the tertiary sector, which resulted in a stunted form of economic development, only compounded the difficulty of the Kapu lower middle class in improving their situation. The social movements and identities in the region, suggest the reflective of the absence of a developed industrialised, capitalist economy and the consequent lack of emergence of a fully developed class structure. The ambiguity of community in Kapunadu, thus epitomizes their class location, within an economic structure characterized by rural

⁶The boundaries of backward classes are both unclear and elastic as Beteille point out. For details see her book. *The Backward Classes and the New Social Order*, O.U.P. Delhi, 1981.

⁷K. Balagopal, Rise of Gangsterism in Politics, *E.P.W.*, May 25, 1989, pp.227-229.

urban-capital flows and the presence of the same dominant class in both rural and urban areas with similar patterns of social, political and economic behaviour.

The Kapunadu was essentially a movement for greater political, economic and educational representation centred around slogan '*backward class status for the kapus*'. Two earlier backward class commissions set up in 1968 and 1982 the Anantha Raman and Muralidhar Rao Commissions did not recommend the inclusion of Kapus in the backward classes list on the grounds that they are not a uniformly backward caste. The movement which was launched in the early 1982, but actually took off in a big way after a Kapunadu Mahasabha was organised in Vijayawada in 1985. The movement was mainly restricted to the Coastal Andhra Region, and brought several sub-castes under its umbrella including Kapus, Telagas, Ontaris and Balijas.

Traditionally these groups have occupied a similar position in the caste hierarchy, below the dominant cultivating castes, but above the dalits. By the early 20th century most of these groups had settled down as cultivators and agricultural labourers. Their differences seem to originate slightly different in ritual status, as well as class and occupational differences which prevailed in earlier times, but there has never been any taboo on inter-marriages and inter-dining among these jatis. However, the tendency towards cross-cousin and maternal uncle-niece marriages has meant that in practice, there have not been as many marriages among the different Jatis as there were among the sub-castes of the dominant peasant castes.

The idea behind bringing these groups under one nomenclature was to make a difference in the political arena in terms of numbers, as well as to revive inter-marriages among the Jatis and thereby enlarge their geographical spread, since each of these groups were concentrated in a few districts in different regions of the state. In terms of economic status, it was only the Kapus in the Godavari delta who constituted prosperous peasant cultivators, the rest constituting a substantial proportion of the small and marginal farmers and urban lower middle classes with a dominant presence especially in the tertiary sector. The total population of the Kapus as estimated at 18.6% of the population, with around 5% of them who reside the North Coastal Andhra and Telangana regions being classified as backward classes. However, they are mostly concentrated in the Coastal Andhra Region, particularly the Konaseema region, and here their population

is likely to be much more. In urban areas like Vijayawada and Tirupati, for instance their population is variously estimated between 15% to 20%.

But among the backward classes, several dominant groups are engaged in a bitter power struggle to make political gains. Though there are 93 castes in the existing list of OBCs only about 10 groups have been politically active. They include the Goudas, Padmasalis, Yadavas, Mudirajus, Gangaputras, Swarnakaras or Kamsalis, Munnuru Kapus Turpu Kapus, Kalingas and Koppula Velamas. Of these only 3 castes, Munnuru Kapus, Mudiraj and Goudas really enjoy the fruits of power sharing,⁸ along with them in the North Coastal Andhra apart from Turpu Kapus, Kalingas and Koppula Velamas also enjoy the fruits of power.

In the meantime, the Kapus and their associate caste groups, like the Baliijas, the Telagas and the Ontaris have been successfully sought B.C. status for themselves, albeit, for the purpose of reservations in Government jobs and professional educational colleges. By extension, they have also tried to secure more political representation in proportion to their numerical strength.⁹

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 by setting up educational institutions. However, these never really took off for various reasons. The chief 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. The Kammas were able to do it primarily because of having already attained a degree of economic and social mobility. The need to expand the geographic reach by itself cannot be a successful motivation in the absence of other factors propelling such alliances.

In the case of setting up educational institutions, which played a very important role in Kamma mobility, the Kapus just did not have the kind of resources that were needed to invest in areas which do not produce tangible results at least for a few years. Not being in power it was also quite easy for the dominant classes to scuttle some of

⁸*Deccan Chronicle*, Hyderabad Edition, October 28, 1994.

⁹*Ibid.*

these projects. In a struggle over the running of a school controlled by the Kapu community in Vijayawada for instance, the ruling party at that time (TDP) attempted in various ways to prevent the school from functioning. The rhetoric used in this instance again points to the entry of the notion of community into popular consciousness. Further Kapu leaders fighting to get certain municipal orders rescinded, stated that "it was the conspiracy of one community which could not brook the ascendancy of others. It was a conspiracy of one community that no other should run educational institutions".¹⁰

Since as Upadhya puts it, terms such as Kapu "referred to caste or status categories that were not socially organised"¹¹ attempts were also made to define the terms of membership by strictly enforcing marriage rules and ritual status. However, even here, in the absence of any real mobility, such attempts were rarely successful.

The Emergence of Kapu Identity:

The significant attempts of the movement to consciously create a Kapu identity is a continuation of the metamorphosis which 'Kapu' as a caste has undergone. It is interesting to note how the Kapunadu was constituted and the main features of a changing community.

Available records indicate that there has been a cultivating community who have been returned as Kapus for almost 200 years starting with the first census conducted in the then Madras presidency soon after the permanent settlement in the early 19th century. However, in the census of 1871, Kapus seem to be a generic term to refer to all cultivators, though differentiated from the Kamma caste. Till the 1931 census, the practice of clubbing several non-Kamma cultivating castes, particularly Kapus and Reddis, continued despite the fact that a strong Reddi identity has emerged by then.

It was perhaps, the rise to dominance of Reddis and Kammas by the time of independence, that 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 Zamindari and the green revolution,

¹⁰D. Partha Sarathy, *Collective Violence in a provincial City*, O.U.P., Delhi, 1997, p.70.

¹¹Carol Upadhya, 'Social and Cultural Strategies of Class Formation in Coastal Andhra Pradesh' *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, Vol..31, No.2, 1997, p.175.

resulted in several changes in the economic structure of Rural Andhra. Kapus were amongst the communities who migrated out to the small and large towns in a major way. The adverse impact of the economic changes and the pauperization of the Kapus (among other groups), 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.

In the early 1980's a major political change occurred that was to convulse to Andhra Pradesh society and polity. The emergence of the Telugu Desam party (hereafter T.D.P.) and its massive victory in the 1983 state assembly elections can be seen as a breakdown of ruling class in Andhra Politics. The crisis in ruling class politics broke up a carefully built alliance among upper castes and dominant peasant castes over a long period. The breakup resulted in the open social and political mobilisation around caste identities. The Kapu elite at that time allied themselves with T.D.P. hoping to capitalise 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 T.D.P. 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 to power. Thus within a couple of years after the T.D.P. had come to power, the Kapus began to organise their own movement for power. In a sense, therefore, the Kapunadu movement presaged the current upsurge of different communities who have their major demand; reservations on the basis of population of various castes and sub-castes.¹² Reservations for 'backward' castes and other groups - 'freedom fighters', 'ex-servicemen', 'the differently abled' - will undoubtedly spread. In the current political confusion, reservations seem to be one safe way of getting votes. These were based on a realisation that the kind of democracy we have is really skewed in favour of some communities. It is estimated for instance, that close to two thirds of the M.L.As in the current Andhra Pradesh Assembly belong to the two dominant castes-Reddis and Kammas, who constitute less than 12% of the population. This lack of political representation by and a majority of the population, has led to the decline of what Chatterjee calls "a sense of participation by people in a social collective"¹³ or even one

¹²Reservations are necessary because the lower castes cannot compete on their own, Perhaps for generations.

¹³Partha Chatterjee, 'Communities in the East', *E.P.W.*, Vol.33, No.6, 1998, p.277-282.

could argue in communal life, in the development process. The notion of community that was built around the Kapu identity thus captures the precise nature of the socio-political and economic changes that were and are occurring in Andhra society.

Caste, Community and Identity Choice:

In what was considered to be a seminal article when it was published three decades ago, Steve Barnett pointed “identity choice is the central problem in situating caste”.¹⁴ The ‘mega categories’ such as the Kapu, which have emerged cover 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 described as “a kind of holding action”.¹⁵ The shifting identities of the dominant peasant class is one example wherein their identities keep moving between class and caste; their more sophisticated facade in urban areas belies their “background as village power holders and their readiness to even adopt the most feudal traits”, as Omvedt puts it.¹⁶ Omvedt also says that the rich peasant in India essentially has “an ambivalent almost dual political character”.¹⁷

Likewise the heterogeneous Kapu community was deliberately forged into a unified one, so that its ambiguity can “allow the blocs to continue, while at the same time suggesting the possibility for commonality across the blocs”.¹⁸ This ambiguity has enabled the Kapus to struggle unitedly against a common enemy or target. However, while the Kapu elite in the Godavari districts and Guntur have been actively involved in the so-called atrocities against the Dalits, the rest of the Kapus have often had to bear the brunt of a whole range of upper caste violence. The ambiguities of Kapunadu have therefore not been able to overcome the dissensions from within, leading to splits and the consequent decline of the movement.

¹⁴Steve Barnett, “Identity Choice and Caste Ideology in Contemporary South India”, D.A. low (ed.) *Soundings in South Asian History*, 1968.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶Gail Omvedt, “Class, Caste and Land in India: An Introductory Essay” (ed), Hamza Alavi and John Harriss, *Sociology of developing Societies: South Asia*, Macmillan, London, 1991, p.146.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸Steve Barnett, *Op. Cit.*,

The movement was an outcome of the welding together of diverse political and economic interests, a horizontal alliance, based on anger and resentment at social exclusion, to target a common political enemy. The decline of the movement, however has not meant the breakup of the organisational structure that was built up. These structures continue to be quite active within political parties, trade unions and independent village and town level organisations. Like the dalit organisations throughout India, these provide an organisational presence at local levels which make it difficult for the dominant communities to exercise power in ways that they are used to.

The major demands of the movement included categorizations of backward class, and better political representation. The movement was very active and widespread in Coastal Andhra and in the state capital of Hyderabad between 1985-1988 under the leadership V. Mohan Ranga Rao. Vijayawada emerged as a centre for Kapu political activities when Ranga took up the leadership of Kapunadu in 1985. A Kapunadu conference in 1988 in the city was the largest ever held rally by Kapus.¹⁹ Kapunadu held a number of meetings throughout Andhra in 1988 and put forth demands pertaining to opportunities in education, employment and in politics. V. Mohan Ranga Rao was able to mobilise the Kapus in a most effective manner owing to his own origins and migration from the agrarian proletariat to the urban lower middle class, mirroring the changes among a large majority of the Kapus.

The Kapus of Coastal Andhra concentrated in the agrarian rich East and West Godavari and Krishna are different. They were with the Telugu Desam Party earlier and their drift away from the T.D.P. began after the exit of Mudragada padmanabham from it and accomplished dramatically with the anti-Kamma riots following the murder of the Congress MLA V. Mohan Ranga Rao on December 26, 1988. It may be noted that the heightened anti-Kamma feeling among the Kapus was a major cause of the defeat of the T.D.P. in this part in the 1989 Assembly Elections. Now the Kapunadu has intensified the agitation for the inclusion of Kapus in the O.B.C. category, which has been its major demand for the last one and half decade. As the main actors in this agitation belong to the Congress(I) the factional differences in the party get reflected in the Kapunadu as well. *Nevertheless the very fact that not a day*

¹⁹D. Parthasarathy, *Op. Cit.*, p.48.

*passes without a front page report about the activities of the Kapus in the vernacular press, ever since they intensified their agitation in the month of March, 1994 is an indication of their power to keep the Government on its toes, which no backward community can even think of.*²⁰

With the demand of Kapus for B.C. status and the murder of V. Mohan Ranga Rao, there we can see the awareness among the Kapus to unite for themselves and fight for their rights. For this caste provides a readymade raw material. Hence political mobilisation of Kapu clearly felt in the 1989 elections. An analysis of election trends since the first elections show that the caste factor was there in Andhra Pradesh Politics, but was never a major factor in the overall electoral process. 1989 elections deviated the above trend wherein the casteist trend seem to have taken deep roots.

Kapus emerged as a distinct powerful political force in the East Godavari district prior to 1989 elections. The very fact that both the parties the Telugu Desam Party and the Congress (I) strategy in giving seizable seats to this community illustrates the above statement. The caste factor assumes such proportions that the T.D.P. and the Congress (I) selected Kapus to oppose one another in 4 Assembly segments, Kadium, Jaggampet, Pathipadu and Pithapuram. Direct confrontation between Kapus and Kammas was seen in Assembly constituencies between Kapus and Kammas in Assembly Constituencies i.e., Burugupudi, Peddapuram, Anaparthi and Tallarevu. Significantly in the 1989 Assembly and Lok Sabha elections Kammas drew a blank.

In the 1989 elections, out of total 294 assembly seats, the Congress Party gave tickets to Reddis 89, Kammas 27, Kapu 26, B.Cs 47, S.C and S.T's 55, Muslims 6 and Brahmins 6.²¹ In this election Congress won 182 seats.

The most important factor in building upon anti T.D.P. electoral alliance was caste. It was successfully played up by the Congress in its resurgence and search for power. It assigned the task of arousal and rallying people of different castes to prominent Congressmen. The party was most successful in breaking off a large chunk of the Kapu Community from T.D.P. The killing of V. Mohan Ranga Rao, a prominent

²⁰K. Srinivasulu, "A.P: B.S.P. and Casts Politics", *E. P. W.*, Vol.XXIX, No.40, Oct. 194, p.2586.

²¹*Indian Express*, Hyderabad Edition, 28 Sept., 1994. p.3.

Kapu leader and a Congress M.L.A. took caste politics to a climax. The scale of caste violence and arson, targetting the property and assets of the Kammas that rocked the four coastal districts - Guntur, Krishna, West and East Godavari districts, following the murder was unprecedented. The Congress(I) made tremendous political capital out of this murder and gained from the overwhelming support of the Kapus in the coastal districts in 1989 elections.²²

It was the landed gentry of this region ie., the Krishna delta that fashioned the T.D.P. and it was the Peasantry of this region that voted for it enbloc in the first elections. Barring those of the Kamma caste, others were soon put off by N.T.R.'s administration's inefficiency, corruption, nepotism and quite blatant casteism. With the unsentimental hard headedness that befits a green revolution heartland, they deserted the T.D.P. quite fast and thus it happened that N.T.R. lost the Krishna delta well before he lost the state.²³

The factors that influence the 1989 elections, firstly is the lingering aftermath of the Dec.26, 1988 clashes between the Kammas and Kapus in the wake of the murder of Congress M.L.A. V. Mohan Ranga Rao in Vijayawada. The clashes did erode the credibility of T.D.P. as a party capable of providing a strong and effective Government. Secondly, Union Minister P. Shiv Shankar seems to have almost succeeded in splitting the backward classes vote with his interventions on the B.C. reservation issue and the 1988 Kamma-Kapu clashes in Coastal Andhra. Thirdly, there is a widespread feeling that the N.T.R. in his immitable egoistical style offended the Kapu leader Mudragada Padmanabham.²⁴ The rout in East Godavari district was due to what is called Mudragada Padmanabham factor, the former T.D.P. Minister and Kapu leader slighted by NTR.²⁵ In Telangana, the success of Congress (I) in certain districts was due to the Reddy factor.

After Ranga's murder on 26th December 1988 the leadership passed into the hands of the Kapus from Godavari district, who were land owners and whose interests

²²K.C. Suri, "Andhra Pradesh: Politics of Confrontation" *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol.LV, No.13, Jan.-March, 1994, p..202.

²³K. Balagopal, 'Andhra Pradesh; The End of Spring"', *E.P.W.*, Aug.25, 1990, p.1883.

²⁴A.P. Issues Pushed into Background" *E.P.W.*, Oct, 28, 1989, p.2401.

²⁵M. Shatrugna, 'Andhra Pradesh Assembly Elections: Congress and T.D.P."', *E.P.W.*, Jan.27, 1990, p.201.

were different from those of the ordinary Kapus. The movement has split and the Vijayawada faction is now agitating for backward class status and has allied itself with the Scheduled Castes and other backward groups.

The December, 1988 riots in the wake of Ranga's murder was an immediate factor which divided the Kammas and Kapus in terms of power struggle. Meanwhile Kapus were polarizing themselves under the leadership of M. Padmanabham and organised Kapunadu to protect against the injustice done to Kapus. Kapu leaders argued that though they were single largest community in the state and with as many as 25 legislators, they were not getting the due share of power largely because 90% of the population is poor. As such Kapu must be included in the list of backward class. Further the sudden emergence of Kapunadu brought all the members of the community on common platform by Mudragada Padmanabham .

Narrating the defeat of T.D.P. in 1989 elections M. Shatrugna writes, that the first major clash between N.T.R. and his cabinet colleagues had occurred in early 1988 when he had sacked the respected leader of the Kapu community M. Padma Nabham from the Ministership on flimsy grounds. Padma Nabham successfully rallied the backward classes, especially the emerging prosperous Kapu community, under his leadership in the rich delta districts of Godavari, which were the vote banks of T.D.P. since 1982. A major event was the mammoth Kapunadu meet in Eluru in mid-1988 when the slain Congress M.L.A. and emerging Kapu-leader V. Mohan Ranga Rao made his presence felt. The Eluru meet was basically a Mudragada - Ranga joint show. It came in Dec. 1988 when Ranga who was on a hunger strike was murdered, resulting in bloody clashes between the Kapus and Kammas in the coastal districts of Krishna, Guntur and West Godavari. The failure of the Government to protect life and property and its causal attitudes to tacking down Ranga's assassins further alienated the backward castes in particular and the common people in general.²⁶

Again we would like to point out that Caste has acquired a markedly ideological tone since 1990. The ideological tone was given a new articulation when the left parties decided to join hands with Mr. V.P. Singh's Janata Dal in pressing for the extension of Caste quotas in the course of social justice. This made it impossible for any party openly

²⁶M. Shatrugna, 'N.T.R. Ratham Grinds to a Halt' *E. P. W.*, 1989, Dec.9, p.2696.

to oppose caste quotas, so that caste has, at least for the time being, strengthened its grip over politics. But it still is an unsteady grip, for neither the supporters nor the opponents of caste quotas say that caste itself should be revitalised. In fact, the strongest supporters of caste quotas are, paradoxically, also the strongest opponents of caste as a hierarchical system.²⁷

As caste is becoming the agenda of elections, the traditionally established vote banks of several political parties are changing. All over the country more particularly in South, the S.Cs have been a 'stable vote bank' of the Congress. In Andhra Pradesh Congress had entrenched into S.C. Wadas. They used to be called Indiramma wadas. To counter this vote bank of Congress, the T.D.P. made the O.B.C. Wadas, as its vote bank. Though at the apex level the Congress in the state is known as a Reddy Party and T.D.P. is known as Kamma party and the vote banks of these parties were S.Cs and OBCs respectively.²⁸ The OBCs who supported the T.D.P. earlier were not happy with NTR as he was not allowing any visible OBC leader to grim in that party. Further the leadership continued to be family centered.

The assembly elections of 1994-95 in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and early 1996 in Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra etc., were centered around the caste question.

Fighting elections on the caste issues has acquired legitimacy after the 1993 U.P. elections. The new legitimacy that caste has acquired must be seen in the context of Mandal agitation and social justice struggle in 1990, formation of anti-communal front by the Samajwadi Party (hereafter S.P). and B.S.P. in 1992-93 and forming a coalition government in U.P. by S.P. and B.S.P. combine. The functioning of two governments Laloo Prasad Yadav and Mulayam Singh Yadav with caste centrality in states where Brahmanism held sway over for centuries certainly boosted the confidence of SC's and OBCs because the exploited castes began to, at least, smell the odour of political power.²⁹

Today every caste has become conscious of its caste interests, political leaders encouraged casteism for their political victory and goal satisfaction. The competition to

²⁷C.J. Puller, *Caste Today*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1996, p.169.

²⁸*News Time*, Hyderabad Edition, 5 Nov., 1994, p.2.

²⁹*Ibid.*

avail socio-economic factors is based on caste. Many educational institutions are established in the name of caste where the students of particular castes are admitted and given facilities. For example in Andhra Pradesh every major caste has its own hostel in cities and towns. They are Reddy Hostel, Kamma Hostel Velama Hostel, Kapus or Telaga Hostel etc. There are some other non-educational institutions where members of a particular castes are appointed. This resulted in frustration among other castes and caste-bitterness comes into being. There are many temples which are established in the name of some particular, caste members, they are run and represented by their managerial organisation.³⁰ For example Kanyakaparameshwari Temple is run by Vysyas.

In a transitional society caste remains and is bound to remain an important factor in the socio-political life. The caste system manifests itself as a vertical structure in which individual castes are hierarchically graded and kept permanently apart, and at the same time, are linked by well defined expectations and obligations which integrate them into the village social system. As M.N. Srinivas mentioned, though, the scope for individual and familial mobility has increased strikingly since independence, caste continues to be relevant in subtle and indirect ways, in such mobility.³¹ In the Post-independence era, the caste as a status group has been transformed into a political group to articulate the social and economic interests of its members. So, increasingly the caste affiliation of the 'position seekers' became important at the time of elections. The caste group numerically dominant in a particular constituency or a combination of caste groups have considerable influence on the election result.

Participation in Politics

The participation of the Kapus in politics is relatively a recent phenomenon. They realised powerlessness of their caste in the recent past. They also realised that access to modern political power means control over economic and educational opportunities. In a democratic electoral system existing in India where political awareness of all the sections of the society is on the increase and in Andhra Pradesh where caste consciousness and casteism is reaching its peak, numerical strength can be translated into political strength. Harold Gould aptly points out:

³⁰N.Prasad, "Emergence of Caste Conflict: A Historical Context" (ed.), Ram Bali, *Caste and Caste Conflict in Rural Society*, Commonwealth Publishers, N.Delhi, 1989, pp.68-69.

³¹M.N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, Orient Longman, Bombay, 1982, p.117.

“Caste provides the Indian political system with an extensive, built in lobby or interest group deeply rooted in the past. The temptation to appear to the caste lobby is over whelming. The response is immediate because it is so deeply ingrained; the advantages are obvious because caste is a recognised channel to gain access to ministers and entire hierarchy of leaders, and to secure preference in any of the ever-widening activities of the Government”.³²

Caste consciousness of the Kapus is on the increase since the organisation of Kapunadu in 1982 and it reached its zenith with the assassination of V. Mohan Ranga Rao, the then Congress MLA from East Vijayawada on 26th December 1988 in Vijayawada who was on fast untodeath asking the Government to provide him security. Since then the representation of the Kapu community in the Andhra Pradesh state assembly rose from 6 in 1985 to 22 in 1989, and in 1994 there are 26 Kapu M.L.A's in the State Assembly.

With its numerical strength and constantly improved socio-economic conditions, the Kapu community in the 'populist' politics emerged as a 'vote bank' and now the Kapus are in the process of starting of a political party of their own to fight for political and economic share which is due to them.³³

“When would the Andhra Pradesh political scene shift to the most numerous but the least influential castes”? This was the statement made by the Socialist party leader Ram Manohar Lohia in 1958. “These are the Kapus, the Padma Salis, the Malas and Madigas. Among them, the Kapus are the most numerous cultivating caste, they are very poor occupancy tenants and even poor share croppers when they are not actually agricultural labourers. In order to put energy and activity into this mass of Kapus a political party would have to rise that fees itself almost wholly from the strangle hold of the land-owning Reddy and Kamma castes.”³⁴

³²A. Harold Gould: *Caste Adaptation in Modernising Indian Society*, Chankya Publications, New Delhi, 1988, p.163.

³³*Kapu Samkshema Sangh*, Vijayawada, 1994, P.4.

³⁴Notes and Comments: *Mankind*, Vol.II, No.11-12, June-July, 1958, p.1111, Also see, Ram Manohar Lohia, *The Caste System*, Ram Manohar Lohia samata Vidyalaya Nyas, Hyderabad, , 1964 (Reprint, 1979) p.93-94.

Share croppers and agricultural labourers are almost all of them drawn from the backward or depressed castes such as Kapu, Mala, Madiga, Padmasalis and Adivasis. These submerged groups form around 85% of the population. The Reddis, Brahmins, Velamas, Kshatriyas, Kammas and similar castes form around 15% of the entire population, same in other parts of India. Most unfortunately for the country, it is precisely the squabbles and quarrels among various groups of the high caste male which form the politics of Andhra Pradesh, as of India at the present time. There is no effective Kapu, Harijan, Adivasi, momin or women leadership. More than 85% of population is an inchoate mass cruelly suffering and with vague aspirations. No political party dares to touch them. All political parties drew their leading cadres from among the high caste males who are just as coth to change the laws of share cropping as to destroy the bases and customs of caste. This gives Reddy or Kamma and similar castes a some what more advantageous position in village leadership, so that the backward Kapus or Harijan may find it still more difficult to attain leadership than in the North.³⁵

There is no restriction on inter-dining between some of the major middle order castes like Reddis, Kammas (Choudaries) Velamas (Naidus) Telagas (Naidus) Kapus (Naidus) Baliyas (Naidus) and Gavaras.³⁶ Even Reddi - sub-castes meticulously observe the sub-caste endogamy. These various sub-castes may stand united in matters of political expediency, but they are poles apart in matters of marriage between them. While demarcation is not so sharp and marked in the case of sub-caste among these castes, it is at its height in the case of Telagas, Kapus and Baliyas etc. who may be classified as Naidus.

