

CHAPTER-V

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

As in economy, there was no stagnation in the society of Āndhra. As a result of the impact of the economic developments outlined in earlier chapters there were several social changes and the society of the medieval age in Telangāna presents a complex picture. Generally, historians of India attempt to explain the society of a period against the background of the Ātūrvāṇa order i.e. division of the "Hindu" society into four vāṇas, brāhṇāṇa, ksatriya, vaiśya and sūdra.¹ But it must be said that the Ātūrvāṇa system was only a traditional and theoretical concept, derived from the condition of the Vedic Āryans. In course of time, the Indian society has undergone several changes and departed from the Ātūrvāṇadharmā. There occurred a process of acculturation as Āryans expanded eastwards and southwards in the sub-continent.² They came into contact with various non-Āryan races and attempted to āryanise them and integrate them into their own social order. Besides, the anuloma and pratiloma marriages between Āryan and non-Āryan groups resulted in the rise of mixed castes. The Dharmaśāstras of Vaśiṣṭha and Baudhayana tried to fix the position of these mixed castes and tribes in the Āryan social order.³ vāṇasankara⁴ became a common feature in the society from very early times. Buddhism and Jainism, the two non-Vedic religions also contributed to the process of acculturation.

By the 11th and 12th centuries, Buddhism and Jainism declined and there was a resurgence of "Hinduism" in the form of Purāṇic theism which supported the caste system.⁵ The kings and the brāhmaṇa priests began to uphold the Cāturvarṇa dharma. In the Āndhra country the brāhmānical revival began in the Veṅgī kingdom during the reign of Rājarājanarendra (A.D. 1022-1063). Nannaya, the first great Telugu poet translated Mahābhārata with a view to uphold the Varnāśramadharmā. Nannaya states that Rājarājanarendra upheld the Varnāśramadharmā.⁶ Many literary works came in the wake of Mahābhārata and most of them, except those by the Śaiva poets like Pāṅkuriki Somanātha, propagated the Cāturvarṇadharmā. Even among and the Śaivites the followers of Mallikārjuna, known as the Ārādhyas reconciled with the brāhmānical social order.

Several inscriptions of Telangāṇa during the Cālukya and Kākatīya periods refer to the theoretical concept of the order of four varṇas. The Māṭeḍu inscription (A.D. 1120)⁷ of mahāsāmanta Vemabola Bodḍama Mallenāyaka, a general and feudal chief under Kākatī Prola II refers to the creation of the four orders by Brahmā. The Kundavaram inscription of Kundamāmbika⁸ refers to the emergence of Brahmā from the navel of Viṣṇu and the four orders from Brahmā. The kings of the period took titles like Cāturvarṇadharmā pratipāṭhārya and "Cāturvarṇadharmā pratipālītulu".⁹ However the Varnāśramadharmā was upheld only in principle by the rulers of the

period. The praśasti titles noted above are merely traditional and they should not be taken seriously.

Although the above titles were taken by the kings, the Cāturvarṇadharmā could not be maintained. Though the concept of four varṇas remained, the castes based upon occupations increased in number since very early times. We find from the medieval inscriptions that the contemporary society was characterised by the astādaśa mahāpraja.¹⁰ As its name indicates, the astādaśa mahāpraja was a general assembly of 18 major communities. The basis of the classification of the society into 18 communities appears to have been occupational. Actually, the medieval records mention more than 18 castes. Like the cāturvarṇa system, the concept of astādaśa mahāpraja also became purely traditional. It may be said that even in the time of the Śātavāhanas, eighteen śrenis, each being an occupational group, were mentioned in contemporary inscriptions.

An occupational group may be called a jāti. The Dharmaśāstras have defined jāti as a group into which a person is born and as occupations were mostly hereditary, each occupational group came to be called a jāti.¹¹ These occupational groups had their own codes of conduct known as Samaya and samaya daṇḍana.¹² meaning the punishment for violating the code of the community. Each jāti or kula had its own rules and regulations. If any member violated the jāti regulations (kuladharmā or jātidharmā or samāya) he

was liable for punishment. Some inscriptions refer to "astādaśa samayāla samastapraja"¹³ meaning all the people belonging to 18 self-regulating communities. It is therefore, more realistic to keep in mind the concept of astādaśa-praja rather than cāturvarṇadharmā while attempting an analysis of the social conditions of the period under study.

