CHAPTER 3
EVOLUTION AND STATUS OF CASTE GROUPS IN VJAYAWADA

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CHAPTER III
EVOLUTION AND STATUS OF CASTE GROUPS IN VIJAYAWADA

Caste as an aspect of social structure is much more salient in a provincial city, as compared to larger cities in India. This is one major reason for the lower incidence of communal violence in Vijayawada and the occurrence of caste based conflicts as well as the role of caste in other conflicts between various groups.

This chapter traces the migration of different caste groups to the city and discusses the changes in their respective status over a long period. In doing so, the chapter lays a basis for explaining the way in which different groups either achieved social mobility in Vijayawada or declined or remained in the same position as before. The consequences of these factors and the means available and used for mobility had an impact on collective violence. This chapter also discusses the role of each caste group in politics and social movements.

Some of the prominent families in each caste are described in this chapter. These prominent families in Vijayawada occupy significant positions in the economic structure of the city, and who directly or indirectly influence political events in the city. These families are mainly migrants to the city. While many of them have agricultural backgrounds, a few still retain links with rural areas. In this sections, it is proposed to briefly describe a few of these families. The names of these
families kept cropping up during field work, in a wide variety of contexts - economic, political and social. It was also observed that the same families continued to have dominant a presence across two or three generations. Many trends emerged while tracing the active history of these families in the city. The Kammans are one of the few communities to continue their dominant presence in various sectors for more than five decades. The Brahmins and Komatis are not significant actors any more and are being sidelined. Those individuals with record of violence, with rare exceptions, have not been able perpetuate their or their family dominance across different sectors and generations. The few families who continue to be active are confined to political and criminal activities at the local level. They do not enjoy the kind of power, status and position, achieved by Kamma families, some of whom supported the 'gangster' families.

It may be mentioned here that population figures for each of these caste groups are estimates derived from a sample study in 1971. Caste wise data was last collected in the 1931 census. There are several problems inherent in deriving current estimates of various caste groups in the city from the census data collected between 1871-1931. These problems pertain to changes in the geographical unit for which data was collected; changes in the inclusion/exclusion criteria for defining membership in caste groups; and problems arising out of migration of these groups after 1931.
However, census figures for 1921 and 1931 pertaining to Krishna district are also presented (Table 3.1) in order to provide a basic idea regarding the caste composition of the district.

Table 3.1
PROPORTION OF DIFFERENT CASTE GROUPS TO THE TOTAL POPULATION
KRISHNA DISTRICT AND VIJAYAWADA CITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASTE</th>
<th>PROPORTION OF THE CASTE TO TOTAL POPULATION</th>
<th>KRISHNA DISTRICT</th>
<th>VIJAYAWADA CITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPPER CASTE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRAHMIN</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.02</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOMATI</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.19</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAJU</td>
<td></td>
<td>____</td>
<td>4.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERMEDIATE CASTE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAMMA</td>
<td></td>
<td>21.39</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAPU</td>
<td></td>
<td>27.01</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TELAGA</td>
<td></td>
<td>____</td>
<td>11.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BALIJA</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOWER CASTE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODEDE</td>
<td></td>
<td>____</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAGARA</td>
<td></td>
<td>____</td>
<td>____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHEDULED CASTE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALA</td>
<td></td>
<td>____</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MADIGA</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


All figures are in percentages.

 indicates non availability of data.
Brahmins are at the apex of the Varna System. The Brahmins' monopoly over learning over a long period helped them to acquire western education and adapt to changes resulting from colonialism. In Andhra, as in other parts of India, not only were the Brahmins heavily represented in the civil services and in professions, but they were also in the forefront in political movements. They led the social reform movement, the struggle for independence and numerous other social and political movements. As per the 1921 census, Brahmins constituted 10.02% of the population in Krishna district. In Vijayawada, their strength was estimated at around 13% in 1971. It is generally held that Brahmins today constitute 4 to 5; per cent of the population. However their strength is usually above 10% in urban areas and negligible in rural areas.

As a famous pilgrimage centre, Brahmins have always had a sizable population in Vijayawada, till the 1940s, when peasant castes began to migrate to the city in large numbers. A gazetteer in 1828 referred to Vijayawada as being peopled with Brahmins and beggars. The Durga Malleswari temple in the city is a major pilgrim attraction from all over India. The city is the main centre for the Krishna Pushkaram celebrated once in twelve years. The pilgrim function of the city thus ensured a large Brahman population.
In the later decades of the nineteenth century, Brahmins began migrating to the city to work in white collar jobs in trading, in the civil service, and in the professions—chiefly legal and medical professions. 

From the early decades of the twentieth century, Brahmins involved in political activity began migrating to Vijayawada as the city became an important political centre, especially during the nationalist movement. This is the case for instance of Kaleswara Rao, the lawyer turned politician, Gora teacher, social reformer and atheist; Nageswara rao, businessman, publisher and nationalist—all Brahmins who came to the city from the rural hinterland.

Starting from around 1930 Kamma peasants from the hinterland had started migrating to the city. Brahmins however continued to be dominant politically in the city. Apart from a near monopoly over the professions, they had also entered trading in consumer items, both in the old town and the emerging new areas of Vijayawada.

