ROLE OF CASTE IN ANDHRA POLITICS

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CERTIFICATE

This is to Certify that the dissertation entitled **Role of Caste in Andhra Politics** submitted in partial fulfillment for the M.Phil degree of this university has not been previously submitted for any other university and is my original work.

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We recommend that the dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

Prof. Dipankar Gupta
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Contents

INTRODUCTION

In the study of Indian politics, there is a deeply felt need to understand the influential part played by certain informal social processes. Caste is one such aspect of these informal processes, which assumes importance in determining the struggle for power. It is here, that, political sociology has a significant role to play, as it enables us to systematically analyze the underlying social forces that determine the shape and lines of movement of political life.

In this dissertation, therefore, an attempt is being made to comprehend: (1) the extent to which caste influences politics and (2) the impact of the role played by caste in politics, especially, how it has been an instrument of social change.

The scope of this work is limited to Andhra Pradesh. Indeed, Andhra Pradesh provides a striking case of caste polarization and politicization when we take the following factors in to consideration: (1) The historical background of anti-Brahmin caste articulation during the freedom movement through which the "shudra" peasant castes like Kammas and Reddis emerged as the dominant communities in the economy and politics of Andhra Pradesh. (2) The emergence and development of the dalit movement against this dominant case structure and (3) the resurgence of political aspirations among the backward castes during the late 1980s.

This dissertation comprises five chapters based on secondary sources of data. Beginning with a brief sketch of the features and content of the caste system, Chapter 1 offers an overview of the approaches to the study of the relationship between caste and politics. This is followed by a discussion on the impact of colonialism on Indian Polity. Finally, there is a focus on the kind of relationship that exists between caste and modern day politics.

In chapter 2 the relevant background information on Andhra Pradesh that has a direct bearing upon social and political process is presented. Here, the discussion revolves around the non-Brahmin movement and the impact of colonial regime through which the non-Brahmin castes i.e., Kammas and Reddis emerged as the main political contenders for power.

Chapter 3 focuses on how India's independence and later on how the formation of Andhra Pradesh helped the dominant peasant castes, especially, Kammas and Reddis to consolidate their position. At this stage, we take a closer look at the sociological attributes possessed by these castes which give them an edge over others.

Chapter 4 examines the position of lower castes so as to determine why they failed to dominate the political sphere inspite of possessing considerable numerical strength. One aspect of the above includes the differences between

various groups of lower castes, which come in the way of their collective mobilization. There is also a discussion on whether these castes pose a threat to the existing power structure. Also, in future, can there be a triangular contest, between the three groups i.e., Kammas, Reddis and Lower Castes, i.e. SCs and OBCs.

Lastly, chapter 5 deals with the impact of caste politics, i.e., how the role played by caste in politics has been an instrument of social change in Andhra Pradesh. Most importantly, because caste is only one among a number of politically relevant factors in Andhra, it has not hindered development. Is 'caste than just another way for people to come together and organize themselves in their struggle for power'?

Chapter I

CASTE AND POLITICS:
A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Caste system in its most general but most fundamental form, is an ascriptive system of status hierarchy. Inspite of the fact that inequality is recognized as a principle for gradation of different groups of people, the system based on it survived and thus retained some of its fundamental characteristics. The features of caste that prevailed through the past centuries may be described under nine heads hierarchy; endogamy and hypergamy; occupational association; restriction on food, drink and smoking; distinction in custom, dress and speech; pollution; rituals and other privileges and disabilities; caste organization and caste disabilities; caste organization and caste mobility.[1] The hard core of caste, however, appears to be the rule of endogamy.[2] The *jati,* or caste, continues to be the principle unit of endogamy, a significant attribute of identity, a common locus for interaction and an important vehicle for social mobility.

However, a single term 'caste' is used in various ways. It is employed to connote different structural orders such as the smallest endogamous sub-sub caste for which local words like, *jati, quom, dudh* (milk) and *biradari* are used, (for example, the *badaganadu madhva Brahmin* of Karnataka) and a still higher level of *varna* order (the Brahman of India). The term 'caste' is also used to refer

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[1]   Srinivas, M.N. 1982, India: Social Structure, Delhi: Hindustan Publishing Corporation, p.5.
[2]   Shah, A.M. 24 March 1989, "Caste and the Intelligentsia" , The Hindustan Times, New Delhi.

to a category of cognate sub castes as a unit of association across different regions of India (e.g. *Kurmi*). It is used to refer to a category of differently named sub caste groups at the pan-India level (the untouchable castes). Finally, it is used to refer to ideology as in caste ideology.[3] However, its two connotations representing the Hindi terms *jati* and *varna* are widely used.

In Indian society, 4,635 communities or *jatis* have been identified.[4] There are altogether four *varnas*, that is, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. The untouchables who are now officially called 'Scheduled Castes' may be considered a fifth category. As they were traditionally seen as outcastes, therefore, they fall outside the *Varna* scheme. The relative dignity attached to the hierarchy of varnas is clearcut. Brahmins are at the top followed by Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras.[5] But, the hierarchy among the *jatis* is not that well defined. There are, however, local variations. A *jati* in one region has a different position than the place it occupies in another region. In addition, *jatis* generally claim for themselves a better place on the scale of dignity than others

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[3]   Rao, M.S.A.,1989, "Some Conceptual Issues in the Study of Caste, Class, Ethnicity and Dominance" in Francine Frankel and M.S.A. Rao, eds. Dominance and State Power in Modern India: Decline of a Social Order (Vol. I), Delhi: Oxford University Press. P.22.

[4]   Ramesh, Jairam, 27 September 1999, "Vote Your Caste", In India Today, p. 76.

[5]   However, Dipankar Gupta opines that there are multiple hierarchies (with Brahmins not being essentially at the top). He lays emphasis on the concept of 'difference' to arrive at a significant study of Social Stratification. See, "Hierarchy and Difference" in Dipankar Gupta ed. Social Stratification, Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-21.

concede to them, that is, *Jatis* normally try to contest for a higher position on the purity-impurity scale.

Louis Dumont postulated structuralist approach to the study of caste system[6].For him, caste is the most fundamental institution of Indian society. He constructs the caste system in terms of values of hierarchy and separation based on the ideology of purity and pollution. The level of purity is the sole criterion for ranking of occupations and caste groups. Therefore, in his conception, caste is a continuously graded status order with Brahmins at the top as they are the purest, and untouchables at the bottom for they are the least pure of all. Thus, for Dumont's structural model, what matters most is the extent to which a particular occupation is pure, and not the wealth or income it yields. As a result, for him, the politico-economic dimensions are secondary aspects of the caste system.[7]

However, Dumont's position has been severely criticized by several anthropologists and sociologists. He is generally criticized for his use of Brahminical sources in understanding Hindu society. This, it is argued, commits

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[6]   Dumont, Louis. 1988. Homo Hierarchicus :The caste System and its Implications, *Delhi: Oxford University Press.*

[7]   Dumont, L. op.cit, p.165.

him to a Brahminical view of society.[8] He fails to see the Hindu society from 'below', that is, from view point of lower castes. There exist differences between the socio-religious ideology of upper castes and lower castes.[9]

Secondly, he over emphasized on the ideas constituting purity and pollution. However, the actual practices that flourish, necessitate us to place the caste system in a wider socio-economic and political context than to narrow it down to only religious ideas of purity and pollution. For us, caste ranking is a function of power relations and is a form of social inequality. It is the control over resources, not just the caste strictures, which plays a crucial role in ranking and maintaining the caste system.[10] It is, in fact, the access to resources which in tradition provided power and maintained it in favour of those who controlled the economy.

APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CASTE AND POLITICS

Many had predicted the gradual fading away of the caste system as a result of the modernization process. But surprisingly, caste has shown remarkable flexibility in adapting itself to the structural features of modernization.

[8] Berreman, G.D. 1979, Caste and Other Inequalities, Meerut : Folkore Institute p. 162; also see "The Brahminical View of Caste" in Dipankar Gupta ed. 1992, Social Startification, Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp.84-92.

[9] Appadurai, Arjun. 1986, "Is Homo Hierarchicus"? American Ethnologist, Vol. 13(4), pp.745-61.

[10] See Gough, Kathleen, 1961, "The Social Structure of a Tanjore Village" in McKim Marriott (ed.), Village India: Studies in Little Community, Bombay : Asia Publishing House.

Caste as an ascriptive group provided structural and ideological base for political mobilization. What drew the traditionalist in to modernist network was enhanced opportunities of economic gain, immense governmental patronage and positions of power offered by political organization. Thus, in recent period, much attention has been paid to the role of caste influencing the political process in India.

However, there appeared four views on the above subject. Firstly, there is a view that caste has become politically dominant with the introduction of democracy and adult franchise. M.N. Srinivas maintained such a view. He suggested that the increasing communicational facilities offered by the Western impact and modernization, together with the introduction of parliamentary democracy on the basis of adult franchise, have provided new incentive to the growth of caste, especially in the political field. But, he also adds, "...It would, however, be a gross over simplification to state that the politics of a state can be explained entirely by reference to caste. Caste is indeed only one element in state politics but a very important element". [11]Therefore, he notes that one can exaggerate the importance of caste.

The second view maintains that caste is losing its political significance. F.G. Bailey who conducted his field studies in Orissa found that, "ritual and political status are not necessarily connected... Augmented political effectiveness

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[11]   Srinivas, M.N. 1962, Caste in Modern India, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, Introduction p.6.

leads to efforts to improve ritual status..."[12] Thus political power influences caste, not simply the other way round. "...In the village the hierarchy of caste group is no longer a complete reflection of economic realities, nor an adequate means of ordering political relations. Under the pressure of economic change the political functions of caste are beginning to be taken over, by the ultimate political authority, the government of India".[13]

However, in his book 'Politics and Social Change', he reconciled by saying "...Caste is not usually a dominating influence in the relationship of the politician and the voter".[14] But Bailey himself hints at a possible re-rapprochement between his and Srinivas' views by ways of the political role, not of caste, but of caste associations.[15]

Kathleen Gough takes a some what Marxist view, when she suggests, "...It seems logical to conclude that such economic and class conflicts, what ever their outcome, will in the near future weaken the identities of caste". [16] Thus, in short, she means that the taking on of political functions by a caste changes its nature so radically that it ceases to be a caste.

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12   Bailey, F.G. 1958 Caste and Economic Frontier, London : Oxford university Press, p.191.
13   Ibid., p.275.
14   Bailey, F.G. 1963, Politics and Social Change, London: Oxford University Press, p.134.
15   Ibid.
16   Gough, E.K. 1960, "Caste in a Tanjore Village" in E.R. Leach ed, Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon and North-West Pakistan, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.11-57.

Thirdly, there are some who consider caste as one of the factors affecting politics, and by no means the most important. For example, Adrian Mayer in his study of the Municipal elections in a central Indian town, regards castes as, at best, one of the factors at work in Indian politics. He concludes that, "a candidate cannot win through the manipulation of any single relationship; he must fight on several fronts".[17] Discussing the problem of the parties in putting up their candidates, he writes, "...it is by no means certain that to choose a candidate of a certain caste will result in the solid support of that or any other caste".[18]

Finally, there is a view which maintains that the political role of caste is increasing, that this as it should be, and that there is nothing alarming about this development as an essential part of the democratic process. The latter view was expressed by the American political scientist Myron Weiner who had a first-hand acquaintance with the politics of post-independence India. He concluded that "...the number of caste, religious, tribal, linguistic and ethnic associations is likely to increase as the pace of social change increases...the increase in such associations is likely to have a stabilizing effect".[19]

It is clear from the above discussion that the four views expressed are in no way contradictory to each other. However, we could perceive two basic

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[17] Mayer, A.C. 1963, "Municipal Elections: A Central Indian Case Study" in C.H. Philips ed., Politics and Society in India, London : George Allen & Unwin, p.123.

[18] Ibid., p.122.

[19] Weiner, Myron. 1963, The Politics of Scarcity, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, footnote, p.39.

approaches emerging out of the studies regarding the working of the caste system and its implications for the future.

The first approach tends to treat caste mainly as a thing of the past. Modern social theorists like Durkheim and Marx believed, on different grounds, that class identity tended to be large in scale and gradually broke down and dissolved more localized and segmented traditional identities with which people worked in politics. Even the functionalist view of modernity suspected that the development of industrialization and operation of democratic parliamentary politics would slowly corrode caste identities and replace them by modern ones.[20]

Thus, this kind of approach suggests that the process of modernization would make caste more and more ineffectual and irrelevant in all walks of social life. It acknowledges the continuing impact of caste in today's India in terms of intrusions of the past which are bound to lose their intensity in the process of contemporary developments. It lays extraordinary emphasis on the role of

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[20] Kaviraj, Sudipta, 1997, "Caste and Class" in Sudipta Kaviraj (ed.) Politics in India, Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.172.

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modern technology, science and techniques of managements or in its Marxist form on the mode of production in explaining social dynamics.

To the above school belong the developmentalist and institutional models.

DEVELOPMENTALIST MODEL

Almond and Coleman following Weberian dichotomy between tradition and modernity used functional categories to facilitate scientific comparative analysis of 'modern' political systems and the 'traditional' societies of newly independent states. These functions abstracted from structures that were characteristic of modern polities, led to the ideological bias that, all traditional societies would ultimately approximate the Western patterns of political democracy.[21] The developmentalists further used parsons 'pattern variables' to differentiate between tradition and modernity.[22] Parsons himself identified the universalistic – achievement pattern with the 'dominant American ethos'. As a result, they could not escape their own ethnocentrism. Also, by defining modernity as the penetration of 'traditional' styles and values by others identified

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[21]   Almond, Gabriel A. and Coleman, James, 1960, The Politics of Developing Areas Princeton: Princeton University Press.
[22]   Frankel, Francine R. 1989, "Introduction" in Francine R. Frankel and M.S.A. Rao eds. Dominance and State power in Modern India : Decline of a Social Order, (vol.I), Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.14.

as 'rational', they prescribed a future in which caste as well as other 'primordial' collectivities would be superceded by individualistic modern associations.

According to a widely shared perspective on India in 1960s, a breakdown in caste solidarity could be expected from growing economic differentiation with in the community. The political culture would then become increasingly secular, "...so the political identity of the individual will reflect cross-cutting vertical and horizontal ties and a plurality of commitments, associations and interests. The differentiated political culture represents, simply a decline in the former homogeneity of the community, but, it provides the foundation for the emergence of a political culture reflecting identities based on economic interests and growing political awareness".[23]

However, despite growing economic differentiation with in castes and other communities, the emergence of a political culture based exclusively on individual calculations could not be seen. According to Beteille, "the pace of Sanskritization among lower castes may be facilitated by the spread of literacy, improvements in transportation and communication, and the reach of media into rural localities which spread Sanskritic ideas and values".[24]

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[23] Hardgrave, Jr., Robert L. 1970, "Political Participation and Primordial Solidarity : The Nadars of Tamilnad" in Rajni Kothari ed., Caste in Indian Politics, Delhi: Orient Longman, pp. 104-5.

[24] Beteille, Andre. 1969, Caste Old and New : Essays in Social Structure and Social Stratification, Bombay; Asia Publishing House, p.117.

INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH

The above was put forward by Gunnar Myrdal in his book 'Asian Drama : An Inquiry in to the Poverty of Nations.' His study is primarily and in large measure about India. Myrdal wrote:

"We shall use as a starting point the incontrovertible fact that the basic social and economic structure of the countries of South Asia is radically different from the one that has evolved in Western countries, but, more important problem of development is, one calling for induced changes, in that social and institutional structures, as it hinders economic development and as it does not change spontaneously, or, to any very large extent in response to policies restricted to the economic sphere".[25]

Like many other scholars, Myrdal equated social structure in India with Hindu social structure. He regarded the distinctive attributes of caste to be "internal pluralism" and "inequalities of status". It is said to permeate all spheres of activity including the traditional economic and the modern administrative and political spheres. Above all, he linked caste with underdevelopment.

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[25] Quoted in T.N. Madan, Feb (1) 1969, "Caste and Development" in Economic and Political Weekly, vol.4, No. 5. p.285.

The reasons for the above are specified as follows: (1) Caste ethics encourages contempt for manual labour (2) Privileges are unevenly distributed and social and economic inequalities are rigidly fixed. The upper castes are opposed to upward mobility by the dispossessed. (3) Not only are occupational and social mobilities negligible, there is also a general reluctance to acquire new skills and adapt one self to unfamiliar non-traditional types of work. (4) There is lack of competitiveness in economic life.

Myrdal's conception of caste, thus, leads him to conclude that plans for social and economic development are going to be an exercise in futility unless the social structure is reordered.

T.N. Madan has severely criticized Myrdal's conception of caste.[26] Madan goes onto cite example from works of many contemporary writers such as M.N. Srinivas Rudolphs and Leach, all of whom were of the opinion that caste even in its modernized form has a positive role to play and that it does not hinder development.

Thus, from the above it is clear that both the developmentalist and institutional approaches based themselves on Western experience. As a result, they fail to incorporate the most important feature of Indian Society: The

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[26] Ibid., pp.287-9.

interpenetration of religious-ideological and politico-economic structures. Developmentalists over look the material base of caste structures that permit them to evolve as social formations in response to changes associated with modernization.

The other school of thought takes almost the opposite view. It considers caste as one of the characteristic and a crucial mode value of Indian reality. It is likely to play a decisive role even if the country would go through the inevitable process of all round modernization. They attach great importance to the role of caste values and loyalties in comparison with the role of material forces in general, in shaping the substance and the style of contemporary Indian politics. They are not interested in searching for how class is replacing caste or in how secular values and process are superceding the tradition bound caste norms and actions, but, in identifying the developing nature of caste system in the context of modernization.

Advocates of the above view are several scholars such as Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph and Harold A. Gould. They presented a vast body of scholarship with empirical support that caste has an instrumental role in India's social processes.

Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph found that India had irrefutably taken the road to modernization and many of its traditional institutions like caste and kinship were undergoing substantial modifications as a consequence. They argued that caste system far from being a hindrance to democratic polity, is providing peasants with a ready made grouping from which they could put forward their interests with in a competitive political structure.[27] Further, the Rudolphs have examined data from various parts of India to conclude: "caste is losing its functions, norms and structure once associated with it and acquiring new ones. It is serving ritual and occupational roles less and mobility and participation goals of modern society more. In doing so, it helps to substitute in the lives of ordinary Indians choice for birth, equality for hierarchy and opportunity for fate".[28]

In a similar Vein Harold A. Gould opined that caste, religion, nationality and other particularistic social formations proved themselves to be functional in the Indian case. He adds, "even in the West, ethnic conflict and the accommodation of particularistically integrated group interests had always been crucially important aspects of modern state formation".[29]

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27   Rudolph, Lloyd and Susanne. 1960, "The Political Role of India's Caste Associations", in Pacific Affairs, 33, 1, pp.5-22.

28   Rudolph, Lloyd and Susanne. 1968, The Modernity of Tradition : Political Development in India, Chicago: Chicago University Press, p.103.

29   Gould, Harold. A. 1963. "The Adaptive Functions of Caste in Contemporary Indian Society", Asian Survey, Vol. 3.

The continuity of caste is thus a solid proof of its adaptive capacities. As a result, it has evolved simultaneously in several directions and adjusted with ideologically antagonistic systems, adjusting its principles wherever necessary. Thus the contents of its functions and other paraphernalia changed from time to time.[30]

Though economic reorganization of society through capitalist industrialization was under way, traditional structures like caste showed remarkable ability to withstand their impact. Further, it responded with paradoxical flexibility to the invitations and opportunities of democratic electoral procedures. Thus, Sudipta Kaviraj aptly redefines tradition as, "a set of rules of social practice which adapted to historically altered conditions through a surreptitious adaptability, so that although they changed, they also typically tried to conceal the evidence, by an ideological rhetoric of immutability".[31]

Subrata Mitra argues that, caste is an institution which has both 'traditional' and 'modern' aspects and both 'primordial' and 'instrumental' dimensions.[32] He suggests that castes may have a useful role in the formation of

[30] Sharma, K.L. (1977) , "New Introduction" in J. Murdoch's Review Caste in India, Jaipur: Rawat Publications.
[31] Kaviraj, Sudipta, Op.cit, p.5. Sociological theory had earlier defined tradition as a set of relatively static, unchanging practices, resistant to proposals for historical change.
[32] Mitra, Subrata. 1994, "Caste, Democracy and the Politics of Community Formation in India" in Mary Searle – Chatterjee and Ursula Sharma eds. Contextualising Caste, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers p.49.

nation and state. Castes are resources that actors use to promote their own interests. They are perceived as flexible by their members who treat them more as vehicles of self-promotion rather than a structure of domination by the powerful and self censorship by the powerless.

Thus, it is evident from the above discussion that expectations of scholars who felt that caste and other particularistic structures would melt away under the impact of industrialization has simply not materialized.

However, in this context it is essential for us to understand what exactly has been the impact of colonial regime on the caste system.

