Chapter-V

BACKWARD CLASSES
RAYALASEEMA
The profile of backward Classes in Andhra Pradesh present a striking diversity marked by heterogeneous ethnic composition, cultural variation, diverse linguistic traditions and socio-economic levels. Coming to the specific areas like Rayalaseema regions which almost come under underdeveloped area presents more or less the same characters of diversity found in the State. Rayalaseema, the region for the present study is one of the three geographical regions of Andhra Pradesh, the first being the Coastal region with 9 districts generally called ‘Andhra Region’, the second is the ‘Telangana Region’ having 10 districts and the third one being the ‘interior region’ known as ‘Rayalaseema’ consisting of 4 districts namely Anantapur, Chittoor, Kadapa and Kurnool. It was Gadicherla Harisarvathama Rao, Freedom Fighter who coined and proposed the name for the Ceded Districts as ‘Rayalaseema’. The name Rayalaseema came to be accepted as a substitute for ‘Ceded districts’.

Rayalaseema is located between 12° 37’ and 16° 18’ North latitude and 76° 55’ to 79° 55’ East longitudes in south-eastern portion of the Deccan Plateau. The region lies at an altitude of 300-700 meters from sea level with an extent of 67,299 sq. kms. The Rayalaseema region originally consisted of Kurnool, Kadapa, Chittoor and Bellary districts of the erstwhile Madras Presidency. As the entire region was under the rule of the Rayas of Vijayanagar earlier, the region is popularly known as Rayalaseema. Contrary to its name, it has been emerged as one of the backward regions of the country and known as ‘the stalking ground of famine. Rayalaseema is surrounded by Tamil Nadu in the South, Karnataka in the West and South-West, Telangana in the North and Coastal Andhra in the East.

Obviously, the past Rayalaseema was geographically a bigger area. It comprised of the independent states of Banaganapalle and Sandur, some areas of Prakasam District which once were within Kurnool district, the areas in the North Arcot district specially the Chittoor district which once included within itself Vellore and the like. In due course of time the erstwhile Rayalaseema underwent various vicissitudes and witnessed alterations and modifications and took the present form of Rayalaseema which comprises of the present four districts of Andhra Pradesh viz., Anantapur, Chittoor, Kadapa and Kurnool.

Physical features

The physical features of any region and to that matter Rayalaseema region have great impact on the lives of the people. It lacks high mountain ranges and thick forests. Its material progress is hampered due to paucity of perennial rivers, enervating climate and low rainfall. As a result, the soil, rivers, temperature and rainfall became the influencing factors of the general conditions of this region with no optimistic progress. As the failure of rains
occurs quite often, the droughts and famines prevent specially in Anantapur district frequently. As Anantapur happened to be the western district of Rayalaseema which is closer to the Western Ghats, it is denied of the abundant rainfall from the north east monsoon. The failure of rains automatically resulted in scarcity of food and water.

**Historical Background**

To trace the history of Rayalaseema from its historical background, it dates back to as early as the Mauryan times who ruled this area. After few centuries this region was brought under the Satavahana followed by the Ikshvakus, the Pallavas and the early Cholas. In the year 1335 A.D. it came under the Vijayanagar Empire. After the battle of Tallikota this area came under the Nawabs of Cuddapah, Kurnool, Banaganapalle and Golkonda who ruled these small parts here and there as Palegars. In the second half of the 17th Century, the entire Andhra region except Kurnool came under the control of the Sultans of Golkonda. But Kurnool remained under the control of Sultan of Bijapur. Subsequently, the Mughals under the emperorship of Aurangzeb took control of Andhra. With the decline of Mughals authority following the ‘Battle of Plessey in 1757 A.D. the regions of Andhra and Kurnool were parcelled out among the local Hindu and Muslim chief tans who styled themselves as Rayas and Nawabs. When the Asaf Jha Nizam-Ur-Mulk was coroneted as the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1724, these areas were brought under his direct control. In the last four decades of the 18th Century, the Rayalaseema region became the battle ground between Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan of Mysore on the one hand and the East India Company the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Marathas on the other. Tipu Sultan was defeated in the hands of East India Company, the Nizam and Maratha Alliance. Consequently, it became convenient for the Nizam to enter into subsidiary Alliance with the East India Company. On October 12, 1800, the Nizam Ali Khan of Hyderabad Ceded the districts of Anantapur, Bellary, Cuddapah and a part of Kurnool to company towards the cost of maintaining the company troops at Hyderabad. As a result these districts came to be popularly known as the ‘Ceded Districts’.

The Region of Chittoor which is now a part of Rayalaseema was not one among the Ceded districts. But it was under the rule of Nawabs of Carnatic at that time. In 1801 Lord Wellesley annexed the Carnatic Province and as a result Chittoor district came under British rule. However, in 1839 the remaining parts of Kurnool district were brought under the Company control. In 1858 the British Government structured Kurnool and Kadapa areas as districts. In 1882 the area of Bellary was bifurcated into Bellary and Anantapur districts. Chittoor as a district was a created with the grouping of some Telugu speaking areas of the North Arcot and few parts of Kadapa district on April 1, 1911. Finally all these areas of
Rayalaseema formed part of the Madras Presidency till the formation of Andhra State in 1953.

**Cropping Pattern**

The cropping pattern in Rayalaseema region depended on irrigation facilities available, the rainfall, the type and location of land. Keeping in view all these factors, these people cultivate Paddy in irrigated lands under canals, tanks and wells followed by groundnut, maize, Jowar, Ragi, sunflower etc.

