CHAPTER - V
FORMATION OF KAPUNADU AND ITS ACTIVITIES
The characteristic feature of the social structure in India is the caste system. Social system is organised essentially around the caste structure and caste identities. The process of political mobilisation had resulted in identifying and manipulating the existing social structure. The indigenous social structures are closely involved in politics. According to Rajni Kothari:

"Politicians are mobilising caste-groups and identities in order to organise their power. They find in it an extremely articulated and flexible basis for organisation, something that may have been structured in terms of a status hierarchy, but something that is also available for political manipulation and one that has a basis in consciousness”¹

In fact, as the study of political behaviour becomes essential while describing the social structure of a community, M.N. Srinivas, has pointed out that political behaviour of Indian masses is generally influenced by caste and religion.²

As per the spirit of our constitution, there is no discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth in the fields of education and employment. However, Articles 15(4) and 16(4) are two facets envisaging reservations to the classes of citizens, socially and educationally backward. In so far as the state of Andhra Pradesh is concerned, it was originally formed a part of the composite Madras state, besides that of the state of Hyderabad. With the formation of the Andhra State on 1st Oct, 1953, a list of Backward classes as was existing in the composite Madras state was adopted with slight modifications. The Kapus enjoyed reservations in the policy.

In the wake of formation of the State of Andhra Pradesh including Telangana area as on 1st Nov. 1956, the list that was existing with the state of Hyderabad was continued, thereby maintaining two lists- one for Andhra and the other for Telangana area. The British Government in Madras Presidency had recognised Kapus as backward caste in 1915 and the backward classes list of Andhra region included Kapus also. In 1956 the then chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh N. Sanjeeva Reddy deleted Kapus from

²M.N. Srinivas, Caste in Modern India and Other Essays, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1964, p.2.
the Backward classes list on political grounds. Again, though D.Sanjeevaiah, the next Chief Minister tried to recognise them as other backward classes through a government order, the High Court struck down the G.O. on technical grounds.

Meanwhile, the President of India appointed a Backward Classes Commission on January 1953 under the Chairmanship of Kaka Kalelkar, to determine the criteria to be adopted for treating any section of the people, other than Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The said commission was also to draw up a list of such classes on the basis of the criteria laid down by it. It included Kapus in the other Backward classes list. On submission of the report of the Commission, the Central Government found certain tests applied by the commission to be vague, and therefore, directed the different state governments to choose their own criteria for defining backwardness.

The state of Andhra Pradesh issued G.O. Ms. No.1886 dated 21.6.1963 specifying a list of certain persons as belonging to backward classes for the purpose of selecting candidates to the seats reserved for backward communities in the Medical colleges in Andhra Pradesh. The said list was challenged in the High Court on the ground that the order of the Government of Andhra Pradesh offends Articles 15 and 29 (2) of the constitution. After that again through a G.O. Ms. No.870 dated 12.4.1968 the State Government appointed Anantha Raman Commission to prepare a list of Backward classes in the state as socially and educationally backward classes. The commission drew up a list consisting of 93 classes to be included in the backward class. The Government accepted the criteria adopted by the commission and issued G.O. Ms. No.1793 of 1970 declaring that the castes and communities specified by the commission to be socially and educationally backward for the purpose of Article 15(4) of the constitution and making 25% reservations for them.

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3The High Court struck down the said G.O. holding that the State has placed no material before the court as to economic conditions of various castes, their occupation, habitation, social status and their educational backwardness and that the enumeration of persons as Backward has been made almost exclusively on the basis of the caste.

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### Table No.V-1

**The Table showing the percentage of Reservation for each of the B.C. groups**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B.C.-A.</th>
<th>Consisting of 38 castes</th>
<th>With 7% Reservation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B.C.-B.</td>
<td>Consisting of 31 castes</td>
<td>With 10% Reservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C.-C.</td>
<td>Consisting of 1 caste</td>
<td>With 1% Reservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.C.-D.</td>
<td>Consisting of 23 castes</td>
<td>With 7% Reservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Castes</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Anantha Raman Commission 1968.

The Commission did not recognise the entire Kapu castes as backward classes, but recognised only two sub-castes of the Kapus, namely Munnuru kapus and Turpu Kapus as other backward classes and put them under B.C-D. category.

Meanwhile in 1979 the President of India again appointed a Backward Classes Commission. The Commission was headed by B.P. Mandal and submitted its report in 1980. The Commission recommended that caste be the criteria for determining the backwardness. Mandal Commission calculated 52% of the population of India as belonging to other backward classes. In the Commission report in an entry of 264 of the Andhra Pradesh other backward classes list identified Kapus as the other Backward classes.

The Government of India took a decision to include as backward classes, the castes whose names figure both in the lists maintained by state governments and in the state-wise lists of other backward classes appended to the Mandal Commission Report. But Kapu Community does not find place in the list maintained by the Andhra Pradesh government.

Again in the year 1982, the Government of Andhra Pradesh, appointed one man commission headed by N.K. Muralidhar Rao,4 to determine the nature of social and educational backwardness of different sections of citizens and submit its report. According to the Commission submitted its report, but it did not recommend for inclusion of Kapus, Ontaris, Balijas and Telegas in the list of backward classes. It observed

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"They are land owners and enjoy social status in the villages. They are already politically conscious and socially forward. On the educational side also they are not backward as the students belonging to the Kapu Community are considerable number in the educational institutions in the state. The literacy in this community is higher than the state average. There is a good representation from Kapu Community in the employment under the state government, semi-government and local bodies. The Commission thinks that it is not necessary to disturb this."  

It was a one man Commission, further it submitted the report within 9 months of its appointment. No actual investigations were conducted. Hence without going into empirical data and field work, it made dry statements about Kapus. The state government itself set aside the report and the recommendations of the earlier Anantha Raman Commission are followed till today. The Kapus have been relentlessly trying to get their caste included under ‘BC’ list. There is also the attempt to get united to make the government to listen to their demands. The Kapunadu Movement evidently is an attempt in that direction.

The Kapunadu Movement:

Kapunadu is a conglomeration of several Kapu sub-castes who came together and began calling themselves as Kapus. For the first time, important leaders of various Kapu sub-castes were brought together on common platform under the name ‘Kapunadu’ in Vijayawada in 1982. In other words, the term was first used to denote an assembly of Kapus in the above year when members of Kapu, Telaga, Ontari and Balija castes came together. Vangaveeti Mohan Ranga Rao first mobilised the Kapus who form the largest group in Andhra Pradesh. He received support from both the rich and poor sections of the Kapu group of castes. The main purpose of the conference was to bring all the Kapus together so as to formulate plans for the upliftment of their community. It also offered them an opportunity for establishing closer ties between various sub-castes. From then onwards Kapunadu has been organising annual/biannual meetings.

The ‘Nadu’ in the term ‘Kapunadu’ is a dravidian word which means both ‘territory’ or even an assembly which is either territorially or as in this case, community delimited. The deliberate use of this term was to account for several ambiguities in their identity and in the mobilisation processes. The first related to their demand was for

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backward class status. The very notion of a backward class by virtue of being some kind of a residual category has ambiguity built into it. Since the criteria for an Other Backward Classes (hereafter O.B.C.) status was more social and economic, caste became subordinated to the socio-economic status of communities claiming the O.B.C. status. This is reflected in the widespread use of the term "Backward Classes Communities" rather than "Backward Castes" in popular discourse. Secondly, since the Kapunadu actually consisted of several Jatis, the concept of community took precedence over caste as a self-referent for identity. The existing of class difference between a small prosperous rural elite and a majority of rural and urban poor was a third factor. Finally, since the Kapunadu Movement was built around an opposition to the Kammas who were seen as the dominant group, the Kammas themselves provided the term for self-identification of the Kapus. By virtue of their relation to the production process and ownership of property, the Kammas were the chief component of the ruling class in the region. However, their use of caste idiom in their rise to dominance and in their relationships with other groups has given them an ambivalent status in the social formation. Since the popular usage, the Kammas were referred to as a community reflecting their social, political and economic dominance, Kapus by a dialectical process referred to themselves as an exploited or dominated community rather than simply as a 'backward class'. (The very nature of exploitation and treatment of the dalits due to their location with relation to the mode of production and social structures, enables them to mobilise both as exploited castes and classes). Likewise, we argue, the class situation of the majority of the Kapus, with a "widespread presence among the poor peasantry and the urban lower middle classes", which are by nature alienated and insecure, made them to adopt the intermediate category of community rather than class or caste. The nature of the economic structure in Coastal Andhra with a high degree of dependence on the tertiary sector, which resulted in a stunted form of economic development, only compounded the difficulty of the Kapu lower middle class in improving their situation. The social movements and identities in the region, suggest the reflective of the absence of a developed industrialised, capitalist economy and the consequent lack of emergence of a fully developed class structure. The ambiguity of community in Kapunadu, thus epitomizes their class location, within an economic structure characterized by rural

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6The boundaries of backward classes are both unclear and elastic as Beteille point out. For details see her book, *The Backward Classes and the New Social Order*, O.U.P. Delhi, 1981.

urban-capital flows and the presence of the same dominant class in both rural and urban areas with similar patterns of social, political and economic behaviour.

The Kapunadu was essentially a movement for greater political, economic and educational representation centred around slogan ‘backward class status for the kapus’. Two earlier backward class commissions set up in 1968 and 1982 the Anantha Raman and Muralidhar Rao Commissions did not recommend the inclusion of Kapus in the backward classes list on the grounds that they are not a uniformly backward caste. The movement which was launched in the early 1982, but actually took off in a big way after a Kapunadu Mahasabha was organised in Vijayawada in 1985. The movement was mainly restricted to the Coastal Andhra Region, and brought several sub-castes under its umbrella including Kapus, Telagas, Ontaris and Balijas.