Brahmins, for a long time held the premier political positions in the city. Till 1962, at least one Brahman was elected as an M.L.A. from Vijayawada. With exceptions in 1943, 1953 and 1981, Brahmans have always been elected the Chairman of the municipal council of Mayor of the corporation. The advent of the Communist party since the early 1930s reduced the power of
Brahman politicians to an extent. Several Brahman leaders were among the initial founders of the communist party in Andhra, who made Vijayawada the headquarters for the party. But Brahmans were later sidelined by leaders from peasant castes—chiefly Kamma. In any case Brahmans in the CPI were not interested in preserving their communal strength in society.

From around 1960, as leading Brahman politicians like Kaleswara Rao, either were no more, or retired from politics, the position of Brahmans began to decline. From 1967 onwards, not a single Brahman has been elected an M.L.A. None of the descendants of former leaders are active in politics. Some have left the city to pursue their economic interests elsewhere. Others are active in their professions and business enterprises. A few who attempted to survive in politics found themselves unable to compete with new generation of leaders. Only one family the Jandhyala family has been able to be active, owing to their links with state and national level leaders.

In Vijayawada, traditionally Brahmans have always supported the Congress party. While a few Brahmans were active in the CPI, the Communists were always opposed by local Brahmin leaders. Brahman leaders first supported and sought the help of lumpen elements (initially Nagra individuals) to put down the Communist party. These Nagra leaders such as 'Chitti' and 'Appalaswamy' in the 1920s and 1930s ran the Justice party political machine. The Congress being perceived as a Brahmin
party, the Justice party was mainly opposed to the Congress. In municipal and provincial elections between 1920 and 1937, the city witnessed violent incidents as the Justice party used every means available for winning the elections.  

Towns like Vijayawada are a middle ground for educated individuals from rural areas to migrate to larger cities. Vijayawada performs the same function for Brahmins as well as other upper castes including Kammas. Many Brahmins from Vijayawada migrated to Hyderabad, Madras and Visakhapatnam over a period of time, in search of better jobs in the bureaucracy, public sector and private firms. The settlement pattern of Brahmins in Vijayawada also reveals the effect of this phenomenon. Prior to 1920, the city was confined to the west of the railway line. After the 1921 All India Congress Session in Vijayawada, the Brahmins settled in Gandhi Nagar, on the eastern side, adjacent to the railway station. Gandhi Nagar was an open ground where the session was held. Adjacent areas such as Satya Narayana Puram also became Brahman residential areas. Several areas in these two localities are locally called ‘agraharams’ due to Brahmins being in a majority. Suryaraopet in the Governorpet area was also a Brahmin dominated locality.

During field work, it was observed that in the old town Brahmins presently are in a very small number. Mainly lower middle class families among the community live there. Gandhinagar has become a commercial area, dominated by the firm
distribution trade located here. The Durga agraharam in Gandhinagar is controlled by a Kamma Congress leader. Many other localities in Gandhinagar are under the control of local gang leaders who are affiliated to different political parties. A number of slums have come up on the banks of Eluru canal adjourning Gandhinagar. Most gang leaders draw sustenance from these slums. Even in Suryaraopet, Kammans are buying property from many Brahmans moving out of the city.

It is observed that many Brahmans, working in banks, government and other public sector organizations are moving into predominantly Kamma residential areas such as Patamata, Gunadala and Mogularajapuram. Most government offices are located along Bonder road or in Governorpet to which there is easier access from the above mentioned areas.

Brahmins are no longer dominant in the city either in politics or in the economy. A few retail business both in the old town and in Gandhinagar and Besant road in the new town are run by Brahmans. The majority however are Kamma or Komati owned. The patronage of social activities is now by Kammans. Most temples are run by Kamma dominated trusts. Few educational institutions are controlled by Brahmans. Even among professionals Brahmans are few in number. Brahmans have little or no influence over local political events.
JANDHAYALA (BRAHMIN)\textsuperscript{25}

The Jandhaya family is a famous name in Krishna district. Several of its members are in positions in the bureaucracy. Many are professional and some live abroad in the U.S.A. and U.K. A Jandhaya was a corporator in the municipality several times starting from 1930 and was a chairman of the council in 1958-59. He was a medical practitioner, as was his son who was mayor of Vijayawada between 1987-92. The family supports the Congress party.

The family runs a hospital and possess agricultural land in the district. Though no longer having a popular support base in Vijayawada, the family enjoys close relations with state and national political leaders and bureaucrats and thus survives in politics. Kamma Congressman supported him against Ranga Rao who was threatening to become powerful and independent.

GORĀ

Gora was the founder of the atheist movement in Vijayawada. He was also a Gandhian a social reformer and a nationalist. A Brahminical image has stuck to the family even though Gora rejected his Brahmin past, broke brahmin traditions fought against the caste system and many of his sons and daughters had inter-caste marriages.

The present atheist centre is managed by his son. While still propagating atheism, the movement has become weakened and
now focuses mainly on social reform, rural development etc. Several splits occurred in the movement during the 1970s. More radical atheist were dissatisfied with Gora's moderation in politics and started the Rationalist Associations. Kammas of the city who materially supported the movement are sore about the fact that a Brahmin (Gora's son) should still the head of the centre, when Kammas have done so much or the movement. One of Gora's daughter is married to a member of the Chennupati (Kamma) family. (See description of Chennupati family on p.). She is a supporter of the atheist movement and was twice Congress MP from Vijayawada, even though party less democracy is one of the aims of the atheist movement.

The family enjoys the support of a wide cross section of society and has the support of a number of Congress leaders. Most communists are opposed to the atheist movements. This is due to their perception that the movement is conservative in politics. Also, some communist groups believe that the atheist centre serves Kamma interests in the city.