The geographical location of Rayalaseema region in general and the habitations of scheduled tribes in particular made them vulnerable to poverty, illiteracy and backwardness when compared to other areas and people in Andhra Pradesh. The traditions, culture, habits, thinking process and their economic resources added misery to their lives. The backward castes economy is also dictated by the upper caste domination and exploitation, failure of monsoon and consequent failure of agriculture compelled them to convert into agricultural labourers and other types of unskilled labourers in the society. All these also responsible for their backwardness in literacy and education.

**Profile of Backward Classes in Rayalaseema Region**

From the definitions of the backward castes in the introduction chapter it is clear that they are given low position in the hierarchically divided social system, and they are producing class either of commodities or services, which are for the general use in the society. In this process they are denied basic rights, which are essential for the development of the community or individual and the Constitution of India is also not clear on these aspects.

Traditionally, in a caste-ridden society, they are the occupational groups who have been producing the goods and services for the general use of the society. Some of the caste-based occupations may be described as follows.

*Viswabrahmins:* Among the backward castes they claim superior status. Vadrangi (carpenter), Kamsali (goldsmith), and Kammari (blacksmith), are also important to mention. They pursue their hereditary occupations. Though their importance is still felt in the village, they cannot survive fully on their traditional occupations in the face of industrial competition.

*Goud:* Main occupation is toddy tapping. Though they are spread in the entire state, they are predominant in the Telangana region.
Yadavas: Their hereditary occupation is cattle rearing. They rear animals, sell milk and milk products.

Padmasalee: They are weavers by profession and claim superior status among the backward castes. They wear sacred thread. In pre-colonial period they were the main cloth producers in the village, they still practice their hereditary occupation. It is hard for them to compete with the mills producing synthetic cloth with the help of modern technology.

Chakali: Their traditional occupation is washing clothes of all the other castes. They still follow the same occupation. At the time of rituals they have an important role to play, they served the dominant castes under the jajmani system.

Kummari: Kummaris make and supply earthenware required by the villagers. Since all kinds of metal wear made inroads even into the villages, their importance is being reduced. They still practice their hereditary occupation.

Mangali: They are professional barbers. They acquire hereditary rights to work in some families in the village and continue to serve the same families. Their presence is necessary in social ceremonies. They also play music at the time of marriages and other festivals.

Uppara: Their traditional occupation is construction material and work relating to earth digging, carrying on construction and canal works.

Vaddera: Their main occupation has been cutting stones for construction purpose. Even to day they practice their occupation.

Mutharasa: M.A.Stuart says that Mutharasas were employed as watchman to guard the frontiers under Vijayanagar kings. Others usually consider the caste low; he further says that most of the community members are poor and subsequently they have taken to agriculture. At present mostly they are agricultural labours and a few of them hold small patches of land.

Medari or Mahendra: Their occupation is making articles with the bamboos, now a days it is having a big threat from the modern machine based industries.

Jalari, Gangaputra, and Pallikarlu etc: Traditional occupation of these people has been fishing. The mechanized boats are destroying their livelihoods.

The above description of the caste based occupations reveals that there are two types of backward castes, one is commodity producers and second is service providers. The nature of production activities and services led to the cultural differentiation among them and
stratified in the social hierarchy. In the past there was no freedom for an individual to choose his occupation for livelihood according to his talent, choice or interest. Inevitably one had to follow one's own caste occupation irrespective of its economic and social disadvantages. Each caste had certain functions and duties in the village as a whole in relation to the other castes. Consequently, the caste occupations continued without break and determine the status, role and power of an individual by birth and not by merit, nor talent and interest. M.N.Srinivas (1980) puts it as follows.

The hereditary association of caste with an occupation has been so striking that it has occasionally been argued that caste is nothing more than systematization of occupational differentiation. The stratified backward castes of producers as well as the service providers were exploited by the caste-feudal society on the name of jajmani throughout the pre-colonial period.1

During the colonial period destruction of the traditional occupations took place for the expansion of market to their goods produced in the modern industries. The strategy of the colonial rulers was to export the entire local raw material to England and import the machine-based commodities, which posed stiff competition to the local products. The local products were unable to compete with the machine-based products in the market. Therefore, gradually over the years, the caste based traditional occupations declined during the colonial period. Subsequently, the traditional handicraftsmen and artisans were forced to enter into the agriculture sector as labour.

In spite of colonial destruction of the traditional occupations, still they are playing a significant role next to agriculture in the rural economy even in the post-independent period. According to a study, which has collected the data to find out how many people in two villages such as Cheppial (non-irrigated) and Chelgal (irrigated) follow or retain their caste or hereditary occupations. Among the 452 respondents of the non-irrigated village, 271 (i.e., 64.4 %) are following their caste or hereditary occupations whereas in the irrigated Village caste or hereditary occupations are followed by 220 (i.e., 42.1 per cent) out of 523 respondents.

According to this study there is no change in the occupational affiliation of Kummaris (potters) probably because of the fact that it is one of the very backward castes — socially, economically and politically and very rigid in rituals and other customs. But, on other hand, a substantial occupational mobility in the Golla/Kurma (shepherd) caste was seen. More than half of the families of this caste have changed their occupation from sheep rearing to various
other occupations. It may be stated here that those who own land tend to have agriculture as the main occupation and the five respondents in the category of agriculture have not deviated.

_Tenuge_ is one of the backward castes, which is relatively more advanced in the Telangana area. They have no exclusive caste occupation and follow occupations such as agriculture, fruit selling, and fishing and also agricultural labour. Interestingly, there is no occupational deviance among the _Gouds_. Of the 19, 18 are following the toddy tapping. The reason for the occupational continuity may be the very nature of the occupation. A person who follows this occupation gets daily cash more than what an ordinary laborer gets in season and can also attend to his subsistence agricultural work as well.