As the Kapus are scattered here and there, their habits and customs and their political activities differ. On account of the contiguity of the place they inhabit, they may be grouped into 3 or 4 divisions. Those inhabiting the districts of Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram were classed as one group, those who live in East and West Godavari, Krishna and Guntur districts forms a group. The Kapus or Baliyas of the districts of Cuddapah, Kurnool, Chittoor, Anantapur, Prakasam and Nellore may be taken

³⁵*Mankind*, Monthly Journal Vol.4, No.11, June, 1960, pp.91-92.

³⁶Chintamani Lakshmana: *Caste Dynamics in Village India* Nachiketa Publications Ltd., Bombay, 1973, p.42.

by another and those resided in Nizam's dominions constitute the other group. Even in these distinct groups the people have no idea of corporate action until recently.

Some times, a secondary consolidation is attempted at a lower level, with the remaining middle level cultivating castes trying to come together as another extensive caste; but in Andhra Pradesh at any rate this secondary consolidation has remained incomplete. The Munnuru Kapus, Balijas, Telagas or Tenugus are collectively referred to as 'Kapus' but the consolidation has remained un-consummated.³⁷ In contrast the consolidation has been quite successful in the case of upper cultivating castes: with the Kammas almost entirely so, but with the much more heterogenous Reddis to a lesser extent.

A large number of castes for instance, exist in pairs one backward and one forward, with the difference being indicated by a prefix. For instance, there are two kinds of Balijas, two kinds of Kalingas and two kinds of Velamas etc.³⁸ The upper sections take to trade/cultivation and the lower sections remain food gatherers or become labourers.

Though South India is considered to be the bastion of the caste system, there has nevertheless been a considerable flexibility in the occupational stratification in the caste organisation in the south also. The Komatis (Vysyas) in the Andhra Pradesh, had hardly been pursuing agriculture, though cultivation was one of their traditional functions in the varna system. On the other hand, the Non-Brahmin castes like Reddy, Kamma, Kapu, Balija, Telaga and others, had been mainly agricultural castes. Some sub-sects among the Balijas (Naidus) like Gazula Balijas, are following their trades. But of late, individuals among almost all castes have been taking to business. In fact it has been helping individuals to improve their status because it helps them to acquire wealth and property. So also the individual and administration. Occupation, thrown open by the increasing industrialisation, have been, aspired and held by members of all the castes.³⁹

³⁷K. Balagopal: *Probing in the Political Economy of Agrarian Classes and Conflicts*, Perspectives Publishers, Hyderabad, 1986, p.183.

³⁸*Ibid.*,

³⁹Chintamani, Lakshmana, "Caste Dynamics.....", *Op.Cit.*, p.98.

Some times, the process of emigration also helped some groups to improve upon their social status when it was accompanied by the renouncement of traditional occupation. Radha Kamal Mukherjee cites the instance of Teli-immigrants from Andhra acquiring higher status in Madhya Pradesh villages, while the local Telis continued to enjoy low position in the status ladder.⁴⁰ The Teli-immigrants from Andhra were found to adopt more respectful occupations as a consequence of which they could elevate themselves to superior position. At other times immigration resulted in downward mobility. Thus while Kapus (Naidus) in East and West Godavari districts enjoy a very high status, where they are a land owning caste, the Turpu Kapus lost their status in Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam and the Vizianagaram districts because they had taken to manual labour on migrating to these districts.⁴¹ While such instances bound to indicate certain amount of mobility and consequently social change in the past what is the position now? How further has this mobility extended?

Casteism, today is not the legacy of the caste system alone but also the product of the processes of fundamental democratization and democratic decentralisation. Acceptance of the representative type of government, the party system and majority rule have been largely responsible for the growth of casteism. In a democratic government "the so-called" peoples representatives depend upon the solid support rendered to them by their followers. The individual support to the leaders could only be through the collective action of groups. The groups have to be motivated to affirm their allegiance and loyalty to the leaders. This motivation either could stem from enlightened policy of the group or from their narrow vested interests. The leaders, to maintain their hold on the groups, are in constant look out for slogans which could appeal to their followers. In the Indian context, these leaders had the benefit of the well-knit groups like castes for whipping up allegiance. To achieve this, political parties and their leaders showed favours and opportunities in terms of categories.

In democracy, numerical strength undoubtedly has a political significance. The contestants for power, seek followers and allies from kins, relatives, caste and village so

⁴⁰Radha kamal Mukherjee: *Principles of Comparative Economics*, London, P.S.King and Son Ltd., Vol.2, 1922. pp.8-9.

⁴¹C. Lakshamanna: "Rural Social Change, Process and Problems" in *Man and Life: A Journal of the Institute of Social Research and Applied Anthropology*, Vol.3, Nos.1-2, Jan-June, 1977, p.30.

as to increase their tally.⁴² These units of 'social organisation' are one of the sources of power. Thus, the scholars consider land, number, social organisation, ritual status and self-image as rulers, as the requisites for caste dominance.

The domination of the Kapus in the power structure is generally ascribed to the larger number. Since enumeration by castes criterion was not continued by the census after 1931, we do not have currently reliable figure of the Kapu population. G. Ram Reddy estimated the population of Kapus to be 18.6%. K. Balagopal estimated at 15%. Recently, the Kapunadu leaders derived the present day population of the Kapus from the 1931 census reports of the Madras Presidency and the Hyderabad state to be more than 18%.

Caste being the fundamental institution of traditional India continues to influence the process of mobilisation and more so in the field of politics and power. When one community is dominant within a constituency in the traditional terms of landed wealth, ritual status and political power or increasingly, in terms of the modern calculations of numbers - each party is likely to draw its candidate from that community. It has been argued that this practice neutralises caste as a political factor, but the fact remains that all castes do not have equal access to power.

Caste Affiliation of Candidates:

Caste as a status group determining the hierarchical interactions and inter relationships in traditional India, has in the post-independence era, been transformed into a political group to articulate the social and economic interests. So increasingly the caste affiliation of the position seekers became important at the time of elections. The caste group numerically dominant in a particular constituency or a combination of caste groups have considerable influence on the election outcome. In Andhra Pradesh politics as caste always played a predominant role in regional politics, so it was not surprising that the leaders of Congress(I) tried to discredit the T.D.P. by branding it as the party of Kammas, one of the dominant groups in Andhra Pradesh⁴³

⁴²Neale Walter.C. 'Land is to Rule' in Robert Eric Frykenberg (ed.), *Land Control and Social Structure in Indian History*, The University of Wisconsin Press, London, 1969, p.10.

⁴³G. Srinivas, M. Shatrugna and G. Narayana, "Social Background of Telugu Desam Legislators" in George Mathew (ed.) *Shift in Indian Politics*, p.1984, p.114.

All castes do not have uniform numerical strength and concentration. Some are scattered throughout the state and some are heavily concentrated in some regions. Hence the role and the position of caste varies from area to area and from caste to caste.

The concept of dominant caste is quite significant in the understanding of the interaction of caste and politics in modern India. However, the concept of dominant caste must be clearly differentiated from the traditional concept of the high castes. One or more than one caste can be dominant in a particular situation at the same time. The dominant caste or castes can be, but is not necessarily, the high caste or higher castes. The concept of dominant caste or castes have relevance only at the level of state or in the nature of different regions within a single state. There is nothing like a dominant caste or castes at the National level.

Earlier many castes hesitated to be called backward despite poor economic conditions of its members. They feared that they would not be able to improve their social status by identifying themselves as 'backward'. But this is no longer true, now, as the state has provided certain privileges to backward castes. These castes have realised that they could improve their status by improving their economic condition rather than by observing rituals followed by the upper castes. Now there is competition among castes to be called 'backward'. Even Brahmins and Rajputs who traditionally enjoyed higher social status, have also approached the government in some regions to be classified as 'backward'.⁴⁴

There is also acute competition among castes to claim 'backward status', as that entitles them to the benefit of protective discrimination.⁴⁵ Some time castes are 'accused' of being really 'forward', thus cutting into the benefits which only the really 'backward' are entitled to. Thus in Karnataka the two dominant castes of Lingayats and Okkaligas are now bringing acute pressure on the power that be to retain their claim to 'backwardness'.

⁴⁴I.P. Desai, *Caste, Caste Conflict and Reservations*, Ajanta Publications, Surat, 1985, p.4.

⁴⁵M.N. Srinivas, *The Cohesive Role of Sanscritization and Other Essays*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1989, p.20.

Some of the backward castes which are included in the state lists are the socially dominant communities and which of late have emerged politically influential. For example, the Yadavas, Ahirs and Kurmis of U.P. and Bihar, Kolis in Gujarat, Nadars in Tamil Nadu, Izhavas in Kerala, Okkaligas and Lingayats in Karnataka and Kalingas, Gavaras and Kapus in Andhra Pradesh are land owning communities. There is not much social discrimination against them nor these castes consider themselves inferior in any way to any other castes. Informally, some people of these castes claim superior social status but use backward status to avail the reservation benefits. Now more and more groups are claiming and agitating for their inclusion in the list of backward castes.⁴⁶ Using caste for political purpose is not something new to India. What is new is that it is blatantly used by every party as something perfectly normal, legitimate and even necessary. There is a pervasive feeling that the ruling parties are extending reservations to newer groups not with an intent to promote a just social order but to jack up their own electoral support. Apparently, there is conflict between the short term goals of political mobilisation and the implications of the current approaches to the health of the polity in the long run.⁴⁷

Some Sudra castes have a problem because they are neither equivalent to the higher castes in the same category nor so lower to be treated as Harijan castes. And yet this distance is not as wide as observed between the Sudra castes and Harijan castes. If this is agreed upon castes like Telaga, Chetty, Baliya, Muthrasi, artisan castes like Padmasali, Kamsali and service castes like Chakali, Mangali, etc., can be included in this category, which we could refer to as "middle castes", while all the higher castes of 'Sudra Category' and the Brahmins and the Vysya can be treated as upper castes. Some of the higher Sudra castes like Reddis, Kammas and Kapus of certain areas have been placed equally with the Brahmin and Vysyas in the upper castes.⁴⁸

Apart from the economic considerations, caste plays a very dominant role in the Panchayat affairs, especially in the case of elections. Caste of the contestant determines the nature of the voting behaviour. As such even in the selection of the candidates for

⁴⁶K.C. Suri: Caste Reservation in India: Policy and Politics", *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol.LV, No.1, Jan.-March 1994, p.40.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p.49.

⁴⁸Dr. D. Venkateswarlu: *Harijan-Upper caste conflict: A Study in Andhra Pradesh*, Discovery Publishing House, New Delhi, 1990, pp.18-21.

different positions, caste weighs heavily with different political organisations. With hardly any exceptions, all the political parties evaluate the relative position of different caste groups before the final choice of their candidates at any level of election participation. Even though, the political parties have tacitly resolved to leave the elections at the village level free of political considerations, in practice it is observed that the same political parties take undue interest in the elections, and this interest generally centres around the decision of the candidates where in the castes of the candidate and the dominant caste groups in the locality play a significant part. It is also equally true that, to a large extent, the voters exercise their vote not on the basis of the policies to which the different candidates owe allegiance, but on the basis of caste to which they belong. Caste loyalty and caste consciousness contribute to this situation. According to C. Lakshamanna, out of 960 respondents, 646 ie., 67.3% were of the view that caste of the individual determined his acceptability or otherwise for standing in the election.⁴⁹ This largely accounted for the anxiety on the part of Andhra Pradesh leaders to secure representation for their caste groups in the Panchayat and other local elections.

It could also be seen that people of all caste groups were of the view that caste considerations counted significantly in the choice of the candidates and in the voting behaviour of the individuals and groups. Analysing the reasons for the relative rise of communists in the popular vote, Harrison attributes this to the role of caste rivalry between peasant castes like kammias and Reddis, and the caste consciousness of the people in their voting behaviour.⁵⁰ Further not only does caste play the important part in the choice of the candidates for different positions in the Panchayat elections. The voters also show preference to their own caste candidates. That is to say the individuals vote more as castemen than as voters. Rural people are convinced or appeared to be convinced, that if they vote their castemen into power, their interests are safe. This was obvious from the fact that 719, ie., 75.13% out of 957 respondents belonging to different caste groups thought that people voted more on caste basis than on the considerations of merit. This view was almost uniformly held by all the caste groups.⁵¹

⁴⁹C. Lakshamanna, "Caste Dynamics.....", *Op.Cit.*, p.116.

⁵⁰Selig.S. Harrison: "Caste and the Andhra Communists", *The American Political Science Review*, Vol.L, NO.2, 1996, p.381, also see his *India: The Most Dangerous Decades..*

⁵¹C. Lakshamanna, *Op.Cit.*, p.116-117.

Thus an overwhelming percentage of the rural people realised the important influence of castes on the Panchayat affairs. The growing importance of the caste in democratic processes only demonstrates the strength of the caste sentiments which is cleverly utilised by interested parties and vested interests in the elections. Strangely enough in the rural areas of Andhra Pradesh the economic levels of the people, caste stratification and factional organisation represent the same groups. Together these three factors have laid the foundation for the perpetuation of caste loyalties. But this is not a permanent picture.

With the gradual ascendancy of the economic supremacy, the economic factors have come to play an important part in determining the status of caste. Because of this, the middle order castes like the Reddis, Kammas, Velamas, Telagas and Balijas are now on the top in the villages in all vital matters. Its numerical strength some times also plays an important part in determining the status of a caste. The numerical strength has been of great significance in the development of dominant caste patterns in the rural areas. Asked to indicate their preferences among different factors which determining social status, the respondents emphasise the "social and political position", birth and wealth and economic conditions in a descending order.⁵²

Efforts for Reservation:

After the formation of T.D.P. Government in 1983 some Kapu leaders appealed for the consideration of the Kapu caste in OBC list. N.T. Rama Rao's Govt. Paid deaf ears to this demand. After congress government came to power in 1989 elections, again the Kapus prayed Chenna Reddy also. In 1991, they submitted memorandum to the then Chief Minister N. Janardhan Reddy demanding inclusion in the OBC list. In the same year when Rajiv Gandhi visited Andhra Pradesh they submitted a memorandum to him and requested their inclusion in the OBC list. He, inturn, directed the then Chief Minister N. Janardhan Reddy to look into the matter.⁵³

In the wake of V.P. Singh's government passing orders reserving 27% of the Central services to the O.B.C. categories and the Supreme Court's judgement upholding

⁵²C. Lakshamanna, *Ibid.*, p.129.

⁵³Ch. Hari Rama Jogaiah, *B.C. Jabitalo Kapulu (Telugu Article)*, p.4.

its validity in November 1992, the Kapus intensified their efforts to recognise them as OBC's. The reason is that the Government of India took decision to include as O.B.C's the castes whose names figures both in the lists maintained by State Governments and in the state wise lists of O.B.C's appended to the Mandal Commission report. While the Kapu Community figures in the Mandal Commission report's list, it does not find place in the list maintained by Andhra Pradesh government. In 1993 also they met the then Chief Minister Kotla Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy with the same demand. But none of the Chief Minister paid serious attention to their demand.⁵⁴

The Immediate Cause of the Movement:

On 26th February, 1994, the then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Mr. K. Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy was attending a public meeting at Ravulapalem in East Godavari district. From the public gathering some unemployed Kapu youth came out with a memorandum requesting the Chief Minister to include Kapu community in the list of Other Backward Classes. Without any provocation, the police started lathi-charging the Youth and dispersed them. The Chief Minister neither intervened in the incident nor asked the police to stop the lathi charge.⁵⁵

Leaders from all walks of Kapu Community demanded the Chief Minister to make a statement over the incident. When some ruling Congress Party Kapu leaders suggested the Chief Minister to condole the lathi-charge on the Kapu youth in Ravulapalem, he remained adamant and outrightly rejected the proposal.

Finding all the pleas ineffective, on 14th March 1994, Kapu leaders decided to convene a Kapu protest meet on March 20th at Ravulapalem, the same place where Kapu youth were lathi-charged. Kapus from all over the state were invited to participate in the meet and make it a grand success. An open invitation to all the Kapus of the state to this effect appeared prominently in all the major dailies of Andhra Pradesh on March 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20th March 1994.⁵⁶

⁵⁴*Ibid.*,

⁵⁵*Eenadu*, Hyderabad Edition, 27 February 1994, p.1 also see *Andhra Prabha*.

⁵⁶All the News papers covered this news in their front pages.

Ravulapalem is a small town with a population of around 60,000 in the Alamuru assembly constituency of East Godavari district. Situated on the national highway number five, it is predominantly a business centre surrounded by villages. Though a multi-caste composite village, it is numerically a Kapu dominated one. It has a police station, a government hospital and 4 government high schools. It has typical agrarian structure with the upper castes holding most of the lands. Ravulapalem was a silent village till the eruption of the Kapu movement.

In the Ravulapalem scenario, the rival groups among the Kapus, there are many in number what with each claiming the backing of either the congress or dissident congress leaders, T.D.P. or the newly formed Bahujan Samaj Party (B.S.P.) are vying with each other to establish their supremacy. Ironically the high profiled Kapunadu and its self-proclaimed leaders are no where near the scene.⁵⁷

A 'Kapu Sadasu' was held on 20th March 1994 at Ravulapalem and few Kapu Ministers also participated in it. Nearly three lakhs people came from different parts of the state to participate in the crucial meet. Mudragada Padmanabham was invited as the chief guest to this meeting. The participants included Thota Subba Rao, M.P. from Kakinada, Jakkampudi Ram Mohan Rao, Congress-I M.L.A. from Kadiam, B. Veda Vyas, Dy.Speaker, Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly, Nimmakayala China Rajappa, East Godavari T.D.P. President, Pantham Mohan Gandhi, East Godavari District Congress Committee President, Badireddy Appana Dora, Congress M.L.A. from Burugupudi, K.V.C.H. Mohan Rao, Congress M.L.A. from Pithapuram, Vangaveeti Ratna Kumari, Congress M.L.A. from Vijayawada-I, Metla Satyanarayana, T.D.P. Ex-M.L.A., Bandaru Satyanarayana, T.D.P. leader, Polisetty Satyanarayana, Akula Sivaiah Naidu, G.S.Rao, Jakka Papa Rao, Smt. Maithili, all Kapunadu leaders, Smt. Indira Naidu, BJP leader etc.

The following were the demands of the Kapu Sadasu:

1. Kapus must be recognised as other backward classes
2. They should be provided with 17% reservation on the basis of the proportion of their population.
3. The State Government should apologise to the Kapus for the lathi charge on their youth at Ravulapalem on 26th Feb. 1994.

⁵⁷*Deccan Chronicle*, Hyderabad Edition, 17 March, 1994, p.5.

Addressing the meeting Mudragada Padmanabham demanded that the Government should include the Kapus in the list of backward classes by the end of June 1994 and announce its commitment by March 25, 1994. "I will wait till 12 noon that day and at 12.01 P.M. I will submit my resignation" he declared at the meeting".⁵⁸

Further, the Ravulapalem meeting of Kapus on 20th March 1994, also clearly brought to the fore the confrontationist attitude of the organisers, especially the youth who are in the Vanguard of the current agitation which was triggered off in the wake of the lathicharge in this sleepy village during the Chief Minister's visit on 26 February 1994. Though in the past it was the Kapunadu which was acting as the anchorsheet in fighting for the protection of Kapu interests, now it has slipped from its hands and the movement has been taken over by the newly formed 'Kapu Reservation Porata Samithi'.⁵⁹ The senior and old leaders of Kapunadu have been pushed into the background and a band of new youthful militants of the Porata Samithi have emerged as the new torch bearers.⁶⁰ The Chief Minister Kotla Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy discussed the matter with the then Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, in the wake of Mudragada's ultimatum to resign from the membership of the State Legislative Assembly. Further, the Chief Minister sent a Minister in his cabinet CH. Harirama Jogaiah, also a Kapu and some Congress Party legislators to meet Mudragada Padmanabham and tried to persuade him to consider his decision of resignation. However, Mudragada struck to his guns and resigned on 25th March 1994. It is relevant here to briefly review the political career of Mudragada Padmanabham.

Contribution of Mudragada Padmanabham

The aura of sacrifice and shunning power and position for a 'principle' that was usually attributed to his shifting affiliations every time.⁶¹ As an individual he had a good

⁵⁸ Almost all news papers carry the news item in their first pages on 21st March, 1994.

⁵⁹ The 'Kapu Reservation Porata Samithi' was established at Ravulapalem on 20.3.1994. From this organisation Mudragada Padmanabham came out openly for the Kapu cause. Before that i.e., 20.2.94 to 19.3.94 Jakkampudi Ram Mohan Rao led the movement. People like Saladi Swaminaidu, (Congress), East Godavari District T.D.P. leader N. Chinna Rajappa, Metla Satyanarayana Ex-MLA, TDP who are against the Jakkampudi leadership are also convinced the Mudragada to take the leadership. For details see *Andhra Prabha*, Hyderabad edition, 21.3.1994.

⁶⁰ *Deccan Chronicle*, Hyderabad, 20th March 1994, p.1.

⁶¹ *Deccan Chronicle*, Hyderabad, 2 February, 1998, p.5.

name for his non-corrupt, clean image, stick to his words, and straight forwardness.⁶² This he proves many a times during the T.D.P. (1983-1988) and Congress (1989-1994) regimes when he resigned from his ministership, again when he resigned from his M.L.A. seat to protect his caste fellows.⁶³

Mudragada Padmanabham popularly known as Mudragada was born in 1931 at Kirlampudi village in East Godavari district. Mudragada's father Sri M. Veera Raghava Rao was elected as M.L.A. in 1962, 1967 and 1972 elections, as an independent candidate from the Pathipadu constituency.⁶⁴ Mudragada's political career which he inherited from his father took several turns and at every turn he managed to be in the news.⁶⁵ Started his political career in 1978 when he was elected as an M.L.A. from Pathipadu (the same which his father represented) constituency under the Janata Party banner. Though majority of the Janata M.L.A's defected to the then ruling Congress (I) Party, Mudragada preferred to sit on the opposition for the next five years.

After the formation of T.D.P. in 1982, Padmanabham joined that party and got elected as MLA from the same constituency. Upto 1984 he worked as the Chairman of Drainage Board when he resigned. In 1984, though he voted for TDP candidate for Rajya Sabha elections, NTR called him and accused that he has gone against the party whip. Then Mudragada resigned for his Chairmanship of State Drainage Board. He did not change his mind even after NTR expressed sorry for his acts.⁶⁶ After the Nadendla Bhaskara Rao turmoil in the TDP in 1985, again Mudragada got elected as MLA from the same constituency in the 1985 mid term polls. He worked as the Minister of Transport in N.T. Rama Rao Government. In the government's take over of the state bus routes issue,⁶⁷ he developed differences with the Chief Minister in 1988 and resigned from his ministership and also the TDP membership. Immediately, he had formed a political party 'Telugu Nadu' along with K.E. Krishna Murthy, K. Jana Reddy and Vasantha Nageswara

⁶²*Andhra Prabha*, Hyderabad, 10 June 1994, p.3.

⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁴*Andhra Jyothi*, Hyderabad, 15 September, 1994, p.2.

⁶⁵*Deccan Chronicle*, Hyderabad, 2 February 1998, p.5.

⁶⁶*Andhra Prabha*, 24 March 1994, p.2.

⁶⁷Bus routes Nationalisation of Krishna District. See *Andhra Prabha*, March 24, 1994, p.2.

Rao (all are T.D.P. MLA's at that time) which never took off. Having failed in his experiment, within a short time he merged his party with the congress in the presence of Rajiv Gandhi on the eve of the 1989 general elections.⁶⁸ He then joined the Congress(I) and got elected as MLA on Congress ticket, again from the same Pathipadu constituency in the 1989 elections.

The victory over the N.T. Rama Rao government on Uttara Kanchi issue through the weapon of 'fast-unto-death'⁶⁹ and his association with V. Mohan Ranga Rao, the then Congress MLA from Vijayawada East, made Mudragada a charismatic leader of the Kapu community, which rallied behind him. Further Mudragada's popularity helped the Congress in the 1989 Assembly Polls not only in the East Godavari district, but also in other districts where Kapus were a decisive factor.⁷⁰

The Kapu Community organised a convention on July 10, 1988 at Vijayawada to voice their protest against the treatment meted out to them under N.T. Rama Rao's rule. The resignation of Mudragada Padmanabham from the Cabinet was the immediate reason for organising the convention. There were other reasons such as disparity between Kammas and Kapus in Government appointments and harassment of Kapu officials on one pretext or other. One major incident cited was the transfer of 152 police constables (all of them Kapus, who were allegedly sympathetic to V. Mohan Ranga Rao, the slain Congress M.L.A.) from Vijayawada. The arrest of Ranga Rao and ill-treatment of a Kapu IPS officer P.V. Rangaiah Naidu, who was made Director General of Prisons were other provocations.⁷¹

After the imprisonment of V. Mohan Ranga Rao in 1988 the Kapu leader a known roudy sheeter of Vijayawada East MLA, Padmanabham was asked to preside over the first major Kapu conference in Vijayawada drawing the attention of his community to his selfless, clean image.