K. Nageswara Rao, A. Kaleswara Rao, and T.V.S. Chalapathi Rao were some of the prominent Brahmin politicians and freedom fighters. None of their descendants have any influence in the city. While some do not live in the city anymore, others who do live in Vijayawada have been sidelined, especially in politics.26
Kamma

The Kammans in Vijayawada come closest to M.N. Srinivas' concept of the dominant caste. They are one of the numerically large groups in the city, constituting around 6% in 1971 but likely to be greater presently. Kammans are leaders in all political parties; they predominate in the local economy, run the educational and religious institutions; are prominent in the professions; and have a say in all legal and judicial matters in the city.

Kammans are one of the largest groups in Krishna district. In 1921, they constituted 21.39% of the district population. Kamma, Reddi, Kapu, Velama and Raju are all agricultural castes. In the middle ages they were soldiers employed by various kings and local chieftains in the Andhra and Deccan areas of south India. They all belong to the shudra category—the last rung in the Varna system. In modern times however they are considered to be forward castes. Kammans in particular are considered to be enterprising and adventurous in nature. The introduction of irrigation systems in the Krishna delta in the 1850 and improvements in the system over a period of hundred years, has mostly benefited Kammans. Originally middle and small peasants, they launched a movement against the Zamindars (including some Kammans) in the 1930s and 1940s. After the Zamindari system was abolished in 1948, the Kamma Peasants bought up land released by the system, and as a result the community emerged as a class of
large landholders. Further, studies show that Kammas migrated to other states in India where irrigation systems were developed. Starting from around 1940, Kamma Peasants moved to states like Orissa and Karnataka and bought up land cheap just before the Hirakud and Tungabhadhra dams were constructed. Kamma peasants constitute the most prosperous farmers in most areas with well developed irrigation systems.

The enterprise and aggressiveness of Kammas is reflected in Telugu proverbs like "the earth fears the Kammas" and "where Kammas come in, others go out".

Kamma landlords have been living since long on the outskirts of Vijayawada in areas such as Patamata, Gollapudi and Mogulrajapuram. Gradually as the city began to grow, these areas became part of the city from around 1940. Many of the rich landholders began to involve themselves in urban economic and political activities. They shifted from agriculture to trade, transport, construction, cinema and small scale manufacturing. Kammas peasants from more far flung areas in Krishna District also began to invest in Vijayawada. This process intensified as with independence, cities like Eluru, Rajahmundry, Machilipatnam and many small towns lost their economic importance. After the abolition of Zamindari in 1948, many Zamindars either settled or invested, especially in real estate in the city.
As Vijayawada became a centre for various political movements from 1920, many Kamma peasants participated in these movements and used them as a means for social mobility and political power. As the centre for these movements, many Kamma leaders of the Justice party, Congress and Communist party, made Vijayawada their base. The period 1920 to 1960 saw competition between the Kammans in Vijayawada and Krishna District, and Brahmans and Komatis. Competition over economic interests and political power resulted in frequent political conflicts. By the 1960s, Kammans had emerged dominant they had become economically powerful in Vijayawada and were in a greater proportion demographically compared to earlier decades.

In Vijayawada, Kammans between 1920 and 1937 supported the Justice party and came into conflict with the Brahman and Komati dominated Congress party. From 1935 onwards, Kammans supported the Communist party until 1950, when gradually many of them began to support the Congress. Currently they are dominant in all political parties, except the radical Communist factions.

Kammans reside mainly in localities which used to be villages on the outskirts of the city. These include Mogulrajapuram where there has been a Kamma settlement for two hundred areas, Patamata, Labbipet and Gunadala; Krishna Lanka which is close to the wholesale markets is a centre for Kammans involved in the transport industry.
Kammam in Vijayawada are most prominent in the goods transport sector, cinema, wholesale trade in non agricultural consumer goods, manufacture of auto spare parts, machinery and shares for rice mills, finance and construction. Most educational institutions in the city including professional colleges are run by Kammam, as are most hospitals. Most of the famous lawyers are Kammam. Social, cultural and religious activities are supported by Kamma patrons. Politically, socially and economically, Vijayawada is dominated by the Kamma community.

1. KATRAGADDA FAMILY (KAMMA)

This family is one of the oldest families in the city. They migrated around 200 years ago to the Mogulrajapuram area which was then village settlement on the outskirts of Vijayawada. Initially, they were agriculturists, but gradually shifted to trade related activities.

From around 1940, the family became a pioneer in investing in the kind of sectors the city is known for. One of the family members bought the first truck in Vijayawada and it was one of the first to enter the cinema industry. They continue to have substantial investments in film production and distribution in Vijayawada and Hyderabad. They also have interest in transport sector, real estate, timber, and marketing/advertising/publicity. Two members of the family are counted among the founders of Krishna Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition.
Society - an organisation to protect and advance the interests of small scale industries in the city and hinterland. It is widely regarded as representing Vamma interests.

The family has played a significant role in the nationalist and communist movement. Many of the members were active in both movements and provided material support. They played a major role in organizing a historic mass rally of peasants as part of the 1944 All Indian Kisan Sabha Conference. The conference was held in open ground in Mogulrajapuram. Many Kamma and Brahmin communist activists bought land and settled in the area from 1944 onwards with help from the Katragadda family.