The caste occupation of _Padmasali_ is weaving. This is one of the more mobile castes. The members of this caste follow different non-agricultural occupations. Most of them go to Bombay, Ahmedabad and Bheevandi for work in cloth mills. Observation shows that people who stay in the village either follow weaving or some other non-agricultural occupation, such as business.

The artisans include five sub-castes, namely, Goldsmith, Blacksmith, _Kanchari_, Carpenter and _Silpi_, but there are only four castes in this village. Some of these castes declined in their importance as their caste occupations are affected. For example, the goldsmiths are almost without work because of the high cost of gold and consequent decline in the demand for their services. Blacksmiths of ironwork, carpenter does wood work, _Kanchars_ do vessel making and Silpis make idols and statues. Presently, all these sub-castes have their occupational demand in urban areas.

The young are going to cities and improving their skills and are earning a lot. The old stay at the village. The educated people among them are seeking government employment. Regarding barbers and _dhobis_, two-third of the respondents are following their caste occupations of hair cutting and clothes washing, and one-third shifted from their caste occupations.

As in Cheppial, the non-irrigated village, the caste and occupational deviance in Chelgal, the author, also examined the irrigated village. There is considerable occupational deviance among the _Brahmins_ in this village as out of the five _Brahmin_ respondents, only one respondent is following his caste occupation (i.e., priesthood). On the contrary, three, out of four respondents of _Vaisya_ caste, are following their caste occupation (i.e., business), which shows that there is less occupational shift among the _Vaisyas_ in this village.
Similar to the Vaisyas, among the Reddy/Kapu and Velama respondents also, there is very little occupational deviance, as most of them, (i.e., 89.4% and 77% respectively) are following their caste occupation, namely agriculture. The data show that the Kummaris, who are among the backward castes, shifted their occupation to various other occupations. Half of the Golla/Kurma caste respondents have also changed to different occupations. As in Cheppial, among Tenugu caste, a greater occupational mobility was seen in Chelgal also. Tenugus of this village are following fishing as their main occupation. There are also fruit sellers and agricultural laborers in this caste. In contrast to the Gouda caste, having minimal occupational deviance, the Padamasalis, whose caste occupation is weaving, have shown a lot of occupational diversity. On the other hand, about two-third of the artisans which include Blacksmiths, Goldsmiths, Carpenters and Kanchari, are still following their own caste occupations. Similarly, 88 per cent of the barbers and dhobis are engaged in their respective caste occupations, showing that there is minimal occupational mobility in these castes.

Despite the fact that the freedom to choose any occupation, occupational mobility and diversity in the economy, the above analysis reveals that still traditional occupations are playing significant role in the rural economy. While recognizing the importance of traditional occupations in the economy, in the post-independent period, the Government of Andhra Pradesh, in response to the demands of the occupational castes introduced the cooperatives for those who are practicing the traditional occupations. The basic purpose behind the introduction of the occupational cooperative societies was to reduce the occupational castes over dependence on the agriculture, stop them from migration and to consolidate economically. Since the occupational cooperatives are introduced under the Cooperative Societies Act-1964 created a lot of problems like bureaucrats over control, corruption, inefficient management, bogus members, lack of financial support etc. Due to lack of Government interest in encouraging the traditional occupations and interest in promoting the major and modern machine based industries under the ownership of upper castes and introduction of the new economic policies led to the complete deterioration of the traditional occupations. The occupations are drastically affected by the macro economic policies followed since 1990s as they encouraged the entry of foreign goods and the machine based products as well. The traditional local caste based occupations are unable to compete with modern machine based industrial products. Therefore, these communities are loosing their livelihoods. The declining position of the traditional occupations can be explained with the help of following case studies.

The field based study of the five occupational co-operatives, such as fishermen, bamboo workers, weavers, toddy tappers and washer men reveals that they are rapidly
marginalizing and thrown in to the poverty due to state policies, which are introduced since 1990s. As a result of the globalization and privatization, the subsidies are stopped, cooperatives are being abolished, occupational finance corporations are defunct, and modern machines and machine-based products threaten the traditional occupations and livelihoods of dependents.

The fishermen association has been in existence on the coast of the sea since long, while fishing. There is hardly any development since independence in this fishermen street, except the cyclone shelter, which is about to collapse at any time. Ill health, social risk, lack of housing, education, marketing facility etc, are the perpetual problems. Prevalence of the child labour is a common phenomenon. Their ins and huts are built with the palmer leaf. All the fisher folk belong to the Jalari community. Their source of livelihood is fishing in the sea with traditional means of fishing like catamaran, wooden boat and fiber boat. But there are two categories of fishermen within the Jalari community, one is the owner of the fishing boats and another is the labour class within the fishing community or dependents on the first one. There are few traditional boat owners and more fishing labour in Boyaveedhi. Both owners of the boats and labour category fishermen venture into sea to net the fish. The netted fish are distributed equally among themselves after setting aside the boat share.

The traditional local boat costs from Rs 10,000 to Rs 50,000/-. Since the local banks are not giving loans for the purchase of nets, and boats, they are forced to depend upon the private financiers, who charge high rate of interest. For spending thousands of rupees to purchase the fishing material, while taking loans from the private moneylenders, they are getting uncertain income of Rs 10 to Rs 100 per day. The derivation of the income depends on the quantity of fish they net in a day. With this low income, they have to feed their entire family of 10-14 members, payment to the moneylenders, day-to-day expenses, unforeseen expenses etc these are all to be met from paltry income. When they get the huge quantity of fish, their women go to market for selling. Now the quantity of the fish has been drastically reduced due to the mechanized boats. The fisher women are forced to work in the houses as sweepers and washerwomen just for left over rice.