The Astādaśamahāpraja

The astādaśa mahāpraja which is mentioned in several records was a representative assembly of the major communities of a village or town or a sthala. It discharged several administrative functions and played an important role in the economic and social life of the people. The astādaśa mahāpraja generally consisted of:¹⁴

1. Mahājanulu, (2) Nakaramu (3) Kāmpulu (4) Balañja settigāndru (5) Komatīś (6) Īdaravāru (7) Gollavāru (8) Akkasālijanulu (9) Sālevāru (10) Śrīvaiśṇavulu, (11) Velamaveguru (12) Illarīś (13) Gaundlavāru (14) Nāyakulu (15) Redlu (16) Karnālu (17) Telikivevuru and (18) Nāyilu.

Some other records mention them as

- (1) Brāhmaṇa (2) Kṣatriya (3) Vaiśya (4) Śūdra (5) Vyavahārika (6) Pāñcāla (7) Kumbhakāra (8) Tantuvāya (9) Vastrabhedaka (10) Tilaghātika (11) Kurantaka (12) Vastrarakṣaka (13) Devāṅga (14) Peraka (15) Gorakṣaka (16) Kirātaka (17) Rajaka (18) Ksuraka.

Actually we find many more communities mentioned in the inscriptions and literary works of the period. The Table Xv] represents the communities, their profession and the guild they formed. Those professionals who have not organised into a guild are also mentioned.

The causes for the emergence of a large number of communities by the early medieval period are discussed by several authors. The major causes are discussed below:

Ethnic factor

Long before the medieval age, the process of drawing the hill and forest tribes like the śabaras, boyas, pulindas, and others into the mainstream of society began. These tribes were warlike in nature and did heavy physical work. These features helped them to a large extent. As the constant warfare increased the military requirements of the rulers of the age, the more hardy of the tribes were recruited into military services, and others took to the cultivation of land. In the Māṭeḍu inscription (A.D. 1120)¹⁵ of Mahāsāmanta Vemabola Boḍḍama Malleṅyaka, a vassal under Prola II, mentions that he belonged to Pulinda vamśa which was created by Brahmā for the protection of brāhmaṇa, ksatria, vaiśya and śūdra order. The originator of his family, Būchena of Vemabolakula had the title kotamalla which means 'destroyer of forts'. Būchena should have

distunguished himself in wars and thus elevated his family's position at the Kākatīya court.

Another important tribe that became slowly integrated into the society was the boyas.¹⁶ The boyas were engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry. As they were war-like and known for their marksmanship, they were recruited into military service.¹⁷ Moreover, most of the cattle grants to temples were entrusted to the members of the boya community with an obligation to supply ghee for the temple lamp.¹⁸ They operated hydraulic machines like the rātṇam.¹⁹ Gradually, the boyas were integrated into the social mainstream and rose to high positions at the court and in the camp. On the basis of the Gaṇapeśwaram record, it seems that Jāyapa the Gajasāhīni of Gaṇapati descended from Nāraboya, the ruler of Divi.²⁰

The process of assimilation of various ethnic groups into the society multiplied the number of castes. As noted above the Dharmasāstras facilitated the absorption of the aboriginals into Āturvarṇa order through the concept of Varnasankara. An inscription at Mēllaceruvu mentions betṭevāru in samastapraja.²¹ The word betṭe or betṭu means fighting temperament, adventurism and cruelty²² and as such it signifies aboriginals and hunters. The above noted record makes it clear that aboriginals and hunters were absorbed into the society as betṭe caste (jāti).

While enumerating the castes in the city of Warangal it is interesting that Vallabhāmātya mentions turakas (Turks = muslims) and their Masjid.²³ There is reason to believe that at the turn of fourteenth century Muslim population in Telangāna was sizable and its presence significant. It is learnt that from about the last quarter of the 13th century, muslims, especially Sūfi saints and their disciples, made their way into the south. A certain muslim saint by name Baba Fakr-ud-din established his Kankah at Perugonda²⁴ where he died in A.D. 1294. The Sufi brothers Shaik Baba Sharaf-ud-din and Shaik Baba Shiab-ud-din are said to have settled at a place near the present city of Hyderabad.²⁵ Later, at the instance of the famous saint Khwāra Nizam-ud-din Auliya of Ghasipur, a band of sufis left for the south. Again in A.D. 1309 another band of sufis led by Burhan-ud-din Gharib Shah came to the south. Many of these sufis settled down in Telangāna, built Masjids and by their pious life attracted both Islamic and Hindu devotees.²⁶ The muslims known to the Hindus as Turks gradually became a part of the local social order, being looked upon almost as one of the sūdra subcastes.