The family have been traditional supporters of the CPI. However a prominent CPI leader of the party went over to the Congress party in 1969. Currently, some members support both the Congress and TDP, without formally being in politics. One member of the family is always represented in the municipal corporation. The person who is prominent Congress leader is generally regarded as a strategist both for the Congress party and for the Kamma community. There are allegations that he is one among the conspirators in the killing of Ranga Rao, a Congress, Kapu MLA in 1988.

The family has also been involved in the development of educational institutions, including the Jesuit, Loyola College and the Siddhartha group of institution.
II. CHALASANI (KAMMA)

Chalasani Vasudeva Rao was one of the founders of the communist party in Andhra. Vijayawada being the head quarters of the party, he migrated from a village in Krishna district and settled in the city in the mid 1940s. His descendant are active in business especially in the transport and allied manufacturing sector. One of the family members is currently the secretary of the Krishna Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition society. While the family is still sympathetic to the CPI, they are not active in politics. However, they continue to financially support political parties in the city including the CPI, TDP and Congress.

The family lives in Mogulrajapuram along with numerous other ex-communist, presently business oriented families. They also played a significant role in developing education institutions in Vijayawada.

III. CHENNUPATI (KAMMA)

This family were landlords in Patamata a village near Vijayawada, which is now part of the city. It is primarily a Kamma settlement. In the 1940s, and 1950s, C. Ramakotaiah, was Panchayat Board president and MLA from nearly constituency and a Congressman. His descendents are still with the Congress. His son owns one of the largest fleets of trucks in the city and played an important role in the development of the transport industry in
the city. His family owns petrol bunks and other auto parts manufacturing units.

The son is a Congress leader and is married to the daughter of Gora - the founder of the atheist movement. She was twice elected to the Lok Sabha from Vijayawada. The family initially provided land and other amenities to Gora and his family when they settled in Vijayawada in 1940. The family continues to support the atheist movement. The current head of the family as a Congress leader has held no formal positions, but like a few others Kammas is regarded as a strategist for Kamma interests and of the Congress party. Many murders of business rivals and of political leaders/gangsters are traced to him.

There are several other Kamma families such as the Pinnamaneni, Yelamanchili, Veeramachaneni, and Chukkapalli families. These families are prominent as professionals contractors, industrialists and businessmen. At least one member from each family is in politics and occupies an elected position at the municipal, district or state level. They all have at one time or the other used and supported gangs in the city against their rivals or workers in their enterprises.48

KAPU:

Kapus, like Kammas are an agricultural caste with martial origin. The term Kapu used to be a general term to refer to peasant communities in Andhra.49 Census reports, reporting on
castes upto 1931 did not differentiate between Kapus and Reddis - a dominant peasant caste numerically strong in Rayalaseema and Telaga areas of the state.50

Kapus are lower in the caste ranking compared to Kammas, but belong to the same Sudra category in the Varna system. In Krishna district, the numerical strength of the community equals that of the Kammas, but their economic status is much lower. They are mainly small/marginal farmers. In the Godavari delta they are the numerically largest caste. Many Kapus here are big landholders and businessman.51

The Kapu caste as currently referred to by the Kapunadu movement includes several castes—Telaga, Ontari, Balija, Kapu besides other minor sects.52 Balija is an endogamous group and were originally traders who settled down by the nineteenth century as cultivators.53 Telaga, Ontari and Kapu are usually classed as a single unit.54 All three interdine and intermarry. Kapu was originally lower in rank compared to Telaga and Ontari. Kapus in Telangana area are a backward class, while in Andhra region, they are not so classified.55

In Vijayawada, Kapus constitute 14.9% of the population. They first began migrating to the city in 1930s. But larger flows began only after 1950, as towns in Godavari delta began to decline. After the bolition of Zamindari Kammas became more powerful in rural areas. Many Kapus who could not compete with
them, became marginalized and moved to towns such as Vijayawada. The Kapus migrated to the city mainly from the Godavari and Krishna districts. Initially they worked as manual laborers in construction, as 'mutha' labour in the transport sector and in unskilled and semi skilled jobs. The second generation of Kapu immigrants took up petty trading, skilled jobs and low paid white collar jobs. Economically, the Kapus do not have a dominant presence in any sector. Most belong to the lower middle/lowest classes.

The CPI in the 1950s and 1960s recruited many immigrants including Kapus into the party and in their trade unions. Even now Kapus continue to have a strong presence in various trade unions in the city. The Vangaveeti brothers—Radha and Ranga initially worked in CPI trade unions. They later split with the CPI in 1967 and formed a large criminal enterprise. Ranga became a Congress MLA in 1985. After he was killed his widow and a step brother were elected to the state legislature.

Kapu leaders are also active in INTUC a Congress affiliated trade union. Between 1981 and 1991, a few Kapus became corporators in the city. They however had to face stiff opposition from the Kammas, including those in the Congress who had earlier supported Kapus.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Kapu gang leaders were used by Kammas in their illegal activities. Thus Ranga and other Kapus
became involved in criminal activities. Due to this, even though some Kapus occupied political positions, political power could never be used to improve the social and economic status of the community.

Vijayawada emerged as a centre for Kapu political activities, when Ranga took up the leadership of Kapunadu in 1985. Ranga built up a following among Kammans in his fight against the police and against rival (Kamma) gang leaders. A Kapunadu conference in 1988 in the city was the largest ever rally by Kapus. Kapunadu has split; the leaders of one groups hail from Vijayawada and represent the relatively poorer sections among Kapus.