Traditionally these groups have occupied a similar position in the caste hierarchy, below the dominant cultivating castes, but above the dalits. By the early 20th century most of these groups had settled down as cultivators and agricultural labourers. Their differences seem to originate slightly different in ritual status, as well as class and occupational differences which prevailed in earlier times, but there has never been any taboo on inter-marriages and inter-dining among these jatis. However, the tendency towards cross-cousin and maternal uncle-niece marriages has meant that in practice, there have not been as many marriages among the different Jatis as there were among the sub-castes of the dominant peasant castes.

The idea behind bringing these groups under one nomenclature was to make a difference in the political arena in terms of numbers, as well as to revive inter-marriages among the Jatis and thereby enlarge their geographical spread, since each of these groups were concentrated in a few districts in different regions of the state. In terms of economic status, it was only the Kapus in the Godavari delta who constituted prosperous peasant cultivators, the rest constituting a substantial proportion of the small and marginal farmers and urban lower middle classes with a dominant presence especially in the tertiary sector. The total population of the Kapus as estimated at 18.6% of the population, with around 5% of them who reside the North Coastal Andhra and Telangana regions being classified as backward classes. However, they are mostly concentrated in the Coastal Andhra Region, particularly the Konaseema region, and here their population
is likely to be much more. In urban areas like Vijayawada and Tirupati, for instance their population is variously estimated between 15% to 20%.

But among the backward classes, several dominant groups are engaged in a bitter power struggle to make political gains. Though there are 93 castes in the existing list of OBCs only about 10 groups have been politically active. They include the Goudas, Padmasalis, Yadavas, Mudirajus, Gangaputras, Swarnakaras or Kamsalis, Munnuru Kapus Turpu Kapus, Kalingas and Koppula Velamas. Of these only 3 castes, Munnuru Kapus, Mudiraj and Goudas really enjoy the fruits of power sharing, along with them in the North Coastal Andhra apart from Turpu Kapus, Kalingas and Koppula Velamas also enjoy the fruits of power.

In the meantime, the Kapus and their associate caste groups, like the Balijas, the Telagas and the Ontaris have been successfully sought B.C. status for themselves, albeit, for the purpose of reservations in Government jobs and professional educational colleges. By extension, they have also tried to secure more political representation in proportion to their numerical strength.

The Kapunadu movement also attempted to imitate some of the mobility patterns of the Kammas by forging marriage alliances across regions and sub-castes and by setting up educational institutions. However, these never really took off for various reasons. The chief reason seems to be the economic or the class factor. Marriage alliances as a means of geographical expansions require a much higher economic status to be a successful technique. The Kammas were able to do it primarily because of having already attained a degree of economic and social mobility. The need to expand the geographic reach by itself cannot be a successful motivation in the absence of other factors propelling such alliances.

In the case of setting up educational institutions, which played a very important role in Kamma mobility, the Kapus just did not have the kind of resources that were needed to invest in areas which do not produce tangible results at least for a few years. Not being in power it was also quite easy for the dominant classes to scuttle some of

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these projects. In a struggle over the running of a school controlled by the Kapu community in Vijayawada for instance, the ruling party at that time (TDP) attempted in various ways to prevent the school from functioning. The rhetoric used in this instance again points to the entry of the notion of community into popular consciousness. Further Kapu leaders fighting to get certain municipal orders rescinded, stated that “it was the conspiracy of one community which could not brook the ascendancy of others. It was a conspiracy of one community that no other should run educational institutions”.¹⁰

Since as Upadhya puts it, terms such as Kapu “referred to caste or status categories that were not socially organised”¹¹ attempts were also made to define the terms of membership by strictly enforcing marriage rules and ritual status. However, even here, in the absence of any real mobility, such attempts were rarely successful.

The Emergence of Kapu Identity:

The significant attempts of the movement to consciously create a Kapu identity is a continuation of the metamorphosis which ‘Kapu’ as a caste has undergone. It is interesting to note how the Kapunadu was constituted and the main features of a changing community.

Available records indicate that there has been a cultivating community who have been returned as Kapus for almost 200 years starting with the first census conducted in the then Madras presidency soon after the permanent settlement in the early 19th century. However, in the census of 1871, Kapus seem to be a generic term to refer to all cultivators, though differentiated from the Kamma caste. Till the 1931 census, the practice of clubbing several non-Kamma cultivating castes, particularly Kapus and Reddis, continued despite the fact that a strong Reddi identity has emerged by then.

It was perhaps, the rise to dominance of Reddis and Kammas by the time of independence, that first created a consciousness among the Kapus of a separate identity. Subsequent developments in Coastal Andhra involving the rise of Kammas as a dominant rich peasant class as a result of the abolition of Zamindari and the green revolution,

¹⁰D. Partha Sarathy, Collective Violence in a provincial City, O.U.P., Delhi, 1997, p.70.
resulted in several changes in the economic structure of Rural Andhra. Kapus were amongst the communities who migrated out to the small and large towns in a major way. The adverse impact of the economic changes and the pauperization of the Kapus (among other groups), except in small enclaves in the Godavari delta, and the concomitant rise to dominance and prosperity of the Kammas constituted the initial impetus for the coming together of the Kapu sub-castes.

In the early 1980’s a major political change occurred that was to convulse to Andhra Pradesh society and polity. The emergence of the Telugu Desam party (hereafter T.D.P.) and its massive victory in the 1983 state assembly elections can be seen as a breakdown of ruling class in Andhra Politics. The crisis in ruling class politics broke up a carefully built alliance among upper castes and dominant peasant castes over a long period. The breakup resulted in the open social and political mobilisation around caste identities. The Kapu elite at that time allied themselves with T.D.P. hoping to capitalise on the crisis to emerge powerful at the regional level. However, it soon became apparent that the section of the ruling classes responsible for the emergence of the T.D.P. had no wish to share power with any other community. The calculated use of caste to form strategic alliances for power however showed the Kapu community their own route to power. Thus within a couple of years after the T.D.P. had come to power, the Kapus began to organise their own movement for power. In a sense, therefore, the Kapunadu movement pressaged the current upsurge of different communities who have their major demand; reservations on the basis of population of various castes and sub-castes. Reservations for ‘backward’ castes and other groups - ‘freedom fighters’, ‘ex-servicemen’, ‘the differently abled’ - will undoubtedly spread. In the current political confusion, reservations seem to be one safe way of getting votes. These were based on a realisation that the kind of democracy we have is really skewed in favour of some communities. It is estimated for instance, that close to two thirds of the M.L.As in the current Andhra Pradesh Assembly belong to the two dominant castes-Reddis and Kammas, who constitute less than 12% of the population. This lack of political representation by and a majority of the population, has led to the decline of what Chatterjee calls “a sense of participation by people in a social collective” or even one

12Reservations are necessary because the lower castes cannot compete on their own, perhaps for generations.

could argue in communal life, in the development process. The notion of community that was built around the Kapu identity thus captures the precise nature of the socio-political and economic changes that were and are occurring in Andhra society.

Caste, Community and Identity Choice:

In what was considered to be a seminal article when it was published three decades ago, Steve Barnett pointed “identity choice is the central problem in situating caste”. The ‘mega categories’ such as the Kapu, which have emerged cover groups which are originally separate from each other and whose status identification was of the least possible kind. These communities therefore resort to what Barnett terms ‘hedging’ - that is, ‘presenting contradictory identities in different contexts’, which he described as “a kind of holding action”. The shifting identities of the dominant peasant class is one example wherein their identities keep moving between class and caste; their more sophisticated facade in urban areas belies their “background as village power holders and their readiness to even adopt the most feudal traits”, as Omvedt puts it. Omvedt also says that the rich peasant in India essentially has “an ambivalent almost dual political character”.

Likewise the heterogeneous Kapu community was deliberately forged into a unified one, so that its ambiguity can “allow the blocs to continue, while at the same time suggesting the possibility for commonality across the blocs”. This ambiguity has enabled the Kapus to struggle unitedly against a common enemy or target. However, while the Kapu elite in the Godavari districts and Guntur have been actively involved in the so-called atrocities against the Dalits, the rest of the Kapus have often had to bear the brunt of a whole range of upper caste violence. The ambiguities of Kapunadu have therefore not been able to overcome the dissensions from within, leading to splits and the consequent decline of the movement.

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15Ibid.


17Ibid.

The movement was an outcome of the welding together of diverse political and economic interests, a horizontal alliance, based on anger and resentment at social exclusion, to target a common political enemy. The decline of the movement, however, has not meant the breakup of the organisational structure that was built up. These structures continue to be quite active within political parties, trade unions and independent village and town level organisations. Like the dalit organisations throughout India, these provide an organisational presence at local levels which make it difficult for the dominant communities to exercise power in ways that they are used to.

The major demands of the movement included categorisations of backward class, and better political representation. The movement was very active and widespread in Coastal Andhra and in the state capital of Hyderabad between 1985-1988 under the leadership V. Mohan Ranga Rao. Vijayawada emerged as a centre for Kapu political activities when Ranga took up the leadership of Kapunadu in 1985. A Kapunadu conference in 1988 in the city was the largest ever held rally by Kapus. Kapunadu held a number of meetings throughout Andhra in 1988 and put forth demands pertaining to opportunities in education, employment and in politics. V. Mohan Ranga Rao was able to mobilise the Kapus in a most effective manner owing to his own origins and migration from the agrarian proletariat to the urban lower middle class, mirroring the changes among a large majority of the Kapus.