⁶⁸*Andhra Pradesh Times*, Hyderabad, July 9, 1997, p.4, also see *Deccan Chronicle*, Feb.2, 1998, p.5.

⁶⁹He achieved success in Uttara Kanchi issue to compensation to Dalits under Yeleru Reservoir Project.

⁷⁰*Deccan Chronicle*, Hyderabad, Feb. 2, 1998, p.5.

⁷¹G.S. Radha Krishna, "The Kapu Village: Padmanabham Takes on the N.T.R. Family", *The Week*, Vol.6, No.34, August 14-20, 1988.

After the 1989 Assembly Elections, Padmanabham was included in the Channa Reddy and N. Janardhan Reddy cabinets, but Kotla Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy kept him out. Piqued, he vowed to avenge the insult. But there was no political issue on which he could fight Kotla. The only issue that could confer Kapu leadership on him which indirectly helped him. In a calculated move he resigned from the assembly on March 25, 1994 returned to his village Kirlampudi and demanded the inclusion of Kapus in the B.C. category.⁷² Significantly this time too he staged a came back on the Kapu card. Mudragada could convince even N.T. Rama Rao in 1988 when he undertook fast over Uttara Kanchi incident. In 1994 he again fought with the then C.M. Kotla Regarding B.C. status to Kapus. In view of his victory over Uttara Kanchi issue, public started believing that their wishes will be fruitful.⁷³ Though a late comer, because of his standing among the people of his caste and in the politics of East Godavari district Mudragada has emerged as the champion of the Kapu cause. The movement literally brought the entire community on to the streets and once again Mudragada's 'fast unto-death' forced the government to announce some sops to Kapus.⁷⁴

Prominent Kapu leader Mudragada, who resigned from the State Assembly on 25th March, 1994 to focus on the community demand for B.C. status and went on a widely publicized fast, has re-emerged as the most powerful and charismatic leader of the community. As the community sees it, he has successfully extracted an assurance from the government for inclusion of Kapus in the B.C. list.⁷⁵ Further, he had proved his organisational skills and hold over the community when the Kapus falcitated the then Chief Minister Kotla Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy at a massive public meeting at Kirlampudi attended by nearly 5 lakh people on Sept. 30, 1994.⁷⁶

Resignations were nothing new to him. To maintain his self-respect, he has resigned as chairman of the state Drainage Board. For the same reason, he had even quit Ministership and membership of the assembly on an earlier occasion. "This time my

⁷²M. Shatrugna, "All Kapus are B.C.'s: Reducing Reservation to a Farce" *E.P.W.*, Vol.XXIX, No.37, Sept.10, 1994, p.2399.

⁷³*Deccan Chronicle*, March 20, 1994, p.1, *Udayam*, April 4, 1994, p.1.

⁷⁴*Deccan Chronicle*, Feb.2, 1998, p.5.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, October 28, 1994, p.13.

⁷⁶*Deccan Chronicle*, Sept. 31, 1994, p.1, also see *Deccan Chronicle*, Oct. 28, 1994.

resignation is for the self-respect of my community. It does me proud," he declared.⁷⁷ "Today's resignation has a special significance as it has been done to protect the self-respect of my community, which is very dear to me", he concluded.⁷⁸

Mr. Padmanabham said the Kapus did not want reservation at the expense of BC's. "We do not accept it even if they give", he said. The demand was for additional reservation proportionate to their population, without prejudice to the existing B.C. groups. He said it was not a political movement, but a social movement, intended to secure justice for the poorer sections among the Kapus.⁷⁹ Further Mudragada made it clear that they were demanding reservations for Kapus in educational institutions, Government jobs and for preference in bank loans but not in elections. They wanted reservations about 17% without affecting the existing reservations for the backward classes. The few rich among Kapus may be excluded by imposing income criteria for reservation, he added.⁸⁰

While his supporters argue that he fought for the cause of Kapus everytime the need arose, his detractors alleged that he exploited the caste whenever his career was under a cloud.⁸¹

The Kapu supremo Mr. Mudragada's influence stands undeterred. The victory he achieved in getting the Kapus included in the B.C. list after an uproarious 'fast unto-death' brought much closer to Kapus.⁸² However, the Kapu agitation for B.C. status proved a political blunder for Mudragada, who had to bite the dust in 1994 assembly elections in his home constituency Pathipadu where B.C. voters are predominant.

⁷⁷*Indian Express*, March, 26, 94, *Deccan Chronicle*, March, 26, 94, *Udayam*, March 26, 1994 and this was reported in all the leading Newspapers of that day.

⁷⁸*Deccan Chronicle*, Hyderabad, March 26, 1994.

⁷⁹*The Hindu*, Hyderabad Edition, March 26, 94, p.3, also see *The Hindu*, Hyderabad Edition, April 6, 94, p.3., *Deccan Chronicle*, Hyderabad Edition, April 7, 94, p.1.

⁸⁰*The Hindu*, Hyderabad Edition April 6, 94, *Deccan Chronicle*, Hyderabad Edition, April 7, 94.

⁸¹N. Vamsi Srinivas, *Deccan Chronicle*, Hyderabad Edition, Feb.2, 98, p.5.

⁸²*Deccan Chronicle*, Hyderabad Edition, October 12, 1994.

Interestingly the same caste person was elected as M.L.A. in this election from this constituency against Mudragada on T.D.P. ticket.⁸³

The political career of Mudragada, the maverick leader from the coastal district of East Godavari has come full circle with his recent joining of the BJP. For one who started his public life with Janata Party in 1977, the BJP is not a natural choice but has become an inevitable step.⁸⁴ He resigned from both the Janata Party and the State Legislative Assembly to join the TDP, purportedly in a move to strengthen the spirit of anti-congressism and again resigned from the TDP 'Sacrificing' the posts of Cabinet Minister and MLA.⁸⁵

On March 25, 1994, as stated above, Mudragada resigned from the State Legislative Assembly. Stating that renunciation of posts was not new to him, he remained that in the past he had resigned as chairman of Drainage Board to protect his self-respect. "Today's resignation has special significance as it has been done to protect the self-respect of my community, which is very dear to me" he concluded.⁸⁶ Thus the Kapu movement for reservations in the real sense started under the charismatic leadership of Mudragada. Soon Kapu movement for reservations gathered momentum and spread all over the state.

ORGANISATION OF KAPU RESERVATION PORATA SAMITI:

The Kapu Reservation Porata Samiti (Kapu Reservation Struggle Committee, K.R.P.S.) was formed in 20th March 1994. It consisted of members and its administration rested with a Board including the President, Vice-President, and General Secretary. It had loosely organised with no definite form and structure with the pattern of organisation varying from place to place depending on the particular local context and circumstances.

⁸³*Deccan Chronicle*, Hyderabad Edition, Feb 2, 1998, p.5.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

⁸⁶*Deccan Chronicle*, Hyderabad, March 26, 1994, p.1, *Indian Express*, 26th March, 1994, p.1, all the leading News Papers carry this news item in their front pages.

In the case of Kapu movement, Mudragada padmanabham was able to generate voluntary and spontaneous response from among the Kapus. There was wide spread excitement in the coastal areas of Andhra pradesh and squads of influential persons working informally were able to mobilise the support of followers for various programmes. The process of recruitment was highly diversified depending on the talents of persons, while the traditional intellectual elite was drafted to spread the message of the movement, others who did not have specific talents were recruited as volunteers.

Since the youths were immediately affected by the existential realities, their active involvement for mobilising in this context appears to be a natural response. The business elite among the Kapus helped the movement by giving financial aid. Among the professional elite, the lawyers, more than the doctors and engineers have provided the movement with direction and leadership at various levels.

The administrative elite was less active because of restrictions on their involvement in the movement. They, however, showed sympathy to the demands and informally rendered guidance and assistance in various ways. Occasionally they presided over functions which were not expressly political. Further persons like judges of High Court, District Magistrates and Professors also actively participated.

Ethnic Background:

Basically people from Kapu community participated. Some close associates of Mudragada Padmanabham from backward classes of his constituency also took part.⁸⁷ Kapus of all age groups participated in the movement, youth particularly in the age group between 15 and 30 years were more actively took part. Both the sexes took part in the movement. But the ratio of female participation is very less.

Leaders of all cadres including Congress, T.D.P., B.J.P. from the Kapu Community participated. However, Kapu Ministers in the Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy Government and Kapunadu leaders who believed that inclusion of Kapu caste in O.B.C.'s list was not possible through political movement, did not take much part in the movement. Kapus from all parts of Andhra Pradesh participated. For example the Kapus

⁸⁷Interview with Mr. Padmanabham, 21.7.1997 at Kirlampudi in East Godavari District.

from Cuddapah and Anantapur came in special buses for their participation. Like Kapus from Nalgonda, Khammam came. These people participated because of their faith in the Mudragada's leadership. But as the movement was intense in Coastal Andhra, people of these 9 districts took active part.

Methods of Struggle

The Kapu movement followed both quasi-violent methods and non-institutionalised collective political action. After the resignation of Mudragada Padmanabham on March 25th, the Kapu Reservation Porata Samithi was paralyzed upto 16 May, 1994, Vehicular traffic at different places of Andhra Pradesh. Conducted Rail Rokos, Jail Bharos and organised dharnas before all District Collectorates of the state. For instance when, Mudragada Padmanabham started his Rastha Roko and Rail Roko programmes, Kapu people belonging to T.D.P. namely P. Prasad and Piniseti Narayana Rao participated directly. Not only this when Mudragada started his 'fast unto death' in Kirlampudi, West Godavari Kapu T.D.P. leaders maintained a number of sibhirams in West Godavari and supported the Kapus cause.⁸⁸

From May 17 to June 30th 1994, Kapu Youth resorted to cycle rallies all over the state. Mudragada himself participated in these rallies. He started cycle rally from Kirlampudi to Tirupati⁸⁹ with 5000 volunteers. When the movement became violent in West Godavari district he asked his followers to go back but he continued his rally only with 5 people upto Tirupati. They were: Nalla Suryachandra Rao, A. Ramakrishna, L.V. Subba Rao and B. Suryachandra Rao, besides himself.⁹⁰ He made extensive tours propagating the cause, visiting all the places of Andhra Pradesh mobilising people and meeting eminent persons.

Thus Mudragada and his followers brought about a mass awakening all over Andhra Pradesh through informal and semi-formal associations. They transformed the general urge into specific programmes of action. News Papers played an important role in acting as channels of communication of ideas, events and activities of the leaders. Leaders also held public meetings. The movement acquired a general mass character.

⁸⁸*Andhra Prabha*, Hyderabad Edition, April 27, 1994,p.2.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*

⁹⁰*Andhra Prabha*, Hyderabad Edition, June 5,1994, p.3.

However, nowhere the movement took a violent turn. Though one former naxalite leader S.V. Naidu from Ramachandra Puram of East Godavari District called for violent movement using weapons, all the Kapu leaders including Mudragada opposed his suggestion.

The Kapu Reservation Porata Samithi leaders appealed to the Kapu community that though they had to undergo temporary sufferings, they should keep in mind that their progeny would be permanently benefited by their sacrifices now.

Kapu Reservation Porata Samithi argued that their demand for providing separate reservations on the basis of Kapu population without snatching away the benefits of the existing backward classes was justifiable and genuine and questioned why the reservation limit in Andhra Pradesh can not be increased beyond 50% where in Tamil Nadu it is 69% and in Karnataka it is 62%.⁹¹

As the backward classes commission's report was awaited, some Kapu leaders like Tota Subba Rao, T.D.P. M.P. from Kakinada demanded the government to recognise Kapus as economically backward classes facilitating them to get Economically Backward Class (EBC) scholarships and loans.

Meanwhile West Bengal Government decided to add some more backward classes to the list of 14 already existing castes in the state, on 24.5.94. Jyoti Basu government passed a resolution in the state assembly to this effect. This gave further impetus to the Kapu movement in Andhra Pradesh. They came out with the following demands.

- (A) State Government should take steps to enlist the Kapus as other backward class.
- (B) The State Government should direct the Backward Classes Commission to expediate its probe and press for an interim report.
- (C) Immediately students of Kapu Community be entitled for all concessions and scholar-ships given to the backward class students.
- (D) Loans, subsidies and other economic benefits of the backward classes should be extended to the Kapus with immediate effect.

⁹¹ *Deccan Chronicle*, Hyderabad Edition, April 25, 1994, p.6.

Crucial Phase of the Movement

As the State Government was not yielding to any of the demands of the Kapus, Mudragada padmanabham announced fast unto-death. He started this from 1st July 1994 at Kirlampudi in East Godavari along with his wife (Padmavati) and two teenaged children. Along with Mudragada, Kapu Reservation Porata Samithi leader Aakula Rama Krishna also was in the fast-unto-death. He belonged to T.D.P.⁹² For the first four days the State Government showed no signs of response to this fast. Kapus from all over the state rushed to Kirlampudi and thronged to see Mudragada. To support the Mudragada's 'fast unto-death', people not only from Coastal Andhra districts, but also came from Rayalaseema and Telangana regions with tourist buses.⁹³ During Mudragada's fast people damaged 4 buses completely and one bus was partially damaged and in 113 centres relay hunger strikes were conducted.⁹⁴ The Kapunadu did not support Mudragada when he resigned for the MLA post on March 25, 1994, but during the fast it had to support him as he gained popularity among rural Kapus.⁹⁵ During his 4th day fast most of the T.D.P. leaders came to see him. Among them Mr. Umareddi Venkateswarlu, T.D.P. leader and ex-Union Minister, Ex-Minister was one C. Ramachandraiah came from Cuddapah to see Mudragada and ex-MLA Metla Satyanarayana also came.⁹⁶ Further among the T.D.P. leaders who came were District Election Committee convener N. Chinna Rajappa, Ex-MLA, V. Nageswara Rao, Ex-Z.P. Chairman Boddu Bhaskara Rao, State Telugu Mahila Leader, Dr. Anisetti Padmavati, W.G. District Telugu Mahila Ex-President, Smt. Vanga Geeta, Smt. G. Sarojini, Bezawada Varalaxmi, Ex-MLA's, M. Narayana Murty, P. Dorababu etc.⁹⁷ Rajampet M.P. Saipratap, W.G. District, Central Cooperative Bank Chairman Pantham Mohan Gandhi and some other Congress leaders also came to see him.⁹⁸

⁹²*Andhra Prabha*, Hyderabad Edition, July 2, 1994, p.1.

⁹³*Andhra Prabha*, Hyderabad Edition, July 5, 1994, p.3.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.3.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.3.

Among the non-Kapus who came to see Mudragada were ex-Minister, Mummidevaram MLA, B. Subba Rao, Bhupati Raju Sudarshan Babu, Rama Chandrapuram M.L.A. Pilli Subhash Chandra Bose and also Garapati Sambasiva Rao from W.G. District.⁹⁹ Particularly W.G. district Kapus of all parties supported the Mudragada's movement for B.C. status to Kapus.¹⁰⁰

But when the agitation in the districts mostly covered by the Kapus grew wild, the government issued G.O. Ms. No.18 dated 6.7.1994 providing certain non-statutory educational benefits and economic schemes to poor and also issued G.O. Ms. No.19, providing non-statutory educational and economic support schemes to poor among Kapus whose annual income was less than Rs. 12,000/-. Mudragada ended his fast unto-death.

Here we have to remember that when Kapu leaders demanded for certain benefits to be announced the then Chief Minister Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy said that no state government had any right to include or exclude any caste from the list of backward classes on its own without a proper recommendation made in this regard by the State Backward Classes Commission following the Supreme Court's judgement on the Mandal Commission Report. West Bengal Government case is the best example.¹⁰¹ Further in response to Chief Minister's statement Mudragada said: "There is nothing that the Government cannot do. It should only have the will and commitment".¹⁰² He stressed that at least the Chief Minister should ask for an interim report from the State Backward Classes Commission or request the Commission to submit its report early, but the state Government consented for neither in the early phase. When the movement came to a peak stage with Mudragada's fast unto-death, fearing for his hold on the Kapu community, the state government accepted the demands what previously they said it is not in their purview. This reflected the Vijayabhaskara Reddy government's anti-sympathy about Kapu problems.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰*Andhra Prabha*, Hyderabad Edition, November 27, 1994, p.2.

¹⁰¹On 24.5.94 in West Bengal, the Jyoti Basu Government decided to add some more Backward Classes to the list of 14 already existing castes in the state. For that a resolution passed in the State Assembly to this effect.

¹⁰²*Eenadu*, Hyderabad Edition, June 29, 1994, p.2.

Even then the Kapus were not satisfied and the agitation was not stopped. They were demanding the inclusion of their caste in the list of other backward classes. The government issued G.O. Ms. No.30 dated 25.8.1994 declaring Kapus and 13 other communities are backward classes. The G.O. reads:

“Normally before any caste or community is included or excluded from the list of Backward Classes, the Government is expected to seek a report from the Commission and then take an appropriate action. It is not the policy of the Government under normal circumstances to deviate from this procedure. But so far as the demand of the castes and communities under reference is for inclusion in the list of Backward Classes is concerned it is a long pending demand with a mass support some times even causing unrest for the reason that certain communities which are more or less on par with them in the matters of social and educational backwardness have already been included in the list of Backward Classes. Thus a feeling of inequality has been generated in those communities giving rise to emotional upsurges for social justice”.

In the above backdrop of events and demands and pending receipt of the report of the Backward Classes Commission, the Government hereby order that 14 castes/communities namely Muslims, Kapus, Telagas, Baliyas and Ontaris, Ayyakara, Kasi, kapidi, Patra, Gajulabaliya, Nagaralu, Pondara, Kurakala, Quresh, Palaekari shall be treated as socially and educationally backward for the purpose of reservation of seats in educational institutions and for recruitment to jobs in government local bodies etc.

Any reservation to the communities hereby ordered to be included in the list of Backward Classes will not cut into the quantum of reservation available to those who are already recognised as Backward Classes.

As the reservation contemplated to the castes included in the list by this order is in addition to the quantum of reservations available to castes already included in the list of Backward Classes, government will take suitable action in order to provide for reservations in excess of 50 per cent.

When the validity of the G.O. was challenged in the Andhra Pradesh High Court, a three member High Court Bench on 7.4.1995 in its majority judgement struck down the challenging writ petitions. While justice Y. Bhaskara Rao and justice Ramesh Madhav Bapat gave majority judgement, Justice B. Subhashan Reddy delivered the minority judgement.

Reaction of Various Sections:

The Kapu movement for reservation and the inclusion of the Kapus in the list of Backward Classes was reacted upon differently by different sections of Andhra Pradesh. Mudragada padmanabham said that the Kapus did not want reservations at the expense of the Backward Classes. "We do not accept it even if they give". The demand is for additional reservations proportionate to our population.

The fear of the upper caste opposition reference groups like Kammas and Reddis was that if the Kapus were to be included in the backward classes list, they would forge an alliance with all the existing backward castes who would constitute more than 60% of the State's population and contend for power in the state politics. Thus they wanted to keep the Kapus and the backward classes isolated.

The attitude of the opposition reference groups intensified further the unity and political awareness among the Kapus belonging to diverse sub-castes. Their unity was derived from their ethnic identity. This ethnic identity and the ensuing unity enabled them to face the resistance from the opposition reference groups.

The promise of B.C. status for the Kapus had sounded the alarm bells for the traditional backward classes which not only feel threatened by the Kapu resurgence, but are also alarmed by the Kapu demand for more representation for the community. The backward class leaders apprehended that the change in the caste equations may turn out to be harmful to the overall interests of the traditional backward classes to the extent that they have to share the spoils of power or party tickets for assembly polls with the Kapus now.

While Kapus have made significant economic and educational progress in the Godavari districts, they lag behind in Krishna and Guntur districts. Their relationship with Kammas on the one hand and backward castes on the other is uneven and depends on the vagaries of politics. Hence the ire of backward classes is that they will 'swallow' all the reservation benefits. Since Kapus look 'upwards' rather than 'downwards' for political alliances, backwards have a deep suspicion of them.¹⁰³ Among the neo-

¹⁰³ *News Time*, Hyderabad Edition, 21 Sept. 1994, p.2.

backward classes only the Kapus are politically organised and have been enjoying all the benefits at the cost of the Balijas, Telagas and Ontaris. Balijas who are predominant in 6 districts including Nellore and Prakasham and four Rayalaseema districts have meagre representation in the assembly. Besides, Turpu Kapus in North Coastal Andhra and Munnuru Kapus in Telangana were already in the OBC list.¹⁰⁴ Though some Kapus may be in good position, those depend on agriculture in the villages are educationally and socially backward and hence the inclusion of Kapus in the backward classes list is good. Unfortunately, the issue has acquired political overtones as those in the forefront of the Kapu agitation are known political leaders.¹⁰⁵

But Andhra Pradesh Backward Classes Sangham had threatened to agitate if the Kapus were recognised as Backward classes. Its president, P. Krishna Rao, T. Balagoud and Konda Laxman Bapuji had openly opposed any move by the State Government to include Kapus in the B.C. list.

According to R. Krishnaiah, President of Andhra Pradesh Backward Classes Welfare Sangham or Association “if Kapus included in the B.C. List, the B.C’s will certainly be affected because Kapus will dominate others and corner all the facilities for themselves”¹⁰⁶ In other words, if reservations are extended to all Kapus they form a formidable 18.6% and tilt the electoral balance significantly. Politically they are a strong group!¹⁰⁷

Stand of Political Parties

As a ruling party at that time, the Congress (I) should not support the Kapus demand. But at the same time it should not antagonise the Kapus towards the Congress Party. So we can see the vacillating nature in the Congress party stand.

N. Chandrababu Naidu the then T.D.P. General Secretary went on record that it was a sensitive issue and he could not like to offer his party’s stand on it. Thus, T.D.P.

¹⁰⁴*Deccan Chronicle*, Hyderabad edition, 26 Oct., 1994, p.13.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 12 Aug, 1994, p.10.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 28 Aug. 1994, p.10.

¹⁰⁷M. Shatrugna, *All Kapus as B.C.’s : Reducing Reservations as Farce*” *E.P.W.*, VolXXIX, No.37, Sept.10, 1994, p.2399.

like some sections in the Congress-I was cautious about its approach in this regard as many backward classes leaders were opposed to the inclusion of Kapus in the B.C. List.

The Bahujan Samaj Party took it as a golden opportunity to establish its hold in Andhra Pradesh politics using the Kapu movement. Its leader Kanshi Ram even met some Kapu leaders and offered his support to the movement. The Kapus accepted this cordiality but never tended towards the Bahujan Samaj Party as a group. But certain individuals joined the B.S.P.

Significantly, the state B.S.P. which is supposed to speak on behalf of the BC's, SC's, ST's and Muslims and women has remained silent on the Kapu issue. According to a senior B.S.P. leader "Absorbing the Kapus in the B.C. category has meant that one section of the upper caste is disarmed".¹⁰⁸

Stand of Muslims

With the recent emergence of Hindutva Ideology in the wake of the Mandir-Masjid controversy, Muslims have become a self-centered group interested in protecting themselves from any possible Hindu onslaught. They submitted separate memorandum to the government of Andhra Pradesh and to the State Backward Classes Commission for their inclusion in the list of other backward classes. Though they are not supporting the Kapu demand, they did not oppose it.

Consequences of the Movement

There is the question of the nature of the social and cultural consequences of a social movement. The social changes that result from a movement may be seen first in terms of the changes in the positions of the concerned sections of the movement and secondly in terms of their impact on the wider society. The Kapu movement was highly significant among the Kapus in terms of ethnic identity, opportunity structure and politicisation.

Two important developments could be observed in the community. The growth of a differentiated elite with a shift in the traditional balance of power in the state of

¹⁰⁸M. Shatrugna, *Op.Cit.*, P.2400.

Andhra Pradesh and the transformation of localised sub-castes into an ethnic bloc at the state level. While the movement had not changed the Kapu's everyday life in any drastic manner, it had in more subtle ways helped them to realise their collective strength and potential. Through the movement the Kapu community became a unified power which could turn the tables in the 1994 Assembly elections. Kapu ethnicity was double edged; on the one hand it promoted common identity and a sharing of common values and on the other it had a cognitive change which became manifest in situations of conflict against opposition reference groups. Kapu ethnicity was nourished and kept alive by the Kapu movement.

Further, the movement also facilitated politicisation of the Kapus. It generated increasing political awareness and encouraged some of them to assume leadership at various levels. The political elite consisting of professional politicians began to appear. They began to hold positions in the new structures of power at various levels, at the parliament, the state assembly, the municipality and the three tiers of the Panchayat Raj. They also became office bearers of different political parties and active workers. At the state level they emerged as a strong political force in Andhra politics which rests on a delicate balance maintained by the two groups, the Reddis and the Kammas. Thus a high degree of politicisation backed by the Kapu movement had enabled the Kapus to bring about a shift in the balance of power relations in Andhra Pradesh. Since 1983 the Kapus have made significant gains in improving their share of formal political power in accordance with their numerical strength.

Judging by the standards, the Kapu movement extended its influence beyond the group of Kapus. The Kapus were the first to organise themselves in a systematic way and led a movement for reservations after the Supreme Court judgement of 1992 upholding the validity of the Mandal Commission's recommendations. Other lower castes also started demanding for their inclusion in the list of other backward classes or the other backward classes are demanding for their inclusion in the Scheduled Caste Category. Thus the movement set a precedent in this respect.