Though Kapus have held political positions and are well organized, they are economically poor in Vijayawada. In the city, they live mainly in Krishna Lanka (where rich Kammans also live) as well as in numerous slums in the new part of the city.

VANGAVEETI (KAPU)

The Vangaveeti brothers claim themselves to belong to the Kapu caste. However they are of mixed Kapu/Kamsali origin. The brothers migrated from the West Godavari district in 1960. The elder brother Radha began working as a taxi driver, while Ranga Rao was a cycle mechanic. They soon became involved in trade union activities and illegal activities. Working under the communist Venkataratnam. They split with Venkataratnam in 1969.
and began operating among trade unions, student unions, and doing illegal work for liquor manufacturers and others. By 1972 they controlled a large criminal enterprise. Radha allegedly killed Venkataratnam in 1972. In 1974 Radha was killed by his Kamma opponents and Ranga managed the activities. Gandhi and Nehru Kamma brothers who were with Ranga split to form their own group. Increasing conflicts between the two groups resulted in the killing of Gandhi in 197.. Ranga Became Congress corporator in 1951 and an MLs in 1985. For protecting himself from Nehru who had the support of the Telugu Desam government, Ranga projected himself as a Kapu being persecuted by Kammass. He mobilized kapus in Vijayawada and all over Andhra Pradesh. He as killed allegedly by Nehru in 1988. His widow Ratna kumari became an MLS in 1989 from the city and controls part of his groups. Another group is controlled by Rajgas step brother - Chalapathi Rao who got elected as an MLA from Vuyyuru. There is frequent conflict between the two groups as well as with oothers groups. All memves of the family are believed to control a large part of illegal economic activities in the city. However there are no overt sings of investments in the city. They are however believed to have invested in real estate elsewhere within and outside the state.

KOMATI

Komatis are the trading caste of Andhra. They have historically lived in the Godavari and Krishna delta areas since the medieval period and spread to other areas over the list two

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centuries, Komatis claim to be Vaisyas, the commercial caste occupying the third place in the Varna system. Like Brahmins, Komatis are a twice born caste.

Historical evidence shows that Komatis have lived in Vijayawada for over a thousand years. There is little evidence for large scale migration of the Komatis to Vijayawada. From the 1890s onwards, when Vijayawada became an important railway junction connecting north and south India, the city emerged as a centre for agricultural trade. It was around this time that the Komatis from the city and its hinterland acquired control over the agricultural trade. As the city became a major centre for export of agricultural products, Komati traders became prosperous. They also invested in processing of agricultural products and in retail trade in the city. They entered the bullion trade which became an important sector as the city became more prosperous from 1940 onwards.

Currently Komatis still control much of the wholesale trade in agricultural products in the old town. They also own most of the retail outlets related to agricultural products, groceries and general provisions. Though they are not prominent in the Cinema industry, a Komati in the 1950s, was a pioneer in film distribution and exhibition. The famous Kowtha family has investments in small scale industries apart from trading. There are signs that Komatis are entering sectors hitherto dominated by Kammas. A Komati is a big name in construction. He has a
manufacturing unit in the automobile sector and is the chief promoter of the Vijayawada stock exchange.72

The Vijayawada Chamber of commerce has more than five hundred member organizations, representing various traders, wholesalers and retailers.73 It is widely viewed locally as a Komati front organization. Its president was a Congress supporter, who recently shifted his support to the BJP.74 The Komatis have traditionally supported the Congress. In the 1920s and 1930s, they used the Congress to win political positions and restrain Kammans who were then striving for economic and political power in the city. Many Komatis participated in the national movement. The Kowtha family which also participated, contributed a municipal chairman in 1947.75 A member of the family was a corporator between 1981-86 and 1987-92. In the 1940s, some Komatis supported the Hindu revivalist Jan Sangh and Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS), over the last ten years, there is support for the Jan Sangh successor B.J.P. not only from the Komatis, but also from Kammans and other caste groups.

The Komatis continue to reside by and large in the old part of Vijayawada.

KOWTHA (KOMATI)

The Kowtha family has been residing in Vijayawada for over a century. At the beginning of the century, they were involved in
trading activities in the city. By the 1940s they had started investing in small scale industries. Currently the family has investments in Vijayawada and Hyderabad and is mainly involved in whole sale trade and small scale manufacture of steel products.

The family as part of the Komati community supported the Congress against the Justice party then dominated by Kammams in the 1920s and the 1930s. The Kammams threatened the political and economic power of Komatis who had been dominant for over fifty years in the wholesale agricultural trade form Vijayawada. A Kowtha was chairman of the municipal council in 1931-32 and 1935-36, His brother was a deputy chairman in 1931-1932. A female member of the family wa twice corporator between 1981 and 1992.

The family has popular support both among the Komatis and among poorer people in a few words where it has undertaken charitable works. However, the family is opposed by local leaders of rival factions in the Congress. It has the support, however of state level leaders.

The wholesale and retail trade in the old town is still largely in the hand of Komatis. However, few Komati families play an influential role in the city’s life. The Vijayawada Chamber of Commerce consists of over a hundred organization of retailers and wholesalers of various articles. The president of the Chamber is a Komati who used to support the Congress but
presently supports the BJP. The Chamber's influence was reduced following the emergence of the Kamma dominated Krishna Industrial Exhibition Society in 1975. There are signs that Komati individuals are entering non-Komati type of economic sectors. One family has invested in cinema theatres and hotels. Another is a builder in Vijayawada who is now one of the chief promoters of the Vijayawada Stock Exchange. These families are not politically active.