The Kapus of Coastal Andhra concentrated in the agrarian rich East and West Godavari and Krishna are different. They were with the Telugu Desam Party earlier and their drift away from the T.D.P. began after the exit of Mudragada padmanabham from it and accomplished dramatically with the anti-Kamma riots following the murder of the Congress MLA V. Mohan Ranga Rao on December 26, 1988. It may be noted that the heightened anti-Kamma feeling among the Kapus was a major cause of the defeat of the T.D.P. in this part in the 1989 Assembly Elections. Now the Kapunadu has intensified the agitation for the inclusion of Kapus in the O.B.C. category, which has been its major demand for the last one and half decade. As the main actors in this agitation belong to the Congress(I) the factional differences in the party get reflected in the Kapunadu as well. Nevertheless the very fact that not a day

passes without a front page report about the activities of the Kapus in the vernacular press, ever since they intensified their agitation in the month of March, 1994 is an indication of their power to keep the Government on its toes, which no backward community can even think of.\footnote{K. Srinivasulu, “A.P: B.S.P. and Casts Politics”, \textit{E. P. W.}, Vol.XXDC, No.40, Oct. 194, p.2586.}

With the demand of Kapus for B.C. status and the murder of V. Mohan Ranga Rao, there we can see the awareness among the Kapus to unite for themselves and fight for their rights. For this caste provides a readymade raw material. Hence political mobilisation of Kapu clearly felt in the 1989 elections. An analysis of election trends since the first elections show that the caste factor was there in Andhra Pradesh Politics, but was never a major factor in the overall electoral process. 1989 elections deviated the above trend wherein the casteist trend seem to have taken deep roots.

Kapus emerged as a distinct powerful political force in the East Godavari district prior to 1989 elections. The very fact that both the parties the Telugu Desam Party and the Congress (I) strategy in giving seizable seats to this community illustrates the above statement. The caste factor assumes such proportions that the T.D.P. and the Congress (I) selected Kapus to oppose one another in 4 Assembly segments, Kadiam, Jaggampet, Pathipadu and Pithapuram. Direct confrontation between Kapus and Kammas was seen in Assembly constituencies between Kapus and Kammas in Assembly Constituencies ie., Burugupudi, Peddapuram, Anaparthi and Tallarevu. Significantly in the 1989 Assembly and Lok Sabha elections Kammas drew a blank.

In the 1989 elections, out of total 294 assembly seats, the Congress Party gave tickets to Reddis 89, Kammas 27, Kapu 26, B.Cs 47, S.C and S.T’s 55, Muslims 6 and Brahmins 6.\footnote{\textit{Indian Express}, Hyderabad Edition, 28 Sept., 1994. p.3.} In this election Congress won 182 seats.

The most important factor in building upon anti T.D.P. electoral alliance was caste. It was successfully played up by the Congress in its resurgence and search for power. It assigned the task of arousal and rallying people of different castes to prominent Congressmen. The party was most successful in breaking off a large chunk of the Kapu Community from T.D.P. The killing of V. Mohan Ranga Rao, a prominent
Kapu leader and a Congress M.L.A. took caste politics to a climax. The scale of caste violence and arson, targeting the property and assets of the Kammases that rocked the four coastal districts - Guntur, Krishna, West and East Godavari districts, following the murder was unprecedented. The Congress(I) made tremendous political capital out of this murder and gained from the overwhelming support of the Kapus in the coastal districts in 1989 elections.22

It was the landed gentry of this region i.e., the Krishna delta that fashioned the T.D.P. and it was the Peasantry of this region that voted for it en bloc in the first elections. Barring those of the Kamma caste, others were soon put off by N.T.R’s administration’s inefficiency, corruption, nepotism and quite blatant casteism. With the unsentimental hard headness that befits a green revolution heartland, they deserted the T.D.P. quite fast and thus it happened that N.T.R. lost the Krishna delta well before he lost the state.23

The factors that influence the 1989 elections, firstly is the lingering aftermath of the Dec. 26, 1988 clashes between the Kammases and Kapus in the wake of the murder of Congress M.L.A. V. Mohan Ranga Rao in Vijayawada. The clashes did erode the credibility of T.D.P. as a party capable of providing a strong and effective Government. Secondly, Union Minister P. Shiv Shankar seems to have almost succeeded in splitting the backward classes vote with his interventions on the B.C. reservation issue and the 1988 Kamma-Kapu clashes in Coastal Andhra. Thirdly, there is a widespread feeling that the N.T.R. in his immitable egoistical style offended the Kapu leader Mudragada Padmanabham.24 The rout in East Godavari district was due to what is called Mudragada Padmanabham factor, the former T.D.P. Minister and Kapu leader slighted by NTR.25 In Telangana, the success of Congress (I) in certain districts was due to the Reddy factor.

After Ranga’s murder on 26th December 1988 the leadership passed into the hands of the Kapus from Godavari district, who were land owners and whose interests

were different from those of the ordinary Kapus. The movement has split and the Vijayawada faction is now agitating for backward class status and has allied itself with the Scheduled Castes and other backward groups.

The December, 1988 riots in the wake of Ranga's murder was an immediate factor which divided the Kammas and Kapus in terms of power struggle. Meanwhile Kapus were polarizing themselves under the leadership of M. Padmanabham and organised Kapunadu to protect against the injustice done to Kapus. Kapu leaders argued that though they were single largest community in the state and with as many as 25 legislators, they were not getting the due share of power largely because 90% of the population is poor. As such Kapu must be included in the list of backward class. Further the sudden emergence of Kapunadu brought all the members of the community on common platform by Mudragada Padmanabham.

Narrating the defeat of T.D.P. in 1989 elections M. Shatrugna writes, that the first major clash between N.T.R. and his cabinet colleagues had occurred in early 1988 when he had sacked the respected leader of the Kapu community M. Padma Nabham from the Ministership on flimsy grounds. Padma Nabham successfully rallied the backward classes, especially the emerging prosperous Kapu community, under his leadership in the rich delta districts of Godavari, which were the vote banks of T.D.P. since 1982. A major event was the mammoth Kapunadu meet in Eluru in mid-1988 when the slain Congress M.L.A. and emerging Kapu-leader V. Mohan Ranga Rao made his presence felt. The Eluru meet was basically a Mudragada - Ranga joint show. It came in Dec. 1988 when Ranga who was on a hunger strike was murdered, resulting in bloody clashes between the Kapus and Kammas in the coastal districts of Krishna, Guntur and West Godavari. The failure of the Government to protect life and property and its causal attitudes to tacking down Ranga’s assassins further alienated the backward castes in particular and the common people in general.

Again we would like to point out that Caste has acquired a markedly ideological tone since 1990. The ideological tone was given a new articulation when the left parties decided to join hands with Mr. V.P. Singh’s Janata Dal in pressing for the extension of Caste quotas in the course of social justice. This made it impossible for any party openly

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to oppose caste quotas, so that caste has, at least for the time being, strengthened its grip over politics. But it still is an unsteady grip, for neither the supporters nor the opponents of caste quotas say that caste itself should be revitalised. In fact, the strongest supporters of caste quotas are, paradoxically, also the strongest opponents of caste as a hierarchical system.27

As caste is becoming the agenda of elections, the traditionally established vote banks of several political parties are changing. All over the country more particularly in South, the S.C.s have been a ‘stable vote bank’ of the Congress. In Andhra Pradesh Congress had entrenched into S.C. Wadas. They used to be called Indiramma wadas. To counter this vote bank of Congress, the T.D.P. made the O.B.C. Wadas, as its vote bank. Though at the apex level the Congress in the state is known as a Reddy Party and T.D.P. is known as Kamma party and the vote banks of these parties were S.C.s and OBCs respectively.28 The OBCs who supported the T.D.P. earlier were not happy with NTR as he was not allowing any visible OBC leader to grim in that party. Further the leadership continued to be family centered.

The assembly elections of 1994-95 in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and early 1996 in Bihar, Gujarat, Maharashtra etc., were be centered around the caste question.

Fighting elections on the caste issues has acquired legitimacy after the 1993 U.P. elections. The new legitimacy that caste has acquired must be seen in the context of Mandal agitation and social justice struggle in 1990, formation of anti-communal front by the Samajavadi Party (hereafter S.P.) and B.S.P. in 1992-93 and forming a coalition government in U.P. by S.P. and B.S.P. combine. The functioning of two governments Laloo Prasad Yadav and Mulayam Singh Yadav with caste centrality in states where Brahmanism held sway over for centuries certainly boosted the confidence of SC’s and OBCs because the exploited castes began to, at least, smell the odour of political power.29

Today every caste has become conscious of its caste interests, political leaders encouraged casteism for their political victory and goal satisfaction. The competition to

29Ibid.
avail socio-economic factors is based on caste. Many educational institutions are established in the name of caste where the students of particular castes are admitted and given facilities. For example in Andhra Pradesh every major caste has its own hostel in cities and towns. They are Reddy Hostel, Kamma Hostel Velama Hostel, Kapus or Telaga Hostel etc. There are some other non-educational institutions where members of a particular castes are appointed. This resulted in frustration among other castes and caste-bitterness comes into being. There are many temples which are established in the name of some particular, caste members, they are run and represented by their managerial organisation. For example Kanyakaparameshwari Temple is run by Vysyas.

In a transitional society caste remains and is bound to remain an important factor in the socio-political life. The caste system manifests itself as a vertical structure in which individual castes are hierarchically graded and kept permanently apart, and at the same time, are linked by well defined expectations and obligations which integrate them into the village social system. As M.N. Srinivas mentioned, though, the scope for individual and familial mobility has increased strikingly since independence, caste continues to be relevant in subtle and indirect ways, in such mobility. In the Post-independence era, the caste as a status group has been transformed into a political group to articulate the social and economic interests of its members. So, increasingly the caste affiliation of the 'position seekers' became important at the time of elections. The caste group numerically dominant in a particular constituency or a combination of caste groups have considerable influence on the election result.