IMPACT OF THE BRITISH RULE

With British colonization India entered the Industrial age. The approach that the British colonialists adopted to governance was one of 'Honouring Native Custom'.[33] This was because the English could not tamper with indigenous social and cultural institutions. Due to this, the ethnic and other sub cultural aspects and of the caste system found increasing operational scope. Therefore, the creation of a pluralized polity in India harnessed the country's vast cultural diversity to the service of the Imperial state.

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[33]   Gould, Harold A. 1990, Politics and Caste (vol. I), Delhi: Chankya Publishers, p.5.

Following the Mutiny in 1858, the colonial cooptive policy of "Honouring Native custom" was found to have useful applications. This was so, especially in the modern philosophy of government, rooted in notions of popular representation and constitutionally guaranteed 'basic rights'.

From 1880s onwards there was accelerating growth of modern forms of politicization. This resulted in the incorporation of those formations which proved capable of bargaining their way into the system. This included numerous educated urban middle class and reform oriented popular organizations (such as Indian National Congress and Muslim League). Hereditary status groups rooted in caste, religious and regional cultural differences were the principle, although not the exclusive beneficiaries of this governmental style. Thus, the British raj combined on the one hand doctrine of honouring native custom and on the other hand its obligations to honour the rules of political conduct laid down by its Parliament, According to Rajni Kothari, "with there being no practicable way to dissolve them, they became progressively more politicized as modernity accelerated".[34]

In this transitional period, there was a rise of caste and communal organizations which competed for access to, and certification by the Imperial

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[34]   Kothari, Rajni, 1970, Politics in India, Boston : Little Brown

state. Thus, the colonial sensitivity to 'Native Custom' and dedication to 'basic rights' made possible such pluralistic accommodation.

Further, the legal system of British India produced drastic changes in the traditional working of the caste system.[35] Most significant was the introduction of the principle of equality before law. Untouchable castes naturally gained from the above policy. In the year 1923, government resolved that no grants would be provided to any school that denied admission to untouchable children. Though implementation lagged behind official policy but it did have an operational significance.

After the first world war, attempts were made to ensure adequate representation through mixed electorates. Hindu population was divided into three political tiers; Brahmans and other high castes, Marathas and other intermediate castes and lastly backward castes including untouchables. B.R. Ambedkar insisted on separate electorates for depressed classes. In 1932 the British Prime Minister granted the communal award. Gandhi announced a "fast unto death" as a mark of protest as he felt that the communal award would "vivisect" and "disrupt" the Hindu community. Under pressure Ambedkar gave up the idea of separate electorate. But, he demanded the number of seats reserved for his community in the legislature to be increased from 71 to 148. This was

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[35] Smith D.E. 1963, India as a Secular State, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp.292-329.

known as the Poona pact and later incorporated in the government of India Act of 1935.

Many Indian writers saw the British policy of giving preference to low castes as part of the technique of "divide and rule". M.N. Srinivas wrote that the policy of the British government " was in accordance with its humanitarian sentiments, but it also had the effect of making the lower castes to look up to the British for protection".[36]

Another British practice which drew attention was that of recording caste in the decennial census. At each recurring census the authorities received innumerable petitions from different castes requesting the government to recognize their claims to higher rank. This provided a new field for caste conflict and tended to perpetuate caste consciousness. However, by 1941 this practice was abandoned due to its questionable accuracy. The introduction of limited franchise under British rule as a part of Lord Rippon's reforms created a stir among the Indian electorate.

POST-INDEPENDENCE ERA

Self government came to Indian politics only after independence. Now, Indians had the task of protecting themselves from their primordial loyalties which

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[36]   Srinivas, M.N. 1957, "Caste in Modern India" in <u>Journal of Asian Studies</u>, vol.16, pp.530-32.

could tear the society if devolved to them in an unwisely large measure. The state in India therefore created a constitution based on universal suffrage. Democracy came to constitute the central theme of Indian polity. In 1951, Nehru could interpret the constitution in the following terms: [37]

"...After all the whole purpose of the constitution as proclaimed in the directive principles, is to move to what I may call a casteless and classless society. I take it, its purpose and anything that perpetuates the present social and economic inequalities is bad".

Earlier Nehru wrote:[38]

"In the context of society today, the caste system and much that goes with it are wholly incompatible, reactionary, restrictive and barriers to progress. There can be no equality in status and opportunity with in its framework nor can there be political democracy, and much less, economic democracy. Between these two conceptions, conflict is inherent and only one of them can survive".

Thus, universal suffrage was conceived as a part of a large, consistent plan for modernization of India. In this modernization process, representative

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[37] Smith D.E. op.cit., p.310.
[38] Nehru, Jawaharlal, 1946, The Discovery of India, New York, John Day Company, p.254.

democracy was only the political aspect. The other important aspects were development planning, secularization and elimination of caste practices in favour of common modern citizenship. These elements were thought to convert identities based on the primacy of communities to those based on the primacy of individual

The above was evident in the first few years of independence. For instance, political conflict centred on ideological issues and around the question of how the social constitution of India should be arranged.[39] From late 1960s there were divergences. India seemed to operate a democratic government in the absence of a democratic society. Under Nehru, the society was forced in to becoming a mega society.[40] Especially, India acquired ambitions of large-scale coordination, connected with the five-year plans and the visions of modernization. Juxtaposed to the collective ambitions are the individual ambitions, values and motivations, derived largely from the cellular world of family and caste.

In the post-Nehruvian era, political scenario changed.[41] In 1967 general elections, Congress lost in most northern states. There was a spilt in the left

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[39] On how the language of Indian politics has changed. Manor, J. 'Anomie in Indian Politics'. Economic and Political Weekly, Annual No. Vol. XVIII, nos. 19-21, 1983, 725-34.

[40] Saberwal, Satish. 1996, India : The Roots and Crises, Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.33.

[41] Congress too adopted the strategy of 'honouring native custom' as a principal bases for group mobilization.

which till then played the role of constructive opposition. The strategies which were used by the new set of politicians in order to make sure that they won elections were a series of appeals directed towards the upliftment of Harijans and other backward castes. These sections were the main 'target' as they form a numerically significant section of the population though economically quite vulnerable. This tactic led to the alienation of other sections as they felt neglected.

As a consequence of the above, electoral mobilization had led to a new phenomenon called 'horizontal mobilization' where by, people situated at comparable levels with in the local caste hierarchy came together in caste associations. Thus emerged parties like the Republican Party or the various *Kisan* parties like Lok-Dal which drew their support mainly for the OBCs (Other Backward Castes). Therefore, caste is no longer an inclusive ascriptive collectivity of individuals claiming distinctiveness. They form federations on grounds of social homogeneity and goal identification. Aggregation of adjacent segments and tertiary groups who privately preserve their strata differences is clearly visible. For example AJGAR (Ahir, Jat, Gujjar and Rajput), KHAM (Kshatriya, Harijan, Adivasi, Muslim), MAJGAR (Muslim + AJGAR), DYM (Dalit, Yadav and Muslim) and MAMULI (Marwaris, Muslims and Lingayats).

Added to the above, there is an inherent contradiction between the Indian

government's objective of a casteless society and its policy of granting special

aid on the basis of caste. This especially, created vested interests in determining

the criteria for 'backward classes'. The very same castes which made a plea to

the British government in India for them to be considered as castes of a higher

rank (in the census records), now, keeping in view the benefits and privileges

that they would be entitled to if classified as 'backward classes' demanded that

they be regarded so. In fact, how can castes which have a large number of

representatives in state legislatures and ministries be treated as 'backward' that

too when access to political power holds the key to all manner of benefits.[42]

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CASTE AND MODERN DAY POLITICS

Electoral politics, as we have already seen, instead of contributing to a

fading away of castes led to its reinforcement in a startling non traditional way.

The combined logic of industrial development and democratic citizenship were to

work together to bring about the individual, by dissolving primordial identities like

caste. But what exactly happened was a deviation from the above.[43] Since

elections required aggregation of perceived interests and where the perception of

identity was deeply traditional, appeals to caste identities were more effective.

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[42]   Shah, A,M, 1996, "Job Reservation and 'Efficiency" in M.N. Srinivas ed., Caste –Its Twentieth
        Century Avatar, New Delhi: Viking, Penguin.pp.195-202.
[43]   Hawthorn, Geoffrey. 1982, "Caste and Politics in India. Since 1947" in D.B. Mcgilvray ed.,
        Caste Ideology and Interaction, Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, pp.204-220.

Caste was drawn in to electoral politics due to enhanced opportunities of economic gain, immense governmental patronage and positions of power thus offered.

The spread of equalitarian political values and opportunities provided by democracy helped many groups to mobilize themselves. In the early phase of independence the political and arena was dominated by an educated nationalist elite. The business class too, was politically influential. But slowly, the landed caste elites were brought in to the ruling coalition. These new rulers enjoyed legitimacy in part because of the traditional patterns of authority such as the caste structure in the villages. They in turn patronized competing elites from other social groups in order to avoid discontent and thus the breakdown of the power structure.

Gradually, electoral competition mobilized many formerly passive socio-economic groups. Adult franchise and expanded opportunities of political participation created a new awareness among them of the importance of treating politics as an instrument of satisfying mobility aspirations. For instance, Karpoori Thakur following in the foot steps of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia mobilized the 'backward' castes against the 'forward' castes in Bihar. Consequently, caste

polarization is quite evident in Bihar.[44]

Lok dal under the leadership of Charan Singh was established on the basis of 'backward' peasant castes. With the spread of 'green revolution' agrarian social structure underwent many changes. The emerging capitalist farmer and the surplus generating peasant participated in politics on the basis of caste. Charan Singh posed a formidable challenge to the Congress in northern India by successfully mobilizing 'backward' peasant castes. He provided an economic ideology of rural vs. urban, agriculture vs industry and village vs. town. This had an appeal for the rural rich who employed caste strategy in elections. The peasant castes wanted to control political power by diverting public resources for rural development which in reality meant more resources at the disposal of the rural rich.

The multiplicity of societal goals and mobility aspirations in the democratic order induced the castes to dilute the intensity of their commitment to a particularistic group. There is a race for identity expansion by a process of inducting several socially homogeneous like-minded castes that share greater historical proximity with each other. The urge for political domination and

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[44]   Sharma, Jyotsna; 1996, "Backward Caste Politics: Style of Leadership" in Eastern Anthropologist (Vol.49:1), pp.45-57.

competition for scarce resources induces a caste to shed off its rigidity and enter in to broader alliance. No single caste is large enough to dominate a state or region and only a combination of several castes can ensure majority. Unless they form such broader allegiances they would remain permanently unrepresented.

However, Zoya Hasan argues that there are certain very definite limits to castes mobilization "because of the perpetual struggle over the distribution of benefits to various castes and classes. Thus, the rise of middle and backward castes such as the Jats, Ahirs, Kurmis and Gujjars in a number of districts intensified conflicts between the Yadav and Kurmi land owner and land less agricultural labourers".[45] Thus, Hasan's argument is that caste consolidation takes place not due to cultural affinity but economic interests.

The politics of 'backwardness' took a new shape with the installation of first non-congress government in New Delhi in 1977. Political parties sought to defend the use of caste on tactical rather than on ethical grounds. It was argued that caste needed to be given a place in public life not so much on grounds of *Real Politikas* but on grounds of social justice. Further their argument was that since lower caste had been stigmatized and exploited in the past, therefore, they should be given social protection through extensive quotas in every domain of

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[45]   Quoted in Gupta, Dipankar, 1996, <u>Political Sociology in India,</u> Delhi: Oxford University Press, p.29.

public life. This received a fresh lease of life since 1990 with the then Janta Dal government pressing for the expansion of caste quotas in the cause of social justice.[46]

Thus, from the above discussion it is evident that the relationship between caste and politics can be understood when a 'voluntarist' dimension is attached to it. Amoral opportunism is quite evident.

However, with changing times, caste today instead of being the instrument of hierarchy and stratification, it has become the main vehicle for identity assertion. It is an important tool for institutionalizing egalitarianism rather than a symbol of institutionalized inequality.

Amidst this discussion arises the question as to what exactly is the presumed relationship between caste and electoral politics.

PRESUMED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CASTE AND ELECTORAL POLITICS

Considering a general political scenario, there figure two myths regarding the influence of caste over electoral politics: (1) it determines the orientation of a

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[46] Beteille, Andre, 1996. "Caste in Contemporary India" in C.J.Fuller ed., Caste Today, Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp.167-69.

particular caste members to one political party and (2) Electoral results in India are decided by the so called vote banks. The voters do not think or act as individuals. Further , it is believed that if a party fields a candidate from a caste that is either dominant or numerically significant in a particular constituency than that ensures success of the candidate.

The first point is agreeable to certain extent, but, it is not without complication. There are several instances, whereby personal interests outweigh group interests in competition for scare resources especially in acquisition of power.

As far as the second myth is concerned, the social groups may tend to vote in similar direction, but no group is ever completely homogenous. Even when they vote in a similar direction, it is not because of any herd mentality. Their shared circumstances lead them to arrive at similar conclusion through independent reasoning. In this context, even the scheduled castes and other backward classes who possess numerical strength cannot be perceived as monolithic bloc.[47] There exist differences among them added to which 'have nots' have a grudge against the upper sections, that is those who hog on to the benefits.[48]

[47]   Gupta, Dipankar, Oct. 19, 1999. "Poll Predictions When Caste Numbers Do Not Add Up", in
         Times of India.
[48]   Srinivas, M.N. 1996 "Introduction" in M.N. Srinivas ed., Caste ; Its Twentieth Century Avatar,
         New Delhi: Viking, Penguin.

Finally appeals to caste loyalties by setting up candidates from dominant caste groups or those that are numerically significant does not always ensure success. Moreover, if a political party fields a candidate from a particular caste, then other parties may react by fielding in candidates from the same caste, thereby, creating confusion. Alternatively, there are instances where by inorder to defeat a dominat-caste candidate, the less dominant castes join to oppose him. As no constituency has a monocaste majority only a combination of diverse caste stratas can ensure victory. Thus, electoral results cannot be predicted merely on the basis of caste composition of a constituency.[49]

Thus, then arises the question as to why do politicians use caste in their political calculations. This can be understood from a voluntarist point of view. Every individual has a personal network which he articulates for achieving his

goals. In an increasingly complex world, where scarcities are the order of the day and every activity tends to come under the government purview there is a continuous pressure on the individual to articulate his networks (be it formal or the informal ones like caste and religion). However, the fact that networks involving members of diverse castes are all the time being articulated provides

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[49]   Gupta, Dipankar, 1999, " Caste and Politics: The Presumption of Numbers" in Veena Das, Dipankar Gupta and Patricia Uberoi eds., Tradition, Pluralism and Identity, New Delhi: Sage.

enough evidence to show that inter caste competitiveness has not reached a stage where members of a caste work only to promote their caste interests.

However, towards the end of this dissertation on the basis of Andhra experience we shall try to detect some more factors which compel a politician to think on caste lines.

TOWARDS AN APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF THE ROLE OF CASTE IN ANDHRA POLITICS

The present study is a combination of two points of view – the instrumental and voluntaristic. It is instrumentalist because it projects caste as a promoter of identity and therefore could serve the interests of the members of one particular caste. In Andhra Pradesh, Caste provided a ground for competition between the two non-Brahmin forward castes i.e. Kammas and reddis each of whom dominate Telugu Desam Party and Congress (I) respectively. Both these caste in an effort to out do each other provided a major impetus to the states progress. Though both the parties are not 'casteist' (neither Congress I is devoid of Kammas nor Telugu Desam Party is devoid of Reddis) they, nevertheless calculated on the basis of caste as to who would occupy seats of effective power in the state.

As regards voluntarism it is Parsons "Voluntaristic Theory of Action" which finds an applicability in this context.[50] To mention in brief, Parsons conceptualizes volutarism as the subjective decision-making processes of individual actors, but he views such decisions as the partial outcome of certain kinds of constraints, both normative and situational. Voluntaristic action involves the following basic elements: (1) Actors are individual persons (2) Actors are viewed as goal seeking. (3)Actors are also in possession of alternative means to achieve the goals. (4) They are confronted with a variety of situational conditions, such as their own biological make up and heredity as well as various external ecological constrainst, that influence the selection of goals and means. (5) Actors are seen to be governed by values, norms and other ideas in that these ideas influence what us considered a goal and what the appropriate means are to achieve it. (6) Action involves actors making subjective decisions about the means to achieve goals, all of which are constrained by ideas and situational conditions.

Thus, when seen in context of Andhra Pradesh it is surely not devoid of voluntarism. In fact, in Andhra politics, there are many instances of voluntarism such as personality clashes, presence of factions, intra-caste rivalries and above

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[50] Parsons, Talcott. 1949, The Structure of Social Action, New York: The Free Press, pp.72-86, 737-776.

all switching loyalties from one party to another. These are all, instances where by individual interests assume importance over group interests. For an actor in the political sphere, an important goal is to gain access to political power and there by enjoy the perks associated with it. Therefore, it is he who ultimately decides or selects the most suitable means to achieve his goal. In Andhra, there are also instances, which show that beneath caste interests lie some very personal interests.

Thus a combination of instrumental and voluntaristic approaches helps us to analyse the role of caste in Andhra politics.

CHAPTER II

EMERGENCE OF DOMINANT CASTES IN ANDHRA POLITICS: 1920-1956

This chapter deals with the ways in which the non-Brahmin upper castes i.e., Kammas and Reddis came to dominate the political sphere in Andhra. In order to understand this, as a starting point, one has to focus specifically on the divide that arose between Brahmins and non-Brahmins in the pre-independence era (i.e., during the British raj).

However, before we examine the above, it is essential for us to have a brief look at the caste profile of the state: The castes can be divided into three categories: Forward castes, Backward castes and Scheduled Castes.[1]

FORWARD CASTES

The above category comprises of Brahmins, Vaishyas, Kammas, Reddis and Velamas.

In the traditional rural society, Brahmins were either priests, land owners, village officials or medical advisors. With the advent of the British rule they were the first community to take advantage of the demand for an expanding bureaucracy and put their literate skills to use. They slowly shifted to urban areas taking up government and quasi-government jobs. However, they lost their age old social

[1] Rao, C.V.Subba, 1982, "Land, Caste and Politics in Andhra Pradesh" in Gail Omvedt ed, Land, Caste and Politics in Indian States, Delhi: Authors Guild Publishers, p. 157.

superiority owing to the influence of anti-Brahmin movement and the Western education available to the landed castes.[2]

Vaishyas are called 'Komatis' in local parlance. They have been merchants, traders and money lenders. Some of them own lands as well. They, however, constitute a small community.

Kammas are a prosperous agricultural community.[3] In the past they were also Zamindars in northern coastal districts of Andhra. However, now the majority of therm are land-owners and possess large tracts of land in the districts of Krishna, Godavari, Guntur and Anantapur.

Reddis too, are a prosperous land holding community. It is believed that they ruled several parts of Andhra Desa at different times in the past.[4] Under the Nizam, they enjoyed large scale Zamindari rights in Telangana. They also held large tracts of land in parts of Rayalseema and Neilore districts.

As far as the Velamas are concerned, though not numerous, they also held

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[2] Reddy, P.Ranjani, 1987, The Role of Dominant Castes in Indian Politics, Delhi: Uppal Publishing House, p.39

[3] Kammas, it is believed, were originally soldiers, see Thurston, Edgar, 1975, Castes and Tribes of Southern India, (Vol.III), Delhi: Cosmo Publications, pp. 222-223

[4] Reddy, P.Ranjani, op.cit., p.88.

Zamindari positions in some parts of Andhra.

Kammas, Reddis and Velamas originally belong to the Shudra category with in the *Varna* framework. However, they all claim a Kshatriya status. Both Kammas and Reddis derive enormous strength and influence through ownership of large tracts of land. The difference however is that while Kammas dominate the coastal districts, Reddis dominate Rayalseema and Telangana regions. As M.N.Srinivas explains,"the deltaic region seems to hair been called once upon a time 'Kamma Rashtra' while Rayalseema was referred to as 'Reddiseema'".[5]

BACKWARD CASTES

The category of backward classes as defined by the Andhra Pradesh government consists of 33 castes. Important castes include Vadrangi (Carpenter), Kamsali (Gold Smith), Kammari (black Smith), Gowda (toddy tappers), Padmasalee (weavers), Chakali (washermen), Kummari (potters) and Mangali (barbers).

SCHEDULED CASTES

They are mainly categorized as Malas and Madigas. Malas claim superiority over the Madigas. They are mostly agricultural labour. The traditional occupation of

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[5] Srinivas, M.N., 1962, Caste in Modern India, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, p.27.

Madigas is tanning and shoe-making. Only a few families practice their traditional occupations. Others are agricultural workers.

EMERGENCE OF DOMINANT CASTES IN PRE-INDEPENDENCE ERA

Here we shall examine as to how the pre-independence era provided a fore ground to the emergence of non-Brahmin peasant castes, especially, Kammas and Reddis on the political centrestage.