MADIGA

The Madigas are one of the ex-untouchable castes and currently are included in the scheduled castes. They constitute one of the numerically large percentage of castes in Andhra Pradesh. In Vijayawada, in 1971, they constituted 6% of the population. Madigas are traditionally leather workers and currently constitute a major part of the large mass of agricultural labourers in Andhra. They are still involved in tanning an curing of leather and manufacture of leather goods, both in villages and in cities.

In Vijayawada, Madigas first migrated in large numbers during the construction of railway projects in and around Vijayawada in the 1890s. Later they migrated intermittently to the city, to escape rural poverty. Initially they worked in construction work, in unskilled jobs and other work involving manual labour. They are currently a mainly found among casual
labourers, rickshaw pulling and construction work. Madigas used to stay in slums near the river bank, close to the railway station. These several slum areas, both in the old and new parts of the city.

The vast majority of them are poor. Madiga and Mala castes were initially involved in mutha labour (loading and unloading work in the trade and transport sector. Mutha labour is well paid and secure. But as intermediate castes migrated to the city these castes with greater access to power, resources and networks displaced Malas and Madigas in Mutha labour.

Madigas have had few opportunities for political power or social mobility. CPI(M) supported bid to organize Madiga leather workers working for a major Kamma owned firm failed, as the family simply closed its leather goods manufacturing concern.

While Madigas are beginning to involve in trade union activities, many have joined criminal gangs and are involved in various group conflicts. During large scale rioting, some Madigas along with other castes in slums participated in looting.

The Madigas have little influence on local politics, though a few have been elected as corporators.
MALA

Malas are also an ex-untouchable caste.\(^{82}\) They constitute a large proportion of the population in the State. In Vijayawada, they constitute 8.3 per cent. The traditional occupations of Malas are weaving and agricultural labour. Currently they mainly work as agricultural labourers in the villages, and in low paid jobs in cities.

Like the Madigas, Malas first migrated to the city in the 1890s for working in railway construction projects.\(^{83}\) Over the next fifty years they began working in mutha labour, in junk and scrap collection and in petty trading.\(^{84}\) In the city, Malas took advantage of Christian missions (many of them are Christian converts) to acquire education from missionary schools.\(^{85}\)

Compared to Madigas, Malas have thus achieved a certain measure of mobility. Tataji in his study showed that several of the third generation Mala immigrants have entered lower level white collar jobs, skilled jobs and small business.\(^{86}\) They have also been aided in their mobility by government measures specifically targeted at scheduled castes.

However, the majority continue to be poor. Some Malas have entered the transport sector as drivers. A few even own a trucks which they drive themselves for transporting goods.\(^{87}\) Though Malas are better organized, in the absence of economic resources and
political power, the community as a whole in Vijayawada has not achieved noticeable social mobility.

There have been recent attempts by the Malas at organizing themselves as Dalit Christian in order to demand special concessions from the state. However the attempts never achieved any tangible benefits.

Malas and Madigas, for long supported the Congress party. Over the last decade, there are indications of increasing support to the CPI(ML) groups as well as dalit parties such as the Bahujan Samaj Party. These parties apart from organizing dalit workers in the city are also taking up related issues in the rural interland of Vijayawada. Recently two leaders who have had their political training in the city have become leaders of the B.S.P. With their combined strength of around 14% they are likely to emerge as a strong political force in the future.

NAGARA

Nagaras are a cultivating caste, originally confined to the Visakhapatnam district. They claim to have worked as soldiers in the medieval period. They were also practitioners of native medicine. During the nineteenth century, they were mainly agricultural labourers and marginal farmers.
Three Nagara Subedars in the British army, then stationed at Vijayawada acted as labour contractors for the construction of an anicut across the Krishna river in the 1850s.\textsuperscript{91} They got their own fellow caste families from Visakhapatnam district for construction work in Vijayawada. Many more migrated in the 1890s for railway construction work. The descendants of the three subedars made a fortune out of labour contracting and some of them continued in the profession till the early decades of this century.\textsuperscript{92} One of them Appalaswamy, had his labour gangs working in construction works throughout Andhra.

These families invested in real estate and trade in Vijayawada. The Potina family built the first cinema in Vijayawada in 1942.\textsuperscript{93} The family played a significant role in the freedom movement. One of them became the chairman of the municipal council in 1953.\textsuperscript{94} Appalaswamy supported the Justice party between 1920 and 1935 and reportedly was responsible for electoral violence in favour of his party.\textsuperscript{95} After the decline of the party, he along with Chitti, one of his followers joined the Congress. Both were prominent congress leaders. Appalaswamy was a leader of the INTUC-trade union affiliated to the Congress party Chitti was thrice elected MLA from the city.\textsuperscript{96}

During the years of prohibition in the 1930s and 1940s, Nagara individuals were chiefly involved in the distribution of illicit liquor. Participation in criminal activities were high
and violent conflicts were witnessed amongst Nagara individuals and groups resulting in several murders at that time. 97

T. Potharaju was a Nagara Communist leader who built up opposition to Chitti. 98 He was elected an MLA in 1952 and 1962. After the CPI split in 1964, he formed a City Communist Party which merged with the CPI split in 1964, he formed a City Communist Party which merged with the CPI in 1972. He generated large financial resources for the party. Thus it can be seen that Nagaras played an important role in the politics of the city.