Participation in Politics

The participation of the Kapus in politics is relatively a recent phenomenon. They realised powerlessness of their caste in the recent past. They also realised that access to modern political power means control over economic and educational opportunities. In a democratic electoral system existing in India where political awareness of all the sections of the society is on the increase and in Andhra Pradesh where caste consciousness and casteism is reaching its peak, numerical strength can be translated into political strength. Harold Gould aptly points out:

“Caste provides the Indian political system with an extensive, built in lobby or interest group deeply rooted in the past. The temptation to appears to the caste lobby is over whelming. The response is immediate because it is so deeply ingrained; the advantages are obvious because caste is a recognised channel to gain access to ministers and entire hierarchy of leaders, and to secure preference in any of the ever-widening activities of the Government”.32

Caste consciousness of the Kapus is on the increase since the organisation of Kapunadu in 1982 and it reached its zenith with the assassination of V. Mohan Ranga Rao, the then Congress MLA from East Vijayawada on 26th December 1988 in Vijayawada who was on fast untodeath asking the Government to provide him security. Since then the representation of the Kapu community in the Andhra Pradesh state assembly rose from 6 in 1985 to 22 in 1989, and in 1994 there are 26 Kapu M.L.A’s in the State Assembly.

With its numerical strength and constantly improved socio-economic conditions, the Kapu community in the ‘populist’ politics emerged as a ‘vote bank’ and now the Kapus are in the process of starting of a political party of their own to fight for political and economic share which is due to them.33

“When would the Andhra Pradesh political scene shift to the most numerous but the least influential castes”? This was the statement made by the Socialist party leader Ram Manohar Lohia in 1958. “These are the Kapus, the Padma Salis, the Malas and Madigas. Among them, the Kapus are the most numerous cultivating caste, they are very poor occupancy tenants and even poor share croppers when they are not actually agricultural labourers. In order to put energy and activity into this mass of Kapus a political party would have to rise that fees itself almost wholly from the strangle hold of the land-owning Reddy and Kamma castes.”34

Share croppers and agricultural labourers are almost all of them drawn from the backward or depressed castes such as Kapu, Mala, Madiga, Padmasalis and Adivasis. These submerged groups form around 85% of the population. The Reddis, Brahmins, Velamas, Kshatriyas, Kammas and similar castes form around 15% of the entire population, same in other parts of India. Most unfortunately for the country, it is precisely the squabbles and quarrels among various groups of the high caste male which form the politics of Andhra Pradesh, as of India at the present time. There is no effective Kapu, Harijan, Adivasi, momin or women leadership. More than 85% of population is an inchoate mass cruelly suffering and with vague aspirations. No political party dares to touch them. All political parties drew their leading cadres from among the high caste males who are just as coth to change the laws of share cropping as to destroy the bases and customs of caste. This gives Reddy or Kamma and similar castes a some what more advantageous position in village leadership, so that the backward Kapus or Harijan may find it still more difficult to attain leadership than in the North.\(^3^5\)

There is no restriction on inter-dining between some of the major middle order castes like Reddis, Kammas (Choudaries) Velamas (Naidus) Telagas (Naidus) Kapus (Naidus) Balijas (Naidus) and Gavaras.\(^3^6\) Even Reddi - sub-castes meticulously observe the sub-caste endogamy. These various sub-castes may stand united in matters of political expediency, but they are poles apart in matters of marriage between them. While demarcation is not so sharp and marked in the case of sub-caste among these castes, it is at its height in the case of Telagas, Kapus and Balijas etc. who may be classified as Naidus.

As the Kapus are scattered here and there, their habits and customs and their political activities differ. On account of the contiguity of the place they inhabit, they may be grouped into 3 or 4 divisions. Those inhabiting the districts of Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram were classed as one group, those who live in East and West Godavari, Krishna and Guntur districts forms a group. The Kapus or Balijas of the districts of Cuddapah, Kurnool, Chittoor, Anantapur, Prakasam and Nellore may be taken

\(^3^5\)Mankind, Monthly Journal Vol.4, No.11, June, 1960, pp.91-92.

by another and those resided in Nizam's dominions constitute the other group. Even in these distinct groups the people have no idea of corporate action until recently.

Some times, a secondary consolidation is attempted at a lower level, with the remaining middle level cultivating castes trying to come together as another extensive caste; but in Andhra Pradesh at any rate this secondary consolidation has remained incomplete. The Munnuru Kapus, Balijas, Telagas or Tenugus are collectively referred to as 'Kapus' but the consolidation has remained un-consummated.\(^{37}\) In contrast the consolidation has been quite successful in the case of upper cultivating castes: with the Kammas almost entirely so, but with the much more heterogenous Reddis to a lesser extent.

A large number of castes for instance, exist in pairs one backward and one forward, with the difference being indicated by a prefix. For instance, there are two kinds of Balijas, two kinds of Kalingas and two kinds of Velamas etc.\(^{38}\) The upper sections take to trade/cultivation and the lower sections remain food gatherers or become labourers.

Though South India is considered to be the bastion of the caste system, there has nevertheless been a considerable flexibility in the occupational stratification in the caste organisation in the south also. The Komatis (Vysyas) in the Andhra Pradesh, had hardly been pursuing agriculture, though cultivation was one of their traditional functions in the varna system. On the other hand, the Non-Brahmin castes like Reddy, Kamma, Kapu, Balija, Telaga and others, had been mainly agricultural castes. Some sub-sects among the Balijas (Naidus) like Gazula Balijas, are following their trades. But of late, individuals among almost all castes have been taking to business. In fact it has been helping individuals to improve their status because it helps them to acquire wealth and property. So also the individual and administration. Occupation, thrown open by the increasing industrialisation, have been, aspired and held by members of all the castes.\(^{39}\)


\(^{38}\) *Ibid*.,

Some times, the process of emigration also helped some groups to improve upon their social status when it was accompanied by the renouncement of traditional occupation. Radha Kamal Mukherjee cites the instance of Teli-immigrants from Andhra acquiring higher status in Madhya Pradesh villages, while the local Telis continued to enjoy low position in the status ladder. The Teli-immigrants from Andhra were found to adopt more respectful occupations as a consequence of which they could elevate themselves to superior position. At other times immigration resulted in downward mobility. Thus while Kapus (Naidus) in East and West Godavari districts enjoy a very high status, where they are a land owning caste, the Turpu Kapus lost their status in Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam and the Vizianagaram districts because they had taken to manual labour on migrating to these districts While such instances bound to indicate certain amount of mobility and consequently social change in the past what is the position now? How further has this mobility extended?

Casteism, today is not the legacy of the caste system alone but also the product of the processes of fundamental democratization and democratic decentralisation. Acceptance of the representative type of government, the party system and majority rule have been largely responsible for the growth of casteism. In a democratic government “the so-called” peoples representatives depend upon the solid support rendered to them by their followers. The individual support to the leaders could only be through the collective action of groups. The groups have to be motivated to affirm their allegiance and loyalty to the leaders. This motivation either could stem from enlightened policy of the group or from their narrow vested interests. The leaders, to maintain their hold on the groups, are in constant look out for slogans which could appeal to their followers. In the Indian context, these leaders had the benefit of the well-knit groups like castes for whipping up allegiance. To achieve this, political parties and their leaders showed favours and opportunities in terms of categories.

In democracy, numerical strength undoubtedly has a political significance. The contestants for power, seek followers and allies from kins, relatives, caste and village so

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as to increase their tally. These units of ‘social organisation’ are one of the sources of power. Thus, the scholars consider land, number, social organisation, ritual status and self-image as rulers, as the requisites for caste dominance.

The domination of the Kapus in the power structure is generally ascribed to the larger number. Since enumeration by castes criterion was not continued by the census after 1931, we do not have currently reliable figure of the Kapu population. G. Ram Reddy estimated the population of Kapus to be 18.6%. K. Balagopal estimated at 15%. Recently, the Kapunadu leaders derived the present day population of the Kapus from the 1931 census reports of the Madras Presidency and the Hyderabad state to be more than 18%.

Caste being the fundamental institution of traditional India continues to influence the process of mobilisation and more so in the field of politics and power. When one community is dominant within a constituency in the traditional terms of landed wealth, ritual status and political power or increasingly, in terms of the modern calculations of numbers - each party is likely to draw its candidate from that community. It has been argued that this practice neutralises caste as a political factor, but the fact remains that all castes do not have equal access to power.

Caste Affiliation of Candidates:
Caste as a status group determining the hierarchical interactions and interrelationships in traditional India, has in the post-independence era, been transformed into a political group to articulate the social and economic interests. So increasingly the caste affiliation of the position seekers became important at the time of elections. The caste group numerically dominant in a particular constituency or a combination of caste groups have considerable influence on the election outcome. In Andhra Pradesh politics as caste always played a predominant role in regional politics, so it was not surprising that the leaders of Congress(I) tried to discredit the T.D.P. by branding it as the party of Kammas, one of the dominant groups in Andhra Pradesh.

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All castes do not have uniform numerical strength and concentration. Some are scattered throughout the state and some are heavily concentrated in some regions. Hence the role and the position of caste varies from area to area and from caste to caste.

The concept of dominant caste is quite significant in the understanding of the interaction of caste and politics in modern India. However, the concept of dominant caste must be clearly differentiated from the traditional concept of the high castes. One or more than one caste can be dominant in a particular situation at the same time. The dominant caste or castes can be, but is not necessarily, the high caste or higher castes. The concept of dominant caste or castes have relevance only at the level of state or in the nature of different regions within a single state. There is nothing like a dominant caste or castes at the National level.

Earlier many castes hesitated to be called backward despite poor economic conditions of its members. They feared that they would not be able to improve their social status by identifying themselves as 'backward'. But this is no longer true, now, as the state has provided certain privileges to backward castes. These castes have realised that they could improve their status by improving their economic condition rather than by observing rituals followed by the upper castes. Now there is competition among castes to be called 'backward'. Even Brahmins and Rajputs who traditionally enjoyed higher social status, have also approached the government in some regions to be classified as 'backward'.