In 1970s the fishermen of Boyaveedhi formed the fishermen cooperative society. However, due to the malpractices in the fisheries and cooperative apartments, financial mismanagement, government disinterest in organizing the fishermen, extending the financial support, involvement of the vested interests, encouragement to the private investors resulted in the failure of the fishermen cooperative society in the Boyaveedhi. Another important reason for the failure of the fishermen cooperative society is that the president of the society
is an outsider, who borrowed about one lakh rupees from the local bank and he neither 
distributed the money among fishermen nor repaid. Therefore, the bank seized the society.

Today there is a threat to the livelihoods of the fishermen not only from the lack of 
government support and mechanized boats but also due to the government plan to make 
Boyaveedhi as a tourist spot. This may result in the fishermen being vacated from here, 
because land in the surrounding area of Boyaveedhi is being occupied by the prominent film 
personalities. Now there is an attempt to hike up the demand for their land, this will be 
materialized only through making Boyaveedhi a tourist spot. Generally the fishermen keep 
their fishing material on the coast of the sea, and the upcoming fishermen practice fishing. 
Now there is the pressure from the government of Andhra Pradesh, department of tourism, to 
get the area vacated. Forcing the fishermen to vacate Boyaveedhi is nothing short of 
destroying the occupation of a community, which has been living on the sea for centuries.

Similar thing is happening in the case of bamboo workers as well in Kurnool city itself. There are 2000 bamboo workers in the city itself, while depending on their traditional occupation of making goods and articles with the bamboos since long time. Prior to the invasion of the bricks, granite and cement, the bamboo articles used to build the thatched 
houses and there was a market for the bamboo articles during the marriages, festivals and 
other occasions. When the bamboo workers society existed the government used to supply the 
bamboos from the Nallamala forest at the subsidized rates of Rs 1000/- per quintal. The 
society also used to extend the financial support to the bamboo workers. Therefore, they had 
opportunity to create their own livelihood. The real problem started with the abolition of the 
bamboo workers cooperative society in 1994 in response to the privatization of the economy 
in the country. For the supply of subsidized bamboos, financial support was stopped. Now the 
private people are selling the bamboos at the rate of Rs 3000/- per quintal. To purchase the 
bamboos, the workers are approaching the private moneylenders for the money at the high 
rate of interest. At present the products of the bamboos are unable to compete with the 
machine based products. That is why the bamboo workers of the Kurnool City are facing 
serious financial crunch. They are forced to borrow from the moneylenders due to lack of 
government support, they have to purchase the bamboos from the private individuals at the 
high rate due to lack of cooperative society, and there is no market for their products due to 
lack of demand.

Since the bamboo workers of Kurnool are living in city, their children have got 
education in the social welfare hostels and completed tenth or intermediate and their parents 
are not able to finance further studies. They have neither employment nor traditional skills for
the eking their livelihood. Therefore, the educated children of the bamboo workers are thrown out of gear. When there is a market for the bamboo articles, women used to go for the market to sell them. Now there is no demand for the articles. Hence these women are becoming either household servants or remaining unemployed.

Another occupational cooperative society, which is in deep crisis, is the Yemmiganur Weavers Co-operative Society (hereafter YWCS). The YWCS was established in 1938, when there was severe drought during the colonial period. In order to stop the kurni (weavers) community from the migration to Bombay, Bangalore and other places, the prominent Gandhian Machani Somappa (by caste a weaver) was the brain behind in establishing YWCS. Soon the YWCS products got market and reputation at the national and international level due to effective management and hard work of the weavers. Until recent times the YWCS provided employment for more than ten thousand weavers in Yemminaganur itself with two thousand and five hundred active members in the society. YWCS encouraged the weavers in the surrounding villages such as Gudikal, Gonedgandla, Gudur, Nandavaram, Nagaladinne and Kosigi. In all these villages now the weaving industry is disappearing.

The YWCS succeeded in stopping the migration for decades; it has been able to consolidate the weaver community in terms of economic, social and political spheres. Gradually over the years, entry of the power looms, lack of supply of raw material from the Government, hike in the dyeing rates, rise of elite class within the weavers, entry of faction politics, mismanagement of the society, corruption and bureaucratic control created a lot of crisis in the YWCS. Due to the heavy competition from the modern machine based products, entry of the foreign products, new economic policies non-cooperation of the government in supplying raw material and financial support the YWCS got into debt crisis in 1990s. With the gradual decline of the YWCS, in line with the over all destruction of the weaving and handloom industry in the country, the local traditional weavers started migrating to other places for survival. In fact the YWCS was started to stop the weavers from migration during the colonial period, the process of migration of the weavers is occurring in the post-globalization period.

The toddy tappers cooperative society is another one to be seriously studied. There are hundred toddy tapping or Goud families in Ibrahimpatnam; about fifty families are directly depending on toddy tapping. Though the society is located in urban area, still majority of the toddy tappers are illiterates, that is why they hardly know other than toddy tapping skills. Therefore, they are depending on the traditional occupation, though it is yielding less income that is not sufficient to meet their bare family needs.
One among the many reasons for the low income from the toddy tapping occupation is that there are three types of taxes levied on this occupation. These are tax on drawing the toddy from the tree, tax to the landowner for locating the tree in his/her land, and tax on selling of the toddy. The first and third are to be paid to the excise department and second one is to be paid to the landlord. The toddy tappers are also supposed to pay the bribe to the excise department and to the local lumpen gangs while meeting the day today expenses in the preparation of the toddy.