Thus we may conclude by saying that ,the idea behind bringing these groups under one nomenclature was to make a difference in the political arena in terms of numbers, as well as to revive inter- marriages among the Jatis and thereby enlarge their geographical spread, since each of these groups were concentrated in a few districts in

different regions of the state. In terms of economic status, it was the only the Kapus in the Godavari delta who constituted prosperous peasant cultivators, the rest constituting a substantial proportion of the small and marginal and urban lower middle classes with a dominant presence especially in the tertiary sector.

The Kapunadu movement was highly significant among the Kapus in terms of ethnic identity, opportunity, structure and politicisation. While the movement had not changed the Kapu's everyday life in any drastic manner, it had in more subtle ways helped them to realise their collective strength and potential. Kapu ethnicity was double edged; on the one hand it promoted common identity and a sharing of common values and on the other it had a cognitive change which manifest in situations of conflict against opposition reference groups. Kapu ethnicity was nourished and kept alive by the Kapu movement. Further a high degree of politicisation backed by the Kapu movement had enabled the Kapus to bring about a shift in the balance of power relations in Andhra Pradesh.

For the first time the Kapunadu united all the sub-castes of Kapus on common platform. The movement literally brought the entire Kapu community on to the streets. This was due to Mudragada's personal image. Mudragada as an individual had a good name for his non-corrupt, clean image. Though a late comer, because of his standing among the people of his caste and in the politics of East Godavari district, Mudragada has emerged as the Champion of the Kapu cause. According to Mudragada it was not a political movement but a social movement, intended to secure justice for the poorer sections among the Kapus.

The Kapu movement for reservations gathered momentum and spread all over the state. In the case of Kapu movement, Mudragada was able to generate voluntary and spontaneous response from among the Kapus. Further, Mudragada and his followers brought a mass awakening all over Andhra Pradesh through formal and semi-formal associations. They transformed the general urge into specific programme of action. However, no where the movement took a violent turn.

CHAPTER - VI

KAPU'S CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FIELDS

The distinguished men in the Kapu community are too numerous to be mentioned individually. Among them there are lawyers, jurists, educationists, poets and social reformers. In the administration side we have few people from this caste. Among the officials mention should be made about Ajay Naidu Chief Secretary of Andhra Pradesh and former Secretary in the Union Cabinet, noted for his honesty. I.J. Naidu acted as Chief Secretary to the State of Andhra Pradesh from Jan.1978 to July 1979. After that Mr. Gonela also acted as the special Chief Secretary. K.V. Rao, IAS, son of K.V. Reddi Swamy Naidu a freedom fighter from Rajahmundry, was secretary to the Industries Minister.

Like wise from Indian Police Service, P.V. Rangaiah Naidu from East Godavari district as D.I.G.¹ Ragala Ramakrishna Rao, popularly known as 'Ragala' retired as D.I.G. Another prominent person in the I.P.S. was M.V. Bhaskara Rao² Similar I.P.S. Officer was M.V. Krishna Rao, brother of M.V. Bhaskara Rao, of 1974 batch of I.P.S.

Justice A. Lakshmana Rao:

A.Lakshmana Rao was born at Tenali on January 14, 1934. He completed his High School Education in Taluk High School, Tenali, and College Education up to Graduation at Hindu College and A.C. College, Guntur and studied Law at Madras Law College. After completion of his law he enrolled as Advocate in the High Court of Andhra Pradesh in the year 1959. He was appointed as Government Pleader in the A.P. High Court in the year 1981 and handled Home, Industries and Civil Supplies Departments and was elevated as permanent Judge of Andhra Pradesh High Court on December 10, 1982. Lakshmana Rao was the first President of the Andhra Pradesh State Consumer Disputes Redressal commission constituted in 1989.

Under his stewardship, initiative has been taken in getting the District Consumer Forums Constituted all over the state. Great awareness had been aroused among the consumers in the State about their rights, thereby evoking widespread response from people of all walks of life. He was the Chairman of the Andhra Pradesh State Legal Aid Board. As Chairman of the Legal Aid Board, he organised innumerable Lok Adalats to

¹In 1991, he was taken voluntary retirement and contested in 1991 Lok Sabha Elections from Khammam on Congress Ticket and won. He was a Minister in-charge for Telecommunications in P.V. Narasimha Rao Cabinet from 1991-1996.

²He resigned from his post in 1997 and recently he joined in Congress Party.

solve the disputes pending in the various Courts all over the state, and achieved good results. The most important of such Lok Adalats was the Srisailam Lok Adalat which was the biggest Lok Adalat held so far in which disputes pending for over 20 years have been settled and more than one lakh claimants in the districts of Kurnool and Mahaboobnagar had been paid compensation of about Rs.100 crores.

Lakshmana Rao was the President of the Andhra Pradesh Judiciary Academy (1992-93). He took steps for starting Basic Training Courses for the newly appointed judicial officers in the state and refresher courses for the serving Judicial Officers so as to help them achieve perfection in Judicial and administrative matters. Strived hard in carving the Academy as one of the best of such Academies in the country.

Lakshmana Rao was the Acting Chief Justice of the Andhra Pradesh High Court during the period July 1992 to September 1994. As Acting Chief Justice he took keen interest in toning up the Judicial Administration including computerisation of Judicial and Administrative work in the High Court. He introduced the Computerised cause list and Court NIC facility.

As Acting Chief Justice he strived to improve the infrastructural facilities in the District Courts and the High Court including construction of residential quarters to Judicial officers and court buildings.

Lakshmana Rao became the Chief Justice of the High Court of Judicature of Allahabad (Uttar Pradesh) He has undertaken various reformative measures for restoration of pre-eminence of the largest premier High Court of our country. And retired in January, 1996.³

I.J. Naidu:

Naidu took his Master's Degree in First Class, both in Physics and History from the Presidency College, Madras University.

I.J.Naidu had experience in various Departments both at the State and Central level.

³Interview with Lakshmana Rao on 26.1.1998 at Secunderabad.

He led a number of Indian delegations to several foreign countries. Naidu held several senior posts in the Government of India, where he worked as Joint. Secretary (1962-67), Ministry of Agriculture and also was Ex-Officio Chairman of National Seeds Corporation when 7000 tonnes of Dwarf hybrid wheat seed was imported to initiate hybrid wheat revolution. He worked as Additional Secretary (1970-75) and Agricultural Census Commissioner in Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture and Secretary to Government, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, Department of Rural Development (Jan.1976 to Dec. 1977).

State Level:

In the composite Madras State he was acted as Sub-Collector, Karur, Tiruchirapally district in 1949, was under Secretary, Home Department, Madras (1950-52) was Deputy Secretary, Home Department, Madras from 1952 till Nov. 1953, (Rajaji was Chief Minister and Home Minister). When Andhra State was formed in Nov.1953, he moved to Kurnool then a temporary Capital and continued as Deputy Secretary, Public Department, under the Chief Secretary. He took charge as Director of Agriculture in 1954, in Andhra State and continued as Director of Agriculture, A.P. State from Nov.1956 till July 1958.

Further he held various posts in the State Government in Andhra State. After the formation of Andhra Pradesh (1956 Nov.) Naidu became the first Director of Agriculture. Served the State in various capacities as Collector, Visakhapatnam (1958-59 Dec.), Member Board of Revenue (Jan.'68 to Dec.'70) having held the posts of Commissioner, Civil Supplies Commissioner, Panchayati Raj Commissioner, Ayacut Development etc. Also worked as Secretary, Agriculture (1959-61) and Industries (1961-62 Dec.) Departments in the State. Specialised in the fields of Agriculture, Rural Development, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, Industries, Industrial Estates, Small, Medium and Large Scale Industries etc.,

As Agricultural Census Commissioner in the Government of India, Naidu was incharge of the Agricultural Census Operations which India undertook for the first time and submitted the report to the government of India and Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations, as part of the programme of World Agricultural Census in 1975. This report was very much appreciated both within the country and abroad.

Naidu widely travelled in foreign countries as a leader of several Indian delegations. In 1965, he led Government of India policy Team on Fertilisers to U.S.A., Japan and U.K. In 1972 he visited Rome as the Leader of the Indian Delegation to the 59th Session of Food and Agricultural Organisation. He also headed the Government of India Seed Review Team that visited, U.S.A., Europe Japan and Philippines to study the measures adopted in regard to production and distribution of improved seed in 1967. Again he led Indian Agricultural Experts Team to Libia in 1974 to advise that Government on Agricultural Development. Visited Iran as the leader of the Indian Delegation to review operation of fisheries agreements with Persian Gulf Fishing Company in 1974. Headed the Indian Delegation that visited Bangkok in 1976 to establish a Regional Training Centre for Integrated Rural Development in India. Naidu was elected Chairman of the Technical Committee at the Session of the Thirteenth Regional Conference for Asia and the Far East of the Food and Agricultural Organisation held at Manila. In 1976, he was elected as Vice-Chairman of Inter-Governmental Meeting on Integrated Rural Development held in Tokyo in 1977.

Naidu has several publications on various subjects. Some of them are: *Farmers of India* (Andhra Pradesh Farmers) was published by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. *The Seed Review Team Report; An Introduction to the Agricultural Census Operations in India: All India Report on Agricultural Census* (on a complete enumeration basis). This has become a basic data for Policy schemes on Agriculture Development.

Naidu has also contributed articles on a variety of subjects like Agriculture and Rural Development to various news-papers in the country.

Retired as Chief Secretary, Government of Andhra Pradesh (Jan. '78 to July '79) on 1st July 1979. Was Advisor to Governor, Tamil Nadu (1980. Apl. to June), Was Chairman, Regional Recruitment Board State Bank of India, Hyderabad Circle 1981 to 1985, Was vice-President, Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Hyderabad kendra 1978 to 1983.⁴

⁴Interview with I.J. Naidu on 26.1.1998 at Secunderabad.

University Administrators:

In education field Raghupati Venkata Ratnam Naidu, Vice-Chancellor of Madras University (See Chapter-III for details) stands supreme and the next name was Sri Ram Govinda Rajula Naidu, Ex-Principal of Law College of Madras and an authority on Indian law. Up to 1956 he was the Director of Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency. He was the founder Vice-Chancellor of Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati.

K.V. Gopala Swamy M.A. Bar-at-Law, the son of Justice party leader and ex-Governor Madras, Sri K.V. Reddi Naidu was a permanent registrar of Andhra University. After his retirement he was served as principal of Law College until his death.

Among the Kapus apart from Sri Raghupati and Sri Govinda Rajula Naidu, Mangina Venkateswara Rao acted 2 terms as Vice-Chancellor for Agricultural University, Hyderabad, and retired in 1997. Among women, in the recent period we have Mrs. K. Rajyalakshmi who was appointed as founder Vice-Chancellor of Sri Padmavati Mahila University in 1986 which post she held till in 1990. She is the first women academician who became the Vice-Chancellor in Andhra Pradesh. V. Ramakrishnaiah was the Vice-Chancellor of Osmania University upto February, 1999. At present, Rokkam Radha Krishna was the Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University. Before he became the Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University, he was the Director of Centre for Economic and Social Studies (CESS) Hyderabad and also was the Member-Secretary Indian Council of Social Sciences Research, (ICSSR), New Delhi.

Mangina Venkateswara Rao:

Along with Nobel Laureate Dr. Norman E. Borlaug and Dr. Swaminathan there is another noted agriculture scientist from our own state who has played a key role in the Green Revolution, particularly wheat, which has made the Country self-sufficient in foodgrains. He later adroitly piloted the Technology Mission on Oilseed and increased its production. Seventyone-year old Dr. Mangina Venkateswara Rao, the only farm scientist to have been honoured with the '*Padma Sri*' by the Union Government in 1999 for his outstanding contribution towards the growth and modernisation of Indian Agriculture.⁵

⁵"The Brain Behind Oilseed Revolution", *The Hindu, Metro Special*, Feb.22, 1999. p.2.

Mangina Venkateswara Rao popularly known as M.V. Rao was born on June 21, 1928 in a Kapu farming family of Perupalem Village in East Godavari in Andhra Pradesh. Dr. M.V. Rao was a student of distinction and took his B.Sc. in 1948 from Andhra University with a first class and a University second rank. His M.Sc. degree in Botany in 1951 was from Agra University with a first class, University first rank and was also declared the best student in Agra College and was awarded the *Lord Damodar Science Prize* given to students who excelled in academics and sports - Dr. Rao was an avid sportsman and represented his school and college in football. He was awarded a *Rockefeller Foundation scholarship* in 1963 and obtained his Ph.D. degree in 1966 with joint majors in Plant breedings and Genetics and Plant Pathology from Purdue University, U.S.A.

Having held several key positions including Special Director-General of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) effectively being in charge of all crops, he knows the pluses and minuses of the farm sector like the back of his hand. Dr. Rao in his more than three decade career with the ICAR was associated with the National Seed Policy, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, National Pulses Development, Indian Coffee Board and many others.⁶ Dr. Rao worked in Wheat Research for 30 years between 1952 and 1981, in India in various capacities. He headed the All India Wheat Improvement Project of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) from 1971 till 1981, and was one of the key contributors in ushering in, and the successful spread of the Green Revolution in India, particularly in wheat. The signifiant role played by him helped the country in increasing wheat production from 6 million tonnes in 1952 to over 58 million tonnes in 1982, thereby, transforming India from being a net importer of foodgrains to a nation self-sufficient in meeting the food needs of a burgeoning population. "Imagine the plight of the country if the Green Revolution did not happen- could we have afforded to import enough to feed our people?" M.V. asks and adds: "If there is political stability in the country it is because of the availability of foodgrains".

As Deputy Director General (Crop Science) of ICAR between 1981 and 1986, he gave a new thrust and impetus, at the national level, to all researches pertaining to food, commercial and horticultural crops and plant protection. He was instrumental in initiating, guiding and coordinating horticultural research to improve the quality of life

⁶*Ibid.*

and laid foundations to establish 11 National Research Centres. Another project in which he takes immense pride is being the first Director of the Technology Mission on Oilseeds under the Rajiv Gandhi Government. From 1986 till 1989, he served as the first Director of the Prime Minister's Technology Mission on Oilseeds in the rank of Special Secretary to the Government of India and as Special Director General of ICAR. He provided leadership and direction, helping in the doubling of oilseed production and facilitating the country to move towards self-sufficiency and the reduction in the annual foreign exchange bill of US \$300 million. Between 1989 and 1990 Dr. Rao worked as an Agricultural Expert with the World Bank, and later served for six consecutive years from 1991 till 1997, as Vice-Chancellor of the Andhra Pradesh Agricultural University, Hyderabad- India's largest agricultural university with 14 campuses, 68 research stations and over 1500 scientists and a staff of over 5000 people. M.V.Rao chucked a World Bank job to accept the Vice-Chancellorship of Acharya Dr.N.G. Ranga Agricultural University and held it for two successive terms from 1991 to 1997. The stint was "refreshingly different" from his ICAR job as he had to confront a varsity which had problems galore.⁷

In addition to publishing a number of scientific papers, Dr. Rao guided 25 M.Sc., and Ph.D. candidates in Plant Breeding and Genetics at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, Delhi. He participated in a number of International Conferences, Symposia and meetings. Dr. Rao was the Organising Secretary of the 3rd Congress of the Society for the Advancement of Breeding Researches in Asia and Oceania (SABARO) and the 5th International Wheat Genetic Symposium. He was on the Wheat Advisory Committee of the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations. Dr. Rao served as the Trustee of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Philippines, for 6 years and also as an External Panel Expert of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT), Mexico. He lead Indian Agricultural delegations to France, USSR, Canada and Bangladesh. He served as a consultant to the World Bank, in Uganda (1990) and in Ethiopia (1997), to help agricultural research and higher education.

Besides serving as the Chairman of a number of committees of the Government of India and ICAR, Dr. Rao was President and Secretary of numerous scientific bodies in

⁷*Ibid.*

India. He was also Chairman of the Committee on the New National Seed Policy of the Government of India.

For his contributions to agricultural development in India, Dr. Rao was awarded the prestigious *Norman Borlaug Award*, (1992) *Linker's Award*, *Peddireddy Thimma Reddy Award* and *Dr. P. Siva Reddy Foundation Award*. In November 1997, the Nutrition Society of India presented the *Dr. Srikantia Memorial Award* for his contribution to Indian Agriculture.⁸

The eminent scientist, who believes in the motto "Rest is Rust", still keeps himself extremely busy with several ongoing projects like *Overseeing the Andhra Pradesh.-Netherlands Bio_Technology Project*, *Andhra Pradesh Hunger Project*, *World Bank-Aided National Agricultural Technology Project for Coastal Eco-_system* etc. And is also reviewing the functioning of ICAR research centres.⁹

Performing Arts:

Dwaram Venkataswami Naidu 1893-1964:

Dwaram Venkataswami Naidu was born in 1893 at Vijayanagaram in a Telaga family. As a renowned violenist in the field of Karnataka Music, he had his initiation into music at the hands of his brother Krishnaiah Naidu. He became the principal of the Vizianagaram Music College in 1929 and shone as a unique soloist. Awarded the title 'Sangita Kala Nidhi' in 1941 by the Madras Music Academy and 'Sangita Ratna Kara' in 1946 by the Maharaja of Mysore. He received the *National Award* in 1953 and the title of *Padma Sri* in 1959.¹⁰

Dwaram Venkataswami Naidu was not only a great violenist known, loved and respected for the impeceable virtuosity of his style but also a vital link with a great tradition. He had delighted thousands of listeners with his skill and scholarship. The greatness in him was that he could make any one sit cross-legged and listen for hours to the melodies that the violin in his hands poured forth. What was unique about Dwaram

⁸Interview with M.V. Rao at Secunderabad, 26.1.98.

⁹*The Hindu, Op.Cit.*

¹⁰G. Rama Krishna, N. Gayatri and D. Chattopadhyaya: *Encyclopaedia of South Indian Culture*, K.A. Bagchi and Company, Calcutta, 1983, p.522.

was that he trained himself to be a soloist and not as an accompanist. He thus choose a difficult field of musical expression. He performed scores of such solo concerts and won the applaud of one and all. His very technique was such as to bring out the ravishing possibilities of his instrument, and people admired such technique as the *Dwaram Vari Bani*. He could produce lovely notes on his instrument. There are many ragas and kirtanas to cite as his masterpieces. He could draw tears from his listeners in rendering a song like Ksheera Sagara Sayana in Deva Gandhari.¹¹ Dwaram Venkataswami Naidu enthralled the audiences with his superb performance on violion and earned an All India fame. He was the recipient of 'Kala prapoorna' from the Andhra University.¹² P. Shiv Shankar, Former Central Minister, is married to the niece of the late Dwaram Venkataswami Naidu of Machilipatnam.

The other famous violenists from Kapus are Dwaram Manga Tayaru and Dwaram Durga Prasada Rao.¹³

Yella Venkateswara Rao:

Of the percussion instruments mridangam occupies a foremost place. It is otherwise known as Maddela (drum) in Telugu. Drum playing is a well accomplished art in India, and Andhra Pradesh is second to none.

Yella Venkateswara Rao was born in a Telaga family of Music to Sri Rama Murty (student of Dwaram) and Mahalaxmi. Started kacheris at the age of 7 and worked with great singers like Mangalampalli Bala Murali Krishna, Chilakalapudi Venkateswara Sarma, Appaya Setti etc.¹⁴ He inherited the Mridangam as a well deserved patrimony. He was adopted by his uncle Somanna. The adopted father Somanna was a humble artiste. Somanna believed that he was the disciple of the world, while Venkateswara Rao seem to believe that he is a disciple of Mridangam. That represents the difference in the out look of the father and the son but that enabled Venkateswara Rao to concentrate all

¹¹R. Parthasarathy, *Andhra Culture : A Petal in Indian Lotus*, A State Gazetteer Department Publication, Hyderabad, 1984. p.115.

¹²*Ibid.*, p.113.

¹³*Ibid.*, p.116.

¹⁴"Ellerugane Dwani Tharangam Yella": *Waartha* editorial , Hyderabad, 6th Sept, 1998, p.4.

his energy on the instrument. His father Somanna was a disciple of Kolanka Venkata Raju.

Venkateswara Rao is more an artistie than a mere professional. Dwaram Venkataswamy Naidu, the Vizard of violin once visited the Yella family when Venkateswara Rao was very young. Somanna and others were, naturally behaved with fear born out of great respect for the violin mestro. Venkateswara Rao suddenly brought a Mridangam from no where and requested Naidu to allow him accompany him and pay him for so accompanying. The elders were scared but Naidu met the challenge with a smile and played violion as Venkateswara Rao accompanied on the Mridangam. Dwaram Venkataswamy Naidu then gave him a small monetary present accompanying it with his blessing

To Venkateswara Rao, Mridangam is an instrument of daily experimentation both to produce variagated patterns of Laya and Sruti. He handles a number of Mridangams simultaneously to give the effects of an assemble of his imagination. Sure one day he would have found out an unheard of harmony in his Mridangam's and that he would prize more.¹⁵

He joined All India Radio with the help of Bala Guru Murthi. His greatness lies in bringing Mridangam as sole instrument in place of side instrument. He have his solo performances on Mridangam from All India Radio for the first time and continued to perform throughout the world. He stood first in All India Radio Music Competition in 1961 and received 'Golden Lute' from Sarvepalle Radha Krishnan, the then President of India.¹⁶

Andhra Pradesh has produced one such veteran artist in Yella Venkateswara Rao also called Yella for short. He accompanied numerous musicians with his Mridangam. He played solo intermittantly. He proclaimed his creative genius by playing simultaneously on five, seven and nine Mridangas. He bagged the *Hosha Banka* award

¹⁵"They have won Honours" *Telugu Vani*, Monthly Journal of the International Telugu Institute, Vol.III, No.6, Secunderabad, 1978, pp.70-71.

¹⁶*Waartha, Op.Cit.,*

of the Asian Broad Casting Union at Jakarta for his innovative rhythmic extravaganza entitled *Siva Tandavam*.¹⁷

His latest musical feat, Mridanga Mahayajna, was held under the auspices of the Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Andhra Pradesh on 16th and 17th August, 1981 at the Sringeri Sankara Math (Vidyanagar, Hyderabad). He played Mridangam non-stop for 36 hours starting from 6 am on 16th August 1981. The Yajna reached the climax when he played the much acclaimed Siva Tandavam at mid-night on the 17th August 1981. Musical luminaries such as Mangalampalli Bala Murali Krishna, Emani Sankara Sastry, Nookala China Satyanarayana and Sri Rangam Gopala Ratnam gave musical recitals to Yella's accompaniment in the Yagna. Brahmasri Gollapudi Kutumbavadhani, a vedic scholar, recited the vedas and read the benediction at the concluding session. Yella reproduced the shanti mantra on his own Mridangam.¹⁸

Playing Mridangam non-stop for 36 hours is a trying, arduous, unique and remarkable feat requiring uncommon skill and endurance. He sat through the yajna as if in a trance, as his mind was filled with devotional spirit. The Mridangam Maha Yajna was witnessed by thousands of spectators with rapt attention. The Chief Minister, the Chief Justice of Andhra Pradesh, the Minister for Cultural Affairs and several others showered on him profuse encomiums. Yella Venkateswara Rao could become a superb Mridanga player even though he is young and his feats made him a much sought after artist.¹⁹

He was very close to N.T. Rama Rao the then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and persuaded N.T. Rama Rao to start courses in Fine Arts in Potti Sri Ramulu University (then known as Telugu University) and worked to formulate syllabus for those courses. He worked as Dean at the University for the School of Fine Arts. He persuaded, the then Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, and K.S. Sarma, Director, Navodaya Schools, to introduce Music Teacher posts in all the Navodaya Schools in the country.²⁰

¹⁷*Ibid.*, also see, R. Parthasarathy, *Op.Cit.*, p.116.

¹⁸R. Parthasarathy, *Ibid.*

¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp.116-117.

²⁰*Waartha, Op.Cit.*,

He worked with maestros like Chembai Vaidya Natham, T.R. Mahalingam, Eamani Sankara Sastry, Pandit Ravi Shankar, Hari Prasad Chourasia, Ahmajad Ali Khan, Alla Rakha etc.

Venkateswara Rao got more than 30 titles like 'Mridanga Sarva Bhauma', 'Mridanga Samrat', 'Mridanga Shiromani', etc. He worked as Asthana artist of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam and Yadagirigutta temples. He is also working on relief to mentally handicapped through music.²¹

Achanta Venkata Ratnam Naidu

An artiste who gave the true values and contribution to Telugu social and mythological drama around India and abroad was Achanta Venkata Ratnam Naidu. Born in a small Telaga business family at Kondapally adjacent to river Krishna a place well known for handicrafts and natural beauty and a historical place well known in Andhra Pradesh in Krishna District on May 28th in 1935. His father Sri Achanta Venkateswarlu Naidu is very happy because he was blessed by his first son in his family and later two brothers followed the eldest. Achanta Venkata Ratnam Naidu has an excellent understanding in darma, music and song from his school days. Passed the examination of Secondary School in 1952 Hindu College High School at Guntur and in 1951 at the level of school drama competition he won the first prize as best actor 'Jeevana Jwala' playlet for his character 'Tata' and the play was written by late Sri Narla Venkateswara Rao, a well-known journalist and editor, *Andhra Prabha* daily. This seventeen years young boy's life got a wonderful turn and he started to act in 'Adadi', 'Anna Chellelu' and 'Natakam' etc. the well-known Telugu social plays between 1950 and 1970. A stage drama 'Aparadhi' conducted by Andhra Nataka Kala Parishad, Hyderabad and he was instantly recognised by the artists and critics immensely and cordially.