There is also acute competition among castes to claim 'backward status', as that entitles them to the benefit of protective discrimination. Some time castes are 'accused' of being really 'forward', thus cutting into the benefits which only the really 'backward' are entitled to. Thus in Karnataka the two dominant castes of Lingayats and Okkaligas are now bringing acute pressure on the power that be to retain their claim to 'backwardness'.


Some of the backward castes which are included in the state lists are the socially dominant communities and which of late have emerged politically influential. For example, the Yadavas, Ahirs and Kurmis of U.P. and Bihar, Kolis in Gujarat, Nadars in Tamil Nadu, Izhavas in Kerala, Okkaligas and Lingayats in Karnataka and Kalingas, Gavaras and Kapus in Andhra Pradesh are land owning communities. There is not much social discrimination against them nor these castes consider themselves inferior in any way to any other castes. Informally, some people of these castes claim superior social status but use backward status to avail the reservation benefits. Now more and more groups are claiming and agitating for their inclusion in the list of backward castes. Using caste for political purpose is not something new to India. What is new is that it is blatantly used by every party as something perfectly normal, legitimate and even necessary. There is a pervasive feeling that the ruling parties are extending reservations to newer groups not with an intent to promote a just social order but to jack up their own electoral support. Apparently, there is conflict between the short term goals of political mobilisation and the implications of the current approaches to the health of the polity in the long run.

Some Sudra castes have a problem because they are neither equivalent to the higher castes in the same category nor so lower to be treated as Harijan castes. And yet this distance is not as wide as observed between the Sudra castes and Harijan castes. If this is agreed upon castes like Telaga, Chetty, Baliya, Muthras, artisan castes like Padmasali, Kamsali and service castes like Chakali, Mangali, etc., can be included in this category, which we could refer to as “middle castes”, while all the higher castes of ‘Sudra Category’ and the Brahmins and the Vysya can be treated as upper castes. Some of the higher Sudra castes like Reddis, Kammas and Kapus of certain areas have been placed equally with the Brahmin and Vysyas in the upper castes.

Apart from the economic considerations, caste plays a very dominant role in the Panchayat affairs, especially in the case of elections. Caste of the contestant determines the nature of the voting behaviour. As such even in the selection of the candidates for

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47Ibid., p.49.
different positions, caste weighs heavily with different political organisations. With hardly any exceptions, all the political parties evaluate the relative position of different caste groups before the final choice of their candidates at any level of election participation. Even though, the political parties have tacitly resolved to leave the elections at the village level free of political considerations, in practice it is observed that the same political parties take undue interest in the elections, and this interest generally centres around the decision of the candidates where in the castes of the candidate and the dominant caste groups in the locality play a significant part. It is also equally true that, to a large extent, the voters exercise their vote not on the basis of the policies to which the different candidates owe allegiance, but on the basis of caste to which they belong. Caste loyalty and caste consciousness contribute to this situation. According to C. Lakshamanna, out of 960 respondents, 646 ie., 67.3% were of the view that caste of the individual determined his acceptability or otherwise for standing in the election.\textsuperscript{49} This largely accounted for the anxiety on the part of Andhra Pradesh leaders to secure representation for their caste groups in the Panchayat and other local elections.

It could also be seen that people of all caste groups were of the view that caste considerations counted significantly in the choice of the candidates and in the voting behaviour of the individuals and groups. Analysing the reasons for the relative rise of communists in the popular vote, Harrison attributes this to the role of caste rivalry between peasant castes like kammas and Reddis, and the caste consciousness of the people in their voting behaviour.\textsuperscript{50} Further not only does caste play the important part in the choice of the candidates for different positions in the Panchayat elections. The voters also show preference to their own caste candidates. That is to say the individuals vote more as castemen than as voters. Rural people are convinced or appeared to be convinced, that if they vote their castemen into power, their interests are safe. This was obvious from the fact that 719, ie., 75.13% out of 957 respondents belonging to different caste groups thought that people voted more on caste basis than on the considerations of merit. This view was almost uniformly held by all the caste groups.\textsuperscript{51}


Thus an overwhelming percentage of the rural people realised the important influence of castes on the Panchayat affairs. The growing importance of the caste in democratic processes only demonstrates the strength of the caste sentiments which is cleverly utilised by interested parties and vested interests in the elections. Strangely enough in the rural areas of Andhra Pradesh the economic levels of the people, caste stratification and factional organisation represent the same groups. Together these three factors have laid the foundation for the perpetuation of caste loyalties. But this is not a permanent picture.

With the gradual ascendency of the economic supremacy, the economic factors have come to play an important part in determining the status of caste. Because of this, the middle order castes like the Reddis, Kammas, Velamas, Telagas and Balijas are now on the top in the villages in all vital matters. Its numerical strength some times also plays an important part in determining the status of a caste. The numerical strength has been of great significance in the development of dominant caste patterns in the rural areas. Asked to indicate their preferences among different factors which determining social status, the respondents emphasise the “social and political position”, birth and wealth and economic conditions in a descending order.52

Efforts for Reservation:

After the formation of T.D.P. Government in 1983 some Kapu leaders appealed for the consideration of the Kapu caste in OBC list. N.T. Rama Rao’s Govt. Paid deaf ears to this demand. After congress government came to power in 1989 elections, again the Kapus prayed Chenna Reddy also. In 1991, they submitted memorandum to the then Chief Minister N. Janardhan Reddy demanding inclusion in the OBC list. In the same year when Rajiv Gandhi visited Andhra Pradesh they submitted a memorandum to him and requested their inclusion in the OBC list. He, inturn, directed the then Chief Minister N. Janardhan Reddy to look into the matter.53

In the wake of V.P. Singh’s government passing orders reserving 27% of the Central services to the O.B.C. categories and the Supreme Court’s judgement upholding

52C. Lakshamanna, Ibid., p.129.
53Ch. Hari Rama Jogaiah, B.C. Jabitalo Kapulu (Telugu Article), p.4.
its validity in November 1992, the Kapus intensified their efforts to recognise them as OBC’s. The reason is that the Government of India took decision to include as O.B.C’s the castes whose names figures both in the lists maintained by State Governments and in the state wise lists of O.B.C’s appended to the Mandal Commission report. While the Kapu Community figures in the Mandal Commission report’s list, it does not find place in the list maintained by Andhra Pradesh government. In 1993 also they met the then Chief Minister Kotla Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy with the same demand. But none of the Chief Minister paid serious attention to their demand.

The Immediate Cause of the Movement:

On 26th February, 1994, the then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Mr. K. Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy was attending a public meeting at Ravulapalem in East Godavari district. From the public gathering some unemployed Kapu youth came out with a memorandum requesting the Chief Minister to include Kapu community in the list of Other Backward Classes. Without any provocation, the police started lathi-charging the Youth and dispersed them. The Chief Minister neither intervened in the incident nor asked the police to stop the lathi charge.

Leaders from all walks of Kapu Community demanded the Chief Minister to make a statement over the incident. When some ruling Congress Party Kapu leaders suggested the Chief Minister to condole the lathi-charge on the Kapu youth in Ravulapalem, he remained adamant and outrightly rejected the proposal.

Finding all the pleas ineffective, on 14th March 1994, Kapu leaders decided to convene a Kapu protest meet on March 20th at Ravulapalem, the same place where Kapu youth were lathi-charged. Kapus from all over the state were invited to participate in the meet and make it a grand success. An open invitation to all the Kapus of the state to this effect appeared prominently in all the major dailies of Andhra Pradesh on March 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20th March 1994.

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54 Ibid.,
56 All the News papers covered this news in their front pages.
Ravulapalem is a small town with a population of around 60,000 in the Alamuru assembly constituency of East Godavari district. Situated on the national highway number five, it is predominantly a business centre surrounded by villages. Though a multi-caste composite village, it is numerically a Kapu dominated one. It has a police station, a government hospital and 4 government high schools. It has typical agrarian structure with the upper castes holding most of the lands. Ravulapalem was a silent village till the eruption of the Kapu movement.

In the Ravulapalem scenario, the rival groups among the Kapus, there are many in number what with each claiming the backing of either the congress or dissident congress leaders, T.D.P. or the newly formed Bahujan Samaj Party (B.S.P.) are vying with each other to establish their supremacy. Ironically the high profiled Kapunadu and its self-proclaimed leaders are no where near the scene.57


The following were the demands of the Kapu Sadasu:
1. Kapus must be recognised as other backward classes
2. They should be provided with 17% reservation on the basis of the proportion of their population.
3. The State Government should apologise to the Kapus for the lathi charge on their youth at Ravulapalem on 26th Feb. 1994.

Addressing the meeting Mudragada Padmanabham demanded that the Government should include the Kapus in the list of backward classes by the end of June 1994 and announce its commitment by March 25, 1994. “I will wait till 12 noon that day and at 12.01 P.M. I will submit my resignation” he declared at the meeting. 58

Further, the Ravulapalem meeting of Kapus on 20th March 1994, also clearly brought to the fore the confrontational attitude of the organisers, especially the youth who are in the Vanguard of the current agitation which was triggered off in the wake of the lathicharge in this sleepy village during the Chief Minister’s visit on 26 February 1994. Though in the past it was the Kapunadu which was acting as the anchorsheet in fighting for the protection of Kapu interests, now it has slipped from its hands and the movement has been taken over by the newly formed ‘Kapu Reservation Porata Samithi’. 59 The senior and old leaders of Kapunadu have been pushed into the background and a band of new youthful militants of the Porata Samithi have emerged as the new torch bearer. 60 The Chief Minister Kotla Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy discussed the matter with the then Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, in the wake of Mudragada’s ultimatum to resign from the membership of the State Legislative Assembly. Further, the Chief Minister sent a Minister in his cabinet CH. Harirama Jogaiah, also a Kapu and some Congress Party legislators to meet Mudragada Padmanabham and tried to persuade him to consider his decision of resignation. However, Mudragada struck to his guns and resigned on 25th March 1994. It is relevant here to briefly review the political career of Mudragada Padmanabham.