Though Nagaras initially worked as manual labourers and were involved in illegal activities, they achieved a higher economic status as a community. Presently, they are represented in small businesses, retail trade, money lending and clerical jobs in private and public concerns. 99

Nagara leaders are found in most trade unions affiliated to the Congress, CPI and radical Communist groups.

Nagaras continue to live in the old town, where they first settled over a century ago.

POTINA (NAGARA)

The Potina family are descendants of an ancestor who as a subedar in the army contracted labourers from his community for
the construction of barrage across the Krishna river in the 1850s. He became a labour contractor for public works in the area. He later bought up land in the old town and began investing in trade. One of the descendants built the first cinema in Vijayawada in 1942. He was chairman of the municipal council in 1955-56. His family were all involved in the freedom movement. The family still retains interests in cinema in Hyderabad and Madras. However they are not active in politics now. But as a prominent Nagar family is drawn into activities involving the community.

The family is related by marriage to the Marupilla family which also descended from a labour contractor in the 1890s. Marupilla chitti was thrice MLA from Vijayawada in 1955, 1957 and 1967. Chitti was originally with the Justice party and organized its political machine. He joined the Congress after the Justice party declined in the mid 1930s. He was involved in several clashes with CPI cadres between 1940 and 1955. His family is no longer political active.

T. Potharaju, was Communist party MLA in 1952 and 1962. His family also no longer wields any influence in the city.

ODDE (VADDERA)

Oddes are a caste traditionally involved in quarrying stones, constructing tanks and executing all kinds of earth work and road construction. In Andhra Pradesh, they are classified
as "backward class". In 1931, they constituted 2.01 per cent of
the population in Krishna District. In Vijayawada their strength
was estimated at 1.7% in 1971.

Oddes migrated in large numbers in the 1890s for railway
construction work. They settled near the railway station, on the
banks of the Krishna river. The population of this slum were
relocated in different areas in 1979. The community still
retains a monopoly on earth and sand labour. Oddes were the
major workers in the construction of a new barrage across the
river in the 1950s. They are involved in construction of
buildings, road construction and other earth work. They are one
of the few groups exclusively engaged in their caste occupation.

The large scale construction activity between 1960 and 1990
generated continuous employment for the community. Recent shifts
in capital investment away from construction has led to
fluctuation in employment in this sector. Many Oddes as a result
have been out of work for a long time.

Oddes like many other communities participated in looting
and arson during riots. These were directed especially at rich
Kamma contractors and builders.

RAJU

The Rajus are of martial origin, but are now mainly
agriculturists concentrated in the northern districts of coastal
Andhra. They claim to be Kshatriyas, the warrior/ruler caste who occupy the second position in the Varna system. The Rajus are a prosperous community. A majority of them are rich landlords, businessmen and industrialists. 104

In 1931, they constituted 4.16 per cent in Krishna District. They were 2.8% of the population in 1971, in Vijayawada. They began migrating to the city after 1940. A majority of them in the city keep aloof from politics. A few support the congress party. G.S.Raju, one of the few prominent Rajus in the city, is a past president of the city Congress unit. He is an industrialist manufacturing pharmaceuticals and hails from a prominent Raju political family based in Krishna District. 105

As a community the Rajus in Vijayawada do not support any other caste Group. Most Rajus are businessmen and small scale industrialists. Only a minority are in low paid occupations.

A description of the caste composition of Vijayawada, its evolution and the current status of different groups, reveals many aspects, While the economic condition and political power of some groups improved, other groups lost their dominance in society. Even though most of the groups consist largely of migrants they came to the city for different kinds of resources, from different socio-economic background. In their attempt to gain entry into different sphere of activity, the groups utilized every available means and competed with each other.
This process generated conflicts as groups responded in a variety of ways through social, political and economic institutions.

The various groups migrating over a period of time settled in different areas of the city. Thus when conflicts arose, they had spatial impact as violence tended to be distributed over specific localities of the city.

The exact ways in which the migrant group adopted to the city, their economic activities, political behaviour and cultural responses are outlined in the following chapters. It is shown in greater detail as to how some groups like the Kammas achieved and maintained their dominance; at the same time castes like addes, Malas and Madigas who constitute the earliest in-migrants could not achieve any significant degree of social mobility and control over resources.

A study of the prominent families in Vijayawada's history provides several insights. There are few families belonging to non Kamma communities who are as dominant as their Kamma counterparts. Even these have rarely been able to maintain their position across generations. The kind of wide ranging participation in various sectors is also not observed among the prominent non-Kamma families. In particular, it was observed both during field work and in records of past events, that the rich peasant families have always been involved in all major events in the city - political, social and economic.
It is also seen that in the case of Kamma families, their participation in politics is not only crucial for their dominance in other sectors, but is itself a significant aspect of their migration and presence in the city.
Notes to Chapter 3