The real mythological drama wave started in his young brain from 1956 onwards and his life got a turn in 'Bala Nagamma', 'Rongoon Rowdi', 'Sati Sakkubai', 'Tula bharam' and 'Bobbili', in which he plays very different roles but people started to think

²¹*Ibid.*

the young artist Venkata Ratnam Naidu. Mr. Naidu started 'Nataraja Kala Mandali' in 1957 at Guntur and Sri Hulakki Bhaskara Rao taught him how to render poems and this is a real turn in this artist's life. His fast appreciation is 'Duryodhana' in Kurukshetram and for his excellence, he made at a monument, unforgettable and remarkable. His action, movement, his dialogue rendering of verse with a rytham, style and the very particular pattern of laugh, all brought him a name and fame for playing. He got thoroughly identified with Duryodhana. Not only this, he was 'Gayudu' in 'Gayopakhyanam', 'Viswamitrudu' in 'Harischandra' and he acted with all the stage stalwarts and ace artists. For example, Eela Pata Raghuramaiah, Muppavarapu Bhima Rao, Pelluri Seshagiri Rao, Addanki Sri Rama Murthy, P. Saibabu, Pulipati Venkateswarlu etc. He participated with very famous lady artists Smt. Purnima, Abburi Kamala and T. Kanakam etc. He participated with a number of stage artists and he politely remembers all of them with a high regard and gratitude. He is very popular as 'Jarasandhudu' in 'Sri Krishna-Jarasandha'.

All India Tour:

Sri Madasu Narasimha Rao, founder and producer of 'Sri Shanmukha Natya Mandali' at Tanuku started in 1970 and late P.V. Bhadram as the director of 'Tulasi Jalandhara', an immense success in Achanta life as 'Jalandharudu' and he reached great hights on mythological stage.

Natya Mandali gave their very dignified performances at various places in India, like Madras, Bellary, Bangalore, Jamshedpur, Kharagpur and even at Delhi. wherever he performed 'Jalandharudu' he got affections, garlands, cheers, felicitations.

In the Islands of Mauritius, he performed Duryodhana in 1990 December 10th to 13th in many places and the Telugu auditorium cheered him and one of the audience was Padma Sri Akkineni Nageswara Rao who hugged him and garlanded him, amidst thousands of Telugu audiences. What more is needed to an artist than this?

He acted in several cinemas, Boomikosam, Kolleti Kapuram, Brathuke Voka Panduga, Pandanti Jeevitham, Mohana Ragam, Natana and Sri Datta Darsanam. He performed very different roles with ease and dignity.

L.P. Record and Casettee Released: Duryodhana, Mayasabha and Tulasi jalandhara has been released by a very prestigious organisation AVM, from Madras.

He was felicitated by several organisations. On 20th Dec.1976, Theatre artists convention, Hyderabad with *Nataratna* Title On 17th Aug. 1977, *Kanakabhishekam* conducted by Turlapati Kutumba Rao and Ex-Minister, Ch. Devananda Rao.

English Daily, *The Hindu* appreciated him as 'Sri Achanta Venkataratnam who is now familiar to theatre audience throughout the state did the role of Jalandhra and performed with distinction'. On 31st May, 1981 again *The Hindu*: Appreciated him as "Mythological roles are the sheet anchor of Achanta Venkataratnam Naidu's reputation first class Telugu Actor". For his credits, he is invited U.S.A. to give his greatest performance in 1992 commencing from July 3rd to July 12th. A familiar artist almost has acted as Duryodhana in countless places and he has given a very prestigious performances of various characters, he loves acting and he lives for acting. All this shows the drama, song, music and art are in his blood and let us pray lord Nataraja to give him strength, health, wealth and prosperity to enact the prestigious Telugu drama not only in India but all the central places of the world where Telugu people are living. Till 26.1.98 he received 11,000 felicitations from various spheres.²²

Eelapati Raghuramaiah:

Eelapati Raghuramaiah was born in 1900 in a Telaga family. A versatile artist who had acted male and female characters on the stage, first acting in 'Prudhviputra' in 1933. He had acted in about 100 films before his death in 1975. He was awarded *Padma Sri* by Central Government in 1975. He was known popularly as Eelapati Raghuramaiah.²³

Cinema can have varied influences on the society. Irrespective of class, caste and religion or social and political differences all people view cinemas. What is it that mesmerizes all and sundry in cinema? What are its roots? What are the historical processes that influenced the evolution of Telugu cinema? The contribution of different people particularly the Kapu caste people to the film industry in the then Madras presidency and particularly to the Andhra Pradesh at present are dealt with here. The

²²Interview with A.Venkata Rathan Naidu on 26.1.1998.

²³*Indian Talkie: Golden Jubilee, 1931-1981: Andhra Pradesh Film Chamber of Commerce, Souveiner, 1981, Dolton Press, Hyderabad, p.30.*

differential impact of cinema in the society and also the varied response of different social classes to it are the other interesting questions that are addressed in this .

Raghupati Venkaiah 1869-1941:

While Phalke is called as the father of Indian Cinema, Raghupati Venkaiah is called as the father of Telugu cinema. He was no other than the brother of the famous Brahma Samajist and social reformer Raghupati Venkata Ratnam Naidu. It is the best example of the relation between social reform and cultural field. In recognition of his efforts in establishing the entertainment industry, the cinema, with all its facades in our country, the Andhra Pradesh Government has instituted *Raghupati Venkaiah Award* in 1981 to be awarded every year to a person whose contribution is reckoned with the development of film industry.²⁴

The early film exhibitor based in South India was Raghupati Venkaiah Naidu was a native of Machilipatnam born in a Kapu family . Venkaiah moved to Madras in 1896 to work as a photographer. Within ten years he established himself as one of the city's leading photographers and along with his brothers, he ran a photograph studio on the prestigious North-East end of Mount Road, in the elite and European shopping district of Madras. To signify their standing and success, the letter head of the R. Venkaiah brothers boasted of patronage from 'the Governor and the leading Rajah of the Presidency'.²⁵

The father of Telugu cinema R. Venkaiah was a film personality even before phalke. Venkaiah expanded his business from studio photography to moving pictures. He organised shows in tent in Esplanade in the heart of Madras city in 1909 and in a theatre Gaiety in 1914 in Madras.²⁶

Raghupati Venkaiah the first exhibitor of the South imported 'Crono-Megaphone' the first projector equipped to re-produce 'sound' by disk system and exhibited short

²⁴*Indian Talkie, Golden Jubilee 1931-1981: Souveiner Andhra Pradesh Film Chamber of Commerce, Dolton Press, Hyderabad, 1981, p.19.*

²⁵Judicial G.O. No.1297, 18 May, 1916. (Tamil Nadu Archives)

²⁶Bommakanti Subba Rao, "Illustrious History of Telugu Film Industry" in *Amarajeevi Potti Sreeramulu 90th Jayanthi Souvenir*, not dated, Madras, p.64., also see C.B. Devraj, *Indian Talkies Era, Silver Jubilee, 1957, Madras, p.11.*

reels at Esplanade grounds Madras during 1910. A gramophone record could be played as the film was screened. He travelled with it all over South India, Ceylon, Burma and other places. He returned to India in 1911 and constructed 'Gaiety Theatre', a permanent cinema hall in Madras in 1914. Immediately he constructed 'Star of the East film Studios' known as 'Glass Studio' and it was managed by his son, R. Prakash, a London trained film technician.²⁷ Thus, R. Venkaiah was the first South Indian exhibitor and studio owner. He constructed 'Crown-Talkie' on Mount Road and also the 'Globe Theatre' now called 'Roxy' in Purasawalkam.²⁸

Early touring exhibitors in Madras offered within each film show a wide variety of appeals capable of accommodating a range of audiences interest and engagement. Both R. Venkaiah and Vincent another exhibitor from Madras, offered topical features which were of special interest for British audiences in the far flung corners of the empire. For example during the second half of 1910 Venkaiah organised his show around a series of films documenting the funeral of 'Edward-VII', the 'Accession proclamation procession' and the 'Coronation of George-V' only a few months after the events.²⁹ In addition to targeting British audiences, these two exhibitors also used other marketing strategies which focussed on the distinct, yet overlapping social categories of christians, women, children and soldiers. By offering discount rates for certain groups, special film screenings and separate seating, exhibitors consciously reached out to certain audience segments so as to create a new market, for film shows. Another targeted audience segment was which figured prominently in the early Madras exhibitors marketing strategies was that of Indian women. By 1910 Venkaiah routinely advertised his cinema company as providing special accommodation for native ladies, which consisted of a screened off area with a separate entrance.³⁰ The next year, he went further in offering a 'Ladies only' show at 6.00 pm under the patronage of the Indian Ladies Club of Madras, featuring, a programme of films especially selected for women audiences.

²⁷Indian Talkie, *Op.Cit.*, p.32.

²⁸Mikkilineni Radhakrishna Murthy, *Teluguvari Chalanachitra Kala*, Hyderabad, 1975, p.6, also see S. Vijayalakshmi, *The Impact of Films on Society*, Madras, 1975, p.7, also see, S. Theodore Baskaran, *The Eye of the Serpent: An Introduction to Tamil Cinema*, East-West Private Ltd., Madras, 1990, pp.3-4.

²⁹"The Pre-Phalke Era in South India: Reflections on the Formation of Film Audiences in Madras", *South Indian Studies*, Vol.2, July-Dec.1996, p.170.

³⁰Special accommodation for Indian Women was a Theatre convention which pre-dated cinema and was a strategy used by film exhibitors in India from the outset, *Ibid.*, p.171.

The early film exhibitors cultivated women audiences, in part, as a means to extend the market for their entertainment especially since Indian women film-goers either attended film shows in groups or were accompanied by men or brought along their families. In this way, the appeal to Indian women was, perhaps, part of a more general effort to encourage broader attendance from amongst the wealthy Indian classes.

The early touring film exhibitors also recognised British soldiers as an important market for their entertainment. During the period, most exhibitors offered half-price tickets to soldiers in uniform for all seating classes except the least expensive. This marketing ploy, however, would not have significantly cut into the exhibitors revenue since British soldiers in Madras were only a small percentage of the larger European Community for whom early cinema shows primarily catered.³¹

This highclass orientation also informed the efforts made to accommodate Indians at the early touring film shows in Madras. Even though Europeans figured most prominently as preferred audiences, film exhibitors catered to select Indian audiences consisting mostly of those from the elite, english educated and the wealthy classes who were the most inclined toward 'Western cluture'. The appeal to these Indian classes is reflected in the efforts to publicise film shows in the local press whose readership was confined to a small group of educated elite. In addition to English Newspapers of Madras, film exhibitors also placed advertisements in Tamil and Telugu News papers of the city from as early as 1911.

From the mid 1910's the film exhibitors on Mount Road marketed high-class film adaptations of historical, literary and dramatic classics to their predominantly elite and educated audiences. In addition to their European clients, exhibitors targeted the Indian students from the nearby university and colleges.³² The two most important institutions of higher education in South India, Presidency College and the University of Madras, attracted thousands of Indian students from all over the presidency.

³¹*South Indian Studies, Ibid., p.172.*

³²*Ibid., p.193.*

In Madras silent film serials were cited as the first film genre to inspire a regular cinema-going habit amongst Indian audiences. The Madras exhibitors considered the serials to be the film genre most suited for Indian audiences, especially lower class and illiterate Indians for whom multi-reel dramas and itenary adaptations were too difficult to follow. Since it was possible to follow silent film serials without having to read the inter-titles, exhibitors used serials more than any other film genre to cultivate new Indian audiences beyond the educated, elite classes.³³ During the late 1910's when Madras exhibitors extended cinema to include a majority of Indian audiences, silent film serials provided the first genre which could be specifically marketed to the widest possible Indian audiences.

Since our films are largely based on traditions, folklore and epics, usually all is well at the end. Even in most modern films, since modernity has not become a way of life, forms of folklore hangover still persist. After all, our present day cinemas are culture brought forwards only. It is interesting to know what type of culture the early Telugu films reflected? What is the ideology propagated by them? What are the values depicted in the early Telugu Cinema? The early Telugu cinemas were the cultural representation of people. All the themes in epics, historical stories and social stories represent the culture of the world.

The 1920's in the history of Andhra are called roaring twenties. This period witnessed a galaxy of political and cultural personalities. Unnava Lakshmi Narayana, Gudipati Venkatachalam, G.Jashuva, Tripuraneni Ramaswamy Choudhari, Sripada Subramanya Sastry, M. Krishna Murthy, Tapi Dharma Rao and a host of other romantic poets belonged to this period. The social reform activities were already wide spread in Andhra.

In 1921 R. Venkaiah established a touring cinema and started showing silent pictures all over the country. Inspired by this, people like Pottina Srinivasa Rao of Vijayawada, P.V. Das of Machilipatnam, G. K. Mangaraju of Vizag, C. Pullaiah of Kakinada, Sri Gopala Rao of Bellary, Nidamarthi Suraiah of Rajahmundry and others took it as a business and encouraged cinema as mass entertainment.³⁴

³³*Ibid.*, p.195.

³⁴Mikkilineni, *Op.Cit.*, p.15.

In 1921, 'Bhishma Pratigna' (the Vow of Bhishma) was the first movie produced by Raghupati Venkaiah and his son Prakash in Madras. This was the first Telugu feature film. Prakash was hero and also director of it. Thus he was the first Andhra director hero and founder of a cine lab.

R. Prakash 1902-1956:

To develop the film industry, Raghupati Venkaiah sent his son R.S. Prakash to England for training. After he returned to India he constructed a studio 'Star of East Films' in Madras and produced silent films like 'Bheeshma Pratigna', 'Matsyavataramu', 'Gagendra Moksham', 'Nandanar' etc. The studio, which was located behind what is now 'Roxy' Theatre, was modern by the then prevailing standards. Beginning with 'Bhishma Pratigna'(1921), Prakash made a number of movies which were screened all over the country, with title cards in Telugu, Tamil, Hindi and Gujarati. Though the company lasted for not more than four years, it played a crucial role in the growth of cinema in this part of the country. Many pioneers of South Indian Cinema such as Y.V. Rao and C. Pullaiah were trained in this company.³⁵

In 1925 Prakash founded the 'Guaranteed Pictures Corporation'. He along with A. Narayana of Tamil films founded 'The General Film Corporation' and established a film laboratory called 'Gostan and Company' in 1930.³⁶

After the emergence of talkies he not only produced many pictures in 'Sound City Studio', but also directed some people. The famous Telugu directors like C. Pullaiah and Y.V. Rao were trained by R. Prakash. He was the first Telugu man to wield megaphone in 1921, had to wait till 1940 to make his first talkie. He made 'Chandrika' a costume drama dealing with the story of an ambitious and schooling women's attempts and success in capturing the throne. Kannamba was in the lead and this picture met with the expected success. Prakash followed this with two short features to be exhibited in a single showing. 'Barristar Parvateesam' was an insipid screen adaptation of a hilarious comic novel of the same name written by tasteful humorist Mokkalapati Narasimha Sastry.

³⁵S. Theodore Baskaran, *Op.Cit.*, p.5.

³⁶Mikkilineni, *Op.Cit.*, p.9.

G. Varalakshmi a versatile artist of the later years was in the lead. Prakash's second short feature was 'Bondampelli' (Bondam's Wedding) a cheap slap stick.³⁷

We learn that at least 73 films were made in Madras during the silent era. The Vishnu Leela (ways of Vishnu) which R. Prakash made in 1932, was the last silent film produced in Madras.³⁸ Later he freelanced and made 'Krishna Arjuna' (1935) in Calcutta. His film 'Anandhai Penn' (1938) is remembered for the sequences containing nationalist propaganda. But most of his works were mythologicals and his favourite locale was Gingee Fort near Madras. His last completed film was Moonrupengal (Three Girls, 1956) When he died in 1956, he was in the midst of directing a Telugu film the Deva Sundari (Celestial Beauty) which was released in 1960.

Prakash saw a bright future for cinema in this country. He made a number of short films. He also had plans to run a regular news reel service. To begin with, he covered some important happenings in the city and made shots like *The Inauguration of the Royal Bath*. He assisted in the film titled *The Calchist of Killarney* for T.G. Duffy, an Irish missionary, which was shot in a village near Tiruvannamalai. The film was exhibited widely in England, in India there were protests against its screening. He made a film for the Government on the prevention of Cholera.³⁹

In 1935, B.V. Ramanadhan, uncle of S.V. Ranga Rao, the famous character actor of 60's and 70s (both are Kapus) on the name of Bharat Lakshmi Films, made a 'Sati Sakkubai' with Dasari Koti Ratnam and T. Chalapati Rao in Calcutta.⁴⁰

During 1930's and 1940's major literary stalwarts worked for film industry. Gudipati Venkatachalam, Kosaraju Raghavaiah are famous in this regard. Among them the latter was a Kapu. 1935 saw two leading ladies of Telugu stage, Pasupuleti Kannamba and Dasari Koti Ratnam (Kapus) being introduced to the film world, while Kannamba had a longer innings, Koti Ratnam's career as a cine artist was brief albeit

³⁷K.N.T. Sastry, *Telugu Cinema*, Published by Cinema group, 1986, p.19.

³⁸S. Theodore Baskaran, *Op.Cit.*, p.6.

³⁹S. Theodore Baskaran: *Op.Cit.*, pp.190-191.

⁴⁰M. Raghu Ram, *Sixty Years of Telugu Cinema*, Kinnera Publications, Hyderabad, 1994, p.112.

bright and significant.⁴¹ She was the first female film producer who had acted and produced 'Anasuya' in Aurora studios, Calcutta, directed by Ahim Choudary in 1935. She had organised Dramatic troops and toured all over India and brought great name to the stage.⁴²

The Directors of the early period had their origins in such areas which are in line with social reform activity. For example Raghupati Venkaiah from Machilipatnam, C. Pullaiah from Kakinada, P. Pullaiah from Nellore and many others entered the film industry.⁴³ Further all these were from upper castes, already in the mainstream of economic and educational development.

They believed in idealistic approach and they also believed that cinema can be a very great platform for culture. They were under the impression that cinema can enlighten people and it can be a great force in that direction. Social reform was the objective of the cinema and as such dialogues have the flavour of reformation zeal. Tapi Dharma Rao Naidu's pen has shown a new taste and also lyrics.⁴⁴ In 1939 Tapi Dharma Rao Naidu provided lyrics to Rytu Bidda (A peasant) cinema. Dialogues in 'Malapilla' are very scathing on social matters and critical concerning religion. Extreme devotion is expressed towards patriotism. Worship of Gandhiji is the underlying phenomenon in dialogues.

In 1941 Gudavalli Rama Brahmam made a movie on 'Apavadu' (Slander). Story, dialogues and songs for this film were written by Tapi Dharma Rao Naidu. In the same year the Documentary Films Ltd., Madras made one documentary film on Mahatma Gandhi with the same title. For it, commentary was written by Andhra Visaradha Tapi Dharma Rao Naidu.

As a whole, the film makers upto 1950 were having ideological commitment. But later films are left with patriarchy and pseudo oppressive ideas. The audiences upto 1946

⁴¹K.N.T. Sastry, *Op.Cit.*, p.7.

⁴²Indian Talkie, *Op.Cit.*, , p.29.

⁴³Interview with C.S.Rao, Film Director and son of Veteran Director Late C. Pullaiah on 27th May, 1995, at Madras.

⁴⁴Screen adaptation of 'Mala Pilla' cinema was done by Tapi Dharma Rao Naidu in 1938.

were mainly from middle classes. After 1946 and by 1950 working class people formed the bulk of audience.

Tapi Chankya:

Chankya was the son of Tapi Dharma Rao having been trained as wireless technician, he joined Sobhanachala Studios, Madras, as an Assistant in sound department. Being interested in dramatic art he directed a number of collegiate competitive dramas and won first place many a time. Later he shifted himself to film direction and joined as assistant to B.A. Subba Rao, one of the reputed directors. He had become a fullfledged director and directed a number of hit pictures in Telugu, Tamil and Hindi, 'Rojulu Marayi' was his super hit in 1955.⁴⁵

The account of cinema enriched by the stalwarts belonging to Kapu community would be incomplete without a mention of the artists, like Dr. Govinda Rajulu Subba Rao, C.S.R. Anjaneyulu, Ch. Narayana Rao, Chittoor V. Nagaiah, S.V. Ranga Rao etc., who were great thespians. They enthralled the audiences for a long time with their skill of acting.⁴⁶ Among the Kapus the character actors are S.V. Ranga Rao, R. Nageswara Rao, from Machilipatnam, Rajanala from Ongole, K. Satyanarayana from Machilipatnam, Janardhana Rao, Srihari etc. From comedians we have Allu Rama Lingaiah.

S.V. Ranga Rao:

His full name was Sringavaram Venkat Ranga Rao. He was born in Machilipatnam in Krishna district in a Kapu family. B. Venkata Rama Naidu a great nationalist leader from west Godavari district was the uncle and father-in-law of S.V. Ranga Rao. He was popularly known as S.V. Ranga Rao. He made his screen debut in the film 'Varudhini' in 1946. He dominated the field of character acting on the South Indian screen and enriched many of Tamil and Telugu films with his consummate historic talent. Greater glory came to him when he won the *Best Actor Award* from the *Afro-Asian Film Festival* held in 1963 at Djakarta for his dynamic portrayal as 'Keechaka' in Telugu mythological Rajayam picture's 'Nartanasala' which had earlier

⁴⁵Indian Talkie, *Op.Cit.*, pp.28-29.

⁴⁶R. Partha Sarathy, *Andhra Culture: A Petel in Indian Lotus*, A State Gazetteer Department Publication, Hyderabad, 1984, p.115.

won the silver medal from President of India. He acted in a number of pictures and particular mention should be made to 'Shavukar', 'Patala Bhairavi', 'Missamma', 'Mayabazar', 'Bangaru Papa', and 'Pandanti Kapuram' of Vijaya Productions and Vahini Pictures.⁴⁷ S.V. Ranga Rao's contribution to the film industry was no mean and he received accolades.⁴⁸ S.V. Ranga Rao was not only an actor but also a producer and director. He directed a movie 'Bandhavyalu' on S.V.R. Films (both as producer and director) which was selected as a best film in 1968.⁴⁹

Under the dynamic leadership of Dr. K. Raja Rao, 'Praja Natya Mandali' (which was formed in 1943 by the communist party as its cultural wing) pioneered a revolutionary cultural movement to educate the masses. Personalities of the present day Telugu film industry like Tatineni Prakash Rao, V. Madhusudhan Rao, T. Chalapati Rao, Allu Rama Lingaiah, Mikkilineni, Vallam Narasimha Rao, Jamuna were closely connected with the activities of the Praja Natya Mandali.⁵⁰

Allu Rama Lingaiah was another notable film personality from Kapu caste. He started his film career in 1953 in 'Puttillu'. From the beginning he was a congress sympathiser and he participated in 1942 Quit India Movement and went to jail. Later he became a Communist sympathiser and before 1952 he acted in the Praja Natya Mandali plays and also in their movies also.⁵¹ So far he was acted in more than 800 films. He was famous in his comedy roles. In most of his movies he has acted as villain with comedian character.⁵² At present his son Allu Aravind is famous producer and son-in-law, Chiranjeevi is a Megastar in the Telugu cine field.

Dasari Narayana Rao:

He was born in June 1947 in a middle class Kapu family of Palakollu village in West Godavari district. He started his stage acting from his 9th year onwards. In the

⁴⁷Indian Talkie, *Op.Cit.*, p.31.

⁴⁸K.N.T. Sastry, *Op.Cit.*, p.36.

⁴⁹*Siva Ranjani*, Special Issue, Hyderabad edition, 1990-91, p.262.

⁵⁰N. Venkateswarlu, "Praja Natya Mandali Yesterday and Today", in Dr. V. Krishna Rao (ed.) *Communism in Andhra Pradesh (Rise and Decline)*, Hyderabad, 1989. p.120.

⁵¹*Sivaranjani*, Hyderabad edition, Special Issue, 1990-91, p.112.

⁵²*Andhra Prabha* (Chitra Lekha) Hyderabad edition, 20th Nov. 1998, p.3.

beginning he has acted in 'Tappu Nade' a small play. By his 11th year he not only wrote a play called 'Nenu Naa School' but also acted in this play as a school teacher and won the prizes. By his 14th year, he enlarged the above play for 40 minutes and won the district level prize for his best writer, best play and best actor awards. In 1959 he participated in the state level competitions and was selected for the best actor award and won the gold medal from the Governor of Andhra Pradesh.

From his childhood onwards Dasari has taken up his social service activities. During the 1962 China war he along with 50 other students, toured West Godavari district and collected donations and gave to the National Protection Council. For his services he received an award titled *Praja Seva Vitharana* from the West Godavari District Collector.

Due to financial problems, he discontinued his studies and joined in H.A.L, Hyderabad. But he continued his acting and won number of prizes for his best writer, best acting and his best direction.