Andhra Pradesh is the first state to be carved out on a linguistic basis in independent India. Andhra districts which were internally differentiated between the Circars or fertile coastal belt and the dry uplands of Rayalseema were administered during the colonial period as part of the Madras Presidency. By contrast, the backward Telangana region remained under direct rule of the Nizam of Hyderabad until the year 1948. The State's formation took place in two stages: Firstly, Rayalseema and coastal districts were separated from Madras state and formed in to separate Andhra state in 1953. In 1956, Telangana too was incorporated in to Andhra. Thus, the combination of all the Telugu speaking districts in to Andhra Pradesh left the state divided into three sub-regions (Circars, Rayalseema and Telangana) characterised by cultural discontinuities, economic, imbalances and

political rivalries.[6]

Ever since the formation of the state, political power has been largely in the hands of members of the dominant agricultural castes of Reddi, Kammas and Velamas. (We shall deal with the concept of dominant castes in the next chapter). The above mentioned castes rival with each other but do not act as solid blocks. The most important units in the political process are the factions mostly led by members of the dominant castes, but including members of other castes and communities.[7] Thus the pattern consists of irregular vertical structures of factions.

After this background information on the state, we shall now discuss the contribution of the pre-independence era to the emergence of dominant peasant castes. It was the construction of the anicut over Godavari and Krishna rivers in 1847 and 1853, which qualitatively influenced the dynamics of Andhra's economy and politics. Pre-anicut conditions were characterised by stagnation.[8] As a result of

[6] Reddy, G. Ram, 1989, "Caste, Class and Dominance in Andhra Pradesh" in Francine R. Frankel and M.S.A.Rao eds., Dominance and State Power in Modern India: Decline of Social Order (Vol.I), Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 266.

[7] Bernstorff, Dagmar, 1977, "Political Leadership in Andhra Pradesh" in B.N.Pandey, ed. Leadership in South Asia, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, p.290.

[8] Reddy, G.Ram, op.cit. p. 273.

the British colonial policies with respect to the structure of land holding, Andhra districts evolved a distinct system of land tenures i.e., *Zamindari* and *ryotwari*.[9] The *Zamindars* in Andhra were basically the parasitic rent-receiving land holders who exercised ownership rights in land and other resources with out undertaking supervision and cultivation of land. In terms of caste, these landlords were primarily from the non-Brahmin upper castes such as Kammas, Reddis, Velamas and Kshatriyas. Their wealth enabled them to exercise power and domination over the dependent peasantry. Thus, they could command and exercise immense power and authority in the country side mainly because of their grip over land. All this, inturn, helped them to maintain their higher status. Added to all this, even the cost of cultivation was so prohibitive that there were several instances of peasants and tenants leaving the

land and running away from the villages. This could be attributed to various factors such as natural calamities, arbitrary exactions by *Zamindars*, severe burden of taxation on cultivators, depression of agricultural prices etc.[10]

After the construction of the anicut, agriculture became attractive and there

9   Satyanarayana A. 1994 "Caste and Class in Rural Andhra- A Historical Perspective" in K.L. Sharma, ed., Caste and Class in India, New Delhi: Rawat Publications, pp. 368-9.

10   Reddy, G.Ram, op.cit., p. 273.

was a swell in the number of tenants and agricultural labourers.[11] At this stage, agricultural production required devoted work of the laborers. This saw the emergence of cultivating peasant castes who unlike the Brahmins, were not only good supervisors but accustomed to soiling their own hands. This phenomenon partially explains the decline of Brahmins as agriculturists.

With the advance of commercial agriculture there resulted the emergence of a new middle class among the cultivating castes. The *Ryotwari* tenure, wide spread prevalence of peasant proprietorship and the development of irrigation system contributed to their stabilization.[12] Furthermore, expansion of commercialization, commodity production and agrarian trade led to their prosperity. In terms of caste, these middle peasants predominantly belonged to Kamma and Reddi castes.

Thus there was the emergence and crystallization of 'nascent peasant - bourgeoisie in rural Andhra who were market-oriented, dynamic and acquisitive.

Other castes especially the lower sections of the backward castes like Yadavas, Gowdas and Telagas as well as artisan castes continued to remain peasants and under-tenants. They did not benefit from the opportunities provided by the colonial regime. As a result, most of them tended to lose their lands and join the ranks of the rural labour force.

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[11]   Ibid.

[12]   Satyanarayana, A., Op.Cit., pp. 368-370.

Meanwhile, another important outcome of the colonial regime was increasing urbanization and occupational changes. Brahmins utilized the opportunities provided by the colonial regime in the shape of education and employment in the professions and government services. For instance, in the period 1876-1886, 73% of the total Hindu candidates who successfully completed their University examinations were Brahmins.[13] Therefore, it was rightly pointed out that "educationally the Brahmin was the leader of South India".[14] They entered the colonial administration and newly created urban professions in disproportionately large numbers. Besides education and public services, the Brahmins in Andhra also controlled the Congress Party and dominated Public Life.

However, it was the emergence of these new middle peasant castes that contributed to the changes in traditional status hierarchy by injecting the element of economic mobility in the social ranking system. For the future it meant that caste and class divisions acted as barriers against a possible alliance between the middle and poor peasants and Schedule Castes. They had to accept the leadership of the rich peasants. Thus the foundations of rich peasant hegemony were laid after the successful overthrow of the superiority of the Brahmins.[15]

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[13]   Reddy, G. Ram, Op. Cit. p. 274.

[14]   Satyararayana, Op.Cit., p.374.

[15]   Reddy, P.Ranjani, Op.Cit., p.11.

In Andhra, there were three kinds of movements spanning the first half of twentieth century. In the period of struggle for independence and statehood, national movement and movement for the creation of Andhra State intertwined.[16]Running parallel to both these movements was the non-Brahmin movement. However, in the present discussion all these three movements assume utmost significance as they enable us to understand and the ascendance of dominant agricultural castes to the positions of power in the state.

NON-BRAHMIN MOVEMENT

In the 1920s and 1930s alongside the national movement and movement for statehood in Andhra, non-Brahmin movement swept peninsular India.[17]This movement was directed against the domination of Brahmins in all fields- social, political and cultural. The non-Brahmin movement has been viewed by scholars as a movement of every one who is not a Brahmin. Thus,M.N.Srinivas, although conceding that opposition to Brahmin domination came from the dominant castes,

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[16]   Walch, James, 1976, " One-Party Dominance in Andhra Pradesh" In Faction and Front: Party Systems in South India, New Delhi: Young Asia Publications, p. 275.

[17]   Ramaswamy, Uma: March 1978, "The Belief System of the Non-Brahman Movement in India: The Andhra Case in Asian Survey (Vol. XVII, California: University of California Press, p.291.

discusses the non-Brahmin movement as part of the backward classes movement.[18] Irschick too refers to non-Brahmins as "backwards".[19]

Leadership for the non-Brahmin movement came from non-Brahmin rich peasants.[20] Though this movement claimed to represent the interests of all non-Brahmins, its limited programme appealed primarily to elitist groups in rural society. Apart from Tamilians, Telugus took an active part in this movement. In fact, some of its prominent leaders were Telugus. In the Telugu region, the movement was spearheaded by Kammas, Reddis and Velamas.[21] Though they were wealthy, they lacked to claim high status in two spheres: (1) modern Western education and (2) ritual sphere. However, as they became politically aware through Western education and social reform movements, it was the Brahmin monopoly over ritual status and government jobs that these castes systematically attacked.

Thus, a non-Brahmin Sangam was formed in the year 1917 which later on merged with the Justice Party.[22] It demonstrated clearly the deprivation of upper

[18] Srinivas, M.N., 1966, Social Change in Modern India. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 102-103.

[19] Irschick, Eugene, 1969, Politics and Social Conflict in South India, Bombay: Oxford University Press, Introduction.

[20] Reddy, P.Ranjani, Op.Cit., p.49.

[21] Ramaswamy, Uma. Op.Cit. p.291.

[22] Ibid., p.292.

class non-Brahmins. This movement rested on the ideas which emerged from the writings and pronouncements of its leaders. The non-Brahmin elite challenged the sanctity of sacred texts. Further, they argued these texts to be the creation of the Brahmins for the purpose of vesting themselves with ritual exclusiveness and keeping the Shudras in perpetual servility. The non-Brahmin elite drew upon South India's cultural past, contending that caste stratification was unknown in the original Dravidian society.[23]

According to Uma Ramaswamy,"structural factors play a crucial role in the emergence of a movement. When a society is highly stratified and segmented it produces conditions favorable to the emergence of such a movement".[24] However, social movements are a consequence of a series of "encounters and interaction rather than a mere reflection to structural conditions"[25]

The non-Brahmins highlighted the fact that even though the Brahmins constituted a small minority of the population they monopolized Western education and cornered a major share of jobs in the administration. Therefore, these castes demanded "non-Brahminization" of services.[26] Their logic behind this was that non-

[23]   Rajagopal, Indhu, 1985, The Tyranny of Caste: The Non-Brahmin Movement and Political Development in South India. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, p.5.

[24]   Ramaswamy, Uma. Op.Cit. p.290.

[25]   Wilson, John, 1973, Introduction to Social Movements, New York: Basic Books, p.90.

[26]   See, Rajagopal, Indhu; Op.Cit., pp.95-105.

Brahmins constituted bulk of the population, paid that greater part of the revenue and should therefore be entitled to a substantial share of administrative jobs. In fact, the non-Brahmin elites came to suspect Home Rule as a design for allowing Brahmins to dominate the province. However, by then the erst while Madras government had already recognized non-Brahmins as an administrative category. Thus, castes other than Brahmins were provided with a framework for political action.

The non-Brahmin Sangam, however, was not a homogeneous group. Almost every caste which took an active part in the movement formed a caste association. Thus Kamma Mahajan Sangam was founded in 1914, followed by Reddi Mahajan Sangam in 1920 and Velama Mahajan Sangam around the same time.[27] An important activity of these associations was to commission caste histories. In order to enhance their ritual status Kammas laid claims to Kshatriya status. Reddis and Velamas too voiced their claims to Kshatriya status. These claims were made through a reinterpretation and recasting of appropriate mythologies of origin. In order to avoid conflict Kammas, Reddis and Velamas were willing to grant Kshatriya status to each other. For this purpose, they found the *varna* scheme convenient. In this process, a contradiction surfaced, as an one hand the non-Brahmin leaders claimed that Brahmin status should depend on personal qualities, they did not reject ascriptive differences based on birth. A prominent Kamma leader Tripuraneni

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[27] Ramaswamy, Uma Op.Cit., p.294.

Ramaswami Chaudhury was caught in this contradiction. He claimed that the Kammas, Reddis and Velamas were Kshatriyas and superior to Shudra castes such as the Golla, Kummari etc., While he encouraged marriages between subcastes, he did not greatly favour inter-caste marriages.

Thus, the non-Brahmin movement clearly brought to the fore the division among the non-Brahmins. They were clearly divided in to three categories: Upper Caste non-Brahmins, other Backward Classes and Scheduled Castes. There existed wide socio-economic disparities between the three categories. However, the non-Brahmin leaders had intentions of bringing about a unification of all non-Brahmin Castes. But these ideas could not be successfully translated into action as the differences between these castes were too wide to be bridged.

Therefore, this non-Brahmin movement could hardly be considered a mass movement because from the very beginning it was dominated by upper caste non-Brahmins. Even with in these castes many leaders came from princely families. The Justice Party in the districts was essentially an informal association of friends and relatives, coordinated by informal contacts between old families. Party membership was confined to elite of upper non-Brahmin castes and did not even

attempt to encompass low caste groups.[28] The Justice Party achieved its measure of success in Andhra by recruiting elites who held personal power as traditional notables in the locality. Thus, a party which was founded to articulate caste interests was reformed in the Andhra setting to a party of landed elites. Aptly as Washbrook observes, Caste organizations had a dominant streak of elitism.

The Justice Party leaders instead of rejecting the hierarchical principle, drew heavily on it to restate their position. Irschick too states that the Justice Party did not attempt to enlist the support of lower castes by including their demands in the party platform. Thus, the activities of caste associations, the competing claims of superiority and Kshatriya status and above all, the notion of self-help where by each caste was to promote its own interests did not contribute to the emergence of a broad-based movement.

The upliftment of untouchables too remained a mere political strategy used by upper caste non-Brahmins in order to attract the former. High Caste non-Brahmins never thought

of equating themselves with untouchables. Their selfish motives were exposed when they

heartily welcomed the first communal Government Order (G.O) which allotted to

[28] Elliott, Carolyn M. 1970, "Caste and Faction Among The Dominant Caste: The Reddis and Kammas of Andhra" in Rajni Kothari ed., Caste in Indian Politics, Delhi: Orient Longmans, p.146.

them a major share of Government jobs, ignoring the claims of the untouchables. This led to distancing of untouchables from upper caste non-Brahmins. Gradually Other Backward Classes too moved away.

Not only were the non-Brahmin upper castes different from those below them, but had differences amongst themselves. A leader wrote in Reddi Rani "The term non-Brahmin includes a congeries of *Varnas*... Each of these *Varnas* is interested in its own advancement rather than in the progress of the non-Brahmin group as a whole. The formation of various caste associations is illustrative of this tendency."[29] The exclusive emphasis on goals such as better education, government jobs and political power also pushed to the fore the cleavages among them.

Once meeting their goals became accessible, now their interests were focussed on the distribution of the loaves and fishes among the different non-Brahmin castes.

Thus the coming together of Reddis, Kammas and Velamas was truly an "alliance of convenience". They went their separate ways to promote their own interests. Their associations functioned independently of each other despite the overlap in the leadership of the Justice Party.

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[29]   Ramaswamy, Uma, Op.Cit., p.299.

It is through the non-Brahmin movement that Reddis and Kammas rose to prominence to become the chief political rivals in Andhra Pradesh. Srinivas argued that it was a natural outcome for these groups to fall apart that too, back in to their traditional rivalry once Brahmin power had been contained.[30] Earlier, they joined hands because at the ideological level their sole aim was to whittle down Brahmin supremacy. And once they succeeded in doing so, they faced a threat from each other in their struggle for scarce resources which turned them in to rivals.

However, the non-Brahmin movement was a short lived one and it fizzled out by late 1930s. This could be attributed to its notable success in its primary goal of containing Brahmin power. These upper caste non-Brahmins had gained access to Western education, political power and government jobs. In fact, the Communal Government Order allotted 5 out of every 12 administrative posts to non-Brahmins. By 1940, the non-Brahmins had greatly benefited from this arrangement and had in fact begun to monopolize government jobs just as the Brahmins had done before them. Upper caste non-Brahmins also attained a measure of freedom from ritual control by Brahmins.

Therefore, this non-Brahmin movement which was originally established in order to pave the way for an egalitarian social order, had contrary results. The important consequences were: 1) Whittling down Brahminical power. 2) To set off

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[30]   Srinivas, M.N., "Caste in Modern India" Journal of Asian Studies, (July 1957), Vol.16, p.538.

the Upper non-Brahmins from those below them. The appropriation by them of the title "Kshatriya" established this cleavage. 3) There was a race between the dominant non-Brahmin Castes for superior status. Strangely, the very Sanskritic texts which these castes so vehemently denounced began to be used for this purpose. Both Kammas and Reddis went back to the *Puranas* to prove their royal descent. 4) This movement also brought to the fore the differences with in each of these dominant castes. Thus, differences appeared even at the sub caste level.

However, at another level the non-Brahmin movement had one more important consequence. And, this was with respect to the rise of landlord power in Andhra. Control over land and acquisition of wealth and affluence had earlier helped the landlords to exercise power and authority. But, with the growth of the non-Brahmin movement the opportunities provided by the colonial state in terms of local self-government and 'dyarchy' were utilized by *Zamindars* to their full advantage.[31] Their ability to extend patronage and exercise control and domination over their dependents contributed to the monopoly of power by them. In fact through 'dyarchy' they emerged as 'political bosses' in the Madras Presidency.[32] As a result of colonial patronage, in the period between 1921-36, out of four Chief Ministers three belonged to the *Zamindars* Class.

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[31]   Satyanarayana, A. Op.Cit., p.373.

[32]   Ibid.

Meanwhile, the new middle class (in the agrarian sector) which arose as a result of the commercialization of agricultural became a dynamic force in 1930s. Their dynamism led to the rise and growth of the *Kisan* movement in Andhra. The peasant proprietors who belonged to the Kamma and Reddis castes provided leadership to the agrarian movements and challenged the authority of the feudal landlords. The growth of the Left Movement (between 1934-47) weakened the authority of land lords in Andhra and benefited the upper echelons of the peasant proprietors.

By the end of the colonial rule, there was displacement of the landlords and Brahmins from their pre-eminent position in the realm of economy and polity in the countryside. Atleast two factors could be attributed to this phenomena: 1) abolition of the *Zamindari* system and other land tenure systems. 2) Shift of land holding from Brahmins to non-Brahmins to non-Brahmins and migration of Brahmins from rural areas to urban areas.

The above two factors, led to the emergence of rich peasant proprietors in the country side. As a result of strong *anti-Zamindaari* movements led by them and further the abolition of *Zamindari* system enabled these peasants to buy large tracts of land and acquire ownership rights. Even Brahmins disposed of their land to these non-Brahmin big tenants and leasees. Brahmins lost lands not only to finance education of their young family members and make a living in the urban areas, but

also due to their conspicuous consumption and extravagant expenditure on rituals and ceremonies.

Thus, the decline and disintegration of absentee landlordism paved the way for the crystallization of dynamic rural rich in the countrywide. In caste terms, it consisted primarily of the Kamma and Reddis could maintain and improve upon their lands mainly because of their 'attachment' to land as well as 'the extraordinary care' they take in agriculture.[33] Thus landownership is a crucial factor in establishing dominance as it gives the big landowners on opportunity to establish their hold over the rural economy.[34] This in turn, enables them to dominate the political sphere.

NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

However, parallel to the non-Brahmin movement and *Kisan* movement, urban elites who took part in the nationalist movement needed to broaden their base of support. Congress needed to recruit traditional notables to contest local government elections and defeat the Justice Party which support the colonial regime.[35]

Therefore, Brahmin leaders who were front runners in the nationalist

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[33] Satyanarayana, A., 1994, Op.Cit. p.375.

[34] Srinivas, M.N. 1962, Op, Cit. p.92.

[35] Elliott, Carolyn M., Op.Cit., p.152.

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movement brought many dominant non-Brahmin notables into the highest circles of the party, even at the risk of their own displacement. Thus in 1930s many landed elites were recruited into Congress.

In the early nationalist period when India's national leaders were engaged in constitutional representation to British authorities, they did not consider it important to mobilize these rural leaders.[36] Only when the nature of struggle shifted to mass mobilization did they turn to rural elites. This provided an easiest means for mass mobilization especially through the usage of patron-client ties. Once this happened, Congress leaders had also to accept the legitimacy of goals which these rural leaders wished to pursue in politics.

Thus, as the Congress movement spread out into rural areas, the leadership composition underwent a change. "Landed aristocracy and middle peasantry provided the base for leadership recruitment. Most often economic dominance, caste superiority and political ascendance coincided reinforcing the stratificatory pattern of traditional society".[37]

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[36]   Ibid.

[37]   Rao, P.V.Narasimha, 197, "Change with Stability: The Chief Ministers Burden", in B.N.Pandey, ed., Leadership in South Asia, New Delhi: Vikas Publishers, p.266.

MOVEMENT FOR THE CREATION OF ANDHRA STATE

Apart from the non-Brahmin movement, the rivalries between Brahmin and non-Brahmin leaders led to caste-based, confrontational politics on another issue. And this was the demand of Congress leaders in the advanced coastal districts for a separate state of the Telugu speaking population of the Madras Presidency.

Telugu interests were powerfully expressed through the Andhra movement. As a solution to the social and economic backwardness of the Telugu districts and in order to offset Tamil dominance in the government services of Madras, the movement demanded the creation of a separate Andhra province. In Madras Presidency, Tamilians had an upper hand in all spheres and they undermined abilities of Telugu people.[38] As a result, Telugus of Madras Presidency felt deprived of many advantages by Tamilans especially in the field of administrative positions. Telugu leaders felt that inspite of their sizeable numbers, they were" unknown as compared to Tamilians. "They reiterated that the Telugus had a distinct culture, and that it was "nothing short of absurdity to yoke them to the Tamils."[39]

As such, the coastal districts were dominated by Brahmins. They constituted

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[38]   Rao, K.V.Narayana. 1973, The Emergence of Andhra Pradesh, Bombay: Popular Prakashan, pp.22-25.

[39]   Rajagopal. Indhu, Op.Cit., p.152.

the middle classes who were most responsive to new opportunities arising from modernization. These people had more political awareness than any other castes. In fact, they composed the majority of educated elite occupying leadership positions both in the bureaucracy and in national and regional movements in Andhra. It was this section of Telugus that wanted the creation of a separate Andhra State in which their education, cultural and political interests would be served better.