1. See Thurston, 1875, for details.
3. This is evident from a perusal of the list of prominent leaders in the movements. For Krishna district see Krishna Sastry, 1991.
4. There are no studies to substantiate these figures. However for some tentative figures see Prajapandha, 1990.
6. See Krishna Sastry pp. 1-10 for details.
7. Field notes. See also Washbrook, 1977.
8. Field notes. Based on discussions with some political and social leaders in the city.
9. Field notes. In the Besant Road Brahmins still continue to have a presence in retail trading.
10. See chapter 5 for more details.
11. Ibid.
12. See section on communist parties in Chapter 5
13. Ibid.
14. Field notes. Based on discussions with senior Brahmin politicians.
15. This was the case for instance of descendants of T. V. S. Chalapathi Rao, former Mayor and MLA and of the Kowtha family.
16. Field notes. Their marginalization is recent years have led to protests and some Brahmin leaders distanced themselves from the party during the December 1994 elections.
17. The Brahmin politician Kaleswara Rao led the anti-communist attacks.
18. See section on municipal politics in Chapter 5
19. Field notes: interview with a Brahmin trade union leader and DVS KR Krishnamurthy, a key informant working for several business concerns; this was the case of even public figures such as Nageswara Rao.
21. Field observation; see also Bhamu, 1982, for details; the map of Vijayawada is given in Chapter II.
22. Field notes. Interviews with some Brahmin citizens as well as
with a few house agents operating in the area.

23. Field observation and discussion with Brahmin citizens, especially with the atheist leader Lavanam.

24. Field notes; these included management and patronage of temples, charitable organizations, Lions clubs, cultural associations, etc.

25. The description of the various families in this chapter are derived from in depth informal interviews and discussions with members of the families as well as with other key informants.

26. This is the case of the family of Chalapathi Rao.


28. For references regarding these castes see Thurston 1980.

29. Ibid, pp. 94.

30. This is a widely held view among all sections in the state.


32. See Dhanagare, 1982, pp. 142-44 for details; also Haragopal, 1985, pp. 80-105.

33. Swamy, op. cit. pp. 74.

34. Ibid, pp. 76.


36. Field notes, interviews with some senior citizens; see also Narsaiah, no date, pp. 2.

37. Narsaiah, pp. 3.

38. For details see Chapter 2, in Raman Rao 1958, pp. 160-172.

39. The Chalapalli Zamindar was one of these.

40. Details are given in ch. 5. pp. "Social and Political Movements".


42. Details in Chapter 5

43. Ibid.

44. Field observation; also discussions with persons in the transport sector. These Kamas were the main targets of attack in the 1968 riots.

45. See chapter 4.

46. See section on "Education", chapter 4.

47. One of these recently launched an agitation for a bench of the High Court near Vijayawada. He is a Congressman and a
participant in various movements including the Jai Andhra movement. He has also represented several of the city's gang leaders in court cases.

48. Field notes. Interview with T. Ganapati Rao, a Nagara Communist Trade unionist.

49. Thurston, op. cit. pp. 22; also Balagopal, 1988, pp. 228.


51. Balagopal, op. cit. pp. 228; See also newspaper reports in August, 1994, for statements by R. Krishnaiah on various occasions opposing the demand for BC status to the Kapus.

52. See Thurston for details regarding these castes.


54. Field notes. This is the basis for the Kapunadu movement demanding Backward Class status for themselves. For details see chapter V.

55. Field notes. Interview with some Town Planning officials working or worked earlier in the city.

56. See Rao and Rao 1984, pp. 96; also Tataji, 1984; Kapus in these reports are referred to as Telagas.

57. Ibid.; field notes. Interview with some Kapu trade unionists and a leader of the Kapunadu movement.


59. Field notes. Interview with old time trade union leaders.

60. Field notes. Interview with Kapu leaders.

61. See Chapter 4, section on "Types of Groups".

62. Chapter 5.

63. On this see Sundaram, 1972, pp. 57-62.

64. Thurston op. cit. pp. 307.

65. Sundaram, op. cit.


67. Field notes. Most of the units located in the old part of the town are still owned by them

68. Field notes. This also includes Vaisyas from other states especially from the north.

69. Field notes; Vijayawada Directory 1996 has a list of associations of wholesale traders; a majority of these traders are Komatis.

70. This was the family of Mangaraju; they also own a few hotels.
71. See below section on the Kowtha family.

72. He is active in the Kamma dominated Krishna Industrial and Agricultural society.

73. For a complete list see Vijayawada Directory op.cit.pp.313-323

74. Field notes.

75. See below, section on Kowtha.


78. Tataji op.cit.

79. Ibid.pp.191.


81. Field notes. Interview with a few Town Planning officials with an intimate knowledge of the city.

82. Thurston op.cit.pp.329.


84. Ibid,pp.62


86. Ibid,pp.189.


88. See Benadu dated pp.1,Nov. 1992, for a report.

89. Field notes. These are Bojja Tharakan and Kathi Padma Rao who have played important roles in the dalit movement in the past decade.

90. Thurston ,op.cit.pp.135.

91. Field notes. Interview with Lakshman Rao.

92. Ibid.

93. See below section on Pothina family.

94. Chapter. 5,section on Municipal Politics.

95. Field notes, interview with Lakshman Rao; also Baker,1975,pp.120 and Suryanarayana, op.cit. 145.

96. Chapter. 5.

97. Field notes. Interview with Lakshman Rao.

98. Details in Chapter. 5.

99. Field notes.

100. Thurston ,op.cit.pp.422

101. Rao and Rao ,op.cit.pp.45-46...

102. On this see Prasanna Kumar,1984.

103. Field notes. Interview with officials in the Town Planning
section, Vijayawada Municipal Corporation.

104. Field notes. They are very prominent in the industrial scene in present day Andhra Pradesh.

105. Field notes. They are originally from West Godavari district and still retain connections with their native region.