In 1973 Dasari Narayana Rao, by then a writer and a stage director came out with his maiden film 'Thata-Manavadu' and drew the attention of the film world in as much as he had offered a low budget production with high box office returns. He entered the cine field without any god fathers and experimented successfully with new cast in movies like 'Swargam-Narakam' in 1975.⁵³ Dasari has not looked back since then. Within a short span of 8 years he has completed over 60 films in more than one language. He has experimented in many ways. He brought new faces as well as very popular stars. He has taken credit for the story, screen play, dialogues and of late for lyrics too, apart from the direction. Recently he has taken to production also. He had acted in some of his own and other movies also. 'Megha Sandesam' has won an award at the National level.⁵⁴

Dasari Narayana Rao, like Satyajit Ray belongs to the Neo-type, unconventional and revolutionary class. In the midst of a cry for purposeful cinema, consensus cinema and entertainment cinema, he makes a combination of all these through a complete

⁵³Geetha Subba Rao, *Andhra Prabha*, (Chitra Lekha) 17th Sept, 1977, p.3.

⁵⁴K.N.T. Sastry, *Op.Cit.*, p.32.

deviation from all of them. His innovative approach is like that of Mrinal Sen, Paranjpaye, Aloori Gopala Krishna and Balachander whose names are to be reckoned within Indian Cinema. Some times he focuses on the central men the so-called hero, and very often on people around him. Flamboyant music, innovative linguistics not controlled by limitations and dialogues growing wings and unconventional endings with new vistas are his characteristics. While taking a Sanskrit film on Adisankara, the famous producer-director G.V.Iyer produced a film on a subject which people never read. In that film the central message is god is faith and religion is experience. The same thing can be said of Dasari's films - he is to be believed to give an experience through films, which are only to be experienced to be believed. 'Oka Voori Katha', 'Premabhishekam', 'O Manishi Tirigichudu', etc., represent new stirring in the Telugu cinema ocean.⁵⁵

Dasari's 'O Manishi Tirigichudu' which opposes bonded labour, 'Manushulantha Okkate', where he talk of farmers and their issues, 'Bobbili Puli', encouraging people to rise against atrocities, 'Oreyi Rickshaw', advocating freedom of the oppressed, and then 'Oseyi Ramulamma', which depicts the revolt of a suppressed and exploited dalit woman. For its success Deccan Chronicle makes a comment: "The film *Oseyi Ramulamma* is a super hit breaking all previous records in the Telugu film industry".⁵⁶

Dasari directed so far more than 131 films. Most of his assistants like Kodi Rama Krishna, Davala Satyam, R. Narayana Murthy, Mutyala Subbaiah, Relangi Narasimha Rao, Ravi Raja Pinsetti etc. are successful directors today.

Although Dasari is not an actor he has as many fans's associations as the major heroes.⁵⁷ Dasari's fans associations were far ahead of others in that they began to perform a wide range of activities in addition to watching their star's films on the first day.⁵⁸ Dasari, Krishna and producer T. Subba Rami Reddy and Chiranjeevi championed their fans activities towards social service. These four people made their fans

⁵⁵R. Partha Sarathy, *Op.Cit.*, p.130.

⁵⁶*Deccan Chronicle* (Cinema Cinema), Hyderabad edition, April 3, 1997, p.1.

⁵⁷Estimated to be 1100.

⁵⁸*Andhra Prabha*, (Chitra Lekha), 17th Oct, 1997, p.1.

associations perform activities such as poor feeding, distribution of clothes to the poor, providing assistance to the sick and the aged etc.⁵⁹

Known for his speed in work and ability in several fields of movie making like direction, action, script, production etc. Dasari was not only a film person, but also experimented in journalism, Udayam (daily), Sivaranjani(Cine Magazine)were run by him.. At present he is running Bobbilipuli (Telugu weekly), and Megha Sandesam (Cine Magazine) .

For his services he was given Kala Prapurna, Honorary Doctorate by Andhra University. Recently he was awarded the N.T Rama Rao Memorial Swarna Kankanam by Vamsi Arts Theatre International Association, Hyderabad.⁶⁰ Recently he was given Nandi award for his best direction. He is the first Telugu Director to be included in the 'Guinness Book of World Records' for his direction of more than 100 films.⁶¹

Chiranjeevi:

Among the cini actors who come from kapu community, the name of Chiranjeevi figures high. The most popular actor today is Chiranjeevi. His original name was Konidela Siva Shankar Vara Prasad. His rise to prominence corresponds roughly with the exit of N.T. Rama Rao⁶² from the film industry in 1982-83 (although N.T.R. continued to make films sporadically over the next decade) and the year also saw the release of 'Khaidi' (A Kodanda Ram Reddy, 1983) a turning point in Chiranjeevi's career as the most popular star which also saw a vast increase in his fan following.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p.3.

⁶⁰*Andhra Prabha*, 19 January, 1999, p.3.

⁶¹*Siva Ranjani*, Special Issue, Hyderabad Edition, 1990-91, p.274.

⁶²Tamil film makers like C.N. Annadurai and M. Karunanidhi made use of Cinema as a vehicle for their political ideology and M.G.R. was projected as a people's hero. These three eventually became Chief Minister's of Tamil Nadu, while a section of the Tamil Cinema had been wedded to a particular political party. The Telugu Cinema was never a party oriented culture. However in 1982, came the changing tide. N.T.R. at the approach of his 60th birth day decided to plunge into politics and founded Telugu Desam Party (TDP). His calculated tour of the districts drawing multitude of crowds landed him as the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. Consequently, the Telugu cine industry, also got divided into two groups, one supporting N.T.R. and others are not, see for details K.N.T. Sastry, *Op.Cit.*, p.36.

Chiranjeevi whose first film was 'Pranam Kharedu' (K.Vasu, 1978) has acted over 132 films including three in Hindi by June, 1999. His films have been dubbed into Hindi, Tamil, Russian and English. He has been reputedly the highest paid star in India.

On screen, Chiranjeevi introduced a new form of dance with quick vigorous, choreographed steps, which stood in stark contrast to the more leisurely style of his predecessors. He did his own stunts, often in a far more spectacular fashion than the norm in the early 80's of Telugu films. In this regard we may quote K.N.T. Sastry, "Telugu cinema's notable characteristic is fan clubs. Popular artists have their own fan clubs and rivalries between them is the order of the day. Even new comers like Chiranjeevi and Suman have their own fan clubs".⁶³ Fans often mention his portrayal of the wronged and angry fugitive fighting feudal oppression in 'Khaidi' as his most important early hit.⁶⁴

Every major hero and heroine has Fans Associations, with numbers that roughly correspond to their popularity. 3000 Fans Associations with a membership varying between 10 to 500 members, spread across all the three regions that comprise A.P. are devoted to Chiranjeevi, the most popular Telugu movie star today.⁶⁵ Undoubtedly, the most popular star after N.T.R., Chiranjeevi is the centre of what is perhaps the largest fan movement in the history of Telugu cinema. Most of his films are referred to as mass-films by film makers and critics, while it is against these (not just his but other stars as well) mass-films that the upper caste, middle class public has sought to mobilise public opinion for over a decade now. However, Chiranjeevi has also featured in some-class films which have been lauded by film critics.⁶⁶

⁶³K.N.T. Sastry, *Op.Cit.*, p.37.

⁶⁴S.V. Srinivas, "Devotion and Defiance in Fan Activity", *Journal of Arts and Society*, No.29, Jan.1996, p.69.

⁶⁵It has been argued that Fan's Associations were created by film industry following their successful promotion of M.G. R. in Tamil Nadu. Motivated by profit the industry encouraged and founded Fans Associations of both N.T.R. and A.N.R. in the hope that fans would provide free publicity to the actors and their projects. The production companies and studios that actively manufactured the star system in the 1950s and 1960s, therefore created Fans' Association as a logical extension of that activity. *Ibid.*67.

⁶⁶S.V. Srinivas, *Fans and Stars: Production, Reception and Circulation of the Moving Image*, Ph.D. Thesis Submitted to University of Hyderabad, 1997, pp.8-9.

Chiranjeevi's fans associations spread across all the three regions of Andhra Pradesh. A majority of fans associations are situated in the urban areas of Coastal Andhra Pradesh.⁶⁷

M.S.S. Pandian's 'The Image Trap' correctly draws attention to the careful and systematic orchestration of images that, in turn, construct the figure of the real Hero, a generous M.G.R. who fights oppression and is a friend of the poor.⁶⁸ Such orchestration is evident in the case of Chiranjeevi as well, although the image projected is some what different. It is perhaps indicated by the fact that Chiranjeevi remains untouched by scandal, by the striking similarities between the official life story and popular print biographics produced by fans, providing evidence for the success of the enterprise.⁶⁹

Perhaps, Chiranjeevi is the first star in India who have a magazine or Fanzine⁷⁰ on his own name. Its name was *Megastar Chiranjeevi*, edited by, Vijaya Bapineedu, the famous producer and director who calls himself a fan of the star. The first issue was published in 1989. Of course, it was run only for 5 years, due to financial problem it was closed in 1994. The inaugural issue called for photographs of Fans Associations' along with details of the nature of social service rendered by each.

The establishment of this periodical constituted the first major effort to consciously harness fan energies to ensure that they performed controlled productive activities. The stress on social service is common and it is aimed at using the Fans Associations to earn the star some good will. Social service, is today one of their main functions.

⁶⁷Chiranjeevi's Fans Associations exist in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Orissa and even Gujarat. According to Chiranjeevi's office staff at Hyderabad, some associations have been formed abroad as well. Chiranjeevi office has photograph's of fans in Kuwait with banners reading *Megastar Chiranjeevi's Fans, Kuwait*, Most fans outside the state are immigrant Telugus, *Ibid*.

⁶⁸M.S.S. Pandian, *The Image Trap. M.G. Ramachandran in Film and Politics*, Sage Publications, N. Delhi, 1992, pp.95-99.

⁶⁹S.V. Srinivas, *Devotion and Defiance, Op.Cit.*, p.73, also see Chiranjeevi's Autobiographical note by Director Mahesh Batt, with K. Kasi Visveswara Rao's, "Mighty Megastar Dynamic Hero Chiranjeevi Sachitra Jeevita Charitra" *Megastar Chiranjeevi*, 1994.

⁷⁰S.V. Srinivas, *Ibid.*, p.71.

The credit for transforming social service activities to the scale of a movement goes to Chiranjeevi who converted his birthday celebrations into a blood and eye donation camps. Recently Chiranjeevi has started *Chiranjeevi Eye and Blood Bank: Research and Development Centre*, a division of Chiranjeevi Charitable Trust in Hyderabad which was established in 1998 with the slogan Donate Eyes and Live Twice.⁷¹

In the wake of N.T.R.'s political success, which has been attributed to his popularity as a film star, a number of other stars entered politics, although few have been able to build lasting political careers. Simultaneously, fans associations witnessed unprecedented growth in the cities. They began establishing links with political parties in several parts of the state, even as their importance for the industry grew with their numbers.

In so far as the fans associations in Andhra Pradesh were concerned, paradoxically the question of caste loyalty did not arise so long as all or most of the super stars belonged to the Kamma caste. Youth from a wide cross section of castes joined the fans associations of different Kamma stars such as N.T.R., A.N.R., Krishna and Sobhanbabu. With the emergence of Chiranjeevi as the most popular non-kamma star ever, the question of pro-Kapu or anti-Kamma alliances arose.⁷² The Telugu film industry is dominated by the Kamma Community. Whether one consider film actors, directors, distributors, producers or financiers, the majority belongs to the Kamma community.⁷³ This has been changed since the mid 1980's when a group of castes began mobilising themselves as Kapus. At the same time Chiranjeevi, a Kapu rose to prominence in Telugu cinema and is currently rated the most popular actor. The Kapu-Kamma conflict thus is also reflected in the rivalries between fans associations.

The Kapus are there in the cine industry in various fields like music, photography, producers etc. Music director of 1960's and 1970's fame Master Venu the father of cine actor Banuchander also belongs to this caste. Famous singer of Yester years Pithapuram Nageswara Rao also belongs to this caste. The politician CH. Hari

⁷¹Interview with R. Swamy Naidu, Secretary, *All India Chiranjeevi Fans Association*, 8th Oct, 1998.

⁷²See for details S.V. Srinivas *Fans and Stars*, *Op.Cit.*

⁷³The fact becomes evident even from a random selection of major film personalities. *Source: Vijayawada Film Chamber of Commerce.*

Rama Jogaiyah also made a movie on his own banner R.K.R. Production. The movie was *Nalaga Yendaro* in 1978 and still he continuing production of films.⁷⁴

Apart from Chiranjeevi, Pavan Kalyan his younger brother, Nagendra Babu, his elder brother (both actor and producer), others like suresh, Bhanuchander (he was not only actor but also a music director like his father Master Venu) producer and director also are Kapus.

The famous producers from Kapu caste are T. Trivikram Rao (N.A.T.pictures), K. Nageswara Rao, (Rama Films), brother of character actor K. Satyanarayana, Allu Aravind, son of Allu Rama Lingaiah and brother in-law of Chiranjeevi, Thota Subba Rao from Tanuku and Eedida Nageswara Rao (Purnodaya art creations)

In the domain of Heroines, the Kapus are P. Kannamba of Pandilla Palli Village in Krishna district, S. Vara Laxmi from Guntur, Savitri from Vijayawada, Ramba and Ravali from Machilipatnam. P. Kannamba and Kanchanamala of the Yester years were the most versatile actresses. P. Kannamba in her heyday strode the scene like a colossus. Among the other actresses Savitri is of very high repute.⁷⁵

The late Piniseti Sri Rama Murthy was well known to Andhra people as play writer and script writer. He also made movies on Adarsha banner. Now his son Ravi Raja Piniseti is a famous director in the Telugu film industry. At the same time, the director Sri Ramulu Naidu, (who directed Aggi Ramudu with N.T.R. as Hero in 1954) also belongs to this caste.

Late R. Nageswara Rao, in the role of villian swayed the audience in 1960's V.Rajanala also dominated the scene upto 1990's.⁷⁶ At present K. Satyanarayana and Srihari are villians in Telugu cine field from Kapu caste.

⁷⁴*Siva Ranjani*: Special Issue, Hyderabad edition, 1990-91, p.262.

⁷⁵R. Partha Sarathy, *Op.Cit.*, p.131.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

Literature:

In the literary and journalism fields we have people like Tapi Dharma Rao, M. Chalapati Rau from this caste. And also there are writers, Novelists like Chandu Sombabu, Chiranjeevi, Erramsetti Sai, Harsha Vardhana, Piniseti Sri Ram Murty, Aniseti Subba Rao, Mannem Saradha etc. from this caste.

Journalism

Many communist oriented writers like Tapi Dharma Rao and others not only spread the ideas of Marxism but also rendered considerable service to the growth of the Telugu literature.

Tapi Dharma Rao Naidu:

Tapi Dharma Rao Naidu was born at Barhampur in 1887. He was a student of Gidigu Rama Murthy at Parlakimidi Rajah College in B.A. He did his M.A. in Madras in Political Science. Started 'Kondegadu' magazine in 1912. Worked for 'Samadarshini' of Pingali Subramanyam setti for some time. It was the official organ of justice party (under Gudavalli Rama Brahmam). He later edited 'Janavani' from 1936 when justice party has split and 'people's party' came out. Through 'Janavani', he made several experiments and took language nearer to the public. When it was closed in 1939 he started 'Kagada' and ran it for two years. After some time he again revived 'Janavani'. In 1941 he conducted the editors conference for the first time at Vijayawada.⁷⁷

Tapi Dharma Rao was a stalwart in Telugu Literature who threw his weight with the progressive writers movement. Many a number of the present artists in the cinema field were to some extent connected with the communist party in the past. He wrote screen play and dialogues for the movie 'Rojulu Marayi (Times have changed) which focussed the urgent need of land reforms.⁷⁸

The universal character of Nationalism and how the Nation was meant to serve the interests of all the 'people' was popularised by young nationalists in their popular

⁷⁷Rapolu Ananda Bhaskar, *Journalism-Charitra-Vyavastha* (Telugu), Sri Venkateswara Printers, Vijayawada, 1988, pp.56-57.

⁷⁸D. V. Krishna Rao, *Communism in Andhra Pradesh, (Rise and Decline)* Cavery Publications, Hyderabad, 1989, p.116.

songs. A good example is the poem "Nag Janma Bhumi" (My Mother land) written for children by Tapi Dharma Rao in 1924.⁷⁹ He also worked with G. Rama Brahmam for movies like 'Malapilla' and 'Rythu Bidda'.⁸⁰ Literary critic, Journalist and poet excelled as screen play writer in 'Bheeshama' and 'Patni'. He had to his credit most of Gudavalli Ram Brahmam's classics.⁸¹ The papers like 'Prajamitra', 'Kagada' etc., by Tapi Dharma Rao had played vital role in rousing the social conscience of the people against religious, social and economic injustice and exploitation. Thus caste and class conflict developed.⁸² He has two sons by name Tapi chankya a film director and Tapi Mohan Rao a noted novelist and a daughter who was married to Sohan Singh a homaeopathy doctor in Hyderabad.

M. Chalapati Rau

English journalism attracted the attention of Andhras and they did great service to it in the state and outside. Among them Mr. Chalapati Rau of National Herald was famous. Manikonda Chalapati Rau was born in Visakhapatnam in a Kapu family. He did his B.A. in History at Visakhapatnam. Later he finished his M.A. in English literature at Presidency College, Madras. He also took his B.L. Degree from Madras. For some time he was an advocate at Madras High Court.⁸³

Before joining the National Herald, M. Chalapati Rau, worked some time in Triveni.⁸⁴ Writing about M. Chalapati Rau Iswara Dutt said.

"A voracious reader, his range of reading was vast, from ancient classics to Marxism. He was fond of saying that of his favourite authors none were alive and all were dead. But who could those be? Shakespeare, of course. Among the rest were Malony, Johnson, Browne, Butler, Swift, Landor Lamb, Shelly, Browning, Macaulay, Fraude, Newman and Ruskin. For all his vivacity in writing he preferred papers dignified and dull to those given to 'monkeying' in exuberance. As a journalist, in the same

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

⁸⁰Rapolu Ananda Bhaskar, *Op.Cit.*

⁸¹Indian Talkie, *Op.Cit.*, p.24.

⁸²R. Sangeetha Rao, *Caste System in India: Myth and Reality*, India Publishers and distributors, N. Delhi, 1989, pp.133-134.

⁸³M. Chalapati Rau, *Journalism and Politics, 1984*, pp.6, 312.

⁸⁴K. Iswara Dutt, *The Street of Ink*. Triveni Publishers, Machilipatnam, 1956, p.81.

spirit, he preferred, Scott to Garwin, Spender to Gardiner, and Montague to anyone else, and thought only of Manchester Guardian at its best as a model. As a self-conscious craftsman who is his own model, M. Chalapati Rau has fought his way to the front, with a sense of inevitability".⁸⁵

Some of the India's greatest journalists have come from Andhra Pradesh which has produced some outstanding journalists who have brought lustre and glory to the profession both before and after independence. But they were all devoted to English Journalism of which they were shining ornaments. Among them, M. Chalapati Rau was one.

Among India's great editors M. Chalapati Rau stands out as the champion of the working journalists for whom he strove to secure basic rights as a worker and a decent wage, and as the uncompromising fighter for a free and independent press. He fought against pressures on the news paper internally from the owner or externally from vested interests. He had a sharp wit and a keen sense of the absurd and ridiculous and used his powerful pen to deflate the egos of power crazy politicians and bureaucrats. The high point in his career was the close rapport he established with Jawaharlal Nehru and the vigour and clarity with which he expounded his ideals and philosophy. It was a "concordat of minds". It was a very special relationship between the man who founded the 'National Herald' and the man who edited it during its great years.⁸⁶

The National Herald was started in 1938 under the stewardship of Pandit Nehru, who acted as Chairman of its Board of Directors. In the words of M. Chalapati Rau, it "..... was so closely identified with Gandhi and Nehru in the war years that it served as a test case of the freedom of the press under the Defence of Rules, and in relations between the Government and the All-India News Paper editors conference".⁸⁷ M. Chalapati Rau who started as number thirteen in "National Herald" became number two in two years and by 1946, assumed its Editorship.⁸⁸

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, p.86.

⁸⁶Rangaswami Partha Sarathy: *Journalism in India: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, Sterling Publishers Private Limited, Ne Delhi, 1991, p.268.

⁸⁷M. Chalapati Rau: *The Press in India*, N.B.T., 1974, p.152.

⁸⁸Motilal Bhargava: *Role of Press in the Freedom Movement*, Reliance Publishing House, New Delhi, 1987, p.170.

It was a phenomenal rise due to sheer merit, but the paper was closed down in 1942.⁸⁹ He spent some time working in the 'Hindustan Times' and rejoined the 'Herald' when it was revived in 1945. He was appointed as editor in 1946 and held that post for 31 years from 1946 to 1977 which must be quite a record. His command of the language was the envy of his colleagues in the profession and according to one of them there were not then a dozen in India who had that mastery.⁹⁰

According to K. Rama Rao, who held the editorship of the National Herald before M. Chalapati Rau.

"M. Chalapati Rau started as number thirteen and became number two in two years in 1946. It was a phenomenal rise achieved by sheer merit. Mr. M. Chalapati Rau has a superb command of English; there are not a dozen in India who have that mastery. He wanted to do writing even as he started, but I insisted firmly that he should learn news work first and foremost. A present day editor, who does not know it, would cut a sorry figure; he would be at the mercy of his staff and would not command their respect. I am glad he has since appreciated the way I directed his feet correctly into the way of journalism. He worked for a time as news editor and then as assistant editor".⁹¹

When the second world war broke out, Rama Rao left it to him to do the Sunday Morning article on its progress, which he did with a distinction that brought the paper high praise. Those articles, coupled with others of connected interest, became columns of liquid gold in his hands. Like several others, he rejoined the paper when it was started again in 1945, at a salary lower than he had been getting elsewhere and became the editor when Rama Rao left in 1946.⁹²

In the words of one admirer:

"He wrote in a heavy, granite like style untouched by poetic feeling and imaginery. He wrote with vigour and precision when putting forth his view or rebutting on opposite one. He could be delightfully allusive drawing liberally from the wells of literature and history. He owed this to wide and purposeful reading all through his life. He did occasionally dip

⁸⁹According to M.Chalapati Rau, *The National Herald* had suspended publication in answer to Gandhiji's call that it was better not to publish news papers than to publish them under the restrictions. See M. Chalapati Rau *The Press in India*, NBT 1974, p.153.

⁹⁰M. V. Kamath: *Professional Journalism*, Vikas Publishing House Private Limited, New Delhi, 1980, p.9, also see, M. Chalapati Rau, *Journalism and Politics*, Vikas Publishing Press, New Delhi, 1984, p.99.

⁹¹K.Rama Rao was a journalist during the freedom movement.He was the first editor of the National Herald.K. Rama Rao, *The Pen As My Sword: Memories of a Journalist*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1965, p.123.

⁹²*Ibid.*

his pen in vitriol to make sleeping statements and pass forth harsh judgements." He once wrote of Indian writers in English "The Indo-Anglican writer is typical of our intellectual wastefulness".⁹³

'Our Fleet Street is a Street of Ink', Chalapati Rau wrote, 'a street of adventure but also street of Perils. Indian journalism has been one of many vigorous forms of the expressiveness of Indian Nationalism: To Kristodas Pal, Motilal Ghosh, Subramanya Ayer and Chintamani, Fleet Street was not their spiritual home, though the last one absorbed most of the traditions without being burdened by techniques. They were great journalists. They built up traditions which have made journalism what it is today or what it was till yesterday. Our society is still amorphous weighed down by the milestone of an english educated middle class and it seems difficult for journalism to recover its sociological functions. For one sad feature of our journalism is the lack of social vision which includes political vision.⁹⁴ According to one writer, 'the editors of those days, drawn from the learned professions combined a fine acumen, a flexibility of outlook that was well above the reproach of opportunism, a determination to keep the flag flying in the face of repression and press laws and find best way of doing well by themselves as much as by the country. There can be no questioning the quality of service they rendered to the country, their skill in that kind of tight-rope walking or skating on their ice which was required to escape the attention of the new minister and at the same time adhere to the standards of courageous support of the national cause'.⁹⁵ Chalapati Rau must have had these editors in mind when he wrote about the Indian fleet street.

Chalapati Rau's knowledge of foreign politics would suffice half a dozen chancelleries. He has that inestimable virtue of a diplomat - he can be as silent and as enigmatic as the sphinx. Tickle him, he will not laugh; prick him, he will not bleed. His reserves are more intriguing than his revelations. He does not believe in going out to meet humanity at large; he is like a famous editor who said that humanity might as well meet him by appointment. He has a soft and warm heart which he hides effectively behind an austere and aloof pose.⁹⁶

⁹³Ranga Swamy, Parthasarathy, *Op.Cit.*, p.269.

⁹⁴*Ibid*, p.269.

⁹⁵*Ibid*, p.269.

⁹⁶K. Rama Rao, *Op.Cit.*, pp.123-124, also see Ranga Swamy Parthasarathy, *Op. Cit.*, pp.269-271.