Contribution of Mudragada Padmanabham

The aura of sacrifice and shunning power and position for a ‘principle’ that was usually attributed to his shifting affiliations every time. 61 As an individual he had a good

58 Almost all news papers carry the news item in their first pages on 21st March, 1994.

59 The ‘Kapu Reservation Porata Samiti’ was established at Ravulapalem on 20.3.1994. From this organisation Mudragada Padmanabham came out openly for the Kapu cause. Before that ie., 20.2.94 to 19.3.94 Jakkampudi Ram Mohan Rao led the movement. People like Saladi Swaminaidu, (Congress), East Godavari District T.D.P. leader N. Chinna Rajappa, Metla Satyanarayana Ex-MLA, TDP who are against the Jakkampudi leadership are also convinced the Mudragada to take the leadership. For details see Andhra Prabha, Hyderabad edition, 21.3.1994.


name for his non-corrupt, clean image, stick to his words, and straight forwardness. This he proves many a times during the T.D.P. (1983-1988) and Congress (1989-1994) regimes when he resigned from his ministership, again when the resigned from his M.L.A. seat to protect his caste fellows.

Mudragada Padmanabham popularly known as Mudragada was born in 1931 at Kirlampudi village in East Godavari district. Mudragada's father Sri M. Veera Raghava Rao was elected as M.L.A. in 1962, 1967 and 1972 elections, as an independent candidate from the Pathipadu constituency. Mudragada's political career which he inherited from his father took several turns and at every turn he managed to be in the news. Started his political career in 1978 when he was elected as an M.L.A. from Pathipadu (the same which his father represented) constituency under the Janata Party banner. Though majority of the Janata M.L.A.'s defected to the then ruling Congress (I) Party, Mudragada preferred to sit on the opposition for the next five years.

After the formation of T.D.P. in 1982, Padmanabham joined that party and got elected as MLA from the same constituency. Upto 1984 he worked as the Chairman of Drainage Board when he resigned. In 1984, though he voted for TDP candidate for Rajya Sabha elections, NTR called him and accused that he has gone against the party whip. Then Mudragada resigned for his Chairmanship of State Drainage Board. He did not change his mind even after NTR expressed sorry for his acts. After the Nadendla Bhaskara Rao turmoil in the TDP in 1985, again Mudragada got elected as MLA from the same constituency in the 1985 mid term polls. He worked as the Minister of Transport in N.T. Rama Rao Government. In the government's take over of the state bus routes issue, he developed differences with the Chief Minister in 1988 and resigned from his ministership and also the TDP membership. Immediately, he had formed a political party 'Telugu Nadu' along with K.E. Krishna Murthy, K. Jana Reddy and Vasantha Nageswara

Andhra Prabha, Hyderabad, 10 June 1994, p.3.
Ibid.
Andhra Jyothi, Hyderabad, 15 September, 1994, p.2.
Rao (all are T.D.P. MLA’s at that time) which never took off. Having failed in his
eperiment, within a short time he merged his party with the congress in the presence of
Rajiv Gandhi on the eve of the 1989 general elections. He then joined the Congress(I)
and got elected as MLA on Congress ticket, again from the same Pathipadu constituency
in the 1989 elections.

The victory over the N.T. Rama Rao government on Uttara Kanchi issue through
the weapon of ‘fast-untto-death’ 65 and his association with V. Mohan Ranga Rao, the
then Congress MLA from Vijayawada East, made Mudragada a charismatic leader of the
Kapu community, which rallied behind him. Further Mudragada’s popularity helped the
Congress in the 1989 Assembly Polls not only in the East Godavari district, but also in
other districts where Kapus were a decisive factor. 70

The Kapu Community organised a convention on July 10, 1988 at Vijayawada to
voice their protest against the treatment meted out to them under N.T. Rama Rao’s rule.
The resignation of Mudragada Padmanabham from the Cabinet was the immediate
reason for organising the convention. There were other reasons such as disparity between
Kammas and Kapus in Government appointments and harassment of Kapu officials on
one pretext or other. One major incident cited was the transfer of 152 police constables
(all of them Kapus, who were allegedly sympathetic to V. Mohan Ranga Rao, the slain
Congress M.L.A.) from Vijayawada. The arrest of Ranga Rao and ill-treatment of a
Kapu IPS officer P.V. Rangaiah Naidu, who was made Director General of Prisons were
other provocations. 71

After the imprisonment of V. Mohan Ranga Rao in 1988 the Kapu leader a known
roudy sheeter of Vijayawada East MLA, Padmanabham was asked to preside over the
first major Kapu conference in Vijayawada drawing the attention of his community to his
selfless, clean image.


69He achieved success in Uttara Kanchi issue to compensation to Dalits under Yeleru Reservior Project.


No.34, August 14-20, 1988.
After the 1989 Assembly Elections, Padmanabham was included in the Channa Reddy and N. Janardhan Reddy cabinets, but Kotla Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy kept him out. Piqued, he vowed to avenge the insult. But there was no political issue on which he could fight Kotla. The only issue that could confer Kapu leadership on him which indirectly helped him. In a calculated move he resigned from the assembly on March 25, 1994 returned to his village Kirlampudi and demanded the inclusion of Kapus in the B.C. category. Significantly this time too he staged a came back on the Kapu card. Mudragada could convince even N.T. Rama Rao in 1988 when he undertook fast over Uttara Kanchi incident. In 1994 he again fought with the then C.M. Kotla Regarding B.C. status to Kapus. In view of his victory over Uttara Kanchi issue, public started believing that their wishes will be fruitful. Though a late comer, because of his standing among the people of his caste and in the politics of East Godavari district Mudragada has emerged as the champion of the Kapu cause. The movement literally brought the entire community on to the streets and once again Mudragada’s ‘fast unto-death’ forced the government to announce some sops to Kapus.

Prominent Kapu leader Mudragada, who resigned from the State Assembly on 25th March, 1994 to focus on the community demand for B.C. status and went on a widely publicized fast, has re-emerged as the most powerful and charismatic leader of the community. As the community sees it, he has successfully extracted an assurance from the government for inclusion of Kapus in the B.C. list. Further, he had proved his organisational skills and hold over the community when the Kapus falciticated the then Chief Minister Kotla Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy at a massive public meeting at Kirlampudi attended by nearly 5 lakh people on Sept. 30, 1994.

Resignations were nothing new to him. To maintain his self-respect, he has resigned as chairman of the state Drainage Board. For the same reason, he had even quit Ministership and membership of the assembly on an earlier occasion. “This time my

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resignation is for the self-respect of my community. It does me proud," he declared.77 "Todays resignation has a special significance as it has been done to protect the self-respect of my community, which is very dear to me", he concluded 78

Mr. Padmanabham said the Kapus did not want reservation at the expense of BC’s. “We do not accept it even if they give”, he said. The demand was for additional reservation proportionate to their population, without prejudice to the existing B.C. groups. He said it was not a political movement, but a social movement, intended to secure justice for the poorer sections among the Kapus.79 Further Mudragada made it clear that they were demanding reservations for Kapus in educational institutions, Government jobs and for preference in bank loans but not in elections. They wanted reservations about 17% without affecting the existing reservations for the backward classes. The few rich among Kapus may be excluded by imposing income criteria for reservation, he added.80

While his supporters argue that he fought for the cause of Kapus everytime the need arose, his detractors alleged that he exploited the caste whenever his career was under a cloud.81

The Kapu supremo Mr. Mudragada’s influence stands undeterred. The victory he achieved in getting the Kapus included in the B.C. list after an uproarious ‘fast unto-death’ brought much closer to Kapus.82 However, the Kapu agitation for B.C. status proved a political blunder for Mudragada, who had to bite the dust in 1994 assembly elections in his home constituency Pathipadu where B.C. voters are predominant.

77 Indian Express, March, 26, 94, Deccan Chronicle, March, 26, 94, Udayam, March 26, 1994 and this was reported in all the leading Newspapers of that day.


80 The Hindu , Hyderabad Edition April 6, 94, Deccan Chronicle,Hyderabad Edition , April 7, 94.


Interestingly the same caste person was elected as M.L.A. in this election from this constituency against Mudragada on T.D.P. ticket.\textsuperscript{83}

The political career of Mudragada, the maverick leader from the coastal district of East Godavari has come full circle with his recent joining of the BJP. For one who started his public life with Janata Party in 1977, the BJP is not a natural choice but has become an inevitable step.\textsuperscript{84} He resigned from both the Janata Party and the State Legislative Assembly to join the TDP, purportedly in a move to strengthen the spirit of anti-congressism and again resigned from the TDP 'Sacrificing' the posts of Cabinet Minister and MLA.\textsuperscript{85}

On March 25, 1994, as stated above, Mudragada resigned from the State Legislative Assembly. Stating that renunciation of posts was not new to him, he remaineded that in the past he had resigned as chairman of Drainage Board to protect his self-respect. “Today’s resignation has special significance as it has been done to protect the self-respect of my community, which is very dear to me” he concluded.\textsuperscript{86} Thus the Kapu movement for reservations in the real sense started under the charismatic leadership of Mudragada. Soon Kapu movement for reservations gathered momentum and spread all over the state.

**ORGANISATION OF KAPU RESERVATION PORATA SAMITI:**

The Kapu Reservation Porata Samiti (Kapu Reservation Struggle Committee, K.R.P.S.) was formed in 20th March 1994. It consisted of members and its administration rested with a Board including the President, Vice-President, and General Secretary. It had loosely organised with no definite form and structure with the pattern of organisation varying from place to place depending on the particular local context and circumstances.