The second reason is that though there is toddy tappers cooperative society, it is full of bogus members. These bogus members are either from the non-toddy tapping communities or educated and employed and those people who are having nexus with politicians and excise department. The real toiling tapper is not having the membership in the society. Once the tapper is having the membership in the society, he is eligible to take loans from the Toddy Tappers Industrial Finance Corporation, claim ex-gratia and group insurance.

Third reason is that very often the government imposes the ban on the selling of the toddy, therefore, whenever government changes in the state the tappers has to gather in lakhs and demand the rulers not to impose the ban on the livelihood source of lakhs of people. Fourth reason is that the government is openly giving the licenses for the selling of the foreign liquor and wine shops. Therefore, it has become very difficult to face the competition in the market from the modern liquor.

Even though there is the Andhra Pradesh Toddy Tappers Industrial Finance Corporation to extend the financial support to them, a lot of corruption is taking place in it. The applications are supposed to be routed through the excise department. In order to move the application the excise department staff need to be bribed. It seems that the tappers are spending 10-15 percent of their loan on the excise department and Finance Corporation staff to sanction the loan amount. The loan is also scarce; it would be from Rs 10,000 to Rs 50,000/- only. The principal amount should be paid regularly with interest, if there is any delay in the payment of the installments, the excise department will cancel the license of the tapper. Every year government is getting about Rs 100/- crores from the toddy, but hardly 5% is spent on the welfare of the toddy tappers. The excise department is very much interested in collecting the taxes and their monthly mamuls (bribe) but not in the protection of the date and palm trees, which are being rapidly destroyed, instead adulterated and foreign liquor is encouraged.
Still there are many occupations, which are being destroyed, such as washer men, pottery makers etc. Though the patron-client relations are weakened, the new problems are emerging for these communities. One can find the existence of the washer men in each and every village. They are paid annually in kind for washing the clothes in the traditional society. In the changing situation the washer men are facing dreadful economic problems due to the modern equipments to wash the clothes. These equipments are not available to the poor washer men, because of their low economic position to purchase them. Even though there is the washer men co-operative finance corporation, its budget is hardly crossing 4-5 crores in a year for the 4.2 percent of the washer men population in the state. Since their occupation is not protected by distribution of the modern equipment or the state finance support, they are becoming simply the agricultural labour in the rural areas and unemployed in the urban areas.

Another traditional occupation, which has almost totally destroyed is the pottery with the entry of steel and plastic material for the daily use. The potters has neither alternative source of livelihood, except agriculture labour nor any supporting mechanism from the Government side, therefore, they are rapidly marginalizing might be due to lack of mobility and resistance among them.

This analysis indicates that at least some of the occupations and societies provided the source of livelihood for decades together for those people who used to depend on them in terms of income generation and socio-economic consolidation and prevented them from becoming either agriculture or migrant labour. When these societies were strong enough, government extended financial support to strengthen them. Once the privatization process started, all the subsidies and concessions that are extended to these societies are stopped. With the withdrawal of the financial support by the state to these societies, their existence has become doubtful. That is why the occupational co-operatives are either disappearing or becoming defunct. As a consequence of disappearance of the co-operatives, all those people who depended upon the traditional occupations have to find out an alternative path of survival strategy. They are joining the labour force. Therefore, in the post 1990s the percentage of labour has been increasing. One study revealed that the increase in the labour population is more than the population growth due to overwhelming dependence of those communities who lost their traditional occupation on the agriculture sector.

P.S. Krishnan portrays vulnerable position of the occupational communities as "the Backward Classes, self-employed laborers in traditional home workshops, in oceanic and inland water-bodies and in various other areas of labour like stone-cutting, earth work, are increasingly immiserated, their traditional occupations being snatched away by those with
access to superior technology and finance the moment scope for more intensive exploitation and profit-making emerges. The extent to which they have entered modern fields is not measurable yet because it is only recently that recognition of their identity and provision of Reservation could be snatched for them four decades after India's Constitution. The visibility of some members of the relatively less backward castes of the backward classes should not misguide us and obscure the fact that the bulk of the backward classes in Rayalaseema region continue to remain as laborers of castes-castes in different fields. They include the stone-cutter caste of Vaddars, the earth-worker caste of uppari, the blacksmith caste of Kammari (corresponding to the North-Indian caste of Lohar and the East Indian caste of Kamor), the wood working caste of Vadrangi, caste of Kuraba (corresponding to the North Indian caste of Gadarja) and many other laboring castes of producers and of service providers like Mangali/Nayi-Brahman (corresponding to the Nai of North India). 5

Above illustrations reveals that the disappearing cooperatives, when they are strong, helped in emergence of a clear-cut class division within the backward castes. Those sections and castes that have benefited from the occupational cooperative societies are economically consolidated and started purchasing the land from the dominant castes from 1970s (Anil Kumar, 2000). Therefore, the roots for the rise of some of the backward castes as small and marginal farmers lie in the occupational cooperative societies rather than the distribution of the land by the Government.

A majority of the population from the backward castes cannot survive fully on their traditional occupations and most of them do not have stake in the occupational cooperative societies. That is why they have shifted themselves to agricultural and non-agricultural works. This process is intensified by the introduction of the new economic policies. The class character within the backward castes is reflected in the changing agrarian relations also.