In 1942 that journalists in Lucknow headed by Mr. K. Rama Rao and Mr. M. Chalapati Rau, convened the Uttara Pradesh Journalists Conference with Mr. S.A. Brelvi, editor of the Bombay Chronicle, in the Chair. They pleaded for the security and amelioration of the working journalists and encouraged them to organise themselves.⁹⁷

Working journalists of India had their 'October Revolution' in 1950 when they met in Delhi and decided to form a nation wide organisation to protect their rights as a group and their fundamental rights, and those rights which indirectly issue from the Directive Principles of the constitution such as the right to a decent wage.

It was a red letter day in the annals of Indian journalism when the working journalists movement came under the leadership of M. Chalapati Rau, who, by his, journalistic eminence, intellectual incandescence and moral earnestness and fervour, brought to it a strength and prestige which had ensured its victory at the very outset.⁹⁸ Thus he founded the Federation of Working Journalists in 1950 and was its President for three terms. He nurtured it and made it strong to fight for the rights of working journalists and for a living wage for them. As a member of the first Press Commission appointed in 1952, he was largely instrumental in the Commission recommending the appointment of a Wage Board for working journalists.⁹⁹ He commanded the respect and affection of his colleagues and peers in the profession. According to Chalapati Rau, "Journalism is not a matter of wages and benefits. It is a matter of craft and craftsmanship and journalists are expected to possess not only professional skill but professional pride. It is a free and equal profession. The competition is open. Anyone can rise by enterprise. There is a sense of fellowship between the editor and machineman, between the sub-editor and the proof reader. The news paper is one entity. Every member of the staff should stand or fall by it."¹⁰⁰ Thus Mr. M. Chalapati Rau, was the moving spirit behind the working journalists movement which took strong roots under his able guidance and stewardship.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, p.181.

⁹⁸Iswara Dutt, *Op.Cit.*, p.196.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, pp.297-298.

¹⁰⁰Rangaswami Parthasarathy, *Op.Cit.*, p.272.

Mr. M. Chalapati Rau, was the president of the convention. He occupied a unique position in Journalism as the editor of the 'National Herald' - the one editor who can call his soul his own. Commanding a high intellectual ability, possessing a character that would be an asset to any people's organisation and gifted with tact, wisdom and resourcefulness, he has led it from strength to strength and put it on a secure foundation during the time he held office.¹⁰¹

Working journalists will remember Chalapati Rau for the dedication with which he worked to gain them recognition and a decent wage. As a member of the first press commission he was greatly instrumental in focussing attention on the conditions of the working journalists and to suggest measures to bring cheer and hope into their lives. He was undoubtedly the builder of the working journalists movement in the country. Under his constant care and guidance, this movement has grown into a pivotal organisation in the world of the Indian press. Chalapati Rau looked upon the working journalists movement not merely as a platform to protect the working conditions of the Indian journalists but as an organ to defend the freedom of the Indian press from pollution by proprietorial and other vested interests as also from executive pressures and blandishments.

M. Chalapati Rau's grateness lay in his magnetising capacity to attract readers. It was as paragraphist that he shone punctually in its columns, and whether he suryed foreign affairs or wrote a column of literary notes, there was the authentic M.Chalapati Rau's touch. That on the emergence of National Herald he should have gravitated to it was a matter of course, for , by his association with the weekend, he ceased to be a stranger to the reading public in utara pradesh.¹⁰²

D. Anjaneyulu, a journalist, writing in Triveni (April 1953) on literary profiles mused thus:

'This only highlights the positions, by contrast, of conscientious craftsmen of the 'pofile' art like K. Iswara Dutt, Khasa Subba Rau, Frank Moraes and M. Chalapati Rau,

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, p.265.

¹⁰²K. Iswara Dutt, *Op.Cit.*, p.93.

who are all unlike one another, and at the same time for above the common run of 'Sketch-writers'¹⁰³

Chalapati Rau spent almost his entire career as a journalist in one newspaper the 'National Herald' which although did not have a big circulation, was a powerful voice of the National Movement, the voice of its most enlightened section, under the stewardship of Chalapati Rau. His dedication to the paper was overwhelming. Of the National Herald's contribution he said: "In the process of constitution-making, the integration of country-in free India's contribution - the National Herald has written stout-heartedly and freely as a critic and as a friend with the ideal service for which it was started kept constantly in view". The National Herald wrote without fear and without malice.¹⁰⁴

The philosophy which guided him and to which he was deeply committed was the philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru. According to Rangaswamy Parthasarathi, M. Chalapati Rau was the best and the most lucid exponent of Nehruism apart from Nehru himself. At the same time, it was the freedom that Nehru always insisted that a journalist should be assumed that enabled Chalapati Rau to rise to great heights as a distinguished editor whose views commanded wide respect. The relationship between the two stands out indeed as a model of how a political leader and a journalist of integrity should interact in a democracy where the masses have to be informed so that they are equipped adequately to elect those who are to wield power. Not only did Chalapati Rau understand the significance of this relationship but this understanding became the basis of his monumental endeavour to popularise Jawaharlal Nehru as the architect of Indian democracy".¹⁰⁵

Indira Gandhi once described Chalapati Rau, "as the conscience keeper of my father". It was said of him that reading his editorials in those days one felt that virtually every word in them had been tested and weighed against the quality of understanding and judgement that informed Jawaharlal Nehru's own approach to men and matters and policies.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, pp.176-177.

¹⁰⁴Rangaswami Parthasarathy, *Op.Cit.*, p.270.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*

The contemporary scene however, much enveloped in spiritual darkness, has some rays of light, if no beacons, to leave us some what hopeful of the future of journalism. Our own 'Fourth Estate' has not lost the bread of noble bloods'. The presence of our ranks of such distinguished men as Mr. M. Chalapati Rau (others are Mr. Raghunath Iyer, Mr. Khasa subba Rau, Mr. Pothan Joseph, Mr. J. Natarajan, Mr. Frank Moraes,) is a gurantee of the survival of great tradition in journalism.¹⁰⁷

Writing about M. Chalapati Rau, of the equally 'Sea-green incorruptible', Iswara Dutt said: "at a time when there were too many assaults on editorial integrity and independence, he stood up like a man who has since his school-days mused on the fate of Danton at the guillotine. He is many things rolled into one (writer of prose and verse, satirist, columnist, leader-writer) - and particularly two things; he is both a craftsman and a crusader. I would rather leave it at that as I feel that in his case the best is yet to be, for I know that what he has so far revealed of himself is less than what he has concealed".¹⁰⁸

Chalapati Rau's greatest service to the Federation in the initial stages was that he gathered together devoted talent, put it together, and made the best use of it, a rather difficult task in an anarchical profession like ours. His addresses were dignified, scintillating with Jewelled words, glittering with phrases, packed with thought and resolve. He showed consummate ability in handling delicate situations and negotiating difficult problems and was equal to every situation that arose.¹⁰⁹

To the last he was uncompromising in his integrity and in his principles. An admirer wrote "Himself living a life of an ascetic, he commanded a moral stature which acted as a living indictment of all those in the press who would for personal gains make peace with inequality and injustice. He never forgave those in the journalist profession who would sacrifice their integrity for a comfortable life-style. Chalapati Rau could

¹⁰⁷Iswara Dutt, *Op.Cit.*, pp.250-251.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, pp.252-253.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, pp.265-266

never suffer and hypocrisy in the community of pressmen as he stood for a cleaner public life".¹¹⁰

M. Chalapati Rau was a distinguished member of the First Press Commission (1952-54), the UNESCO Press Experts Committee 1950, and the Initiating Committee of the International Press Institute and also Vice-Chairman of the UNESCO Conference on Journalism Training, a member of the Organising Committee of the International Conference of Journalists held at Helsinki. He was also leader of the Indian Press Delegation which accompanied Nehru to the Soviet Union, Poland and Yugoslavia in 1955 and he was country's delegate to UNESCO General Conference and its representative in the U.N. General Assembly.

Besides his association with several organisations and his participation in National and International conferences, he was a member and Vice-Chairman of the Nehru Memorial Trust Fund and Chairman of the Executive Council of the Nehru memorial Museum and Library and Jawaharlal Nehru University. He was also a member of the Jury for the Nehru Award for International Understanding.

M. Chalapati Rau, wrote several books. They are *Fragments of a Revolution*, *Essays on Indian Problems*, *Gandhi and nehru*, *The Press in India (1974)*, *Nehru For Children*, *Nehru A Biography*. *All in All*, *The Romance of the Newspaper*, *India, Portrait of a people*, *Govind Vallabh pant*, *Journalism and Politics (1984)*. He was conferred Honorary Doctorates by the Agra, Andhra and Sri Venkateswara Universities.

He was killed in a road accident in 1983 and his body was found on the road side. In a tribute to him, one of his admirers wrote "Chalapati Rau as a personality of outstanding calibre stood out in the national life of India. Behind this massive figure was a person of shy and gentle nature. With his abundance of wit and irrepressible humour, was not attracted by the glamour of social life, by temperament he was lonely-almost a lone wolf. But he was by no means unapproachable. Particularly to those younger to him, he had always something to impart out of his vast erudition and professional experience. He was a teacher par-excellence but only to those who could break through the outer crust of his strange aloofness. Even when he was irritated he bore no rancour.

¹¹⁰Rangaswami Parthasarathy, *Op.Cit.*, p.271.

And he left this world as unobtrusively as he lived. All those who knew him could sense that a giant had departed, the like of whom is not to be found in the intellectual world of the India of today".¹¹¹

K. Rama Rao:

Kathiresetti Rama Rao was born in a Telaga family on 11th Sept, 1934 and did his B.Sc., from Andhra Christian College, Guntur and Engineering studies from Madras and College of Aeronautics Garifield U.K. He joined Defence, R&D Organisation in 1959 as Head of the Structure and Materials Division and retired as Director, DRDL, Hyderabad in 1994 and continues as Advisor D.R.D.L.

Rama Rao made a significant contribution to India's Missile programme and to re-entry technology for AGNI missile in particular. He developed special structures and materials for the Guided Missile Programme for which he received several awards. He received *Sir, M. Visweswaraiiah Award* from the Institution of Engineers as the Best Engineer of the Year in 1990. *Best Invention Award from Govt. of India in 1991* and the highest D.R.D.O. Award from Ministry of Defence in 1993. He has one son who is computer software engineer and a daughter presently in states.¹¹²

Sports:

Like literature, in general people belonging to Kapu caste there were quite a few who belonged to Sports as well.

Cricket:

Cothari Kanaka Naidu, (1895-1967) popularly known as C.K. Naidu came from a illustrious Kapu family of Barristars and men of letters was born in 1895. He was called cricket king, greatest batsman of the world. His brother C.S. Naidu also was a cricketer, well known as international cricketer.

According to K. Rama Rao, the famous journalist :

“The most pleasant recollection I have of those days in the classic innings of C.K. Naidu for the Hindus of Bombay against Gilligan's team in 1926.

¹¹¹Rangaswami Parthasarathy, *Op.Cit.*, p.272.

¹¹²Interview with K. Rama Rao on 26.1.1998 at Secunderabad.

I stole a few hours from office work to watch the match and I saw every stroke of his great game, as well as that of Earle for the visitors. Naidu was at the top of his form -eleven sixers and sixteen fours hit in a blaze of glory, a memory to cherish for ever¹¹³"

Consider the piece on C.K. Naidu by Chalapati Rao (Magnus)

"C.K. Nayudu was too alive for long to have become entirely a legend. It is difficult to bury him, as other great cricketers are buried, under a mound of metaphors, though the language of cricket is rich in them. He combined spartan physical strength with an artistic grace. To think of him mainly in terms of his sixes is poor appreciation, like his *Padma Bhushan* which was poor recognition. His sixes were only the sparks of his scientific hitting. Nor is it adequate to recall Neville Cardus with his poetic phrases borrowed from the language of music, because Cardus had only a glimpse of Nayudu's greatness".¹¹⁴

Nayudu could be said to be the father of modern Indian cricket, the man who stamped the age with his strength of character. He is often compared to Jessop, to Trumper, to Macartney or to Woolley; with similar grace and freedom from care, woolley was probably the closest to him. In Indian terms, Nayudu's place was by the side of Ranji, Duleep and Pataudi. Ranji was remote to the modern generation. Duleep with his tulip's delicacy gave of his best in England's green fields. Pataudi was not the success he had been at Oxford when transplanted. Nayudu was wholly indigenous, almost self-taught and self-schooled. Like others, he had to suffer from the imposition of princes in the privilege ridden days of cricket. Nayudu was a commoner, but a commoner who was king.¹¹⁵

It would be ceremonial piety to say that his death is a loss to cricket. He lived a life of achievement, more than that, of fulfilment and his death is a loss in the sense that a magnificent personality, a magnificent presence, has been withdrawn from a greying landscape. His qualities as a cricketer have been described by many, from Hobbs to Miller and by variety of writers using a rich vocabulary. But for those who saw him at his best, no mere tribute to his technique is even adequate. He was a Greek or a Roman

¹¹³K.Rama Rao, *The Pen As My Sword; Memoirs of a Journalist*. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, 1965.p.40

¹¹⁴M. V. Kamath, *Professional Journalism*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Limited, New Delhi, 1980, p.167.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*

at the cricket, every stroke spoke of power and thinking, the merest gesture was an expression of a powerful personality.

Statistics tell nothing and it was ill luck that he was passing his prime when India entered test cricket, and even then he showed without doubt what he could have done in the age of statistics.¹¹⁶

Even Wisden speaks of his promise, not of fulfilment. He had stature and grace; if strength is added to grace, it results in grandeur. He was an all-rounder who did not cease to be a front rank batsman. As a bowler, he could be as wily as Odysseus. To see him field was to see a panther at work. But it was as captain that he was at his best and his character was fully expressed. It was as a captain of India and as a captain of Holkar that his personality found full play and cricket politics, which prevented him from presenting fully his wisdom to the generations which grew under his shadow, withered in his presence. As leader, he was a maker of men, some of them princes among men, like Mushtaq Ali.¹¹⁷

Chandra Naidu:

She was a daughter of famous cricketer C.K. Naidu. She was born and brought up at Indore and retired as professor in English.

Her father was the captain of Indian Team in 1932 and she was the first women commentator not only in India but also in the entire world. She first gave her commentary at Indore in 1977 for the match between Melbourne Cricket Club and Ranji Champions. In 1980 she gave commentary for the match between M.C.C and Hyderabad teams at Hyderabad and she interviewed by the BBC. Later BBC telecasted her interview.

In 1982 she was invited to Mecca of Cricket, Lords of England, on the eve of Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Indo-England Test Matches.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, pp.167-168.

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹¹⁸K. Sarath Babu, 'On Chandra Naidu' *Andhra Prabha*, (Nagara Prabha) 15 June, 1997, p.7.

Tennis:

C. Ramaswamy (M.A. Cambridge) Deputy Director of Agriculture in India called 'Cambridge Blew". He was the first Indian to participate in Davis Cup and won the cup.

Nallam Reddi Krishna Swamy was Tennis Champion in Madras. He was also ranked player in Tennis. He had won championship in Doubles in association with Cambridge blew C. Ramaswamy.

Foot Ball:

Mamidipalli Appa Rao from Kakinada in East Godavari District was called star of India in foot ball. He was one of the champions in India.

D. Ravinder, Sportsman:

D. Ravinder was born on 9.2.1963 at Machilipatnam in a Telaga family and settled in Hyderabad. He did his S.S.C. at Mahboob College, Secunderabad.

He played carromboard from the school days, participated in the following championship state played since 1990. He participated and represented for Ist World Cup Carrom Championship held at Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, New Delhi in the year 1991 and qualified for All India Quarter Finals. In April 1990 he has participated as a 'Referee' for All India Carrom Federation in the 18th Junior National Inter-state Carrom Championship held at Thane, Maharashtra, between March 31 and April 3rd 1990. He was participated as a qualifying player in the XXI Senior National and Inter-state Carrom Championship, organised by Faridabad District Carrom Association under the auspicious of Haryana Carrom Association and All India Carrom Federation.

Dr. Ravinder was Umpire for the 25th Senior National and Inter-State Carrom Championship held at Hyderabad, Feb.5-10, 1996. At present, he is member of AP Carrom Association and also giving coaching for State Carrom Association.

Further there are some Kapus who represent various fields. Persons like Harikatha Pithamahudu Adibhatla Narayana Dasu from Kuchinapudi village from Guntur district, Vinnakota Ramaswamy Naidu from Machilipatnam (He was the first

person who printed Kalamkari in Andhra Pradesh) The famous Body Builder or Wristler Kodi Ramamurthy Naidu, etc. Kodi Ramamurthy, the Indian Hercules bore the weight of a couple of elephants on his chest and fought Gama in wrestling. Dramatist Suri Babu also belonged to this caste.

Edida Gopala Rao:

Telugu News Reader in All India Radio. He got diploma and Theatre Arts in 1963-64. Established a cultural organisation at Delhi by name 'Sarasa Navarasa' in 1978 and conducted several cultural programmes. He is interested in Theatre and felt that drama should be kept alive through competitions, drama courses in Universities, by encouraging audiences to see dramas by buying tickets etc. His book *Uttaradilo Dakshanadi Pramukhulu* was very famous.¹¹⁹ He was not only a news reader, but also a writer, actor. He wrote a book by name '*Gopala Tarangalu*'¹²⁰

Thota Tharani:

After obtaining his initial training in painting in India, Thota Tharani studies under Stanley William Hayter at his Atelier in France in Print making. Having participated in the graphic workshop at the Royal College of Art in London. He obtained specialised training in graphic art too. A renowned artist, he has participated in several exhibitions in India and France. He won the first prize in wild life painting competition during three consecutive years in 1968, 1969 and 1970. Presently working as a freelance painter, he has his collections at numerous centres in India and abroad.¹²¹

The great Saint Swami Omkar Maharaj, the founder of Shanti Ashram in Totapalli, Waltair and Kotagiri and various branches throughout the world was a Telaga. His name was Marisetty Venkata Rao, the nephew of Rednam family of Pittapuram. He was born in 1895 and died in 1982. He did Penance for 14 years in thick forests of Shankavaram and had a vision of God like Buddha. He became a great Jain and continued to spread the message throughout the world.¹²²

¹¹⁹*Waartha*, Hyderabad edition, 21 Oct. 1998, p.4, also see *Andhra Prabha (Nagara Prabha)*, Hyderabad Edition, Oct.18, 1998, p.4.

¹²⁰*Andhra Prabha, Ibid.*,

¹²¹G. Ramakrishna, N. Gayatri and D. Chattopadhyaya, *An Encyclopaedia of South Indian Culture*, K. A. Bagchi and Company, Calcutta, 1983, p.469.

¹²²Interview with Rama Seshachalam, Vetapalem, 15th May, 1995.

There was a Saint Naga Setty Ayodhya Ramaiah, a rich land lord who donated his extensive lands for poor people to build houses. It has now come to be known as Ayodhya Ramapuram at Samalkota. Mention should be made about Kota Laxmaiah Naidu, a great philanthropist, was a donar of Annadana Samaj in Kakinada. Next as a donar Maharaja Samaj of Pithapuram and Ashramas in Guntur and Tenali. Now they have settled in Vetapalem.¹²³

From historical point of view Dewan Bahadur Kommi Reddy Suryanarayana Murthy Naidu was the founder of *Saraswati Ganasabha* in Kakinada around 1900. He was the first president of All India Music Academy, and also he was the first president of the Andhra Chamber of Commerce. This family donated a Hospital in Kakinada for public use. He was the Chairman of Kakinada Municipality for some time.

Thus there are people from Kapu caste who contributed to the society in their respective fields. They are from administrative side we have Ajay Naidu and I.J. Naidu. Like wise, P.V. Rangaiah Naidu, Ragala, M.V. Bhaskara Rao from IPS. From legal side we have Justice A. Lakshmana Rao and P. Shiv Shankar and Rajya Lakshmi in High Court. In the academics we have from Kapus. The most important personalities was Raghupati Venkata Ratnam Naidu, others are Sri Ram Govinda Rajulu Naidu, M.V.Rao, Ramakrishnaiah, R. Radhakrishna. Dr. K. Rajyalakshmi being the first woman academician who became the Vice-Chancellor of a university. All belonging to Kapu caste.

In the performing arts like Music, Theatre, Painting etc., we have several people from Kapu caste and their contribution to the society is worthy to be mentioned. They are Dwaram Venkataswami Naidu, Yella Venkateswara Rao, Achanta Venkata Ratnam Naidu, Eelapati Raghuramaiah. In the Theatre side, particularly, in cinema Kapus stands supreme in certain fields. First photographer, first studio owner, hero, heroine, and director belongs to this caste only. They are R. Venkaiah R. Prakash, Kannamba, etc. In the recent period also we have S.V. Ranga Rao, Dasari Narayana Rao, and Chiranjeevi were excelled in their fields as the tops in the cine industry. There are other persons like

¹²³*Ibid.*

P. Nageswara Rao, Master Venu, Eedida Gopala Rao, Thota Tharani who excelled in their fields.

Particularly in the literature and journalism we have prominent persons from Kapu caste who not only famous in Andhra Pradesh but also in the country probably in the world also. In the first place we have Tapi Dharma Rao Naidu who excelled in both the fields. But in journalism, we have M. Chalapathi Rao who achieved a world recognition for his journalistic contribution. He achieved a distinction of being spent almost his entire career as a journalist in one news paper.

Like wise in science and technology, M.V. Rao and K. Rama Rao excelled in their respective fields. In sports, the Kapus contribution was very high not only in state and national level but also in the international level. Not only that we have a lady cricket comentator from this caste in national level. In cricket we have world famous cricketers from this caste like C.K. Naidu and his brother C.S. Naidu. Like cricket in Tennis, Football, Carroms also Kapus played a prominent role.

Other prominent Kapus were Adibhatla Narayana Das, Kodi Ramamurthy and dramtist Suribabu who excelled in their respective fields.

CHAPTER - VII
CONCLUSIONS

The caste system began to acquire new functions and dimensions in the changing socio-economic and political ambience of the pre-independence period. However, changes in the caste system notwithstanding the grip of this institution on the social matrix did not loosen to any appreciable extent. Caste continues to persist, albeit in a different form from its feudal 'embodiment'. After the achievement of Independence and introduction of electoral politics in a traditional society, caste gained a new role for itself.

Changes in the institution of caste cannot be fully comprehended in isolation from the changes in economy and politics. Changes in caste as a system are closely related to the changes in the economic sphere, while the transformation of castes as interest groups is intrinsically related to the introduction and spread of democratic politics.

The Introduction of democracy, which has been effective in India since Independence, while dismantling the traditional authority structure, at least theoretically, has contributed to the growth and consolidation of castes as interested groups. In view of the fragmentation and factionalism within caste groups and alignments and realignments among them, political parties no doubt cut across caste groups. But because of the compulsions of electoral politics, no party can ignore the caste factor except at its own peril. At every stage in politics, the leaders of political parties, have to engage in 'Caste-roping walking'. The importance of caste increases as we go down the political hierarchy from the parliamentary constituency to the village panchayat. Religious and sectarian leaders and the *Mathadhi Patris* (Monastic leaders) also play a crucial, though covert, role in the mobilisation of the caste factor for political purposes.

Thus during the second half of the 19th century we can see many changes in economic and social spheres. In the economic sphere, it led to the rise of the dominant peasant castes, rich peasantry and a middle class. Balijas have been traditionally a trading community and the rate of literacy among them was quite high. As said earlier some of them were warriors from the medieval times. Among them the Kapus are Gazula Laxmi Narasu Setty of the Madras Native Association, Raghupati Venkata Ratnam of the Andhra Brahma Samaj and K.V. Reddy Naidu of the later day justice party.

Economic and social advancement among the non-brahmin castes and the gradual migration of Brahmins to urban areas leaving the land ownership primarily to the dominant

peasant castes, made the latter to enjoy immense social power. Due to the economic changes brought about by the beginning of the 20th century caste groups like the Kammas, Reddis and Telagas or Kapus became prosperous peasant proprietors and enjoyed economic and social prominence.

Of all these communities, Kammas of the Delta districts strike out as unique case of the emergence of rich peasant class in Andhra. In Coastal Andhra the other castes like Gavaras in Visakhapatnam district, Telagas, Kapus and Balijas in Godavari districts are only prosperous to the level of Kammas. But in other districts of Coastal Andhra, the Kapus, Telagas and Balijas are small peasants and tenants.

By the 30's of the 20th century tenancy both on the Zamindari and Ryotwari lands appear to be in existence at a significant level. In the post-depression period, with a weakened bargaining power, the small peasant/tenants were at the receiving end. Not only they were hard pressed in the credit market but even in commodity and land markets the domination of the rich peasants ever eager to consolidate and strengthen their land-base appears to be complete. Thus land control was increasingly passing on into the hands of the rich peasants at the expense of the small peasantry.

Curiously, this process appears to be reversed in parts of Delta-districts in recent times, i.e., in the post-1960 period. While the Brahmin land holders drifted away from villages to the nearby towns in search of jobs in the urban areas from the 50's of this century, the Kamma rich peasantry has of late, developed a taste for money making avenues in the urban and semi-urban centres. They are drifting to professional services construction business, film-making, real estate, hotels and industry. As they are losing touch with the land, the other middle peasant cultivating castes like Kapus, Goudas etc., are buying up the lands and houses of the Kammas, thus bringing in a new caste balance into operation. The process has just started in recent times.