\textsuperscript{84}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{85}\textit{Ibid.}

In the case of Kapu movement, Mudragada padmanabham was able to generate voluntary and spontaneous response from among the Kapus. There was wide spread excitement in the coastal areas of Andhra pradesh and squads of influential persons working informally were able to mobilise the support of followers for various programmes. The process of recruitment was highly diversified depending on the talents of persons, while the traditional intellectual elite was drafted to spread the message of the movement, others who did not have specific talents were recruited as volunteers.

Since the youths were immediately affected by the existential realities, their active involvement for mobilising in this context appears to be a natural response. The business elite among the Kapus helped the movement by giving financial aid. Among the professional elite, the lawyers, more than the doctors and engineers have provided the movement with direction and leadership at various levels.

The administrative elite was less active because of restrictions on their involvement in the movement. They, however, showed sympathy to the demands and informally rendered guidance and assistance in various ways. Occasionally they presided over functions which were not expressly political. Further persons like judges of High Court, District Magistrates and Professors also actively participated.

Ethnic Background:

Basically people from Kapu community participated. Some close associates of Mudragada Padmanabham from backward classes of his constituency also took part. Kapus of all age groups participated in the movement, youth particularly in the age group between 15 and 30 years were more actively took part. Both the sexes took part in the movement. But the ratio of female participation is very less.

Leaders of all cadres including Congress, T.D.P., B.J.P. from the Kapu Community participated. However, Kapu Ministers in the Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy Government and Kapunadu leaders who believed that inclusion of Kapu caste in O.B.C.'s list was not possible through political movement, did not take much part in the movement. Kapus from all parts of Andhra Pradesh participated. For example the Kapus

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87Interview with Mr. Padmanabham, 21.7.1997 at Kirlampudi in East Godavari District.
from Cuddapah and Anantapur came in special buses for their participation. Like Kapus from Nalgonda, Khammam came. These people participated because of their faith in the Mudragada's leadership. But as the movement was intense in Coastal Andhra, people of these 9 districts took active part.

Methods of Struggle

The Kapu movement followed both quasi-violent methods and non-institutionalised collective political action. After the resignation of Mudragada Padmanabham on March 25th, the Kapu Reservation Porata Samithi was paralyzed up to 16 May, 1994, Vehicular traffic at different places of Andhra Pradesh. Conducted Rail Rokos, Jail Bharos and organised dharnas before all District Collectorate of the state. For instance when, Mudragada Padmanabham started his Rastha Roko and Rail Roko programmes, Kapu people belonging to T.D.P. namely P. Prasad and Pinisetty Narayana Rao participated directly. Not only this when Mudragada started his 'fast unto death' in Kirlampudi, West Godavari Kapu T.D.P. leaders maintained a number of sibhirams in West Godavari and supported the Kapus cause.88

From May 17 to June 30th 1994, Kapu Youth resorted to cycle rallies all over the state. Mudragada himself participated in these rallies. He started cycle rally from Kirlampudi to Tirupati89 with 5000 volunteers. When the movement became violent in West Godavari district he asked his followers to go back but he continued his rally only with 5 people unto Tirupati. They were: Nalla Suryachandra Rao, A. Ramakrishna, L.V. Subba Rao and B. Suryachandra Rao, besides himself.90 He made extensive tours propagating the cause, visiting all the places of Andhra Pradesh mobilising people and meeting eminent persons.

Thus Mudragada and his followers brought about a mass awakening all over Andhra Pradesh through informal and semi-formal associations. They transformed the general urge into specific programmes of action. News Papers played an important role in acting as channels of communication of ideas, events and activities of the leaders. Leaders also held public meetings. The movement acquired a general mass character.

89Ibid.
However, no where the movement took a violent turn. Though one former
naxalite leader S.V. Naidu from Ramachandra Puram of East Godavari District called for
violent movement using weapons, all the Kapu leaders including Mudragada opposed his
suggestion.

The Kapu Reservation Porata Samithi leaders appealed to the Kapu community
that though they had to undergo temporary sufferings, they should keep in mind that their
progeny would be permanently benefited by their sacrifices now.

Kapu Reservation Porata Samiti argued that their demand for providing separate
reservations on the basis of Kapu population without snatching away the benefits of the
existing backward classes was justifiable and genuine and questioned why the reservation
limit in Andhra Pradesh can not be increased beyond 50% where in Tamil Nadu it is 69%
and in Karnataka it is 62%.91

As the backward classes commission’s report was awaited, some Kapu leaders
like Tota Subba Rao, T.D.P. M.P. from Kakinada demanded the government to recognise
Kapus as economically backward classes facilitating them to get Economically Backward
Class (EBC) scholarships and loans.

Meanwhile West Bengal Government decided to add some more backward
classes to the list of 14 already existing castes in the state, on 24.5.94. Jyoti Basu
government passed a resolution in the state assembly to this effect. This gave further
impetus to the Kapu movement in Andhra Pradesh. They came out with the following
demands.
(A) State Government should take steps to enlist the Kapus as other backward class.
(B) The State Government should direct the Backward Classes Commission to expediate
its probe and press for an interim report.
(C) Immediately students of Kapu Community be entitled for all concessions and scholar-
ships given to the backward class students.
(D) Loans, subsidies and other economic benefits of the backward classes should be
extended to the Kapus with immediate effect.

Crucial Phase of the Movement

As the State Government was not yielding to any of the demands of the Kapus, Mudragada Padmanabham announced fast unto-death. He started this from 1st July 1994 at Kirlampudi in East Godavari along with his wife (Padmavati) and two teenaged children. Along with Mudragada, Kapu Reservation Porata Samithi leader Aakula Rama Krishna also was in the fast-unto-death. He belonged to T.D.P.92 For the first four days the State Government showed no signs of response to this fast. Kapus from all over the state rushed to Kirlampudi and thronged to see Mudragada. To support the Mudragada’s ‘fast unto-death’, people not only from Coastal Andhra districts, but also came from Rayalaseema and Telangana regions with tourist buses.93 During Mudragada’s fast people damaged 4 buses completely and one bus was partially damaged and in 113 centres relay hunger strikes were conducted.94 The Kapunadu did not support Mudragada when he resigned for the MLA post on March 25, 1994, but during the fast it had to support him as he gained popularity among rural Kapus.95 During his 4th day fast most of the T.D.P. leaders came to see him. Among them Mr. Umareddi Venkateswarlu, T.D.P. leader and ex-Union Minister, Ex-Minister was one C. Ramachandraiah came from Cuddapah to see Mudragada and ex-MLA Metla Satyanarayana also came.96 Further among the T.D.P. leaders who came were District Election Committee convener N. Chinna Rajappa, Ex-MLA, V. Nageswara Rao, Ex-Z.P. Chairman Boddu Bhaskara Rao, State Telugu Mahila Leader, Dr. Anisetti Padmavati, W.G. District Telugu Mahila Ex-President, Smt. Vanga Geeta, Smt. G. Sarojini, Bezawada Varalaxmi, Ex-MLA’s, M. Narayana Murty, P. Dorababu etc.97 Rajampet M.P. Saipratap, W.G. District, Central Cooperative Bank Chairman Pantham Mohan Gandhi and some other Congress leaders also came to see him.98

94Ibid.
95Ibid.
96Ibid., p.3.
97Ibid., p.3.
98Ibid., p.3.
Among the non-Kapus who came to see Mudragada were ex-Minister, Mummidevaram MLA, B. Subba Rao, Bhupati Raju Sudarshan Babu, Rama Chandrapuram M.L.A. Pilli Subhash Chandra Bose and also Garapati Sambasiva Rao from W.G. District. Particularly W.G. district Kapus of all parties supported the Mudragada’s movement for B.C. status to Kapus.

But when the agitation in the districts mostly covered by the Kapus grew wild, the government issued G.O. Ms. No. 18 dated 6.7.1994 providing certain non-statutory educational benefits and economic schemes to poor and also issued G.O. Ms. No. 19, providing non-statutory educational and economic support schemes to poor among Kapus whose annual income was less than Rs 12,000/- Mudragada ended his fast unto-death.

Here we have to remember that when Kapu leaders demanded for certain benefits to be announced the then Chief Minister Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy said that no state government had any right to include or exclude any caste from the list of backward classes on its own without a proper recommendation made in this regard by the State Backward Classes Commission following the Supreme Court’s judgement on the Mandal Commission report. West Bengal Government case is the best example. Further in response to Chief Minister’s statement Mudragada said: “There is nothing that the Government cannot do. It should only have the will and commitment”. He stressed that at least the Chief Minister should ask for an interim report from the State Backward Classes Commission or request the Commission to submit its report early, but the state Government consented for neither in the early phase. When the movement came to a peak stage with Mudragada’s fast unto-death, fearing for his hold on the Kapu community, the state government accepted the demands what previously they said it is not in their purview. This reflected the Vijayabhaskara Reddy government’s anti-sympathy about Kapu problems.

99Ibid.
101On 24.5.94 in West Bengal, the Jyoti Basu Government decided to add some more Backward Classes to the list of 14 already existing casest in the state. For that a resolution passed in the State Assembly to this effect.
Even then the Kapus were not satisfied and the agitation was not stopped. They were demanding the inclusion of their caste in the list of other backward classes. The government issued G.O. Ms. No. 30 dated 25.8.1994 declaring Kapus and 13 other communities are backward classes. The G.O. reads:

“Normally before any caste or community is included or excluded from the list of Backward Classes, the Government is expected to seek a report from the Commission and then take an appropriate action. It is not the policy of the Government under normal circumstances to deviate from this procedure. But so far as the demand of the castes and communities under reference is for inclusion in the list of Backward Classes is concerned it is a long pending demand with a mass support some times even causing unrest for the reason that certain communities which are more or less on par with them in the matters of social and educational backwardness have already been included in the list of Backward Classes. Thus a feeling of inequality has been generated in those communities giving rise to emotional upsurages for social justice”.