K.V.Narayana Rao commenting on the separate Andhra movement says, "The movement for the separate Andhra province had its origin in the prosperous coastal delta districts where the Western education engendered a spirit of social reform and accelerated the growth of political consciousness. A growing interest among people in Telugu language and literature and consciousness of the fact that they belonged to a linguistic group with a significant cultural legacy sharpened the feeling of contemporary backwardness and made them think of ways of bettering their lot. The feeling that they would flourish only in a separate province for themselves found a strong expression only in Delhi Darbar of 1911."[40]

In contrast to the Brahmin dominated coastal districts, the economically, socially and politically more backward Rayalseema region was dominated by non-Brahmin castes, especially Reddis. Reddis in this region were opposed to the idea of a separate Andhra State as they feared domination by Circar Brahmins (in this

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[40]   Rao, K.V.Narayan, Op.Cit., p.312.

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regions administration as well).[41] By then, coastal districts had progressed in all fields and caused much concern among others. Telugu non-Brahmins feared that their interests would be jeopardized by the dominance of Circar Brahmins in a separate Telugu Province.

In the year 1913, the Andhra conference demanded the creation of a separate province for the first time. As already noted, greatest support came from the Coastal districts. Telugu non-Brahmins of the Rayalseema especially from Nellore and Chittoor districts opposed this move.[42]

However, the possibility of forming a separate province based on linguistic affiliation got official encouragement from the Montagu-Chemlsford report. In the Madras Presidency the Chief Minister showed little interest in helping the formation of an Andhra province. Moreover, it was "Non-Brahmin" ministry which was in power. Therefore, it was plausible to assume that there was the risk of a new Andhra province becoming a Brahmin or Congress dominated area.

The popularity of the Andhra movement, continued to grow, however, and the Madras legislature called for the creation of Andhra in 1927.

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[41] Walch, James. Op.Cit. p.280.

[42] Rao, K.V.Narayana, Op.Cit., pp. 162-65.

A non-Brahmin leader B.Munnuswami Naidu opposed it and felt that, "it failed to evoke an identity of interests among regions which shared only the Telugu language and nothing because of the regional economic and political disparities."[43]

Where as non-Congress men generally opposed the creation of Andhra, many Congress men from Rayalseema were not adverse to the idea, provided, their demands for parity in political power with the Circar were met. With the 1937 elections and the formation of the first Congress ministry in Madras the demands for an Andhra province grew in intensity. Only 8 out of 10 cabinet ministers were from coastal Andhra and none from Rayalseema.[44] This infuriated leaders from Rayalseema. Thus, seeking the full cooperation of Rayalseema Congress, Circar leaders offered a number of safeguards in the 1937 Sri Bagh Pact. Earlier demands for parity between the two regions in the ministries and equal public expenditure between the two regions were not included in the Pact. Generally, the Circar leaders considered that they conceded a good deal as the price of a joint front on the Andhra province issue.[45]

The All India Congress High Command was not willing to take any decision on this issue before independence. It assured a separate state after independence.

[43]   Walch, James, Op.Cit., p.281.

[44]   Rao, K.V.Narayana, Op.Cit., pp. 161-162.

[45]   Ibid, p. 165-166.

But after 1947, this issue was sidelined fearing that it would be hindrance to national integration as it would give rise to similar demands from other parts of the country.

Meanwhile, with independence, Brahmins began to lose control over Congress organization to Kammas and Reddis. The Kammas are located in the coastal Circar districts and Reddis in Rayalseema and Telangana. So, there were caste overtones to the regional conflict between the Circars and Rayalseema. These conflicts mixed with factional politics in the Andhra Congress for the leadership of the APCC and the Chief Ministership of Madras.[46]

In the contest for Chief Ministership of Madras, Rayalseema Congress leaders got less than what they felt to be their share of the new ministry. Thus, once again Rayalseema Congressmen with Sanjeeva Reddi as their leader began to express fears of Circar dominance. In 1948 contest for the APCC Presidentship, Sanjeeva Reddi was defeated by N.G.Ranga (a Circar Kamma). However, the closeness of the contest indicated that Rayalseema Reddis were to begin playing an important part in the life of Andhra Congress.

In the period 1946-51, Communists were actively involved in Telangana peasant struggle. At the same time they supported the idea of a separate Andhra

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[46] Walch, James. Op.Cit., p. 281.

state. In fact, they began to show how the Andhra people were losers in the composite Madras state. The people of Rayalseema were not still convinced of the promised fair treatment in a separate state. They sent a memorandum to the government against the formation of Andhra. But, the agitation for a Telugu state continued and intensified. For this, Potti Sriramulu started a fast unto death. The situation took a violent turn when he died after fasting for 58 days. The central government finally conceded to the demand.[47] Thus Andhra state came into existence on 1st October 1953.

The Andhra movement started later in Telangana (a part of feudal Hyderabad). Here the leaders though initially apprehensive about the possible Circar dominance later agreed to join the state with the working out of Gentleman's agreement. With this merger, emerged the state of Andhra Pradesh in its present form on 1st November 1956.

Thus what emerges out of this discussion is the fact that Brahmins lost their positions of prominence through the non-Brahmin and nationalist movements. They were replaced by the dominant peasant castes that is Kammas and Reddis who became Chief political rivals in the state. In Andhra, it is also evident that casteism and regionalism blend peculiarly. Here regional differences are based not only on economic disparities but also on the degree of the dominance of the landed castes at the state level politics.

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[47]   Reddy, P.Ranjani, Op.Cit. p. 52.

CHAPTER III

STABILIZATION OF DOMINANT CASTES : HEGEMONY OVER POLITICAL POWER

This chapter examines the role of dominant castes in Andhra politics. A phenomenon that could be observed in many Indian states after Independence is the rise to political power of the dominant agricultural castes: the Jats in Haryana, Marathas in the Maharashtra, Lingayats and Vokkaligas in Karnataka. It is in this context that Andhra Pradesh provides one of the striking examples, where by, members of the land owning castes of the Reddis and Kammas dominate at all political levels.

Therefore, the objective of this ensuing discussion is two fold: Firstly, to examine the factors which led to the consolidation of dominant castes especially in the post-independence era. Secondly, an attempt will be made to relate the socio-economic position of 'rural rich' to its hegemony over political power. To understand this requires a close scrutiny of the political activities of both Kammas and Reddis especially in the post- independence period. Another important aspect of the above is that of rivalry between Kammas and Reddis. Their rivalry is believed to be five hundered years old.[1] Infact, it has often been argued by scholars that the two rival political parties in Andhra Pradesh, that is, the Congress (I) and Telugu Desam Parties are dominated by Reddis and Kammas respectively. However, a closer examination reveals the fact that irrespective of which ever party comes to power at the state level, ultimately, power rests in the

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[1]   Harrison, Selig. 1956, "Caste and the Andhra Communists" American Political Science Review, (Vol. L), p.382.

hands of both Kammas and Reddis. These castes have been extremely successful in preserving the hold over the power structure in the state.

However, before we elaborate on the above two aspects, it is essential for us to understand the implications of the term 'dominant caste' in this study.

M.N. Srinivas was the first sociologist who introduced the concept of 'dominant caste'. According to him, "a caste may be said to be 'dominant' when it preponderates numerically over the other castes and when it also wields preponderant economic and political power. A large and powerful caste group can more easily be dominant if its position in the local caste hierarchy is not too low"[2].

However, in this study 'dominant caste' differs from the above position in one major respect and it is that of the numerical factor. Dominance here does not refer to a majority or even near majority in numbers. For instance, the two castes Kammas and Reddis together compose less than a fifth of the population of Andhra Pradesh. Kammas constitute about 5% of the state's population and Reddis are around 10-12%.[3] Dominant castes acquire their dominance mainly through economic power and also due to their social status. It refers to relative

[2] Srinivas, M.N. 1972, "The Social System of a Mysore Village" in Mckin Marriott ed., Village India: Studies in the Little Community, Chicago: Chicago University Press, p.18.

[3] Reddy, G.Ram. 1976, "Andhra Pradesh : The Citadel of Congress", in Iqbal Narain ed., State Politics in India, Meerut : Meenakshi Prakashan, p.4.

influence and control over social and political structures including local bodies such as Panchayati Raj. The rural "middle-class", that is non-feudal landowners who produced a surplus, quickly utilized the channels of political democracy and political office to maintain and further their interests. However, in the context of 'dominant caste', it cannot be taken for granted that everyone in the dominant caste is economically well off. As it happens, one or a few rich peasants enjoy a dominant position in relation to other members of their own caste.

However, in brief, the political success of the dominant land owning castes can be traced to the following factors: (1) Prestige of the urban, predominantly Brahmin elite has been undermined by strong anti-Brahmin sentiments. (2) Strong anti-*Zamindari* system in coastal Andhra and *Jagir* abolition in the erstwhile Hyderabad state, broke the power of traditional elites. (3) Introduction of democratic politics opened up opportunities for the rural middle class of medium land owners. And they were quick to realize the importance of political office for the maintenance and enlargement of their prestige and economic interest. (4) Politicians from these land owning castes had a material base in the joint family system with income sharing and division of labour. [4]

Hugh Gray stresses on the last factor in determining the political success of the landed elites. He uses the term 'landed gentry' for the dominant peasant

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[4]   Walch, James. 1976, "One – Party Dominance in Andhra Pradesh" in <u>Faction and Front : Party Systems in South India</u>, New Delhi; Yoyng Asia Publications, p.293.

castes of Telangana. According to him, landed gentry are, "an elite who operate at every level: in the Villages where they are based, in local government bodies, at district and state levels, and at the seats of Central government in Delhi". He observes that, "the division of labour with in landowning families allows them to remain effective in both traditional and modern roles"[5]. Thus, if a family has four sons it might try to cover the field by having one in local politics, one as an M.L.A., another in a profession, and the fourth as manager of the land. It is in order to maintain power in their villages and zones of over lapping economic and territorial interests that the ruling families as a dominant class of dominant castes, have sent their educated members to new battlefield provided by the institutions of parliamentary democracy. One of their family members has to be a politician in order to prevent interference by 'outside' forces as this could upset their balance of power.

CONSOLIDATION OF THE DOMINANT CASTES

In this section we shall discuss how the upper caste peasantry became dominant and further consolidated its position in the post-independence era. As already mentioned in the earlier chapter, it was the advance of commercial agriculture that contributed to the rise of a stable middle level peasantry. Further more, it was the strong anti-Zamandari movement and later on the abolition of

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[5]   Gray, Hugh. 1970, 'The landed Gentry of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh" in Edmund Leach and S.N. Mukherjee eds., Elites in South Asia, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.119.

Zamindari system which enabled them to buy large tracts of land and acquire ownership rights.[6] However, the reason why the upper caste peasantry became dominant, besides its market-oriented, dynamic and acquisitive nature, was, due to the expansion of agrarian economy since 1947. Given the advantages of land ownership and access to market, the rural rich were able to produce more remunerative and commercially viable crops such as tobacco, sugar cane, cotton etc. This facilitated the accumulation of surplus by the rural rich[7]. They were also benefited by the rising agricultural prices. Further, the growth of Internal trade in paddy and export trade in cash crops hastened the accumulation process among them. The rich Kamma and Reddi peasantry benefited enormously especially so in coastal Andhra by taking up commercial agriculture.

The strategies for rural development also provided ample opportunities for the rich peasants to augment resource moblization and accumulation. According to Daniel Thorner, "there are millionaire cultivators in coastal Andhra who invested their gains from agriculture in trade, transport, money lending and industry and thereby dominated the villages economically, socially and politically[8]". Rural co-operative credit societies were used by them to finance their enterprises. As credit was liked to landed assets they not only cornered a large share but also commanded control over financial institutions. They cleverly

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6   Satyanarayanan. A. 1994, "Caste and Class in Rural Andhra: A Historical Perspective" in K.L.Sharma ed., Caste and Class in India, New Delhi, Rawat Publications, p.377.
7   Ibid, p.381
8   Thorner, Daniel 1980, The Shaping of Modern India, New Delhi: Allied Publishers, p.203

diverted the loans meant for agricultural purposes ".... To start or to expand their private non-agricultural business, the bigger people form.... a co-operative rural bank."[9] But all this took place at the cost of exclusion of the majority of middle and poor peasants of the lower castes from the benefits of the rural credit societies.

The dominant peasant castes also benefited by the new agricultural technology. The big cultivators were encouraged by the Panchayat Samitis to use fertilizers and improved seeds (especially the high yielding variety). They also even obtained foreign power-cultivators, threshers, pumpsets, tractors etc., through government loan at low interest[10]. The rural rich was thus in the forefront of agricultural modernization. They took advantage of the available new technology and adopted several of the latest methods of farming to improve agricultural productivity in their farms. Thus, the above factors enabled the rural rich to consolidate their position.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC POSITION OF THE DOMINANAT CASTES AND THEIR HEGEMONY OVER POLITICAL POWER

In this we make an attempt to relate the socio economic position of the dominant land owning castes to their hegemony over political power.

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9   Ibid. p.190.
10   Thorner, Daniel. Feb.1967, "Coastal Andhra:Towards an Affluent Society", Economic and Political Weekly (Vol. 2,3-5),pp. 242-48

Politics in Andhra Pradesh since independence has often been interpreted as confrontation between the dominant agricultural castes i.e., Reddis and Kammas[11]. They were the two competing dominant castes who have continuously jockeyed for power. In the initial stages after independence there was a two party system in the state: Congress and Communist party. It was argued that while Kammas dominated the Communist party, Reddis have an upper hand in the Congress.

However, the assumption that the leadership of Andhra Communist Party of India (CPI) since its conception was in the hands of Kammas has to be modified. The CPI leadership contained many Brahmins and Reddis. Infact, horizontal solidarities were expressed more in terms of class than caste. The Kamma support given to Communist Party was "more an explosion in to politics by a group of persons who were doing the same things at the same time and the first large generation of Kammas to be educated joined this trend"[12]. Earlier, these Kamma youth who aimed at bringing about radical reforms could not be accommodated in to the Congress. The reason been Congress was not big enough to accommodate the number of Kammas who wished to enter at the levels of leadership they demanded. On the other hand, as the Reddis were the

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[11] Walch,James Op.Cit., p. 293
[12] Elliott, Carolyn M. 1970 "Caste and Faction among the Dominant Caste: The Reddis and Kammas of Andhra" in Rajni Kothari ed., Caste in Indian Politics, Delhi-Orient Longmans, p.158

first to be accommodated by the Congress their support to it remained intact. Therefore, Kammas saw the Communist movement as a vehicle for the advancement of their political ends.

Communist party built strong bases among tenant cultivators and landless labourers. They launched an armed struggle against the landlords. Although the government banned the party in 1946, they set up village committees, which, for all practical purposes served as parallel governments[13]. In 1948 the leadership emphasized the need for structural changes that alone could alleviate the distress of the landless. To this end, it even demanded nationalization of land.

However, with the merging of Telugu speaking districts Communist party began to decline. According to M.N. Srinivas, "one of the short term effects of universal adult franchise is understandable that the villager, other things being equal, prefers to vote for his caste men. It is widely accepted that, even the Communists felt constrained to nominate candidates who had the proper 'social base' which in other words meant that they belonged to locally dominant castes[14]". Thus the leadership of the Communist party fell in to the hands of dominant castes and rich peasants. As a result, the contradiction of a land

[13]   Reddy, G. Ram 1989, "Caste, Class and Dominance in Andhra Pradesh" in Francine R.Frankel and M.S.A. Rao eds. Dominance and State Power in Modern India: Decline of a Social Order (Vol.I), Delhi-Oxford University Press, p.278.

[14]   Srinivas, M.N. 1955, Report on the Seminar On "Casteism and Untoudhability", quoted in P. Ranjani Reddy, 1987, The Role of Dominant Castes in Indian Politics, Delhi- Uppal Publishing House, p.59

owning community supporting Communists surfaced[15]. The masses slipped away in part because of the elitist nature of leadership. Moreover, the need to mobilize electoral support around programmatic promises increased. Thus while Kamma Communist leaders were down playing their radicalism so as to maintain the support of other Kammas, the Congress cut sharply in to its (CPI) support base among the rural poor. By 1967 the Communist base weakened. Meanwhile Congress consolidated its position due to its pro-poor reforms.

Ever since the formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1956 up to the year 1983, Congress had an uninterrupted rule in the state. It nearly established a one-party dominance. As mentioned in the previous chapter, prior to independence the Congress party was dominated by the educated urban professional elites who were mostly the Brahmins. But since 1940's the Congress leadership in A.P. shifted to the dominant agricultural castes of Reddis, Kammas and Velamas. Both the landed gentry and the Congress were mutually dependent on each other. The landed gentry rallied behing the Congress party as its only hope, because of its experience during the agrarian unrest of early 1950's[16]. The immense success of the Communist party at the 1952 elections followed by its bid to form the ministry soon after the formation of Andhra state in 1953, frightened the dominant castes enough to make them extend massive support to

[15]   Kohli, Atul Oct. 1988, "The NTR Phenomenon in Andhra Pradesh: Political Change in South Indian State" in Asian Survey, Vol. XXVIII, No. 10, pp 1012-3

[16]   Sharma, B.A.V. and K. Madhusudan Reddy. 1979, "Electoral Politics and voting Behaviour" in G. Ram Reddy and B.A.B. Sharma eds. State Government and Politics: Andhra Pradesh, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers p.469

the Congress[17]. In the process, this led to the strengthening of Congress. The Congress party, in turn depended on these dominant caste leaders in order to mobilize masses. In fact, prior to independence, it was in order to widen scope of the Congress party and the nationalist movement, that, the Brahmin political elite secured the help and support of the rising rural rich. After independence, both the national and state leadership of the Congress tried to reach the voters not directly but through local influentials belonging to the dominant castes. This provided an easiest means to secure support. Added to this, in order to survive the Congress needed financial support which was readily provided by these moneyed people. These people in turn needed access to political resources. Thus Congress served as an important vehicle for the advancement of their political ends. The support of the dominant castes thus enabled Congress to win power. This arrangement worked extremely well given the social status and economic power of the dominant castes and low political consciousness of other castes. The Congress thus put to clever use the traditional power structure in building its organizational network in rural areas. As an electoral study puts it "The party's leadership gradually shifted in the late 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"[18].

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[17]   Ibid, p. 470
[18]   Ibid., p.469

The party, thus, got the image of landed gentry[19]. In their turn landed gentry felt that only Congress could serve their interests.

The Congress rule in Andhra Pradesh has often been termed as "the eclipse of Reddi-Raj." Not only was the state that formed in 1956 ruled by Reddi Chief Ministers for 25 of its 31 years rule, but their kinsmen held most of the key portfolios as well. In fact, 7 out of its 10 Chief Ministers were Reddis[20].

The above, however is in no way an indication that other landowning castes were ignored. An analysis of caste composition of Congress leadership in Andhra Pradesh noted that; "between 1956 and 1972, three principal castes had an upper hand (Reddi, Kamma and Velamas) in party politics. They constituted more than sixty percent of the Congress Legislature Party, around seventy per cent of the Cabinet positions and ninety-five per cent of the Zilla Parishad Chairman ships....The caste alignment at the lower level reflects itself in the party organization. This process is further promoted by the local Panchayati Raj functionaries who usually belong to the dominant castes and who wield powerful influence in local power politics[21]" However it is the Reddis who constituted the

[19]   Vakil, F.D. 1984, "Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh: A Review" in George Mathew ed., Shift in Indian Politics: 1983 Elections in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, New Delhi: Concept Publishing House, p.62

[20]   Bernstorff, Dagmar, 1973 , Eclipse of "Reddy-Raj"? the Attempted Restructurting of the Congress Party leadership in Andhra Pradesh, Asian Survery, Vol. XIII, No. 10 p.960

[21]   Reddy, A Narasimha. 1979, "Congress Parties and Politics," in G. Ram Reddy and B.A.V. Sharma eds. State Government and Politics:Andhra Pradesh, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, p.209.

single largest group (28to 38%) in the state cabinet till 1971. During that period the representation of the backward classes and scheduled castes in the Cabinet remained below twenty five per cent[22]

Panchayati Raj introduced in 1959 was used for consolidating the hold of dominat castes on state politics. Zilla Parishads, Panchayat Samithis, Village Panchayats and Cooperatives were all used as instruments of political control and support mobilization by Chief Ministers and members of dominant castes[23].