Changing Agrarian Relations and Backward Castes

According to Rudolph and Rudolph there are four social categories in the agricultural relations of contemporary India such as agricultural laborers (scheduled castes and tribes), small holders (backward castes), bullock capitalists (middle castes) and large landholders (upper 'twice born' castes). The same classification is applicable to Rayalaseema region as well. In order to understand the rise of backward castes as small and marginal farmers, it is essential to analyze the changing nature of agrarian relations in Rayalaseema region. 6

The rise of some of the backward castes as small and marginal farmers is a historical process. The process is not, directly, outcome of the policies introduced by the state to bring
changes in the agrarian relations, but it is due to the weakening of the feudal Zamindari domination by the popular peasant movements during pre-independence period, lack of capacity of the old and newly emerged land owners like Brahmins, Kammas and Reddies in maintaining the land due to heavy expenses, losses, shift in the occupation forced them to sell the land. The surplus derived from the occupational cooperative societies and sources of borrowings like banks and relatives helped the backward castes to purchase a piece of land. These changes in the agrarian structure can be analyzed with the help of existing literature on agrarian relations.

In Changing Agrarian Structure and Labour Relations the study examines the structural changes, which have been taking place in rural Andhra Pradesh, especially in the Rayalaseema region. The main concern of study is to find out the differences and similarities between an irrigated and non-irrigated village with respect to agrarian structure, labour relations, and occupational structure and inter caste relations. The assumption is that the availability of canal water for irrigation, the urban impact and communications tend to influence the agrarian structure and labour relations.7

While analysing various castes and their relations to the size of landholdings in the non-irrigated villages after 1973, the year of introduction of irrigation he says that on the whole, a majority of landlords in the village are from Reddy and Kamma castes. Among the backward castes, scheduled castes and scheduled Tribes, two out of five are landless agricultural labourers and three out of five are marginal and small farmers. There is only little Brahmin family, which is having temple priest position but does not own any land. Similarly, out of seven Vaisya families, five are landless but having business and money lending. The economically and politically dominant Reddy caste is also dominant in villages. Among the total families of this caste, only one or two is landless. It may be stated that higher the caste, larger is the size of landholding and greater the number of landowners. On the other hand, lower the caste, fewer are the landowners and greater the number of landless agricultural labourers.

Various castes and their size of landholdings in the case of irrigated villages the higher the caste, greater the number of landholders from the upper castes. In other words, more land is concentrated in the hands of the upper castes. The analysis gives a clear idea that a majority of the upper castes i.e., Brahmin, Vaisya, Reddy and Kamma possess lands and landless people in these castes are very few in numbers. Among the backward castes, such as Kummari, Golla, Tenugu, Gouda, Padmasali, Goldsmiths and Barbers, nearly half of the
Golla and Padmasali families are landless and families in the remaining castes belongs to marginal, small and medium farmer category.

Therefore, it can be concluded that higher the caste, greater the number of landholders and the lower the caste, greater the number of landless and marginal farmers. This observation conforms to the findings of the other studies in both the irrigated and non-irrigated villages.

The changing agrarian relations and grass roots politics are visible in the region. The researcher analyzed the changing agrarian relations with the help of primary and secondary data. In this study the historical account of the changing agrarian structure with illustrations at the grass roots level since the time of Nizam feudal domination is given. In response to the armed rebellion led by the Communist Party the Jagirdari system was abolished and Nizam state collapsed. Even though, all castes and classes participated in the armed rebellion, ultimately it is the Reddies and Kammals who became the owners of the land. According to the researcher from 1970s onwards these landed communities started disposing their land due to land ceiling Act, increase in rates of the wage labour, crop failure, to meet the expenses of the social functions, and children's education.

But not all backward castes are in a position to buy lands from upper castes. Among the backward castes also they are class divided; it is the upper layer of the backward castes to which land shifted from traditional upper castes (Reddys). Some of the backward caste middle peasants too purchased lands from upper castes in some areas of the region. It means that the capacity of land purchase of the backward castes while aspiring to become landowners has always retained the support of their traditional caste occupations. In few villages Padamasalis bought lands largely on the profits they made on their weaving occupation. Besides in some of the villages the Yadavas bought lands from upper castes while retaining their traditional occupation, sheep grazing.

Likewise the toddy tappers purchase or rent in lands while retaining their traditional caste occupation: toddy tapping. While the better off members of backward castes bought lands in larger scale, the backward caste middle and small peasants bought lands on moderate scale. Thus while speaking of land transfers it appears to be necessary to take into account two factors: A) The class differentiation among the backward castes B) The extent of support, financial and social, that they obtain from their traditional caste occupations.

The Caste remains to be the dominant social category in the region. Like most villages and towns under the British administration Brahmins in villages had enjoyed a near
dominant power in social and economic terms. Of course they had to share it with Kammas, the traditional land-holding caste in the feudal period. But still the Brahmin superiority was quite high. In other areas, Reddis dominated the socio-economic order. But Brahmins had a good control over the official positions and at least others including the Reddis did not challenge their claims to special superiority. But after independence and particularly after the introduction of land reforms and of the Panchayat Raj Brahmins in both the villages have lost their overwhelming superiority and power both in terms of material dominance and political superiority.9

The existing studies in on the caste polarization in the region reveals that half of the wetland is in the possession of forward castes. The rest is divided among all other castes. They reveal that the backward castes have not gained anything in terms of economic betterment. Increasing competition from factory made goods and increasing replacement of the barter economy worsened their position. Besides they have not gained much by way of land reforms. Only few they have emerged as the small and marginal farmers but majority of them are the agricultural labour.

There is a closer association between caste status and land ownership. The higher the caste status greater is the chance of owing arable land and lower the caste status higher the chances of they being in agricultural labour.10 The villagers depending on the land owned by a farmer put them into different categories, which they use in their day-to-day conversations. They are Pedda ryutu, who possess about 10 acres of agricultural land and a considerable quantity of coconut garden (more than 20 acres together), Chinna ryutu, who possess one to three acres of paddy land and one to two acres of coconut gardens (nearly less than 5 acres jointly). In between the above two categories of ryotulu are the landowners who possess land between 5-20 acres either agricultural land or coconut gardens jointly. They are categorized as madyarakam ryotulu. Except a Golla and two Settibalija landowners all the landowners, other than Rajulu, are Chinna ryutulu.