Economic Factors

From early times, occupational groups gradually settled down in the "Hindu" society as castes or subcastes. Agriculture, being the mainstay of the economy during medieval

Āndhra, led to the growth of a number of subsidiary supporting industries each of which gave rise to a subcaste. Even among the agriculturists, there were several subcastes such as the redlu, tammadlu, gollas, boyas, īdara and others.

The textile industry which is next in importance to agriculture also led to the rise of subcastes based upon the specialised skills. Vastrabhedaka (dyer), devāṅga (spinner), tantuvāya (weaver), and vastrarakshka (sewer) are mentioned in the records of the period.²⁷ These four groups, evidently, were involved in the cloth making and cloth manufacturing.

Religious movements

The new religious movements of the 11th and 12th centuries within the fold of 'Hinduism' also led to the rise of new castes. The vīraśaiva movement led by Basava in Karnāṭaka²⁸ had its echoes in Telangāna where the Kālāmukha²⁹ system of śaivism was popular. In Āndhradeśa, Śrīpati Paṇḍita and Mallikārjuna Paṇḍita also preached a militant form of śaivism which has developed into the Ārādhyā system.³⁰ All these śaivite systems were opposed to caste or anti-caste in general. The Vīraśaiva movement had opposed the traditional brāhmanical order and Basava is described as an axe to the root of the tree of caste. The followers of Basava did not follow any rules regarding ceremonial pollution, though at a later date, the sect began to develop social

exclusiveness based on privilege of birth and cleanliness of profession. The followers of Basava were mainly the trading communities, potters, shoe makers, tanners, weavers and untouchables. On the other side, during the 11th and 12th centuries, Rāmānuja led the Śrīvaiṣṇava movement in Tamilnāḍu. Rāmānuja observed, "If we descend below the four castes and come to the Caṇḍālas who, however lacking in virtue, are true worshippers of ... Viṣṇu, their servants are my masters and their feet are mine to worship".³¹ The idea of caste negation, in the early phase of the movement, was entertained by the ācāryas and the Tengalai or Prabandhic school was dominated by mostly śūdras who enhanced their status and tried to establish their superiority over the orthodox vaiṣṇavites who gave preference to the Sanskrit texts among other things. Śrīvaiṣṇava movement had made deep impact on Āndhra and Telangāṇa regions which brought into its fold, the śūdras enhancing their status regardless of pollution and caste privileges. These movements led to the rise of new sects among brāhmaṇas and castes among the śūdras. The brāhmaṇa followers of Mallikārjuna and Rāmānuja formed into the subsects of ārādhyas and śrīvaiṣṇavas respectively. Among the śūdras the janamas and balijas were śaivite sects³² where as dāsarlu and sātānis³³ were vaiṣṇavites.

Political factors

The period under study witnessed the decline of the tradi-

tional ruling caste, generally claiming to belong to the kṣatriya vārṇa. The Kṣatriyas were slowly replaced by tribal chiefs and peasant warriors. In the Rāṣṭrakūṭa army, which invaded Veṅgī, there were several śabara chiefs³⁴ whereas in the court of Velanādu many boya chiefs held very high positions including those of maṇḍaleśvara.³⁵ The names of the early Kākatīyas such as Erra, Guṇḍa and Prola are very common among tribals. These names suggest that they too were tribals who were recruited into the army of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas. The early Kākatīyas called themselves as belonging to sāmanta viṣṭi vamsa,³⁶ and viṣṭi is the sanskrit form of vetṭi which means a slave or servant. In later inscriptions they claimed to have belonged to the fourth caste.³⁷ But in some instances, they are described as kṣatriyas.³⁸ But Vidyānātha describes that their fame excelled the fame of the solar and lunar families.³⁹ It may be taken to imply that they did not belong to either. We have already noted the case of the pulindas.

Another important development during this period is the rise of peasant warrior groups. The reḍḍis, velamas and other kāpus who were mainly agriculturists entered the military services under various ruling families. This was necessitated by frequent wars of the age. Moreover, war gave an opportunity to plunder and become rich and powerful quickly, though at the risk of life. These factors helped the recruitment of young peasants into armies. The nāyakulu⁴⁰

and ekkatlu⁴¹ are two such groups mentioned in several inscriptions. Gradually, they rose to the position of military chiefs (dandanāyaka and senāpati) and that of governors (māṇḍalīkas) and sāmantas. The nāyankara system under Pratāpa Rudra helped further development and increase in number of these military chieftains. Immediately after the fall of the Kākatīyas, the Āndhra country witnessed, the establishment of several independent kingdoms. Prolaya nāyaka of the Musunūri family who is considered to belong to the kamma caste established an independent kingdom at Rekapalli.⁴² The reḍḍi chief, Prolaya Vemāreḍḍi became independent at Addanki⁴³ and the velama chief Singamanīḍu became independent at Rājukoṇḍa.⁴⁴ These peasant-warrior nāyakas liberated the Telugu country from the muslim rule and resisted the Bahamani incursions.⁴⁵ This period is generally known as the Reddi-Nāyaka age in the history of the Āndhras.⁴⁶