Around 1971, 15 out of 21 Chairmen of Zilla Parishads were Reddis and 145 out of 322 Panchayat Samithi Presidents came form the same caste. Important portfolios in the cabinet were held by Reddis and Kammas[24]. However it must be borne in mind that the Reddis have always constituted atleast one-fourths of the members of the Legislative Assembly and one-fourths of the members of Parliament. All the above indicate the fact that Redidis enjoy numerical superiority in politics. An Important reason for this is that Reddis have a strong local base.As such the following factors give Reddis an edge over others: Firstly, better caste ties from the village level to the state level. Secondly, firm agricultural base and thirdly, their initiatives and involvement in Congress and Communist parties. Also, as the largest landowners, they were the most able

[22] Kumar, A. Prasanna. 1994. "Caste and Political Leadership" in A. Prasanna Kumar ed. Andhra Pradesh Government and Politics, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, p.158
[23] Reddy A. Narasimha 1979, op. City, p.210- 12
[24] Kumar, A. Prasanna , 1994, op.cit, p 163

to experiment with modern agriculture and hence the most qualified to receive many of the community development benefits. This is another striking reason as to why Reddis have assumed such a prominent place in state politics. Infact, looking over the number of Reddi MLAs, one Reddi remarked, "the reason is that there are so many Reddis in local politics, and that is where politicians come from"[25].

There is another important reason for the domination of Reddis in the Congress. Kammas were traditionally less than dominant in their areas, as they lived under *Zamindars* drawn from other castes. Therefore, the Kammas did not have the corporate political existence which the notable Reddis had enjoyed elsewhere[26]. This had made the Kammas less useful to the Congress when it was expanding its organizations into rural areas. Thus, fewer Kammas were recruited into the party. Later when the Kamma leaders desired greater place in the politics, they encountered an established organization manned primarily by the Reddis who had been recruited earlier. This, however, had a counter effect as Kammas developed a group based on caste solidarity which the notable Reddis never had to employ.

25   Elliott, Carolyn. Op. Cit, p. 163
26   Ibid, p.155

The consolidation of Reddis power in the state was also due to the fact that "the Reddis rural gentry constituted the backbone of the Congress Party[27]. Reddis so dominated the political scene in Andhra, that non-Reddi Chief Ministers found it most difficult to survive in power.

TABLE I : DISTRIBUTION OF CASTES IN THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

Castes	1956	%	1960	%	1962	%	1967	%	1969	%
Reddis	5	38.46	5	35.71	6	37.5	5	35.71	8	28.57
Kammas	1	7.69	2	14.29	2	12.5	2	14.29	3	10.72
Other upper states	4	30.72	4	28.57	4	25	3	21.43	8	28.57
SCs, STs,BCs and Minorities	3	23.08	3	21.43	4	25	4	28.57	9	32.14
Total	13	100.00	14	100.00	16	100.00	14	100.00	28	100.00

Source: A Prasanna Kumar, 1994, "Caste and Political Leadership" in Andhra Pradesh: Government and Politics, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, P. 153

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[27]   Sharma, B.A.V. and K. Madhusudan Reddy. 1979, Op.Cit, p.470.

Table II CASTE BACKGROUND OF MLAs OF ANDHRA PRADESH

CASTE	1957	1962	1967	1972	1978	1983	1985
Brahman	23	22	14	18	11	6	5
Reddi	75	83	72	63	71	76	67
Kamma	34	38	38	36	43	47	48
Muslim Christian	11	7	9	15	9	11	11
Backward castes	38	39	41	55	55	61	59
Scheduled castes/tribes	52	67	55	56	58	54	54
Others	49	34	44	42	41	39	34
No information	18	10	14	2	6	-	16
Total	300	300	287	287	294	294	294

Note: 'others ' include Raju, Kapu, Telaga, Balija, Naidu and Vaishya-upper castes. Kapus in East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna and Guntur districts are forward. In Rayalaseema too, they are forward but, in Telangana they belong to Backward Castes.

Source: G. Ram Reddy 1989, "Caste, class and Dominance in Andhra Pradesh" in Francine R.Frankel and M.S.A. Rao eds. Dominance and State Power in Modern India: Decline of a social Order (Vol.I), Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 305

TABLE III CASTE COMPOSITON OF LOK SABHA MEMBERS FROM ANDHRA PRADESH

Caste	1952	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980
Brahman	7	5	4	4	2	2	3
Reddi	8	8	9	9	11	10	9
Kamma	5	3	6	8	6	7	7
Kapu	4	3	3	3	2	3	3
Rajus	-	3	3	2	3	3	3
SCs & STs	9	9	8	8	8	8	8
Muslims and Christians	3	3	3	2	1	2	1
Others	-	4	4	5	8	7	8
No information	7	5	3	-	-	-	-
Total No. of Seats	43	43	43	41	41	42	42

Source: G.Ram Reddy 1989, "Caste, Class and Dominance in Andhra Pradesh" in Francine R. Frankel and M.S.A. Rao eds. Dominance and State power in Modern India: Decline of a Social Order (Vol.I), Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 307.

Thus, the tables are an indication that usually the caste which dominated the state leadership would stand to gain the maximum share in the process.

However, for both Kammas and Reddis, apart from the land as the source of power it was the kinship ties and informal networks that strengthened their

base[28]. They did not need caste association (even though Reddi hostels and Kamma hostels were started long ago) to gain political recognition. Like the Brahmins of an earlier period who had come into prominence through education, the Reddi and Kammas had an advantage over others, Reddis through politics and Kammas through entrepreneurship.

These dominant castes, however, do not act as monolithic blocks. On the contrary, they were split into numerous factions which provided structured channels for political participation[29]. These factions were often led by the members of dominant castes for electoral purposes. On the one hand upper castes needed the numerical strength that lower castes support can supply, and on the other hand lower castes or communities wanted access to resources and opportunities that support for upper caste leadership can yield. Thus in Andhra politics, vertical mobilization by Reddis and Kammas is a central feature. Infact, Reddi dominance of state politics is the result of local and regional dominance based on vertical mobilization by Reddi notables. The more able among them have concerted with others to form factional alliances[30]. These factions in a way had an integrative function as it led to cooptation of representatives from various castes and sub-regions.

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[28] Kumar, A. Prasanna. 1993, "Andhra Pradesh-A Background", in Narendra Reddy, A. Prasanna Kumar,M. Venugopala Rao, Anand Sarup and P. Venkateswar Rao eds. P.V. Narasimha Rao, New Delhi- Haranand Publishers, p.29

[29] Bernstroff, Dagmar 1973, Op. Cit, p. 960

[30] Rudolph, Lloyd and Susanne. 1967, The Modernity of Tradition: Political Development in India, Chicago; Chicago University Press, p.84

In fact, the Congress system of one-party dominance rested upon the ability of the factional networks to contain caste conflicts[31]. The relationship between caste and faction is complex and shifting. Several district studies show that factions are formed by forging muliti-caste and cross-regional alliances[32]. The traditional village, further rests on personal relationships cemented by client-patron, economic and status bonds. Many factional struggles carried out at the district level reflect old feuds between different subcastes or extended families. One analyst has, however, noted that" while cleavages often involve two powerful Reddis or two powerful Kammas, but when fighting against outsiders, they act together"[33]. However, there is no single pattern here other than the political hegemony of the land owning castes in the frame work of political democracy.

Hari P. Sharma made the following generalizations about factions:[34] (1) Factions are not permanent corporate groups. Their membership composition is fluid and their boundaries are seldom if ever, clearly defined. (2) Faction membership is not necessarily limited to caste or kinship grouping. (3) It is neither a 'class' conflict nor a conflict between higher and lower castes. (4)

31   Walch, James 1976, "One-Party Dominance in Andhra Pradesh" in Faction and Front: Party Systems in South India, New Delhi: Young Asia Publications, p.295

32   Elliott, Op. Cit, bases her conclusions on a series of district-by district studies. Also, see Myron Weiner, 1967, Party-Building in a New Nation, Part III, Chicago: Chicago University Press, pp 133-220

33   Kohli, Atul. Op. Cit., p.1008

34   Sharma, Hari P.April-June 1974, "From Factionalism to Class Polarisation", The Eastern Anthropologist ,Vol. 27, No. 2, p. 161

Factionalism is an expression of political struggle for power and prestige within the group of dominant castes and tends to reach into other caste groups for support and allegiance. (5) The subordinate caste groups are not necessarily passive participants in the factional conflict. Whenever possible they make use of the factional strife to their own advantage.

Personality of the leader too played a crucial role in Andhra politics. In fact, personalities, power and patronage promoted factionalism. Factions were formed and dissolved on the basis of personal loyalties towards the respective group leaders. As such, loyalty is outcome of the patronage extended to party members by their respective leaders. The more the patronage the bigger the faction, the bigger the faction the greater the personality[35]. There were many instances of personality clashes which help us to explain intra-caste rivalries too. Recurrence of intra-caste rivalries, only reinforces the prevalence of voluntarism in politics by exposing the personal interests which play a crucial role in determining political behaviour.

In 1969 there was a split in the Congress Party. With this began an attempt to restructure the support base of the party[36]. The upper middle class landlords and peasant castes support structure of the party was considered a

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35 Reddy, A. Narasimha Op. Cit, p. 215
36 Vakil, F.D. , Op.Cit., p. 63

hindrance to bring about socio economic changes[37]. Moreover, the dominant castes became too powerful to handle. Thus as a strategy to counteract this, Congress sought to befriend the SCs, OBCs and other minorities (who form the bulk of voters) directly by passing the local influentials of the dominant peasant castes.

With P.V. Narasimha Rao as the Chief Minister, changes started in the year 1971. Though a Brahmin, but not from landed caste, he initiated the policy of giving greater representatives to the weaker sections in the legislature and Council of Ministers. He boldly introduced progressive land reforms which annoyed the upper caste landed gentry[38]. Thus, Rao was alienated by Reddis, Kammas and Velamas. Rao tried to create his own support structure by forging links with the weaker sections. However, without the support of the dominant castes he found it difficult to retain his Chief Ministership. Though certain politicians were radical in their actions, they were essentially politicians whose personal interests just happened to coincide with the under privileged segments of the society. Thus personal interests could be projected as secular interests.

[37] Sharma, B.A.V and K. Madhusudan Reddy, 1979, Op. Cit, p. 470
[38] Reddi, A. Reddeppa, 1994, "From Neelam Sanjiva Reddy to Nedurumalic Janardhana Reddy" in Agarala Easwara Prasad and D. Sundar Ram eds., State Politics in India: Reflections on Andhra Pradesh, New Delhi: M. D. Publications Pvt. Ltd., p.197

In the 1972 assembly elections Congress adopted the strategy of "more power to the weaker sections" [39]. Implicitly this strategy was meant to curtail the power of dominant castes especially Reddis. Here, however the problem was one of reducing the high caste representation and finding suitable "weaker section" candidates.

The above led to another serious problem as well. Though the dominance of political life by one section of the society was certainly not desirable, yet, by making the caste of members, the criterion for selection, it resulted in a regression in to caste conflict and caste consciousness. Politicians thus reverted to be caste leaders. Suppressed hatred against the dominant castes reasserted itself. The price for more democracy and legislators with a broader social base (which should have facilitated reforms) was ultimately less democracy in the selection process.

However, a comparison of the Telangana members of the 1962 and 1972 assemblies shows that the percentage of forward castes has not gone down radically (61 to 50%) and still was high. (Refer to table IV)

The share of Brahmins and Vaishyas reduced from 15 of 106 to 9 of 101 members. However the percentage of the three dominant castes of Velamas,

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[39]   Bernstorff, Dagmar. 1973 Op. Cit, p. 960

Kammas and Reddis had only gone down by 2% from 43.4% in 1962 to 41.5% in 1972. Velamas and Kammas increased at the expense of Reddis who held 37.7% of the seats in the 1962 Assembly but only 27.7% in 1972.

TABLE IV : CASTE WISE COMPARISON OF THE TELANGANA MEMBERS OF THE 1962 AND 1972 ASSEMBLIES

Caste	1962	%	1972	%
Reddi	40	37.7	28	27.7
Velama	8	7.5	10	9.9
Kamma	2	1.9	4	4
Brahmin	11	10.4	8	7.9
Vaishya	4	3.8	1	1
BC	13	12.3	21	20.8
SC	20	18.9	22	21.8
Muslim	7	6.6	7	6.9
Christians				
Parsis	1	9		
Total	106	100	101	100

Source: HughGray, 1970, "The Landed Gentry of the Telangana, Andhra Pradesh" in E. Leach and S.N. Mukherjee eds., Elites in South Asia, Cambridge p.135

Thus, the attempt to change the old pattern of dominance based on Reddi Control seemed to imply: (1) Danger of the other land owning castes merely replacing Reddis (2) Use of caste caused a regression in to caste politics at a time when many indicators pointed that block voting was decline. (3) Use of caste as a criterion for the settlement of legislators or ministers does not

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necessarily mean a broader social base. Many politicians from the backward castes are wealthy and as such they may not favour reforms.

In mid 1970s, Janata Party gained ground as a national party. It had its impact on the state of A.P. as well. Reddis were among the prominent ones who gravitated towards the Janata Party. Reddis were irked by land reforms and abolition of bonded labour that were pursued by Congress (I). They were also disgruntled by the fact that dominant castes like Kammas, Velamas and Kapus were given more prominence in the ministries[40].

The above reveals that Congress(I) is not truly a Reddi party. Of course they managed to be on the forefront and wielded power and influences but this is exclusively on the basis of certain social attributes which they possessed. These attributes (discussed earlier) gave them an edge over others. Even their alignment with the Congress was not due to any caste based collective mobilization. On the contrary, it was their shared social conditions which determined their political behaviour and thus, their orientation to the Congress (I).

Caste acted as a dominant feature in the selection of candidates in both Janata Party and Congress (I). As Reddis are dominant in Telangana the Janata party set up candidates belonging to this caste in 8 out of 12 constituencies.

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40   Sharma, B.A.V and K. Madhusudan Reddy, 1979 op. cit., p. 472

However, Janata Party failed to make an impact on A.P. voters[41]. The complete rout of Janata Party in Telangana also proved that caste was not an important factor in the ultimate voting process.

With the 1978 Janata Party defeat there was once again an exodus of members but this time from Janata Party to Congress (I). After the success of Congress in 1977 state assembly elections again there was an installation of Reddi as the CM of the state. Ever since then Reddis consolidated their position in the Congress. For e.g., All the Congress Chief Ministers (specially from 1977) were exclusively from Reddi caste. Even now the chief of APCC (I) is a Reddi. This could also be attributed to the formation of Telugu Desam Party which is a 'brainchild'of their rival i.e., Kammas[42]. Thus it became even more crucial for Reddis to assert their hold over the Congress (I). Congress (I) served as an important vehicle for them in their competition for political power. Though spread in different factions, they got together when their community interests were at stake because this implicitly meant their personal interests are being threatened. Even Congress found it difficult to move from the shadow of this landed gentry. This was not only because they were already well entrenched with in the party but above all they provided financial assistance which any political party needs for its survival.

[41]   ibid., pp 474-80
[42]   Murthy, V.Linga 1994, "Political Parities in Andhra Pradesh" in A. Pransanna. Kumar ed. A.P. Government and Politics New Delhi : Sterling Publishers, p. 96.

However, in the period 1978-1983 there was a gradual decline of Congress (I)'s political fortunes in the state. This could be traced to both social structural and political changes[43].

As far as the social structural changes are concerned, the dominant castes of the region lost their capacity to influence the political behaviour of those below them in the caste hierarchy. Thus there resulted a fluid political situation[44]. The breakdown in patron-client relations at the local resulted in the failure of political communication. Breakdown of patron-client relations is a result of a number of socio-economic programmes that were initiated by Congress to consolidate its power by destabilizing landed castes.

Secondly, the antipoverty policies that earned Congress broad-base support among weaker sections in 1970's were responsible for an erosion in the support structure in the 1980's. These policies were too much Harijan oriented[45]. As a result, it drew flak form other groups of the 'weaker sections' especially so from the Backward Classes.

Also, Congress's decline was caused by repeated and increasing intervention from the centre. Between 1978 and 1983 four different Chief

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[43]   Kohli, Atul Op. Cit, p. 992
[44]   Ibid,
[45]   Ibid.p.997

Ministers were installed in Andhra, all of them on the basis of their loyality to the high command. Competing elites did not accept the authority of such appointed men. All this resulted in rampant factional struggles.

It was in this political scenario that N.T. Rama Rao (NTR) stepped in offering a political alternative. He launched Telugu Desam, a regional political party in 1982, which swept the polls just with in an year. He stressed on the twin themes of Telugu nationalism (telugu pride) and populism[46]. He criticized the Congress high command for its repeated intervention in the state affairs. This, he said, was a humiliation to Telugu people.

Even prior to his entry in to politics, NTR was popular as the superstar of the Telugu film industry. He often portrayed gods from Hindu mythology who ended up saving the 'poor'[47]. He enjoyed immense popularity among all sections of the people and in the three regions of the state. He skillfully combined his charisma with several other themes especially populistic measures such as plans to sell subsidized rice, free lunch for all school children etc. Above all, his strategy was to depend on the vote of the backward classes who constituted 45

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[46]   Rao, V. Bhastara 1988, "Telugu Desam Party"in S. Bhatnagar and Pradeep Kumar eds. Regional Political Parties in India New Delhi: Ess Ess Publications p. 91 See also Shatrgna 1983, "Emergence of Regional Parties Case of Telugu Desam" in George Mathew ed. Shift in Indian Politics, New Delhi: Concept Publishing House, P.104

[47]   And NTR reminded the electorate that he had played these roles for their entertainment during the last so many decades, and that if elected he would like to activate these noble ideas, emotions and perspective in the government of the state. See Ratna Naidu 1983, " Symbolic Imagery used by the Telugu Desma in Andhra Elections" in George Mathew ed., Shift in Indian politics, p.132

to 50 % of the state's population. To this end, he introduced reservation and thus better job and educational opportunities for the backward classes. TDP government took the decision of enhancing the reservation from 25% to 44% for admission to educational institutions.[48] Thus a combination of the above factors helped his party to achieve electoral success.

For NTR, immediate and solid support came from his own caste men i.e, Kammas. As long as Congress (I) was in power, the Reddis who constituted about 10-12% of Andhra population and spread through out the state had an upper hand. The Kammas by contrast constituted about 5% of the state's population and they felt ignored by the Congress. They resented the fact that Reddis dominated state politics. However, Kammas proved to be more enterprising than the Reddis. Thus while Reddis were intensely engaged in politics, Kammas utilized their land wealth and spread into numerous commercial activities such as agro-industry, newspapers, hotels etc. This changing economic base strengthened their clout[49]. It however, found expression in the increased number of ministerial positions secured by the Kammas. But there was failure on the part of the Congress (I) to appoint a Kamma Chief Minister. (This is probably due to the fact that Reddis had strong roots in Congress right from the pre-

[48]   Rao, K.V. Narayana. 1994, "N.T. Rama Rao in Power in Andhra Pradesh" and D. Sundar Ram eds. State politics in India :Reflections on Andhra Pradesh, New Delhi : MD Publications Pvt. Ltd. p. 89
[49]   Satuanarayana A. Op. Cit, pp 383-85

independence period). This was felt as a humilitation and a blow to the self-respect of Kammas.

Thus, according to K. Srinivasulu, "the rich peasant and 'capitalist landlord' class-caste that emerged in the fertile coastal Andhra region over a period of time and crystallized in to *nouveau riche* stratum with multiple economic interests (in social terms predominantly belonging to the Kamma caste) but denied access to the corridors of political power during the three decades of Congress rule found in NTR a general who could rally the masses in the electoral battle field and further the political interests of this class".[50]

The affluent Kammas, therefore threw their support behing NTR, himself a Kamma and well connected with other wealthy Kammas in the movie, hotel and newspaper industries[51]. Infact they helped him to the extent of providing funds for the party and elections. This kind of financial assistance is utmost crucial for a political party to gain ground and establish itself. Thus one of the most important reasons for Rama Rao's ascendance to power was, the unstinted support given by the Kamma landlords and businessmen. Kamma elites joined the NTR bandwagon because they saw in it an opportunity to win political office and the perks that come with it. In this context the role of Ramoji Rao, a Kamma

[50] Srinivasula K. October (1994) "BSP and Caste Politics", Economic and Political Weekly Vol. 59, no.40 p 2585

[51] Kohli, Atul op. cit, p. 996.

freelance journalist and chief editor of the Telugu daily 'Eenadu' is quite significant [52]. The wide publicity given to NTR in Eenadu through attractive photographs, hard hitting editorials and wide coverage of his election campaign contributed immensely to the success of TDP. In fact, it projected NTR as the saviour of people.

However, a number of variables that mould local political perceptions help explain the division of the two dominant castes along party lines. Solidarity with the members of one's own caste is of course, pre political and an integral aspect of the rural social structure.

When the lore of age-old rivalries is transmitted through the generations, as is still among Kammas and Reddis, it provides some of the values that form the basis of cohesive group political behaviour. Even among the more educated sections, these sentiments run deep. For e.g., hostels in Guntur Universities are divided along caste lines, and while there is considerable interaction across caste groups in a setting such as a university, local observes note that Kamma and Reddi youth "live and move together" with in their own groups[53]. Caste sentiments are thus formed early and continue in to adult life. But when the political structure enables these caste divisions to be expressed through different

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[52]   Innaiah, N. 1985, State Government and Politics, Hyderabad, Authors Publication, Osmania
        University. p.181
[53]   Kohli, Atul. Op. Cit, p 1007

parties that hold a realistic chance of capturing state power, then it is not surprising that the competing dominant castes have come to ally with the two rivals parties.