The analysis of the agrarian relations reveals that the landholding categories of the village are Reddys and Kammas. The large and big farmers among them, if put together, are more than the medium farmers. In contrast to Reddys and Kammas, among the Settibalija, unlike Mala and Madiga marginal farmers form the largest category. In fact, between both Mala and Madiga all the landowners are marginal farmers. Mong Golla there is only one person who owns land and belongs to small farmer category. The caste groups Kapu and Mangali do not possess any land.
The agrarian hierarchy, by and large, corresponds to the caste hierarchy in Rayalaseema region as well. Even within each category the caste differentiation can be seen in terms of land ownership. For instance, among the marginal farmers, the average landholding differs between Settibalija, and the SCs; between Rajulu and other middle ranking castes (B.Cs). Thus it is clear that even the class hierarchies follow the caste hierarchies.

Another important study, which made an attempt to analyze the changing agrarian relations, while taking a village as sample in Aluru mandal of Kurnool district in Rayalaseema region\textsuperscript{11} is by Rajasekhar. His work covers the nature of changing agrarian relations from 1891-1984. He divided this period into various phases such as pre-independence, pre-tenancy, post-tenancy, land reforms and green revolution and their impact on land transfers.

Important conclusions of the author on the changing agrarian relations can be seen in two sets of terms (a) acquisition or alienation of land by families with different size classes of land holdings and (b) caste categories.

(a) I) from 1891 to 1948 movement of land transfers was from the large non-cultivating families to the large cultivating families. On the eve of the tenancy reforms in the fifties absentee landowners successfully disposed of their lands to the middle and rich farmers residing in the village. But on the eve of the legislation on ceiling in 1961, the rich farmers ceased to acquire lands any further from the small and marginal farmers who were indebted to them.

ii) Over the years, small and poor farmers could bring cultivable waste under the plough and acquire some economic cushion against the rigours of a subsistence economy in a semi-arid zone.

iii) Inequalities of land ownership in the village had declined between the periods 1948 to 1984. This is consistent with the picture at a macro level. Land transfers (LTs) viewed in terms of caste categories exhibit the following features.

(b) I) Brahmins, who were the single largest landowning community in the village, had not only leased and disposed their lands but a great majority of them had out migrated from the village in search of jobs elsewhere.

ii) As in other regions of Andhra, when the Brahmins left the village the existing dominant cultivating community namely, Reddies filled in the vacuum and strengthened their position still further. However, unlike the Kammas, their counterparts in the coastal Andhra Reddies in Rayalaseema were slower, in diversifying the economic activities beyond agriculture.
iii) It was the non-dominant cultivating communities, such as the *Yadava* and section of *valmikis* who brought the cultivable wastes under the plough. This provided them with some land base to diversify their activities in to sheep rearing, petty trade and so forth.

iv) Overall, the economic power balance has been gradually moving away from the *Reddies*—the dominant cultivating caste of the village.

The studies, which are reviewed, indicate the concentration of the land and its relation to social structure (caste) and natural capital (land). One striking finding of the scholars is that higher the caste more the land and lower the caste greater chances of being small and marginal farmers and agricultural labor. All the works are also reflecting shift in ownership of the land and reasons for the transfer of land. In all the three regions of the state, first, it was the Brahmins who lost their control over the land, then the landed dominant castes, now it is shifting into the hands of backward castes and Dalits. But it is not due to the distribution of the land by the Government to the lower castes. It is because of fact that the heavy revenue, failure of the crops, increase in the labour and inputs costs, tensions in the villages, expenses on the education and marriages of the children, land ceiling Acts etc have forced the land owners to sell their land. The surplus in the traditional occupation, borrowings have helped a section of backward castes to purchase the land. Therefore, a few of the backward castes emerged as the small and marginal farmers, but larger section of them are a part of the labour class.

At the same time these studies, which are referred above did not focus on accessibility to physical (irrigation assets, agricultural implements and machinery, and consumer durables), financial, (investment, savings and credit), social capital (membership stakeholders group and intra group support) and human development (levels of literacy and education, health status, and skills) of the backward classes as they are discussed in the Livelihoods Assessment Report (LAR).12

The Livelihoods Assessment looked at the livelihoods position of the poorest of the poor in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh. This is done for the implementation of the Rural Poverty Reduction Project from the year 2002 in 16 districts. The findings of the report with regard to backward classes are that they are small and marginal farmers; more vulnerable to drought and other natural disasters than those who are not dependent on land.

While referring to the poorest of the poor backward castes the report describes them as largely landless, they live on daily wages, carry out physical labour, and live a hand-to-mouth existence, eat only when they have worked. In particular, the men in these households
are very likely to be in attached labour. It is highly unlikely that women are in attached labour, and if they are then this is a sign of real desperation. The households are characterized by a high dependency ratio, with low skills and education levels. Children are likely to be kept out of school and to be carrying out wage labour. At certain times of the year, these families will be dependent upon the support of others, and in times of crisis have nothing to fall back on. They will have little access to credit, and those who can access will have to bear very high interest rates; as a result the rates of indebtedness are high. They live in old thatched huts, which they do not own. Female-headed households (destitute and single women), the elderly and the long-term sick are likely to be amongst these households. These households also show high levels of ill health, with little means for health care.  