A large number of government officials began to be appointed to discharge administrative functions in the Kākatīya period. Thus, a bureaucracy, loyal to the government developed both in towns and villages. These government officials at different levels (grāma and sthala) were referred to in inscriptions as karanālu.⁴⁷ These were mainly drawn from the brāhmaṇa caste who gradually developed into the separate sect of niyogis.

Table X VI Social Groups

Sl. No.	Community/sub group	Guild	Occupation	Reference
1.	Brāhmalu	Mahājanulu	Priesthood	I.A.P. Wl.89, T.I., II, 161-162.
2.	Kṣatriyulu	--	Warrior Class	I.A.P. Wl. 42.
3.	Komaṭlu	Nakaram	Trade (mainly local)	K.C.S.H.C. pp.199, T.I., I 89,90, T.I.,I 92, P.I.No.6, I.A.P. Wl. No.87.
4.	Sālevāru	Dharmasāli-yajanulu	Cloth manuf-acture	I.A.P. Wl. No.61, T.I., II, 57-59, 60-62, etc.,
5.	Telikki or Tallikulu	Telikivevuru	Oil pressing and Oil trade	T.I., II, 161-162, P.I. No.6, I.A.P. Wl. No.87.
6.	Vīrabalanānjulu	Balanāja seṭṭi-gāndru, Ayyāvai 500	Itinerent and local trade	C.I.T.D. - III, pp. 19-21.
7.	Tammaḍlu	Kāmpulu	Agriculture	I.A.P. Wl. Nos.57, 85, 89 C.I.T.D., II pp. 68-69.
8.	Gollavāru	Kāmpulu	Animal husban-dry, agricul-ture	I.A.P. Wl. Nos. 37, 87, T.I. No.92

Sl. No.	Community/sub group	Guild	Occupation	Reference
9.	Īdaravāru	Kāmpulu	Horticulture, toddy trade	T.I. I pp. 89-90
10.	Mangalulu	,,	Temple service barber	I.A.P. Wl. No.37, T.I.I., 89-90.
11.	Kumarulu	,,	Potters	T.I.I., 89-90.
12.	Akasālivāru	Pañchānamuvāru	Metal work	Ibid.
13.	Reddulu	Kāmpulu	Agriculture and administration	I.A.P. Wl. No.89 and 53.
14.	Nāyakulu	Solidiers (Ekkaṭi vīra-parivāramu)	Peasant warriors	T.I.II, pp.73-74.
15.	Vasadivāru	Jains	Priesthood and teaching	I.A.P. Wl. Nos. 37, 87.
16.	Damarivāru or Medara	--	Bamboowork	I.A.P. Wl. No.87, <u>Krīdābhīrām v.</u>
17.	Velamalu	Kāmpulu (Velamaleguru)	Agriculture	T.I. p. 92.
18.	Sankaṭēlu	--	--	I.A.P. Wl. No.37.
19.	Garagalu	--	--	T.I., I, pp.40, <u>Krīdābhīrām v.</u> 43.

Sl. No.	Community/sub group	Guild	Occupation	Reference
20.	Karaṇālu	Karaṇālu	Small govt. officials, clerks, accountants.	T.I., II 60, 62.
21.	Boyalu	Kāmpulu	Agriculture and Animal Husbandry	K.C.S.C.S. p.223.
22.	Puḷindas	--	Warfare	I.A.P. Wl. No.24
23.	Sidivāru	--	Trade in castor oil (mainly local trade)	I.A.P. Wl. 87
24.	Mālakarulu	--	Gardeners	I.A.P. Wl.37
25.	Mācharāsi	--	Fishermen	Ibid.
26.	Beṭṭevāru	--	Hunter	T.I.I. pp.89-90
27.	Mere (kuṭrapuvāru)	--	Tailor	<u>Krīdābhirāma</u> , v. 106
28.	Perikevāru	--	Basket making and Transporting	<u>Pratāpa Carita</u> , p.151.
29.	Kāsevaru	Pañcānamvāru	Stone work	Ibid.
30.	Turakalu	--		<u>Krīdābhirāma</u> . v. 149

T.I. = Telangana Inscriptions.

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