A widely prevalent view about TDP is that it is an exclusively Kamma party. But just as Congress cannot be claimed as a Reddi party in the same way it is false to view TDP as a Kamma Party. What is true about TDP is, that, its initial formation was influenced by a small group of Kamma intellectuals and political leaders.[54] Thus the founders of Telugu Desam were Kammas its organizers and managers also belonged to the same caste. But the candidates selected by TDP does not give the image of dominance by Kammas.

The caste- wise analysis of the TDP members who won the assembly elections in the year 1983 is indicated in table V. Caste wise analysis of the Council of ministers is indicated in Table VI.

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[54]   Murthy, V.Lnga, op.cit, p.96.

TABLE V CASTE WISE ANALYSIS OF THE TDP MEMBERS WHO WON THE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN THE YEAR 1983.

CASTE	NO. OF CANDIDATES WHO WON
Kammas	46
Reddis	39
BCs	33
SCs	28
Kapus	14
Kshatriyas	12
STs	7
Brahmins	2
Vaishyas	3
Minorities	4
Others	2

Source :N.Innaiah, 1984, Saffron Star Over Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad: Book

Links Corporation, p.37

TABLE VI CASTE WISE ANALYSIS OF THE TDP GOVERMENT'S COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

	Reddis	Kammas	Harijans+BCs	Kapu	Muslim Christian	Brahmins	Others	Total
1983-1984	3	2	1+1	1	1	1	5	15
1984-1987	5	5	7+6	1	1	1	2	27
1987	7	6	7+5	2	1	1	5	35

Source: N. Innaiah, 1984, Saffron Star over Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad:Book

Links Corporation, p.38.

The above tables indicates that TDP is not totally a Kamma dominated party. But, what becomes evident is that the Kamma caste has improved its political position compared to what it was under Congress rule.

However, important qualifications to the description of caste alignments along party lines should be noted Firstly neither Congress is devoid of Kammas nor TDP is devoid of Reddis. Infact there is a frequent crisis cross from one party to another. Some members of the dominant castes establish working relationship with both the parties, so that, their access to political resources is not denied irrespective of which ever party come to power. With in both the parties dominant castes stablise themselves through factions. Thus both TDP and Congress have factions led by both Reddis and Kammas.

Finally we shall make a note of caste-wise analysis of the candidates put up by TDP and Congress (I) in the year 1983 in order show how both the parties cannot be criticized as being casteist. Refer to table VII. Moreover with adult suffrage no party can afford to identity itself with a single caste. This is because, too close an identification with one caste alienates other castes. Political parties gain stability only by involving all major sections of the society.

TABLE VII CASTE COMPOSITION OF THE CANDIDATES

Caste	Telugu Desam	Congress I
Reddi	62	73
Kamma	59	57
Harijan	40	46
Kapu	27	20
Girijans	15	15
Kshatriyas	13	30
Velama		6
Koppu Velama	10	
Goud	9	
Vaishyas	7	4
Yadavas	6	
Muslims	6	10
Mudiraj	4	
Brahmin Nayee Brahmin Viswa Brahmin	53	11
Christian		2
Backward Castes		53

Source " K.V. Narayana Rao, 1994, "N.T.Rama Rao in Power in Andhra Pradesh" in Agarala Easwara Prasad and D. Sundar Ram eds., State Politics in India: Reflections on Andhra Pradesh, New Delhi, M.D. Publications Pvt. Ltd.p.77

However what is undisputable is also the fact that with in Congress (I) Reddis have an edge over Kammas where as in TDP it is Kammas who have an edge over Reddis. Added to this, it is also evident that during the Congress (I) rule, majority of Chief Ministers were from the Reddi caste and there was none from Kammas. And, under TDP rule, it is always a Kamma who occupied the Chief Minister's post.

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However, what can be said about Andhra politics is the fact that irrespective of which ever party comes to power, both the dominant castes wield power. It is the land ownership based social status and economic dominance which enabled them to establish a firm control over the power structure of the state. In fact, it is primarily due to the convergence of their economic interests that at times they act together, especially whenever they perceive a threat to their grip over power from an 'outside' force. The social character and composition of the political institutions make it evident that they are controlled by the landed interests of the dominant peasant castes. Thus, in Andhra Pradesh there is a convergence of political and economic power.

CHAPTER IV

BACKWARD CASTES AND SCHEDULED CASTES: HINDRANCES TO THEIR COLLECTIVE MOBILIZATION

The backward castes and the schedule castes constitute a very large proportion of the population in the districts of Andhra Pradesh at 46% and 14.17% respectively.[1] Inspite of the numerical strength possessed by these castes, so far, it is only the forward castes that could successfully maintain their dominance in the political sphere.

This chapter therefore examines the factors that inhibited these backward castes and scheduled castes from gaining positions of 'effective power' in the state. These factors could be classified into two categories: 1) Internal or those from 'within' and, 2) External that is those from 'without' Internally, with in these categories themselves there are major hurdles in their collective mobilization for political purposes. As regards the external factors, they consist of the tactics employed by dominant castes to sustain themselves in power while keeping others at bay.

However, in the recent years beginning late 1980's and early 1990's there has been a resurgence of political aspirations among these backward castes and schedule castes in Andhra. Their politicization was further propelled with the entry and also consequent popularity of dalit-bahujan oriented political parties such as the Bahujan Samaj party. Keeping this in view, we also try to examine, whether the backward castes and scheduled castes actually pose a threat to the existing power

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[1]   Figures based on Census of India, 1921.

structure. In other words, we shall try to see if there is a possibility of a triangular contest between the three caste groups: Kammas, Reddis, OBCs and SCs combine.

First of all, we look at the groups that constitute the backward castes and scheduled castes in the state. As already discussed in chapter 2, for the state as a whole the caste hierarchy can be divided into three groups. The upper crust consists of Brahmins, Vaishyas and Kshatriyas. There are also Shudra peasant castes such as Reddis, Kammas and Velamas who on account of land ownership and social power fall under this category. At the other end of the spectrum are the untouchable castes or scheduled castes such as Mala, Madiga, Netakani, Sindu and Bindala to name to few. Among them the Malas and Madigas constitute the numerical majority. In between the scheduled castes and the upper crust fall castes now known as 'backward castes' such as Chakali, Mangali, Kummari, Gowda, Munnuru Kapu etc.[2]

The backward castes constitute a category of people, who are for the most part officially listed and given special recognition in a variety of contexts, Andre Beteille observes:

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[2] Rao, C.V.Subba, 1982, "Land, Caste and Politics in Andhra Pradesh" in Gail Omvedt (ed.), Land, Caste and Politics in Indian States, Delhi: Authors Guild Publications, p. 157.

"Backwardness as understood in Indian context has a number of distinctive features. Firstly, it is viewed as an attribute not of individuals but of certain clearly defined social segments in which membership is generally acquired by birth; thus, the Backward classes may in theory include individuals who are highly advanced both educationally and economically. Secondly, membership of this category entitles one to certain advantages and concessions specifically conferred by the government."[3]

The government of Andhra Pradesh has recognized socially and economically backward castes and a majority of them are occupational groups like Golla (shepard's), Chakali (washermen), Mangali (barber), Kummari (potter), Gowda (toddy tappers).[4] These castes faced, over a period of time, destruction of their traditional occupations. Though some of them own land it is too marginal to sustain them. Unlike the dominant peasant castes these castes could not utilize the opportunities provided by the advance of commercial agriculture during the colonial regime. Consequently, they constitute large part of agricultural labour force next only to untouchable castes. Thus, they swelled the ranks of the rural poor.

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[3] Beteille, Andre, Jan-March 1965, "The Future of the Backward Classes- The Competing Demands of Status and Power" in Perspectives, Supplement to the Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol. XI, No.1, pp. 203.

[4] Reddy, K.Subashchandra and N.Vaikuntam, 1982, "Backward Class Movement" in B.A.V. Sharma and K.M.Reddy, eds., Reservation Policy in India, New Delhi: Light and Life Publishers, p. 289.

The caste system as it is characterized by a status hierarchy the scheduled castes or so called untouchables are at the base. As a result of their lowest social and ritual status, they had been subjected to a variety of disabilities under the traditional system. They were denied all privileges and benefits as had been enjoyed by the upper castes. On account of their being on the lowest rung of the social ladder, they were forced to take and remain in unclean and menial occupations which yielded low income. As a result, these castes have remained socially, economically and educationally backward.[5] The untouchable castes from traditional occupations like scavenging, leather work etc., are now primarily engaged in agricultural work. They constitute the bulk of labourers working as farm servants or attached labour.[6]

As we noted in the earlier chapter, both backward castes and scheduled castes were alienated from the non-Brahmin movement as it had a dominant streak of elitism. Backward classes moved away on the plea that although they constituted a third of the population of the Presidency they got little of the privileges conferred by the communal Government Order (G.O). As regards scheduled castes, they too were unhappy with the share allotted to them by the communal Government Order.[7] Moreover, it became evident that upper caste non-Brahmins never thought

5   Rathanaiah, K., 1991, Social Change Among Malas, New Delhi: Discovery Publishing House.p.5

6   Ramaswamy, Uma 20 July, 1974, " Scheduled Castes in Andhra: Some Aspects of Social Change" in Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 9, No. 29, p. 1153-54.

7   Ramaswamy, Uma, March 1978, "The Belief System of the Non-Brahmin Movement in India: The

of equating themselves with the 'untouchables'. Thus both the backward castes and scheduled castes established their own leagues.

BACKWARD CLASS MOVEMENT

In the year 1948, the Andhra Rashtra Backward Classes Conference held its first meeting.[8] In this, it formulated a charter of demands specifying the representation of backward classes in the state services and political bodies. This movement was basically the handiwork of different castes and community organisations such as Munnuru Kapu Association, Toddy Tappers Association, Padmashali Association, Rajaka Sangam (washermen association), Fishermen's Association etc.[9]

With the formation of Andhra Pradesh on 1st November, 1956, all the associations merged with each other constituting a single state wide organization namely the Andhra Pradesh Backward Classes Association. In 1966, a Cabinet Sub-Committee was constituted which adopted the following criteria for the identification of backward classes: 1) Poverty, 2) Low standard of education, 3) Low

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Andhra Case" in Asian Survey (Vol. XVIII), California: University of California, p. 297.

[8]   Reddy, K.Subhash Chandra and N.Vaikuntam, Op.Cit,. p. 291.

[9]   Ibid, p. 313.

standard of living, 4) Place of habitation, 5) Inferiority of occupation and 6) caste;[10]

From the year 1972 onwards these socially and educationally backward classes got a little benefit by way of reservations either in the technical and educational institution or public employment at the initial state of recruitment. These communities have under gone a process of political socialization in the course of political developments in the state.

Different groups passed different resolutions touching upon various aspects of the welfare of backward classes. These include:[11] 1) 40% reservation in all nominated and elected bodies from the village level to the state level, 2) Government should raise the percentage of reservation from the present 25% to 50%, 3) 50% reservations to the backward classes in Public Sector undertakings, 4) State should provide loans and other facilities to the traditional occupational communities such as Toddy Tappers, Washermen, Fishermen, Barbers, Weavers etc., 5) Backward Classes students at the University level to be given scholarships.

HARIJAN MOVEMENT

The nature of this movement was non-violent, peaceful, voluntary and elite based. Its objectives were social, economic and political emancipations of the

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10   Ibid, p. 300

11   Ibid, p. 309.

'depressed classes" It also aimed at the mitigation of all forms of discrimination and exploitation. Towards this end, the strategy adopted was: 1) to educate Harijans about their rights through formal education and propaganda carried out by voluntary and private organizations, 2)By enlarging base of the movement and building it up as a pressure group it sought to extract from the government special concessions to weaker sections in political, economic and social facets of life.[12]

The process of institutionalization of the Harijan movement in Andhra had begun towards the end of second decade of the 20th century. The first Harijan conference `Adi Andhra Mahajan Sabha' was organized on Nov. 1917 at Vijayawada.[13]In the period between 1917-1938 several resolutions were passed. The nature of demands put forward in these resolutions were political, social and economic[14] political demands confined to aspects such as nomination of Harijans to various political offices, reservation of seats to Harijans at all levels from Panchayat Board to Legislative Councils. Demands relating to social sphere included admission of Harijan children to common schools, access of Harijans to common wells and free access to Hotels, Choultries and other public places with out any discrimination. In the economic sphere, demands were related to provision of free education, scholarships, to provide them with government waste lands, to start

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[12]   Abbasayulu, Y.B and T. Tirupathi rao. 1982, ``Harijan Movement'' in B.A.V. Sharma and K.M. Reddy eds, Reservation Policy in India, New Delhi; Light and life Publishers, p.249

[13]   Ibid., p.254.

[14].   Ibid., p .257.

credit banks to provide credit facilities to them and reservation of jobs in all government services.

However, it was with India's independence and framing of the constitution that saw the realization of their goals. In fact, schedule castes have been provided with several constitutional safe guards and other governmental social welfare measures. Of course, there continues unabated debate regarding the effectiveness of such provisions.

HINDRANCES TO THE COLLECTIVE MOBILIZATION OF SCHEDULE CASTES AND BACKWARD CASTE FROM 'WITHIN'

Despite the fact that both Backward Class Movement and Dalit Movement have been quite successful in their endeavour, nevertheless they face major hindrances in their collective mobilization. In this section we shall discuss such factors that are internal to both these categories that pose a major challenge.

BACKWARD CASTES

Firstly, considering the backward castes Adhra's backward castes are extremely heterogeneous and are divided into more than twenty jatis.[15] They constitute a large proportion of the states population and a majority of them are occupational groups like carpenter, black-smiths, weavers, washermen etc., Majority of the population from these backward castes could not survive fully on

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[15]   Kohli, Atul, October 1988, "The NTR Phenomenon in Andhra Pradesh" in Asian Survey, Vol. XXVIII, p. 1016.

their traditional occupations or on their small land-holding. Thus most of them have transformed themselves into agricultural workers.

These backward castes seem to have a well-established hierarchy."The occupational structure reveals that there is a relative immobility in the middle castes occupations which however, has not very much affected their social or economic position."[16]

Within this category, there are also people who are quite wealthy. In fact, as a result of the expansion of the tertiary sector during the 1970s, we witness the emergence of a 'middle class' from the backward communities like Yadavas, Gowdas, Munnuru Kapu, Padmashali in significant way.[17] These castes which till then were dependent on the dominant land owning castes began to assert themselves in village politics because of the latent political awareness of the power of their numbers in electoral politics.

Of course, the backward castes have been acting as interest groups performing the interest articulating functions. In turn, they have also been successful in moulding the policy of the government in their favour. But a closer

16   Srinivasulu, K., October, (1994), "BSP and Caste Politics", Economic and Political, Vol. 59, No. 40, p. 2585.

17   Ibid.

look reveals that the backward castes also suffer from three-fold maladies: quest for a common identity, elitism and factionalism.

Every caste with in the category of 'backward classes' has its own caste and community organization. Each of these developed their own individual identities championing the cause of their own community members . Therefore, each individual caste associations struggles for its own legitimate rights. Added to this every caste has an inherent tendency to consider itself superior when compared to other fellow castes even when they are placed with in the same ranks. Thus, all these lead to a loss of common identity among the backward castes.

Another factor that comes in the way of unity among backward castes' is the growth of elitist tendencies. Thus the benefits of socio-economic development are restricted to a privileged few. There is a feeling that the distributive measures do not reach the real underdog.

Thirdly, just as in case of dominant castes even backward castes are not devoid of factionalism. This goes against the very spirit of unity among the backward castes. Introduction of power politics based mainly on individual rivalries. Personal interests assume great significance which once again reinforces the prevalence of voluntarism.

Thus, the heterogeneous character of these castes and the striking inequalities among them prevented them from acting as a politically cohesive group. The social, educational and economic distance among the elites of these castes encouraged factionalism and infighting.

SCHEDULED CASTES

The scheduled castes constitute a sizeable and well-defined segment of the population which is backward in a number of ways and for whose betterment systematic efforts have been made.

The category of Scheduled Castes is at best a legal one.[18] Of course, the wider society may treat them as if they are undifferentiated but there exist deep divisions within them in terms of their numerical strength, geographic spread, ritual status and occupations. Thus in terms of social and economic status scheduled castes are a disparate category. The identity these castes have is in opposition to that of those who are above them. This results from their low socio-economic position inspite of their internal differentiation.

Considering the demographic aspects of scheduled castes, in Andhra Pradesh sixty castes were listed as scheduled castes. Two castes the Malas and

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[18]   Ramaswamy, Uma, 20 July 1974, Op.Cit., p. 1153.

Madigas make up three-fourths the of the scheduled castes population. Most of the other castes are merely off shoots of these two castes.[19] Madiga caste has the largest number of people forming 43.55% of the total scheduled caste population in the state. Next in terms of numbers come the members of Malas (36.60%) and Adi Andhras (10.67%) castes. The remaining 57 castes constitute a meager 9.18% of the scheduled castes population of Andhra.

As regards their distribution in the state, Madigas are predominant in Telangana region where as Malas are pre-dominant in coastal Andhra.

Among these dalits, there is a well recognized hierarchy as they are internally divided into several castes and sub-castes. Not all scheduled castes are untouchables.[20] Even among those that are there are degrees of pollution.[21] In fact, untouchables themselves are divided into many distinct castes, have a complex hierarchical organization and some of them even practice untouchability in relation to the other untouchable castes. Traditionally, there were occupational differences among them. And untouchability is intimately associated with the pursuit of a defiling occupation. Moreover, untouchability is not only imposed on

[19] Abbasayulu, Y.B. 1978, Scheduled Caste Elite: A Study of Scheduled Caste Elite in Andhra Pradesh, Published by Y.B. Abbasayulu, Osmania University, p. 31.

[20] Ramaswamy, Uma, 23 November, 1974, "Self-Identity among Scheduled Castes: A Study of Andhra" Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 9, No. 47, p. 1959.

[21] Ibid.

the untouchables but practised among themselves.[22] Although associated in popular thinking with polluting occupations, the bulk of them were engaged in a number of secular occupations most prominently agriculture. Of course, even in agricultural labour, it is generally the most arduous type of work which is assigned to them.

Thus from the above it is evident that there exist considerable differences with in the category of scheduled castes itself. However, here we focus specifically on the differences that exist between Malas and Madigas as it is these two castes which constitute a numerical majority. This would help us to analyse in a better way the problems they face in their unification for political purposes.

As between the Malas and Madigas, it is the former who are hierarchically superior. However, the sharp differences between them can be explained in a number of ways.

Firstly, we shall consider the occupational differences. The traditional occupation of Malas is weaving, whereas for Madigas it is tanning and shoe-making. Madiga men handling dead cattle and working in leather are most defiling. Therefore, they are untouchables and accorded lowest ritual status. However,

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[22]   Sen, Mohit 23 November 1974, "What of Andhara", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 9, No. 47, p. 1939.

according to one estimate three-fourths of Malas and 60% of Madigas were engaged in agricultural labour.[23]

There is yet another factor which contributes further to the occupational difference between the two castes. The existence of a secure source of livelihood for which other castes cannot compete although such an occupation may be low in the hierarchy is a factor inhibiting the exploitation of secular opportunities for mobility.[24] The Malas who had to compete for agricultural labour with several other castes, besides facing the uncertainties inherent in this occupation took more readily to formal education than the Madigas who were secure in leather work. Added to this, the Madigas were also tied up in jajmani relationships with upper caste landlords which helped to keep them in their traditional occupations. According to N.S. Reddy, "jajmani system which cultivates a sense of security has itself bred sluggishness in the Madigas and lack of it among the Malas drives them to strive at many a job and secure a living in several ways."[25]

Another crucial area of difference is, there exist religious cleavages among Malas and Madigas especially among those who converted to Christianity. Mala converts of coastal Andhra are by and large Roman Catholics while Madigas are

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[23]   Ramaswamy, Uma, 20 July 1974, Op.Cit. p. 1153.

[24]   Ibid, p. 1158.

[25]   Quoted in Ramaswamy, Uma, 20 July 1974, Op.Cit., p. 1158.

Baptists. These converts have carried over caste distinctions to Christiantiy as well. It is because of this that "caste differences and prejudices are stronger among Roman Catholics than Baptists, possibly because the former have a larger proportion of adherents of higher caste origin".[26] Of course, conversion to Christianity helped the untouchables to register significant gains in the field of education and employment.

In the exploitation of educational facilities too there is striking difference between Malas and Madigas. Malas had by and large done well for themselves and are educationally way ahead of Madigas. For instance, in the urban areas the rate of literacy among Malas is 26.8% as against 15.8% for Madigas. Even in the rural areas where literacy is far less, there are twice as many literates among Malas as among Madigas.[27] This difference between the two castes is pronounced at every level from primary to higher education.