Under the influence of the western civilisation, the caste system was losing its rigidity. New groups were taking up various professions displacing old ones. The Balijas were now forced to seek new pastures and took up agriculture, where they encountered stiff competition from agricultural communities like Vokkaligas in Karnataka and Kammas and Reddis in Andhra. Besides, under the changed political conditions farming

was not as profitable as it used to be. Thus the community gradually lost its predominant position socially and politically and became one of the backward castes in South India.

The Kapus are the numerically largest community in Andhra Pradesh, with 18.6% of the State population. As we mentioned earlier, the Kapus have a number of sub-castes of which Balija, Telaga, Ontari, Munnuru Kapu and Turpu Kapu are predominant. All these sub-castes appear to have been named after either their occupation or place from which they hailed. Though these sub-castes are spread all over the state of Andhra Pradesh, the concentration of the Kapu and Telaga is more in the Coastal Districts, the Balijas in Rayalaseema and the Munnuru Kapus in Telangana area. Further in the case of Kapu sub-sects though they are called with different names, Kapu is a name for all the sub-divisions. There are no taboos on commensality and connubiality. These endogamous groups are not hierarchically arranged and consider them as in groups. Agriculture is their hereditary occupation in which bulk of the people are involved. Thus these sub-divisions are all rivulets and streams in the ocean of Kapus.

Traditionally these groups have occupied a similar position in the caste hierarchy, below the dominating castes, but above the Dalits. By the early 20th century most of these groups had settled down as cultivators, their differences seem to originate in slightly different ritual status, as well as class and occupational differences which prevailed in earlier times, but there has never been a taboo on inter- marriages and inter - dining among these jatis. However the tendency towards cross-cousin and maternal uncle-niece marriages has meant that in practice, there have not been as many marriages among the different jatis as there were among the sub-castes of the dominant peasant castes.

The Madras Presidency and especially the Andhras are proud to have pioneers in the Freedom Movement beginning even before the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny, as is illustrated by the noble example of G.L.N. Setty. He belonged to 19th century and his efforts were directed to protesting in a peaceful but effective manner against the encroachments on the civil liberties of the Indians by East India Company Government. His activity was all embracing not only in the political field but also in the social, economic and religious spheres of native states. Peaceful methods of agitation under the name of Satyagraha adopted later by Mahatma Gandhi had the beginning in the methods followed

by G.L.N. Setty. At a time when electoral bodies were not introduced when public opinion in its true sense was absent, when there was no means of association between the Government and the governed, G.L.N. Setty played the part of the people's leader. Without allying himself with the vested interests, G.L.N. Setty became the friend of the people. In the history of the National Movement, G.L.N. Setty occupies a prominent place, for his efforts could be seen before the Mutiny. He was one of these unnoticed and forgotten gems which shine with lustre only when they were discovered and noticed by the world.

In the middle of the 19th century, we can see the emergence of important personalities in the Kapu caste, who excelled in literary and social reform activities and who left an impact on the social consciousness of people of Andhra. They were, Samineni Muttu Narasimham Naidu, Raghupati Venkata Ratnam Naidu K.V. Reddi Naidu and others.

With the British introducing the Ryotwari system, along with the improved irrigation in the coastal districts, Kapus began to emerge, as a strong peasant caste carving out its own socio-economic and literary space. Such a consciousness was first expressed in the form of Samineni Muttu Narasimham Naidu.

Another prominent Kapu was K.V. Reddi Naidu. Apart from Kurma's distinguished positions and his invaluable individual contribution to every one of the portfolio he held, his views on one or two matters deserve special attention. They were first as for industrialisation of the country. Reddi Naidu was positive that it was industrialisation alone that was going to liquidate poverty in our country. This has been one of his favourite subjects. Sir Kurma's one great desire was to see that India became an important country by solving all its internal problems such as caste, poverty and a host of other social and economic problems and then achieve its Independence.

No name has been so revered and respected as Raghupati Venkat Ratnam Naidu's in the first four decades of the present century. Brahmarishi Venkata Ratnam Naidu was one of the great luminaries of A.P. born in a Kapu caste. He rose to great heights in the public life of the country and made a mark as a great educationist, social reformer and a saint par excellence. During the British days, persons having good qualifications got

better prospects of life. But unlike the man of his age, he was not interested in money or power. As a Brahma Samaj leader he was spreading the gospel of Brahmoism preaching its tenets and himself living according to them. As a social reformer, he laid stress on social purity. Apart from the above personalities, there are persons who came from Kapu caste and have participated in the National Movement.

In the Andhra Pradesh context, the Kapus as the largest group in the state are behind in all the fields particularly education, politics, industry and business. However, in the district like East Godavari because of their numerical strength (18%) and control over land, they are playing a fairly forceful part in district politics. But in other districts they are picking up slowly in education, economy and political spheres.

In the changing context of political scenario in the state in the last decade the Kapus are now trying to assert their identity and are demanding their share in the power structure. In search of a separate new identity they are now trying to bring together under the rubric of Kapus with similar cognate groups. As mentioned earlier, spread in different regions of the state, they are digging out their historical roots of their common origin. They formed a common platform known as 'Kapunadu' to articulate their grievances. One of their immediate demands is that they should be included in the list of backward classes.

Recently, some efforts were made to unite all these sub-castes through a caste organisation, ie., Kapunadu. Of course, there is some awareness of unity among these various sub-castes in the face of political and economic challenges, yet it is only a starting point. But the consolidation of Munnuru Kapus, Balijas and Telagas had remained un-consummated. In contrast the consolidation has been complete in the case of Kammas, but the Reddis are successful to a certain extent.

Thus, the participation of the Kapus in politics is relatively a recent phenomenon. They realised their powerlessness of their caste in the recent past. They also realised that access to modern political power means control over economic and educational opportunities. Being a largest caste in numberwise, if they achieve caste solidarity, they will occupy the political power. For that they concentrated on education and economic

activities. This we can observe in the starting of educational institutions by the Kapus in some areas. And also as the people of most industrious in the urban areas they are mostly in the tertiary sector. Now they are improving their economic activities by spreading other spheres like cinema, News Paper, rice-mills etc.

Caste has been an important factor in the politics of Andhra Pradesh particularly, after the formation of T.D.P. when the significance of the caste has become more and more pronounced and open. Further, the encouragement of political parties also helped the caste to gain political prominence. It is now a well established practice for the state leadership of the various parties to select Kapu candidates for a number of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats because of their numerical strength.

In this context it is necessary to analyse the process of socio-economic and political developments that have taken place in Andhra in the past. This will help in understanding the general conditions under which the Kapus are trying for their rights. Further, they are in a position today to challenge the dominance of the traditional land owning classes in the political as well as in the rural economic spheres. It will take time to come to the level to that of Kammas and Reddis, because the size of the kapu families are more compared to that of Kammas and Reddis. Further the feeling of oneness among the Kapus has started just recently. It was a long term objective, which we could not expect within a short period.

The Non-Brahmin movement in the South has to a large extent sidelined the Brahmins from positions of power and educational institutions. During the freedom movement the Congress leadership in Andhra came from Brahmins, but it was gradually shifted to Reddis, Kammas and Velamas. By 1956, the Reddis took control of the Congress Party.

Thus the trend of Andhra Pradesh politics depended on the C.M. and his caste. Even though other castes have their representation in the ministry. From 1956 to 1983 the Reddis dominated the political life in Andhra Pradesh. From 1983 N.T. Rama Rao mobilise the people on the basis of Telugu unity and obtained financial strength from his own community, for whom he had to give preference.

From 1956 onwards the Kapus have been in the politics of Andhra Pradesh and also in almost all the major political parties, but nobody could reach the high position. Though the Kapus are there in the Assembly, parliament and in ministries, they are not in a position to compete with the Reddies and Kammas. But this has been changed from 1983 onwards.

Though the Reddis are spread out in different factions, but struck together when Reddy interests are really threatened. Likewise N.T.R's political leadership also symbolise the Kamma aspirations and made them rally round him.

One of the most important factors that contributed to the economic development of the Reddis and Kammas is the caste based social network in business, industry and agriculture. The caste consciousness and identity became instrumental for successful economic development. Their caste consciousness and solidarity have given them an edge in business and industry because of their propensity to help one another as a means of improving the status of caste as a whole. Now Kapus are also trying to achieve this.

Further, the economic dominance and caste solidarity of Kammas was strengthened by the emergence of T.D.P. in 1983 under the stewardship of N.T.R. The emergence of T.D.P. provided a source of inspiration for the Kapus to mobilise on similar lines. This is observed in the increase of the strength of M.L.A.s from this caste.

We can also say that some Kapu leaders played their part in influencing the Kapus in increasing their consciousness. They are Mandali Venkata Krishna Rao, L.L. Das, Bandaru Ratnasabhpathy, P. Shiva Sankar, V. Mohan Ranga Rao, M. Padmanabham and others. Among them the last four persons played a crucial role in the awareness of Kapus particularly from 1980's.

In this context, the contribution of V. Mohan Ranga Rao and M. Padmanabham is specially noteworthy. These two were responsible for the Kapu emergence in the recent period. The untimely death of V. Mohan Ranga Rao left M. Padmanabham to take the responsibility on his shoulders. Without Mohan Ranga Rao and M. Padmanabham we can not expect the Kapu movement to this extent.

It may be said that ,the idea behind bringing these groups under one nomenclature was to make a difference in the political arena in terms of numbers, as well as to revive inter- marriages among the Jatis and thereby enlarge their geographical spread, since each of these groups were concentrated in a few districts in different regions of the state. In terms of economic status, it was only the Kapus in the Godavari delta who constituted prosperous peasant cultivators, the rest constituting a substantial proportion of the small and marginal and urban lower middle classes with a dominant presence especially in the tertiary sector.

The Kapunadu movement was highly significant among the Kapus in terms of ethnic identity, opportunity, structure and politicisation. While the movement had not changed the Kapu's everyday life in any drastic manner, it had in more subtle ways helped them to realise their collective strength and potential. Kapu ethnicity was double edged; on the one hand it promoted common identity and a sharing of common values and on the other it had a cognitive change which manifest in situations of conflict against opposition reference groups. Kapu ethnicity was nourished and kept alive by the Kapu movement. Further a high degree of politicisation backed by the Kapu movement had enabled the Kapus to bring about a shift in the balance of power relations in Andhra Pradesh.

For the first time the Kapunadu united all the sub-castes of Kapus on common platform. The movement literally brought the entire Kapu community on to the streets. This was due to Mudragada's personal image. Mudragada as an individual had a good name for his non-corrupt, clean image. Though a late comer, to the movement because of his standing among the people of his caste and in the politics of East Godavari district, Mudragada has emerged as the Champion of the Kapu cause. According to Mudragada it was not a political movement but a social movement, intended to secure justice for the poorer sections among the Kapus.

The Kapu movement for reservations gathered momentum and spread all over the state. In the case of Kapu movement, Mudragada was able to generate voluntary and spontaneous response from among the Kapus. Further, Mudragada and his followers brought a mass awakening all over Andhra Pradesh through formal and semi-formal associations. They transformed the general urge into specific programme of action. However, no where the movement took a violent turn.

There are people from Kapu caste who contributed to the society in their respective fields. From administrative side we have Ajay Naidu and I.J. Naidu. Like wise, P.V. Rangaiah Naidu, Ragala, M.V. Bhaskara Rao from IPS. From legal side we have Justice A. Lakshmana Rao and P. Shiv Shankar and Rajya Lakshmi. In the academics we have from Kapus, the most important personalities like Raghupati Venkata Ratnam Naidu, Sri Ram Govinda Rajulu Naidu, M.V.Rao, Ramakrishnaiah and R. Radhakrishna. K. Rajyalakshmi who became the Vice-Chancellor of Padmavati Mahila university, Tirupati was a prominent women academician from the Kapu caste.

In the performing arts like Music, Theatre, Painting etc., we have several people from Kapu caste and their contribution to the society is worthy to be mentioned. They are Dwaram Venkataswami Naidu, Yella Venkateswara Rao, Achanta Venkata Ratnam Naidu, Eelapati Raghuramaiah. In the Theatre side, particularly, in cinema, Kapus stands supreme in certain fields. First photographer, first studio owner, hero, heroine, and director belong to this caste only. They are R. Venkaiah R. Prakash, Kannamba, etc. In the recent period also we have S.V. Ranga Rao, Dasari Narayana Rao, and Chiranjeevi who excelled in their fields as the tops in the cine industry. There are other persons like P. Nageswara Rao, Master Venu, Eedida Gopala Rao, Thota Tharani who excelled in their fields.

Particularly in the literature and journalism we have prominent persons from Kapu caste who not only were famous in Andhra Pradesh but also in the country. In the first place we have Tapi Dharma Rao Naidu who excelled in both the fields. But in journalism, we have M. Chalapathi Rau who achieved a world recognition for his journalistic contribution. He achieved a distinction of being spent almost his entire career as a journalist in one news paper.

Likewise in science and technology, M.V. Rao and K. Rama Rao excelled in their respective fields. In sports, the Kapus contribution was very high not only in state and national level but also in the international level. Not only that we have a lady cricket comentator from this caste at national level. In cricket we have world famous cricketers from this caste like C.K. Naidu and his brother C.S. Naidu. In Tennis, Football, Carroms also Kapus played a prominent role.

Other prominent Kapus were Adibhatla Narayana Das, Kodi Ramamurthy and dramatist Suribabu who excelled in their respective fields.

The significant contributions made by the Kapu leaders in the field of Social Reform, Administration, Education, Journalism and culture was imulated by the contemporary Kapu leaders who organised themselves into a close knit body to work for certain political privileges. The Kapunadu movement was basically the result of such historical memories of the past wherein several Kapu leaders distinguished themselves both at the regional and national levels.

Sociology abounds in concepts which have varied and often contradictory meanings, and are premised upon opposing theoretical frame works. Ambiguity has been a particularly key element in the chequered career of the concept of community in the social sciences, with meanings ranging from a conservative, to a seemingly progressive mobilisation of common feelings and interests for social change that is implied in the term 'Community Development'. Given the fact, that "communities are some of the most active agents of political practice" in modern times.

Just as social scientists have used the term community in a very general sense, so also in popular usage, the term has been used to refer to caste, class and other similar categories. However, one can find instances where groups mobilizing themselves around an identity, not only refer to themselves as a community, but also the other as a community, especially when they have antagonistic relationship with the other community.

The larger question is how mobility is achieved in a caste.

The Kapu caste, for instance, underwent a significant transformation in the 1980's in the wake of the Kapunadu movement which attempted to gloss over the internal differences (including economic ones) among the Kapu 'sub-castes'. Subsequent to this manoeuvre, not only did the leaders of the movement claim that theirs was the single largest caste in the state but also one which was politically under-represented and socio-economically backward.

There have been recent attempts to broadbase the movement by converting it into a larger movement consisting of all the backward classes and communities and seeking greater political representation. What is intriguing about this alliance is that it involved the

simultaneous mobilisation of Kapus and other castes under the leadership of a man who was attempting to emerge as the spokesperson of the above groups.

Thus a third force in the Andhra Pradesh politics is often heard spitting fire, but is nowhere to be seen. Its protagonists, are searching for some film personality to head the third force, and the names of Chiranjeevi and Dasari Narayana Rao have been cropping up most often notwithstanding their being elusive.

The idea of a third force came to the fore on the eve of the 1989 Assembly elections. Those were the days when the maverick Mudragada Padmanabham, resigning from the N.T.R's cabinet, in 1988 was waging a relentless battle against TDP and NTR. By identifying himself with Mudragada and his movement Dasari made his intentions clear. It was also the time when the CPI had fallen out with the TDP. CPI stalwarts N. Giriprasad and Ch. Rajeshwar Rao moved close to Mudragada and Dasari. The atmosphere was conducive for the emergence of a third force with Mudragada-Dasari combine, Kapunadu and CPI at the core. Several meetings were held between Dasari-Mudragada on one side and CPI representatives on the other. Ch. Rajeshwar Rao and Mudragada addressed several public meetings jointly. After several rounds of talks Mudragada and the CPI were disenchanted with Dasari who developed cold feet. The disenchantment was so intense that Mudragada refused to talk to Dasari even on phone.

Thus a serious attempt at third force became abortive, thanks to film personalities used to running with the hare and hunting with the hound.

Since 1982 the Kapus have become a major pressure group within the state demanding greater share in political power. This is particularly reflected in the recent political scenario where the Kapus are becoming a powerful force as against the Reddis and Kammas. Further the BC status problem has come up along with the TDP and played an important role in changing the Governments in elections of 1989 and 1994. In otherwords, Kapus have always been volatile. Though they have been supporting the congress for a long time like other BCs, they have voted in favour of TDP in 1983 and in 1985 elections and again changed their support to Congress in 1989 elections. Again in 1994 elections, they supported the TDP. Thus they were changing loyalties quite frequently.

In a transitional society caste remains and is bound to remain an important factor in the socio-political life. The Kapu, Telega and Baliya etc., it is argued, are one and the same but have regional variations. All these castes are endogamous groups. Of late, there has been an increasing awareness among these castes to dissolve their endogamous subdivisions and to merge with each other as a solid group to fight their demand for B.C. status and their political opponents. From the backward caste groups Kapu community seem to be better placed in influencing the decision making process in the elections today.

Caste in Indian context, covers both the 4 varnas mentioned in the vedas and carried on still further in time, into jatis. Today the varnas have receded into history and only the jatis are relevant. There are regional differences in the social position of the different castes.

Elite sections of Kammas and Reddis have been at the helm of affairs in Andhra Pradesh for the last 40 years. With caste-consciousness rising in all parts of the country, how can a single caste dominate any area?

Obviously, to those groups within a caste, which had gained money or power to aid their desire for upward mobility, could attempt seriously to improve their status. Unable to escape from their ignoble backgrounds, they were forced to contemplate establishing a new status category for their whole caste. But it is by no means clear that their energy in pamphleteering and polemic made much impact on the less privileged members of their caste, who formed the majority and whose ambitions were limited by lack of power.

In most regions of India, the middle and lower middle level castes enjoy numerical strength and this had resulted in becoming politically significant.

But what is happening at present also provides evidence. Caste as groups are asking for representation in Government through membership of political parties and by demanding tickets for candidates of their own castes in the elections. This means that every caste believes that it is as eligible for participation in Government as any other caste irrespective of its position in the traditional stratification. This phenomenon undermines

the traditional hierarchy. At the same time it indicated caste solidarity. In this regard, it is observed that a particular caste supports one party in one election and another party in the next. The Kapus have long been subjected to cumulative deprivations which include - Political deprivations- Political power and material deprivations - economic, educational and employment opportunities.

It should be noted that numerical factor alone does not make a caste dominant. It cannot be taken for granted that everyone in the dominant caste is economically well off. As it happens, one of a few rich peasants/landlords enjoy a dominant position in relation to other members of their own caste. A situation arises in which even though weaker members of the caste acquire influence indirectly in relation to the other caste groups.

In areas where the Kapus, Telagas and Balijas were numerically strong, they emerged as the dominant castes. Further it has been pointed out, in those areas, as far as the Kapu caste was concerned, their economic position, social standing and the numerical strength have made it the dominant caste in the villages. But it is not the case with the whole of Andhra.

A historical analysis of the dynamics of caste hierarchies show that the relative position of a specific caste in the intermediate category is not fixed permanently. While some castes could improve their position (ex: Kammas and Reddis) the others have lost their position (ex: Ontari, Kapu, Telaga and Balija) These sub-castes have been experiencing downward mobility.

The castes of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vysya, Velama, Reddi and Kamma have almost always monopolised ritual, economic and political power. Though Ontari, Telaga, Kapu and Balija sub-castes are listed in forward castes they were never anywhere near the above mentioned forward castes.

Further, though the Ontari, Kapu, Telaga and Balija sub-castes are numerically large, their strength has not been translated into political power because of lack of economic resources. Though their's is a single largest community, still Kapus have never had a reasonable share either in productive resources or in instruments of power. In this respect their position is not superior to other backward castes, such as Kalingas, Yadavas,

Gaudas etc. Adding to this the Kapu and its sub-castes has become proletarianised and pauperised due to large size of their families, division of land holdings into small and unviable units, lack of expansion and diversification of economic activities.

The Kapus migrated to villages in irrigated areas and growing cities as manual workers and subsistence migrants i.e., those who migrate to overcome poverty and distress and to earn livelihood. Thus cultural differences operating through perceptions, values and world views between upper and dominant castes on one hand, Kapus and peasant backward castes on the other influenced their responses to the growing opportunities and development process, thereby their status and position in the society. Just as one advantage leading to another advantage, one disadvantage leads to several other disadvantages.

It is generally accepted that the democracy is essentially a game of numbers in a positive sense. Every section of the society should get representation in the political institutions if democracy should be meaningful. Large groups should invariably have decisive role in the political processes. But this will not happen in one day because democratization of political process and transfer of power from oligarchic and elitist groups to populous groups is painfully slow process and is beset with several obstacles. This is what has exactly happened during the last four and half decades. If we examine the trends and patterns of distribution of political offices such as Parliament Members, Legislators, Ministers, Panchayat Samithi Presidents etc., among different castes it is very clear that the numerically smaller castes with economic resources and educational achievements such as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vysya, Velama, Reddi and Kamma have had lion's share in the political offices.

The combined per cent of the above dominant castes in the legislative Assembly was 47 in 1957 and 46 in 1989. Thus there is only a marginal difference between 1957 and 1989 with regard to their representation in the legislative assembly. In this regard the position of Kapu, Telaga, Ontari and Baliija is not better even when compared to the backward castes whose representation increased from 38 in 1957 to 59 in 1985. Moreover, backward castes such as Kalingas and Gavaras constitute only 0.30% each of total population of the state, but have one M.P. each from them. Whereas Ontari, Kapu, Telaga and Baliija castes with a strength of 18.60% have 3 M.Ps. from them. Similarly in

the state legislative and the Cabinet, the position of Kapus is not commensurate with their population strength. With regard to the representation of Kapu caste in the cabinet there has been no substantial improvement between 1956 and 1994. The corresponding percentage increased from 7.7% in 1956 to 28% in 1982 but gradually fell down since then and further to 10.5% in 1994.

In Andhra Pradesh even though the efforts to bring together all Kapu sub-castes date back to early 20th century, there has been renewed and sustained attempt to achieve that for the last 17 years or so, with a specific demand to include them into the list of Backward Castes. There has been a very serious sense of relative deprivation among these groups and their disappointment at not being heard and frustration at being neglected has resulted in choosing diametrically opposed political options with significant fortunes for political parties. Expression of dissatisfaction on a massive scale occurs only when the just demands are not properly considered and conceded.

The commitment to long term goals and the ability to defer immediate gratification are considered as necessary for economic and social development of societies by social scientists. The culture and styles of life of Kapu, Telaga, Balija and Ontari groups also reflect such value orientation. Their inability to take advantage of the rapid economic and technological changes are largely due to conservatism and absence of materialistic values. For example not even a single major industrialist in the state belongs to or a single industrial firm is under the control of this group.

In the process of economic change and social mobility India's increasingly participant communities have grown more politically self-conscious and this self-consciousness has deepened existing cleavages.

Though the Kapu community is said to be the single largest caste in Andhra Pradesh it has now become a very backward class, both economically as well as socially on account of several reasons.

Since this community is very vast, one does find a few individuals who have managed to come up all by themselves, in certain professions and civil services. An odd member of this community reaching the top of either the filmworld or civil service cannot

be held against this community. They could reach the top by their own merit, hard work etc,. They can only be termed as the “creamy layer”. But under this “creamy layer” are large multitude of under nourished and impoverished members of this community struggling to remain alive. The majority of this community still remain more backward than most of other castes listed in Backward Classes.

Being born into a particular castes is accidental. We have little control over our upbringing in caste structure. After a certain age we continue to live in the culture of our own caste through a conscious decision. Having been born into a caste, very few can consciously move out of their caste culture.

Moreover the Kapu movement for reservations has manifested and latent repercussions in the social and political spheres of Andhra Pradesh on a large scale.

While in a democratic set up pressure is a legitimate weapon, it cannot be allowed to be executed in such a manner that all legitimacy is lost. Kapus have a right to pressurise the system for their piece of the cake. But why could they not take backward castes with them. Does not it call for some soul-searching. It would be good if they remember that the reservation policy has not been enunciated to solve the political and economic problems of various communities. It can not be used to solve the problems of rising expectations and decreasing opportunities, for all sections of the population, in the job market and the educational sphere. Since there has been very little economic progress, such a development was bound to rise.

The Kapus in their fight against the Government, take the help of other backward castes, but only in a limited extent. In 1985's Vangaveeti Mohan Ranga Rao, was something of a hero for a wide cross-section of the Vijayawada city's poor. Almost a decade after his death, stories of his generosity, concern for his supporters and bravery continue to circulate. More importantly, the fact is that Ranga in his own way forged an alliance between the Kapus and the lower caste poor of the Vijayawada city. When these lines are being penned, there are News Paper reports that a life sized bronze statue of V.Mohan Ranga Rao was unveiled in Vijayawada with all fun-fare. There have been recent attempts to broad base the Kapunadu movement by converting it into a larger movement consisting of all backward classes and communities and seeking greater

political representation. The movement, called Telugu Talli, led by Dasari Narayana Rao, is only a beginning in this process.

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