Keeping in view six DPIP districts such as Ananthapur, Chittoor, Mahaboobnagar, Adilabad, Srikakulam and Vijayanagaram, the report estimated that 24 percent of the backward castes are landless, 60% are small and marginal farmers with the land holding of 2.19 acres 64 percent of them holds up 9 small livestock like hen, sheep, goat etc. With regard to physical capital, the irrigation assets and agricultural implements and machinery are closely related to land holding size of the family. 

In case of financial capital most of the times backward castes depend upon the private moneylenders charging high rate of interests than the banks for seeds, fertilizers and chemicals, agricultural implements and expenditures like festivals and marriages. Generally, the backward castes borrow short-term loans and small amounts. If they are defaulted due to lack of regular wage labour or failure of the crop they are harassed both by the moneylenders and banks, which can be examined with help of field, based case studies. A case study from Ayyagaripalli of Kesamudram in Warangal district illustrates the kind of harassment engineered by the co-operative bank for taking a short-term loan of Rs 5000/-. This marginal backward caste farmer is having two acres of wetland, on surety of the land he got loan for the agriculture purpose, due to adulterated seeds the crop failed and he did not pay the loan in time, therefore the cooperative bank officials confiscated his entire property and auctioned.  

Another case study in the same village is that one Mangisetty Krishna Murthy emigrated one decade ago with small amount of money and started the petty business; within a few years he became a moneylender in the village and made fabulous income. He also started seizing the land from the defaulters. One such sufferer is Mamidi Venkanna, belonging to the backward caste, had land when Mangisetty Krishna Murthy arrived in the village, but within a few years he lost his land and migrated for the survival and also to pay the debt borrowed from the moneylender. These instances reveal that if a backward caste
marginal farmer borrows from the bank, his property will be auctioned and if the loan is taken from a private moneylender he will have to migrate; whereas an upper caste emigrate into the village he will become rich within a few years.

With regard to the social capital of the backward castes, in the informal institutions like self-help groups their role is active, especially backward castes women, but the benefits from the government are meager. The role of backward castes women in building self-help groups, village organizations and Mandal Mahila Samyakhas (Division level women federations) is well appreciated, but their role in the decision making is neglected due to the educational backwardness, lack of awareness in leading an institution and denial of the accessibility to occupy the leadership.

Education and Other Aspects

As far as the human capital of the backward castes is concerned they are too backward in terms of knowledge, education, and health. In terms of education the percentage of literacy among the backward classes is very poor. According to a study on 'the state of primary education in Rayalaseema region by the Center for Public Policy Studies for UNICEF', most of the dropouts from the primary schools belong to the Dalit and backward classes. The Child labor is also very high among the backward classes. Though the BC Social Welfare Department existed to provide hostel accommodation it is not sufficient incentive to these children. The privatization process further affected the backward classes in two ways. It has been destroying the sources of the livelihood and hiking in expenditure on education in the private institutions. With the result the backward castes are unable to meet the growing financial burden, as a consequence of which they are remaining uneducated.

According to Livelihoods Assessment Report of SERP the proportion of workers having traditional skills without formal training is higher among the workers belonging to backward castes due to the fact that they inherited the skill from their families down the generations. Modern skills either in traditional occupations or non-traditional occupations are conspicuously absent among the backward caste workers.

In the case of employment, since employment opportunities are declining in the government sector in recent years, the percentage of backward castes employees increasing. At present the major sources of employment are available in the corporate organizations, which are not interested either in giving the job opportunity or implementing the reservations for the backward castes. In the field of media, both print and electronic, the representation of the backward classes is either nil or meager. The entire media now in Rayalaseema region
Pradesh is concentrated in the hands of upper castes; therefore, they are not given an opportunity either to articulate their problems or to work in the media.

With regard to theorization of the backward castes, among the intellectuals there is a lot of confusion. Unlike, Ambedkar, who theorized about the caste, based on exploitation of the Dalits, and Karl Marx who theorized the class-based exploitation of the working class, but hardly any attempt is made to conceptualize the exploitation of the backward castes either in the pre or post independent periods. The backward castes intellectuals like Kancha Ilaiah, U. Sabmasiva Rao tried but they have created a lot of confusions. The former says it is dalitbahujans\textsuperscript{16}, the latter says the mahajans\textsuperscript{17}, in between the innocent backward castes are confused whether they are Dalitbahujan or mahajans or occupational communities or any other identity.

**Political Representation of Backward Classes of Rayalaseema**

The political representation of a particular community decides their socio-economic position in the society. A close observation of table 5.1 and 5.2 reveals that the backward community political representation in Rayalaseema region is very poor. Their representation in different Assembly elections is never reached the double digit number. In 1957 Assembly elections they failed represent even a single candidate. In 2 out of 14 assembly elections they have no representation from Anantapur district. In 7 out of 14 from Chittoor district they never have any representation. From YSR Kadapa district and Kurnool districts, they have no representation during 9 elections and 4 elections respectively.
Table-5.1
Representation of BC Communities Rayalaseema Region in Andhra Pradesh
State Legislative Assembly during 1952 -2009

<table>
<thead>
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<th>S.NO</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>Total</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1955</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1994</td>
<td>4</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>2009</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Reports of Election Commission of India

Coming to representation in house people the backward classes never opened their account in 3 districts so far. From 1989 onwards one representative (except 1999) from backward communities representing in House of the People from Anantapur district only.
Table-5.2
Representation of BC Communities of Rayalaseema Region in House of the People During 1952-2009

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<th>Chittoor</th>
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<th>Kurnool</th>
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<tr>
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Source: Reports of Election Commission of India
References


3. Ibid, p.49.


17. A pamphlet released by the Mahajans Party on the name of its president, Samba Siva Rao, at Nandyal of Kurnool district in AP, 8th, March 2003.