Even the logic of regional unevenness had an essential bearing on the differences between these two castes.[28] Social reform movements aimed at the emancipation of the weaker sections of society have been more active in the coastal districts where Malas predominate. Thus Malas of coastal Andhra who

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[26]   Ramaswamy, Uma, 23 November 1974, Op.Cit., p. 1959

[27]   Ramaswamy, Uma, 20 July 1974, Op.Cit., p. 1158.

[28]   Srinivas, K., Op.Cit., p. 2585.

have been through Adi-Andhra, Christian missionary reform, rationalist and nationalist movements are ahead of Madigas of Telangana. They also benefited from the preferential treatment under the British. In contrast to coastal Andhra, Telangana where the Madigas are numerically strong was part of princely state where there was no comparable attempt at social reform.

Thus, it is evident from the above discussion that Malas have an edge over Madigas as they benefited from the educational avenues created by the missionaries earlier. Even after independence, it was they who gained from the reservation policy and also from the ruling class politics of patronage and cooptation. Hence, there is visibility of coastal Mala elite in politics, bureaucracy and academia.

Added to all the above, Malas claim a superior status when compared to Madigas and other scheduled castes through a reinterpretation and recasting of appropriate mythologies of origin.[29] Because of this, it can be argued that scheduled caste members cannot unite in their fight against the upper caste exploitation merely on the basis of caste. Thus, according to Dipankar Gupta, the political mobilization of scheduled castes on the basis of caste, "results in the estrangement of the dominant Dalit castes from the more backward and impoverished scheduled caste members, and the myth of natural superiority and

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[29]   Rathnaiah K., Op.Cit., p.6.

differences is retained. It is primarily for this reason that caste action as caste actions cannot overcome or devalue the caste system".[30]

Apart from the above factors there are also other factors from within which inhibit scheduled castes from attaining positions of power as proportional to their numerical strength.

In this context, firstly we shall consider the socialization process of scheduled castes. The dalits live very much within certain framework of power relations as imposed by caste. Malas and Madigas right from their childhood are trained more to obey and to listen than to command and to speak.[31] In fact, the lower the caste of a person, the higher will be the level of obedience and the higher the caste, stronger will be the motivation to speak and to command.

Another factor is that of subdivisions within a caste group itself. Malas for instance are divided into four important endogamous groups. The differences between these groups are strong to an extent that inter-dining and marriage between members of different Mala groups are unacceptable. These four sub

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[30] Gupta, Dipankar, 1985."Caste, Infrastructure and Super Structure: A Critique" in I.P. Desai, Ghanshyam Shah, Pradeep Kumar Bose, Punalekar and Dipankar Gupta eds., Caste, Caste-Conflict and Reservation, Ajanta Publications, p. 40.

[31] Ilaiah, Kancha 1996, Why I am not a Hindu: A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture and Political Economy, Calcutta: Samya, p. 39.

castes do not even touch one another for fear of pollution.[32] This is because there prevails a strong sense of superiority and inferiority between the divisions.

Among scheduled caste members there is also lack of spirit of co-operation, educational backwardness, lack of will power and above all weak organizational abilities. All these combined to hold back these castes. According to Carolyn Elliott, " not having been traditional leaders of village factions, the lower castes lack both the skill of leadership and the authority to claim leadership."[33] Thus it is this lack of opportunity combined with absence of structures of obligations which contribute to these people's inability to play leadership roles. As these people lack economic resources thus it is clear enough that unlike dominant castes they could not establish their hold over others through patron-client ties. Even those who managed to become political leaders have done it badly by allowing personal considerations to outweigh group concerns.

Education has served as an important source of status enhancement for some scheduled caste members.[34] This too, led to emergence of perceptive differences among them with respect to class, status and power thereby making

[32] Rathnaiah, K., Op.Cit., pp. 33-36.

[33] Elliott, Carolyn, M. 1970, "Caste and Faction Among the Dominant Castes: The Reddis and Kammas of Andhra" in Rajni Kothari ed., Caste in Indian Politics, Delhi: Oreint Longmans, p. 164.

[34] Abbasayula, Y.B. 1978, Op.Cit., p. 69.

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them even more of a heterogeneous community. There exists a big gulf between the scheduled caste politician, the educated and the common man. Most of the educated Harijans get government jobs and are alienated from their own people.[35]

HINDRANCES TO THE COLLECTIVE MOBILIZATION OF SCHEDULED CASTES AND BACKWARD CASTES FROM 'WITHOUT'

After having examined the internal factors, we now discuss the external factors or those factors from 'without' which come in the way of unity of dalits and backward castes for political purposes. These basically consisted of the various strategies employed by the forward castes which caused friction among different groups of scheduled castes and other lower castes. This gave them protection against the latter's collective mobilization.

After independence and with the introduction of adult suffrage, the 'politics of numbers' assumed great significance. Since it is the scheduled castes that possess the numerical strength it became imperative upon a political party to enlist their support in order to win elections and attain power. However, this issue was tackled differently at different times.

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[35] Parvathamma. C. 1984, Scheduled Castes and Tribes: A Socio-Economic Survey, New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, pp. 278-295.

At least till late 1960s, the dominant caste elite on account of being wealthy landowners, had a firm hold over the lower castes who constituted the bulk of agriculture labourers. This was due to the persistence of three factors: 1) the existence of dependence ties or patron-client ties between former and latter, 2) lack of spirit of unity among the lower castes and 3) educational, economic and political weakness of the lower castes.[36] The dominators not only possessed political, economic and religious power but also exercised it in such a way that the dependence of the subordinates is perpetuated.

Thus, bearing in mind the firm grip of dominant caste elite over lower caste members, for any political party to attain power, it was essential as well as easier to establish its clout over them than to have a direct link with the masses. The forward castes in turn had to accommodate every aspirant to power. This was to contain discontent, which otherwise could raise potential threat to the existing power structure. It is in this context that patronage came to dominate the Indian Political scene. This saw the emergence of a larger competitive set of social elites. They were handled through distribution of offices and other resources such as development funds. However, here too, the dominant caste elites were careful in devising strategies to sustain themselves in power. The distribution of patronage and rewards was carried out in ways that encouraged competition among the

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Rao, N.Sudhakar, September, 1996, "Ideology, Power and Resistence in a South Indian Village", Sociological Bulletin, Vol. 45 (2), p. 206.

leaders of the lower castes. This prevented the latter from uniting to establish a new political formation.[37] In Andhra, traditional party faction recruited leaders from lower castes not only as symbols of multi-caste appeal but also as insurance against lower caste solidarity. If these people had not been accommodated then they would have formed horizontal solidarities thus challenging the vertical integration built on hierarchical status considerations.

The possession of state power afforded the dominant caste elites for obtaining the support of aspiring lower castes. Therefore, attention was paid to the demands of local leaders of the lower caste groups. This in turn could be assumed to accommodate the group they 'represented' through a process of vicarious participation with notions of prestige. The access to important benefits and positions was tempting to low caste leaders. Thus they were diverted from demands for structural changes which could benefit the larger castes or communities they represented.[38] They were cleverly diverted toward seeking rewards for family and factional groups to assure their cooption into the existing power structure. This is once again an evidence to show the prevalence of volutarism in caste based politics, whereby, serving personal interests is projected as serving the interests of the caste groups. However, the leaders thus

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37   Reddy, G.Ram, 1989, "Caste, Class and Dominance in Andhra Pradesh" in Francine R. Frankel and M.S.A. Rao eds., Dominance and State Power in Modern India: Decline of a Social Order (Vol.I), Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 265.

38   Ibid.

accommodated did not have much role to play in the actual decision making process. Their positions were devoid of 'effective power'.

Nevertheless, some members of the lower castes tried to rise to important positions but they have not been able to do much for their own caste without endangering their own position. Thus for instance, D.Sanjeeviah, the first Harijan Chief Minister of A.P. could not retain his position for more than two years. This was due to several welfare measures introduced by him for the benefit of 'weaker sections' which angered dominant castes. In fact, any non dominant caste Chief Minister found it difficult to remain in his chair as powerful factions led by dominant caste elite were always at work in destabilizing him.[39]

However, around late 1960s and early 1970s, as a result of the initiation of land reforms, the hold of the dominant castes over lower castes had somewhat loosened. This was further aided by introduction of democracy at different levels. Reservations for SCs was made compulsory in local administrative bodies, state legislatures as well as in Parliament.

Therefore, as the hold of dominant castes over lower castes weakened, political parties had to invent new methods of recapturing the latter's support. It is

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[39] Reddi, A.Reddippa, 1994, "From Neelam Sanjiva Reddy to Nadurumalli Janardhana Reddy" in Agartala Faxward Prasad and D.Sundar Ram eds., State Politics in India: Reflections on Andhra Pradesh, New Delhi: MD Publications Private Limited, p. 201.

their numerical strength that mattered rather than their position in the traditional hierarchial system.

The most viable alternative to the earlier form of patronage politics is now one of 'populism', Moreover larger and larger number of persons from the lower castes became politicized. Thus reservations led to a curious development where by, the leading social group has to ally with other fringe groups in order to gain power.

Moving in the above direction, the then Congress (I) government adopted several populist programmes.[40] As a consequence, though it (congress) was defeated nationwide in 1977, in Andhra Pradesh, Janata Party could not make a dent into its hold over the poorer sections. However, by early 1980s it looked as if backward castes were alienated from the Congress.[41] This was due to several policies initiated by congress (I) such as those for the distribution of government lands, house sites for the landless and the abolition of bonded labour, appeared disproportionately to benefit the Harijans who were most easily identifiable

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[40]   Vakil, F.D. 1984, "Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh: A Review" in George Mathew ed., Shift in Indian Politics: 1983 Elections in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, New Delhi: Concept Publishing House, p. 63,
       Vakil points out that in order to restrictive the support base of Congress Party, Indira Gandhi emphasized the concept of welfarism with the induction of a large number of backward communities.

[41]   Kohli, Atul, Op.Cit., p. 996.

members of the 'target' group. In fact, Hargopal described the particular effectiveness of the Congress policy towards Dalits:

"As a part of the new strategy in the late sixties and early seventies Mrs. Gandhi resorted to target group approach. The 'Harijans' were identified as a specific group... The strategy not only envisaged new specific schemes for the Harijans but the entire mass media was pressed into service for the purpose of propaganda. The land reforms, distribution of pattas, and house sites, S.C. component programme with subsidy and so on 'trickled down' to some Harijan families here and there. It is not that their conditions were qualitatively altered nor their social relations transformed. The electoral rhetoric and massive propaganda resulted in two significant consequences: one, Harijans became conscious of their conditions and their identification with Mrs. Gandhi gave them a new sense of social consciousness resulting in greater assertion for dignity and self-respect, two, the special focus on a particular section annoyed a large section of non-Harijan agricultural laborers coming from the other backward groups and alienated them from the Congress party and their Harijan brethren"[42]

Clearly, in this context, backward castes were at a disadvantage because of their extremely heterogeneous composition. Thus it was difficult for the Congress (I) to mobilize around symbolic appeals and rewards of visible positions to a select

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[42] In Omvedt, Gail. 1994, Dalits and the Democratic Revoluition, New Delhi: Sage, p. 320

few members of one particular caste. With the emergence of Telugu Desam Party as a viable alternative to Congress (I), backward castes, found a messiah in 'NTR' as he promised them reservation and thus better job and educational opportunities.[43]

Though the policy of reservation for 'weaker sections' helped them to improve their tally at various political levels, certain loopholes could be identified. For instance, reservations for scheduled castes in local self-governments are made compulsory through statutory provisions.But, what is to be counted more is their access to executive posts. Various positions in the Panchayat like President, Vice-President, Chairman, and Vice-Chairman are the key posts but it has been found that these are most inaccessible to the disadvantaged groups. Only those who are powerful socially and economically are able to occupy them.[44] Even at the state level, there are instances where by the scheduled castes candidates failed to make it to the legislature as they could not withstand the financial pressure involved. In Guntur district according to local communist leaders Kammas and Reddis often unite to defeat a viable communist candidate in elections. Finally, there is the ruthless repression of any one attempting radical mobilization of the poor. Thus, dominant castes never shy away from joining hands whenever they perceive a

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[43]   Kohli, Atul, Op.Cit., p. 998

[44]   Rathnaiah. K. Op.Cit. p. 88.

threat from an outsider. This helps them to preserve their over all power in the society.

Added to all the above, there are also incidents of violence inflicted upon lower castes by upper caste landlords. Two such historical incidents which led to an unprecedented politicization of Dalits in the recent past were that of Karamchedu and Chundur.[45] In fact, the Dalit Mahasabha was formed in response to Karamchedu. These incidents had dispelled any illusions among dalits about the character of the major political parties. And their contribution lies in the political polarization and resultant heightened awareness among the dalit castes especially in coastal Andhra. The Chundur incident is believed to have instilled confidence among the dalits and there by there was a resurgences of political aspirations among them.

Further, the meteoric rise of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), in Uttar Pradesh since the 1980s and its ascendancy to the corridors of political power, provided a major impetus to the forging of a new political identity among Dalits in Andhra.[46] Kanshi Ram visited Andhra Pradesh during the 1994 elections. SC-OBC leaders expected considerable electoral success due to his electioneering in the state.

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[45]   Srinivas, K. Op.Cit., p. 2584.

[46]   Michael, S.M. 1999 "Dalit Vision of a Just Society" in S.M.Michael ed., Dalits in Modern India, New Delhi: Vistaar Publications. p. 113.

However the results were contradictory to their expectations.[47] BSP failed to make a headway in the state politics. Atleast two factors could be attributed to its failure: 1) inability of the leadership to bring together different strands of SC-OBC, 2) in terms of its ideological specificity, failure to distinguish itself from the dominant political parties.

What is notable is that BSP failed to make an impact inspite of the Dalit leadership working out certain strategies to foster unity among Dalits. These included spreading anti-caste message of Ambedkar through songs, stories and speeches, inviting and associating with the men of all dalits castes at marriages and funerals, arranging inter-caste and inter sub caste dining and bringing them together in conferences where there could be proper orientation of the people of other dalit castes and sub castes. Further In order to promote caste solidarity for political purposes, mythology- both in its oral tradition version and classical version has been utilized.[48]

Thus from the above discussion two strands of caste articulation can be identified: 1) Firstly, the strand represented by SC-OBC leaders with in the dominant parties that bargains for a larger share in the power structure, 2) Second

[47]   Srinivas, K. Op.Cit., pp. 2584-85.

[48]   Singh, T.R. 1969, The Madiga: A Study in Social Structrue and Change, Lucknow: Ethnographic and Fold Culture Society, p. 76.

is the strand that considers the forging of unity of dalit-bahujan forces as a historical necessity for the realization of the project of caste annihilation.

However, it seems as though there are many hindrances to their collective mobilization for political purposes. Added to their financial weaknesses, in their practical life they do not completely eschew hierarchy. In other words they have not developed on independent egalitarian system for themselves. This is one major obstacle, which holds them back from being uniting. Thus, we may conclude that they do not, really threaten the existing power structure in the state.

CHAPTER V

CASTE AND POLITICS: AN INSTRUMENT OF SOCIAL CHANGE

The underlying objective of this chapter is two fold: Firstly, it seeks to understand the extent which caste has been an important factor in Andhra Politics and thereby, secondly to examine its impact on the state.

The role of caste in Andhra politics has often been a subject of discussion by both Indian and foreign scholars. Divergent views have been expressed by academias who tried to explain this 'important' aspect of politics. One view is that caste alone is the dominant factor in the politics of Andhra Pradesh, while the other point of view is that the influence of caste is negligible. Selig S. Harrison, for instance, in his paper entitled "Caste and Andhra Communists" concluded that the caste has decisive role in the politics of Andhra. He writes, "Caste has played so fundamental a role during the post-war decade that this examination became in effect a caste history in the impact of caste on India's representative institutions".[1] Contrary to this view is the one expressed by G.Ram Reddy according to whom, "it would be superficial to say that caste alone matters in state politics".[2] Therefore, it is not easy to objectively assess the role of caste in state politics.

However, I am of the opinion that the role of caste in Andhra politics can neither be exaggerated nor oversimplified. Nevertheless, caste has an influential

[1] Harrison, Selig S. July 1956, "Caste and Andhra Communists" in American Political Science Review, Vol.L, p.379

[2] Reddy, G.Ram 1975, "Andhra Pradesh: The Citadel of the Congress" in Iqbal Narain ed., State Politics in India, New Delhi: Meenakshi Publication House.

role in the political arena, but one important aspect that has to be borne in mind is that caste plays its part only as one of the innumerable forces. Other important forces in the context of Andhra politics include regionalism, factionalism, personal interests etc. However here, we shall concentrate specifically on the caste factor and the extent to which it influenced the state politics.

The way in which caste influenced politics could very well be traced back to the non-Brahmin movement which swept peninsular India in 1920s and 1930s. Clearly this movement was based on a spirit of anti-Brahminism. This was dealt at a length in chapter II. However, here it is essential for us to focus on some of its highlights as it would enable us to understand the extent to which caste influences the political arena.

Non-Brahmin movement is indeed a land mark in Andhra politics as it laid the foundations for the emergence of Kammas and Reddis on the political centrestage. Caste provided a crucial basis for bringing about the unity among upper non-Brahmin castes in their mobilization against the Brahminical supremacy. In Andhra region, the upper non-Brahmin castes mainly comprised Kammas, Reddis and Velamas. The people who formed a part of this movement were basically, wealthy landlords. It was on account of their grip over land that they could command and exercise authority on the countryside. Inspite of this, what they lacked was, a claim to high ritual status and also a mark in Western education. As we know, Brahmins took a lead in both the above mentioned spheres. Thus,

the upper non-Brahmin castes resented this Brahminical monopoly over ritual status and government jobs. Therefore, these castes 'joined hands' with a primary aim of containing Brahmin supremacy.

Besides education and public services, the Brahmins in Andhra also controlled Congress Party and dominated public life.[3] The upper non-Brahmin castes as a result formed the Justice Party which could exclusively serve their political interests.

Thus, these upper non-Brahmin castes in their endeavour to take over the lead from Brahmins, had two major tasks to accomplish: 1) to enhance their ritual status and 2) gain access to western education as well as government jobs. Of course, land ownership conferred upon the upper non-Brahmin castes not only power but also prestige. But, this was not an indispensable means to high rank in the caste hierarchy though it facilitated upward mobility. Thus, as part of the non-Brahmin movement, every caste which took an active part in it formed a caste association. One important activity of these caste associations was to commission

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[3]   Satyanarayana, A. 1994,"Caste and Class in Rural Andhra" in K.L.Sharma ed., Caste and Class in India, Jaipur: Rawat Publications, p.374

caste histories.[4] Kammas, Reddis and Velamas laid claims to Kshatriya status.[5] This was done through a reinterpretation and recasting of appropriate myths of origin. Their mythologies claimed descent from former ruling dynasties of South India. But, Kammas and Reddis did not actually ritualize their life-style. This was because the bases of their political authority is essentially secular. They enjoy secular dominance in a society which has few upholders of sacred tradition. The proportion of Brahmins is very small and that of Vaishyas and Kshatriyas is not much. Ritual distinctions among castes appear to be less important than secular measures of dominance.[6] Moreover, Telugu Brahmins are less particular about ideas of pollution than Tamil Brahmins. In fact, a member testified to the statutory commission in London "Brahmins and non-Brahmins got along much better in Andhra than they did in Tamilnad".[7] This kind of secular basis has had an important impact on patterns of social mobility. Because Brahmins had less prestige fewer people imitated them in their attempt to enhance status. Instead they emulated the Shudra dominant castes. Thus, persons from many low castes adopted the name

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[4] Ramaswamy, Uma, March 1978, "The Belief System of the Non-Brahmin Movement in India: The Andhra Case" in Asian Survey, Vol.XVIII, California: University of California Press, pp. 290-300

[5] These Castes opted for Kshatriya status as this would enable them to stand with Brahmins a superior to Vaishyas and Shudras.

[6] Elliott, Carolyn M. 1970, "Caste kand Faction among the Dominant Castes: The Reddis and Kammas of Andra" in Rajni Kothari, ed., Caste in Indian Politics, Delhi: Orient Longmans, p.151

[7] Ibid, p.156

of Reddi, but few castes have sanskritized caste rituals, for such rituals was not an overriding symbol of status.

However, for Kammas in the delta regions the above posed a different problem. Though they are the dominant caste, but owing to the greater presence of Brahmins here, ritual authority became an important means to enhance, their status.[8] Thus, Kammas did not hold the pre-eminent position which the Reddis and Kammas enjoyed in Telangana and Rayalseema. Therefore, in order to claim a higher status, the Kammas emulated the Brahmins by adopting sacred threads. These ceremonies were performed by their own Kamma priests. Sanskritization here became a more important mode of social mobility, because the greater presence of Brahmins made ritual status a greater issue.