In the above backdrop of events and demands and pending receipt of the report of the Backward Classes Commission, the Government hereby order that 14 castes/communities namely Muslims, Kapus, Telagas, Balijas and Ontaris, Ayyakara, Kasi, kapidi, Patra, Gajulabalija, Nageralu, Pondara, Kurakala, Quresh, Palaekari shall be treated as socially and educationally backward for the purpose of reservation of seats in educational institutions and for recruitment to jobs in government local bodies etc.

Any reservation to the communities hereby ordered to be included in the list of Backward Classes will not cut into the quantum of reservation available to those who are already recognised as Backward Classes.

As the reservation contemplated to the castes included in the list by this order is in addition to the quantum of reservations available to castes already included in the list of Backward Classes, government will take suitable action in order to provide for reservations in excess of 50 per cent.

When the validity of the G.O. was challenged in the Andhra Pradesh High Court, a three member High Court Bench on 7.4.1995 in its majority judgement struck down the challenging writ petitions. While justice Y. Bhaskara Rao and justice Ramesh Madhav Bapat gave majority judgement, Justice B. Subhashan Reddy delivered the minority judgement.
Reaction of Various Sections:

The Kapu movement for reservation and the inclusion of the Kapus in the list of Backward Classes was reacted upon differently by different sections of Andhra Pradesh. Mudragada Padmanabham said that the Kapus did not want reservations at the expense of the Backward Classes. “We do not accept it even if they give”. The demand is for additional reservations proportionate to our population.

The fear of the upper caste opposition reference groups like Kammas and Reddis was that if the Kapus were to be included in the backward classes list, they would forge an alliance with all the existing backward castes who would constitute more than 60% of the State’s population and contend for power in the state politics. Thus they wanted to keep the Kapus and the backward classes isolated.

The attitude of the opposition reference groups intensified further the unity and political awareness among the Kapus belonging to diverse sub-castes. Their unity was derived from their ethnic identity. This ethnic identity and the ensuing unity enabled them to face the resistance from the opposition reference groups.

The promise of B.C. status for the Kapus had sounded the alarm bells for the traditional backward classes which not only feel threatened by the Kapu resurgence, but are also alarmed by the Kapu demand for more representation for the community. The backward class leaders apprehended that the change in the caste equations may turn out to be harmful to the overall interests of the traditional backward classes to the extent that they have to share the spoils of power or party tickets for assembly polls with the Kapus now.

While Kapus have made significant economic and educational progress in the Godavari districts, they lag behind in Krishna and Guntur districts. Their relationship with Kammas on the one hand and backward castes on the other is uneven and depends on the vagaries of politics. Hence the ire of backward classes is that they will ‘swallow’ all the reservation benefits. Since Kapus look ‘upwards’ rather than ‘downwards’ for political alliances, backwards have a deep suspicion of them.103 Among the neo-

backward classes only the Kapus are politically organised and have been enjoying all the benefits at the cost of the Balijas, Telagas and Ontaris. Balijas who are predominant in 6 districts including Nellore and Prakasham and four Rayalaseema districts have meagre representation in the assembly. Besides, Turpu Kapus in North Coastal Andhra and Munnuru Kapus in Telangana were already in the OBC list. Though some Kapus may be in good position, those depend on agriculture in the villages are educationally and socially backward and hence the inclusion of Kapus in the backward classes list is good. Unfortunately, the issue has acquired political overtones as those in the forefront of the Kapu agitation are known political leaders.

But Andhra Pradesh Backward Classes Sangham had threatened to agitate if the Kapus were recognised as Backward classes. Its president, P. Krishna Rao, T. Balagoud and Konda Laxman Bapuji had openly opposed any move by the State Government to include Kapus in the B.C. list.

According to R. Krishnaiah, President of Andhra Pradesh Backward Classes Welfare Sangham or Association “if Kapus included in the B.C. List, the B.C’s will certainly be affected because Kapus will dominate others and corner all the facilities for themselves” In other words, if reservations are extended to all Kapus they form a formidable 18.6% and tilt the electoral balance significantly. Politically they are a strong group!

Stand of Political Parties

As a ruling party at that time, the Congress (I) should not support the Kapus demand. But at the same time it should not antagonise the Kapus towards the Congress Party. So we can see the vacilating nature in the Congress party stand.

N. Chandrababu Naidu the then T.D.P. General Secretary went on record that it was a sensitive issue and he could not like to offer his party’s stand on it. Thus, T.D.P.

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like some sections in the Congress-I was cautious about its approach in this regard as many backward classes leaders were opposed to the inclusion of Kapus in the B.C. List.

The Bahujan Samaj Party took it as a golden opportunity to establish its hold in Andhra Pradesh politics using the Kapu movement. Its leader Kanshi Ram even met some Kapu leaders and offered his support to the movement. The Kapus accepted this cordiality but never tended towards the Bahujan Samaj Party as a group. But certain individuals joined the B.S.P.

Significantly, the state B.S.P. which is supposed to speak on behalf of the BC’s, SC’s, ST’s and Muslims and women has remained silent on the Kapu issue. According to a senior B.S.P. leader “Absorbing the Kapus in the B.C. category has meant that one section of the upper caste is disarmed”.

Stand of Muslims

With the recent emergence of Hindutva ideology in the wake of the Mandir-Masjid controversy, Muslims have become a self-centered group interested in protecting themselves from any possible Hindu onslaught. They submitted separate memorandum to the government of Andhra Pradesh and to the State Backward Classes Commission for their inclusion in the list of other backward classes. Though they are not supporting the Kapu demand, they did not oppose it.

Consequences of the Movement

There is the question of the nature of the social and cultural consequences of a social movement. The social changes that result from a movement may be seen first in terms of the changes in the positions of the concerned sections of the movement and secondly in terms of their impact on the wider society. The Kapu movement was highly significant among the Kapus in terms of ethnic identity, opportunity structure and politicisation.

Two important developments could be observed in the community. The growth of a differentiated elite with a shift in the traditional balance of power in the state of

Andhra Pradesh and the transformation of localised sub-castes into an ethnic bloc at the state level. While the movement had not changed the Kapu's everyday life in any drastic manner, it had in more subtle ways helped them to realise their collective strength and potential. Through the movement the Kapu community became a unified power which could turn the tables in the 1994 Assembly elections. Kapu ethnicity was double edged; on the one hand it promoted common identity and a sharing of common values and on the other it had a cognitive change which became manifest in situations of conflict against opposition reference groups. Kapu ethnicity was nourished and kept alive by the Kapu movement.

Further, the movement also facilitated politicisation of the Kapus. It generated increasing political awareness and encouraged some of them to assume leadership at various levels. The political elite consisting of professional politicians began to appear. They began to hold positions in the new structures of power at various levels, at the parliament, the state assembly, the municipality and the three tiers of the Panchayat Raj. They also became office bearers of different political parties and active workers. At the state level they emerged as a strong political force in Andhra politics which rests on a delicate balance maintained by the two groups, the Reddis and the Kammas. Thus a high degree of politicisation backed by the Kapu movement had enabled the Kapus to bring about a shift in the balance of power relations in Andhra Pradesh. Since 1983 the Kapus have made significant gains in improving their share of formal political power in accordance with their numerical strength.

Judging by the standards, the Kapu movement extended its influence beyond the group of Kapus. The Kapus were the first to organise themselves in a systematic way and led a movement for reservations after the Supreme Court judgement of 1992 upholding the validity of the Mandal Commission's recommendations. Other lower castes also started demanding for their inclusion in the list of other backward classes or the other backward classes are demanding for their inclusion in the Scheduled Caste Category. Thus the movement set a precedent in this respect.

Thus we may conclude by saying that ,the idea behind bringing these groups under one nomenclature was to make a difference in the political arena in terms of numbers, as well as to revive inter-marriages among the Jatis and thereby enlarge their geographical spread, since each of these groups were concentrated in a few districts in
different regions of the state. In terms of economic status, it was the only the Kapus in the Godavari delta who constituted prosperous peasant cultivators, the rest constituting a substantial proportion of the small and marginal and urban lower middle classes with a dominant presence especially in the tertiary sector.

The Kapunadu movement was highly significant among the Kapus in terms of ethnic identity, opportunity, structure and politicisation. While the movement had not changed the Kapu's everyday life in any drastic manner, it had in more subtle ways helped them to realise their collective strength and potential. Kapu ethnicity was double edged, on the one hand it promoted common identity and a sharing of common values and on the other it had a cognitive change which manifest in situations of conflict against opposition reference groups. Kapu ethnicity was nourished and kept alive by the Kapu movement. Further a high degree of politicisation backed by the Kapu movement had enabled the Kapus to bring about a shift in the balance of power relations in Andhra Pradesh.

For the first time the Kapunadu united all the sub-castes of Kapus on common platform. The movement literally brought the entire Kapu community on to the streets. This was due to Mudragada's personal image. Mudragada as an individual had a good name for his non-corrupt, clean image. Though a late comer, because of his standing among the people of his caste and in the politics of East Godavari district, Mudragada has emerged as the Champion of the Kapu cause. According to Mudragada it was not a political movement but a social movement, intended to secure justice for the poorer sections among the Kapus.

The Kapu movement for reservations gathered momentum and spread all over the state. In the case of Kapu movement, Mudragada was able to generate voluntary and spontaneous response from among the Kapus. Further, Mudragada and his followers brought a mass awakening all over Andhra Pradesh through formal and semi-formal associations. They transformed the general urge into specific programme of action. However, no where the movement took a violent turn.