Apart from this claim to Kshatriya status, another important task of the upper non-Brahmin castes was to gain access to government jobs and other professions. Towards this end, they took on to western education. Further they also demanded 'non-Brahminization' of services which would ensure them with a substantial share of administrative jobs.[9] They clamoured for a share of preferential allotment of jobs and educational opportunities.

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8   Ibid.

9   Ramaswamy, Op.cit., p.293

By the late 1930s, non-Brahmin movement achieved immense success. The upper non-Brahmins gained access to western education, political power and government jobs. In fact, they began to monopolize government jobs just as Brahmins did before them.

However, this non-Brahmin movement also brought to fore the differences that existed between these upper non-Brahmin castes. Earlier, at the level of high ideology, the sole focus of emphasis was that of attacking Brahmin supremacy. This acted as a great binding force and moreover, there was no suggestion of the Brahmin being replaced by any other caste group. But, once Brahmin power was contained they faced a threat from each other in their competition for education, government jobs and political power. Especially Reddis and Kammas shot in to prominence to become the chief political rivals in the state.[10] At this stage, it was even a matter of convenience for them to fall back into their traditional rivalry. However, the non-Brahmin movement fizzled out once it succeeded in its primary goal (i.e., containing Brahmin dominance).[11]

Meanwhile, around the same period (late 1930s and early 1940s), it became imperative upon the Congress Party to widen its base for the nationalist movement. Here, enlisting the support of the landed elites assumed crucial significance as this

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[10]   Ibid, p.298

[11]   Ibid, p.299

was the easiest means to mobilize means. Therefore the Brahmin elite came forward to secure the support of the rural rich even at the cost of their own displacement. Power depended on materials ties of dominance and obligation. 'Rural rich' could thus exercise influence on their dependents in the village (patron-client ties were put to use for mobilization purpose). In terms of caste, 'rural rich' were primarily Kammas and Reddis. However, even among them, Congress found Reddi elites more useful. This was because Kammas were traditionally less than dominant in their areas, for they lived under *Zamindars* drawn from other castes. They could enjoy no caste identification with the political leaders of their area, nor could they hope to become part of the elite through kinship. Thus Kammas did not have the corporate political existence which the notable Reddis enjoyed. This had made the Kammas less useful to the Congress when it was expanding its organisations into the rural areas. So, fewer Kammas were recruited into the party.[12] Moreover, Congress was not big enough to accommodate the numbers of Kammas who wished to enter at the levels of leadership that they demanded.

Parallel to nationalist movement was the movement for separate Andhra state. Here once again there was confrontation of Brahmins and other upper caste non-Brahmins. Thus at a later stage, when Kammas desired a greater place in the politics, they had to develop a group based on caste solidarity in order to counter

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[12]   Elliott, Op.cit., p.155

Reddi dominance. This tactic was given up gradually in favour of multi-caste factions in order to attract people from other castes.

However, the struggle for a separate state brought to fore another vital issue. Many political leaders were doubtful about the kind of importance they would be accorded in the new state. These leaders needed a reliable support in order to ensure a secure place for themselves with in the new political set-up. Thus they manipulated caste and regional factors which readily factors which readily combined to provide them with loyal supporters.

With the emergence of a separate Andhra state, power gradually shifted from Brahmins to non-Brahmin upper castes like Reddis, Kammas and Velamas.[13] In the post-independence era, with the formation of Andhra Pradesh, Reddi dominance in the Congress party had a significant bearing on the shaping of political life in Andhra.

Before we discuss the above it is essential for us to consider certain crucial factors which helped the Reddis and Kammas to consolidate themselves in Andhra politics. The most important source of their power in control over land. They employ farm servants, they have the most ready capital to loan and also the resources for moving outside the village to represent cases to the administration. This is further

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[13] Kumar, A. Prasanna 1994, "Caste and Political Leadership in Andhra Pradesh" in A.Prasanna Kumar, ed., Andhra Pradesh Government and Politics, p.152

augmented by the state's appointment of certain dominant caste persons as official headmen of the village, thereby, giving them the power to tax collection and the prestige of state recognition.[14] However, political power also depends on qualities of persuasiveness, assertiveness and leadership. These are individual qualities which add to economic power.

Reddis and Kammas, also, put to firm use caste and kinship ties in order to form broader network of interaction. In fact, kinship ties provided a continuing source of trust worthy personnel. Interaction between caste notables increased as a result of transportation, communication and monetization of agriculture. As the notables attempted to win political support in unfamiliar arenas, they turned to their local counterparts to build wider coalitions of village elites. Further, wealthy land lords were known for their contacts with government who aided peasants to obtain services. Caste members in towns provided accommodation and advice to villagers unfamiliar with the urban world. These persons became informal patrons of the caste. Their relationships with in the caste were based on ever widening circles of family ties through which work of their benefactions spread.[15] Such relationships also helped in connecting wealthy caste members with poorer members of the caste. All these factors paved the way for certain patrons to become known as caste leaders within a large area. They also became useful for

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[14]   Ibid, p.133

[15]   Ibid, p.144

conscious political purposes when the patrons started to employ caste to support their own political ambitions.

However, these dominant castes did not form an effective caste association capable of pursuing group goals, as this would have necessitated a centralized organization of authority which they resisted. To have a centralized authority was not feasible because in their relations with each other they were used to exercising reciprocal influence, for power was widely dispersed among many members of the caste.

Both the Reddis and Kammas strengthened their position in the political arena by leading vertically integrated factions. This is because, in order to win elections, support from other castes is of utmost importance. Thus, they could not have depended on horizontal solidarity as this would have alienated other castes. However, these factions were characterized by unity at the top (through caste and kinship interactions) and they were sustained at the bottom by vertical ties.

Starting from the year 1956 upto 1983, there was an uninterrupted Congress rule in the state. And through out this period, Reddis had an upper hand in the party. They dominated almost every level of the political sphere ranging from Zilla Parishads to Council of Ministers. Kammas who were otherwise at an equal footing with Reddis in many respects, felt somehow sidelined by the Congress.

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Nevertheless, they were at the helm of political affairs in the state. In fact, they were provided with some important portfolios in the state cabinets. But, this was not enough to satisfy them thus many Kammas, who felt beaten in politics, took to industry, business and education and steadily rose to the top in these areas.[16]Thus Kammas proved to be more enterprising than Reddis.

Reddis so dominated the political scene that seven out of ten Congress Chief Ministers were from their caste. A non-Reddi found it difficult to retain his post.[17] However, the above is in no way an indication that the Congress leadership at the centre, deliberately pursued a policy of favouring Reddis. It was the domination of Reddis right from the pre-independence era which gave them an edge over other dominant castes especially Kammas. Thus, consolidation of power by the Reddis was also due to the fact that, "the Reddy rural gentry constituted the backbone of the Congress Party".[18]

The above kind of an arrangement made Kammas unhappy. In fact, what infuriated them most was the failure on the part of Congress (I) to appoint a Kamma Chief Minister. This was crucial because the trend of Andhra Pradesh politics

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[16]   Kumar, A. Prasanna, Op.cit., p.152

[17]   Sharma, B.A.V. and K.Madhusudan Reddy 1979, "Electoral Politics and Voting Behaviour" in G.Ram Reddy and B.A.V. Sharma eds., State Government and Politics, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, p.470

[18]   Ibid,

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depends on the Chief Minister and his caste even though other castes have their representation in the ministry.[19] However, Kammas could do nothing about it in the absence of a viable political alternative.

Against such a background the formation of Telugu Desam Party by N.T.Rama Rao (NTR), a Kamma, assumed new meaning, for it symbolized Kamma aspiration.[20] Till then deprived of a pivotal position in the corridors of power, Kamma leaders threw their support behind NTR. One of the reasons for his ascendancy was the unstinted support given by the Kamma land lords and businessmen.[21] Thus, what seems to be crucial in Andhra politics, is, to which caste does the Chief Minister belong especially whether he is a Kamma or a Reddi.

In Andhra Pradesh both the Kammas and Reddis have continuously jockeyed for power. Though both Congress (I) and Telugu Desam Party are in no way 'castiest' but what is also undisputed about them is the fact, that Reddis have dominance over Kammas in the Congress and it is vice-versa in the Telugu Desam Party. In fact, it was the sense of deprivation, which led the Kamma elites to extend

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[19] Reddi, A.Reddeppa 1994, "From Neelam Sanjiva Reddy to Nedurumalli Janardhana Reddy" in Agarala Easwara Prasad and D.Sundar Ram eds., State Politics in India, New Delhi: MD Publications Pvt. Ltd. p.197

[20] Rao, V.Bhaskar 1988, "Telugu Desam" in S.Bhatnagar and Pradeep Kumar eds., Regional Political Parties in India, New Delhi: Ess Ess Publications, p.87

[21] Reddi, A.Reddippa, Op.cit., p.202

their support to Telugu Desam Party. Through this, they wanted to gain access to political power and also the perks that came with it. What is also true about Telugu Desam Party is, that, it is a brainchild of Kammas intellectuals. Its organiser and managers too belong to the same caste. The real decision makers largely belonged to it.[22]

IMPACT OF CASTE POLITICS

As long as there was one party dominance in Andhra Pradesh, its development was put on the back burner as the political leaders were more interested in consolidating their positions. Moreover, there were rampant factional struggles as a result of which the issue of development was sidelined. Despite its abundance of natural resources, the state did not make much headway in social welfare, economic progress and industrial development.[23]

Caste formed one of the important bases for the ascedency of Telugu Desam Party. Ever since its emergence, there has been a two-party system in the state. Thus caste is one of the important factors which provided a ground for

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[22]   Murthy, V.Linga 18994, "Political Parties" in A.Prasanna Kumar ed., Andhra Pradesh Government and Politics, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, p.96

[23]   Kumar, A. Prasanna 1994, "Introduction" in A.Prasanna Kumar ed., Andhra Pradesh Government and Politics, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, p.7

competition between Congress (I) and Telugu Desam Party dominated by Reddis and Kammas respectively.

This in turn has been instrumental in bringing about Social Change in Andhra. Of course, there have been allegations and counter-allegations by both Congress (I) and Telugu Desam Party that which ever party comes to power, the state leadership sought to promote their own caste interests. To cite few instances, during N.T.Rama Rao's regime (1984-1989), it was often felt that caste became the sole barometer for measuring administrative decisions. Most of the key posts in the administration went to Kammas. The Chief Minister's personal staff too was manned by Kammas.[24] Another issue which was controversial was abolition of Village Officer's posts. The Village Officers in Andhra and their counterparts in Telangana were usually Brahmins and Reddis respectively who were predominantly from Congress (I).[25] Thus the abolition of these posts was felt by many as a step taken by NTR in order to break the influence of Reddis and Brahmins and also thereby to strike at the grass roots institutional base of Congress. This would politically enhance its (TDP) own credibility and image. As regards Congress (I), a Telugu Desam member, in a debate in the State Legislative Assembly alleged that during the Congress days, 13 out of 21 Zill a Parishad

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[24] Innaiah, N. 1984, Saffron Star Over Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad: Booklinks Corporation, p.92

[25] Rao, K.V. Narayana "N.T. Rama Rao in Power in Andhra Pradesh" in Agarala Easwara Prasad and D.Sundar Ram eds., State Politics in India, New Delhi: MD Publications, Pvt.Ltd., p.95

Chairmen belonged to the Reddis Community.[26] There was an allegation that Congress (I) gave more preference to Reddis in it administrative decisions. This means that Reddis were deprived of 'effective power' in Telugu Desam Party where as Kammas were deprived of 'effective power' in Congress (I). Though this, had some kind of operational significance, there are instances where it did not necessarily reflect reality. But, both the parties in order to get electoral success are being forced to plan strategies which would pave the way for welfare of the people. Thus to cite some examples we shall consider manifestoes of both Congress (I) and Telugu Desam party in the 1999 assembly elections.

On the eve of elections, Telugu Desam Party announced several welfare measures tending toward populism and the promise that economic reforms will usher in a "Swarna" (golden) Andhra Pradesh Congress (I) emulated Telugu Desam Party by putting forward the same welfare measures in their manifesto but, under a different name. Thus 'Janmabhoomi' rural welfare programme in Telugu Desam Party's manifesto got the name of 'Gram Swaraj' in that of the Congress. The Deepam cooking gas scheme used by Telugu Desam Party was coopted by the Congress as the Indira kalyan programme.[27]

26   Ibid, p.102

27   Menon,K.Amarnath, October 25 1999, "Artful Dodger", New Delhi: India Today, pp. 31-34

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However, as the state was under Telugu Desam Party's rule since 1994, many other welfare schemes became operational in the period between 1994-1999. These were brought in to effect by the Telugu Desam Party clearly in order to get an edge over the Congress. Later on, in the year 1999 (after the assembly elections), Telugu Desam Party once again bounced back to power because of the success that it had achieved in implementing various developmental projects. A few schemes which found successful implementation include the following: 1) *Janmabhoomi'* scheme in which a village comes forward with a development proposal, raises part of the money for it and is guaranteed the rest of what they need by the state government,[28] 2) *Raithu bazaar,* i.e., market for farmers, whereby the farmers could bring their produce directly to consumers in government buses, thereby eliminating exploitation by the middle men, 3) Deepam cooking gas Scheme in order to rescue rural house wives from fossil fuels, 4) The government of Andhra Pradesh has taken up the theme of women's employment as one of the main agenda items to tackle rural poverty through social mobilization. Andhra Pradesh is the pioneer state to introduce DWCRA (development of women and children in rural areas) schemes in all the districts to achieve self-sufficiency and to bring social transformation among rural women living below the poverty line. This agenda of the state aims at keeping rural women in the forefront to facilitate formation of a large number of "self-help groups" through out the state. Around 30

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[28] Singh Tavleen, October 18 1999, "Byte the Bullet" in New Delhi: India Today, p.40

lakh women belonging to the weaker sections have become members of these "groups". The State government has drawn a long-term action plan for women's schemes. Women were also encouraged to save a rupee a day. District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) has indicated that DWCRA scheme helped women to earn a monthly income ranging from Rs. 250 - Rs. 2000 depending on the enterprise activities taken up by them. An amount of Rs 150 crores was provided as a revolving fund as against savings of Rs 200 crores by these groups. DWCRA women amongst themselves are producers of more than 350 varieties of products. There is the unique process of bringing rural women produces in direct interface with the urban consumers of Hyderabad city through DWCRA Bazaar. It is organized to facilitate them to sell their products directly to the buyers. During 1998-99 products worth more than Rs. 8.5 crore were sold in the bazaar. At the district level, products worth Rs. 25 crores were sold in one year. In addition to these, women have taken initiatives in improving their socio-economic status by participating in government programmes like family welfare, environmental awareness, public health, sanitation and clean drinking water.[29]

Another schemes which needs a mention is 'adarana', which aims to consolidate the base of TDP among the backward castes by selectively disbursing financial assistance for self-enforcement. This aims to save the traditional

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[29]   Dwarakanath, H.D. September 1999, "DWCRA in Rural Andhra", Kurukshetra, Vol.47, No.12, pp.14-18

occupation of backward castes which are on the verge of extinction due to privatization. The number of beneficiaries expected to benefit from this scheme is around 10 lakhs. This scheme will provide modern and sophisticated tool kits to eligible occupational backward caste artisans.

Andhra Pradesh under TDP's rule is also pursuing Information Technology revolution in order to make a permanent, qualitative change to the life of the poorest of the poor, the common man and woman of the state. There have been many such projects undertaken by the government with in its framework.[30]

As John Kenneth Galbraith put it "A literate population is anything but poor; an illiterate population can be nothing but poor". Thus Andhra Pradesh government is making firm efforts in order to break the umbilical link between poverty and illiteracy. It has put into action several literacy programmes in order to educate the masses. Thus, the latest official report suggests that illiteracy rates in Andhra Pradesh are coming down rapidly.

Thus, from the discussion so far it becomes evident thta caste indirectly served as one of the important means for the emergence of a viable political alternative to the Congress (I). This established a two-party system, wehre by,

[30] Krishna, Srivatsa January 2000. "The Face of the Future E-Government in Andhra Pradesh",Yojana, Vol.44, No.1, pp. 49-51

the competition for political power between the two parties is bringing about the "best" out of them. Political parties soon realized that the electorate gives preference to efficiency of the government and the steps that it would under take to improve their quality of life. Therefore, both the parties in their struggle for political power cannot afford to sideline the real developmental issues. Of course, Telugu Desam Party took a lead in this direction, as a result of which it consolidated its position. But this process of change as it has already been initiated even Congress (I) cannot afford to neglect developmental issues (in order to re-strengthen its position).

CONCLUSION

Thus, caste based politics provided an impetus to social change in Andhra Pradesh. In order to clinch power, it propelled competition between the two dominant castes i.e., Kammas and Reddis via the two major political parties i.e., Telugu Desam and Congress (I) respectively. In the process of strengthening their positions, both the parties are forced to consider the real developmental issues which would bring about a qualitative change in the life of masses. Here what is of crucial importance is the fact political structure itself enabled these caste divisions i.e. between Reddis and Kammas to be expressed through different parties that held a realistic chance of capturing state power. Thus, it is not surprising that the

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competing dominant castes have come to ally with the two rival parties. Therefore it is quite evident that caste is instrumentally used for political power struggles.
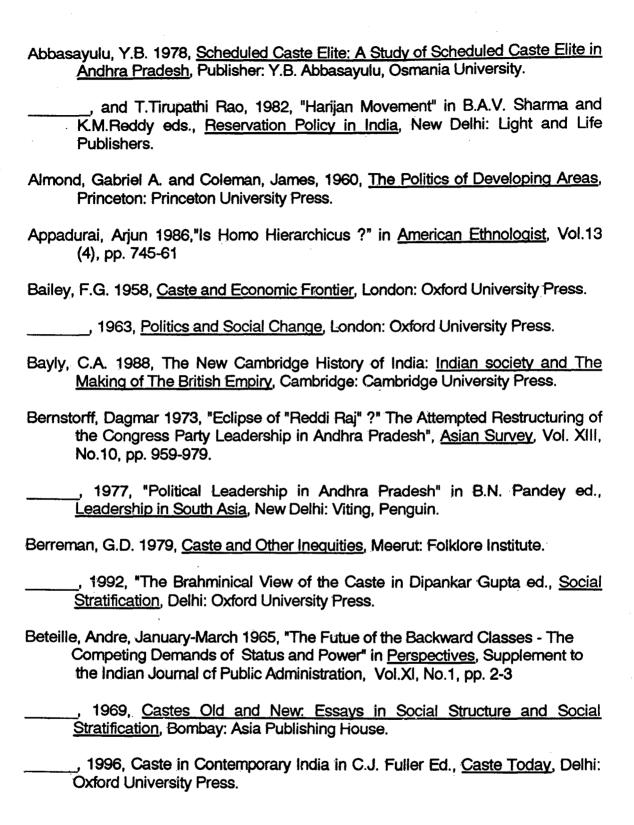
It has been observed that there is a greater tendency of Kammas to associate themselves with TDP and Reddis with Congress (I). This is because by manipulating caste and kinship ties a politician knows that he will be instantly provided with a set of trustworthy personnel. In order to 'woo' his fellow caste men he might even offer them positions of prominence along with other major perks. Moreover, the age-old lore of Kamma-Reddi rivalry adds to the strengthening of bonds with one's own caste members. This "coterie" is not only a source of financial support to the leader but also provides him with the much needed numerical support. The above factor is of crucial importance for the survival of any political party. Thus by working caste loyalties, political bosses hope to bind their supporters in to a stable political unit.

But, both Congress (I) and Telugu Desam party cannot be termed as 'casteist'. This is because neither TDP is devoid of Reddis nor Congress (I) is devoid of Kammas. It is here that "voluntaristic theory of action" assumes importance. A politician is at the same time an 'individual' and thus he shifts his loyalties according to his own convenience. Caste plays a role in such calculation but not by excluding other considerations.

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However, it is the caste of the Chief Minister that sets the trend of politics in Andhra. Thus under Congress rule, there was not a single instance of appointing a Kamma Chief Minister and under TDP rule a Reddi never occupied this pivotal post. In Congress (I) Reddis assume prime importance and in TDP Kammas have an upper hand. In fact his constitutes the core element of both the parties i.e. in Congress (I) 'effective power' lies in the hands of Reddis and in TDP it is in hands of Kammas. This is a major issue on which both the parties do not seem to compromise.

However considering the convergence of economic interests of both Reddis and Kammas and also given the fact the that politicians now have to pay more attention to the developmental issues (which are of real concern to the masses) in order to consolidate their hold over the power structure, then, is there a possibility for both these castes to overcome their rivalries? Are they ready to compromise over the issue of who holds 'effective power' within a party? Thus for future research what has to be probed into is, what exactly will be the basis for the formation of the core membership of a political party. Will caste continue to be a dominant factor or is their a possibility for other factors such as, efficiency and economic interests to gain more significance.

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