In order to estimate the invaluable services of Christian Missionaries to the people of India in general, and Andhras in particular, it is essential to understand the then existing socio-cultural and economic systems during the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries of coastal Andhra and especially to understand the contributions of the Lutheran Medical Missionaries to the people of coastal Andhra.

A. The Political Conditions:

The coastal Andhra is a narrow strip of maritime country on the Bay of Bengal extending from 150-20° to the north latitude and from 79.20° to 85.20° east longitude. The country formed a part of the great Vijayanagar empire which suddenly declined after its defeat in Tallikota war in 1585 and passed under the control of the Qutubshahi Dynasty of Golconda. Towards the end of the rule of Abu Hussain Qutub Shah, Golconda passed to the Mughals under Aurangzeb in 1687, and it became a part of the Mughal Empire. After Aurangzeb’s death in 1707, the Mughal Empire was on the decline and Umar-ud-Din Siddiqi with the title Asaf Jah who remained a Viceroy under the Mughals as the Subedar of the Deccan assuming the title Nizam-ul-Mulk.

Taking advantage of the disorder in the wake of the decline of Mughal Empire the Zamindars on the East coast began to usurp the power of the Mughal Collectors. The leading Zamindars in the region were the Rajahs of

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3 Rajahmundry. Hereafter the Journal is mentioned as JAHRS.

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Vizianagaram, Bobbili, Pithapuram, Mogalturu and Nuzvid. The Nizam, after establishing his position in the Subah of Golconda (Deccan), appointed Nawabs to rule over the several divisions and Rajahmundry was one of these. In order to collect the arrears of tribute form the several Zamindars of Rajahmundry and Chicacole (the present Srikakulam) Divisions, Anwaruddin appointed Rustum Khan as a General. After the death of Rustum Khan, his son Nuruddin Hussain was appointed for the same purpose of collecting arrears of revenue from the Zamindars.

It was the time of the European Companies establishing trading factories and carrying on trade in different parts of India including the Andhra Desa. The Portuguese, which was powerful in the 16th century for trade in the East, lost its supremacy from 1580 onwards. The Dutch on the other hand established factories at Masulipatnam in 1605 and later Pulicat, Surat and Chinsuran similarly. The French East India Company founded its factories at Surat in 1668, Masulipatnam in 1669 and Pondicherry in 1674. The English East India Company also set up a factory in Masulipatnam in 1611, and received permission from the Qutub Shahis of Golconda by the Golden Firman in 1632 for trade. In the course of time the English trade on the Eastern side was extended form Masulipatnam to the Seaports of Orissa and started factories at Hariharpur. After the establishment of Fort St. George in 1642, it displaced Masulipatnam as the chief settlement of the Trading Companies on the Coramandel Coast. In

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5 Ibid.
8 Sha Rocco, *Golconda and the Qutub Shahis*, Lahore: n.p.. 1920. P. 17
course of time the English established themselves securely for trade in the wake of the Dutch losing their importance in India. As a consequence, the French and the British were left as formidable rivals in India.

The death of Nizam in 1748, an opportunity was seized by both the French and the English to interfere in the succession dispute. In a war that followed one claimant Muzafar Jung with the help of the French succeeded to the throne of Hyderabad. The French in return obtained the grant of Circars lying to the south of the Krishna. When Muzafar Jung was succeeded by Salabat Jung the concession of the Circars was confirmed.\textsuperscript{10} The Zamindar of Vizianagaram was recognized by the French for collecting rent for the two Circars - Rajahmundry and Chicacole. This favour shown to Vizianagaram by the French was resented by the Zamindar of Bobbili, who was determined to drive out the French at any cost. He entered into a treaty with the English,\textsuperscript{11} whereby among other things, the English and the Rajah of Vizianagaram had agreed to combine their armies in an endeavor to drive out the French form the Northern Circars.\textsuperscript{12} This resulted in the battle at Chendurti or Kundur on 7\textsuperscript{th} December 1758.\textsuperscript{13} The English defeated the French and consequently the Northern Circars came into the possession of the British. The acquisition of Northern Circars was confirmed by the \textit{Firmana} of the Mughal Emperor in 1765. Among the Circars, Guntur remained till 1782 under the possession of Basalat Jung, the brother of Nizam Ali of Hyderabad.

Slowly the Nizam’s power and authority became increasingly dependent on the British. In 1778, a British Resident supported by a British force

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., pp. 209-14.
\textsuperscript{12} J.A.H.R.S., Vol. III, pp. 200-1014
was posted at Hyderabad. One year later, Guntur was rented out to the British. From there they exercised better control over Central Andhra. Though Guntur was almost at once handed back to the Nizam on orders from Calcutta, it was definitively acquired by the British in 1788.\textsuperscript{14} Thus the whole of coastal Andhra came under the British rule.

After another ten years, Wellesley forced the Nizam into a subsidiary alliance and this has resulted in acquiring four districts called the “Ceded Districts”, and these were Bellary, Cuddapah, Ananatapur and Kurnool of the Madras Presidency.\textsuperscript{15}

As elsewhere in South India, much of the administrative setup was in the hands of some Hindu chieftains, popularly known as the Palayakars. During 18\textsuperscript{th} century some of them figure prominently in the Jesuit documents of the period, for example, those of Anantapur, Tadipatri, Bellary and Kurnool in the West, and Darsi, Tenali, etc., in the east.\textsuperscript{16} Under the Palayakars there were other local chiefs, known as maniakars, who acted as Revenue and Police Officers. Added to these, the Patel was the Head of the village, acting as Magistrate and Rent-Collector as well.

Further, Brahmins despite being a minority dominated the social life because they were also administrators and financiers. But they were challenged not only by the Nayudus as Palayakars, but also by the great land owners and farmers who were from the Reddi and the kamma ethnic communities, often known under the generic name of Kapus. Boyas were the traditional fighters

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., pp. 9-10.
serving in the forces of the *Palayakar’s* (many were found in Haidar Ali’s army). However, the *Reddis* were also considered good fighters, whenever the occasion arose.\(^\text{17}\)

**B. The Physical Features:**

The coastal Andhra is a long narrow strip with an inclined plane of little width in the Northern part which is barely 20-25 KM wide between the Sea and the Eastern Ghats but gradually widens to about 150 KM in South owing largely to the vast stretches of alluvial buildup by river Godavari in the North and river Krishna in South.\(^\text{18}\) The Eastern Ghats rise by gradation in successive ranges, a raise parallel to the Sea and Coastal districts, but in South a waken chain known as Veligonda and Nallamalai hill ranges. The area is drained principally by two rivers Godavari and Krishna which provide vast stretches of fertile alluvial soil, buildup on either of their branches. The river Kaveri in extreme South and Gundlakamma also provide water sources further to the South of the region. There are few other minor rivers such as Vamsadhara, Ghostani, Eluru and Sarada in North and Munneru, Musi and Palery in the South. Since the area has gradation from West to East, all these rivers are rain-fed streams and flow from West to East and ultimately flow into the Bay of Bengal.\(^\text{19}\)

The region falls in the semi-arid zone with an average precipitation of 1200 mm in the North and 800-1050 mm in the South. The rainfall is heaviest in the coastal regions and gradually decreases towards the upland areas. No major hill zone traverses the area in the South except for a few isolated hillocks and the

\(^\text{17}\) Banarji, R.N., *ibid.*, pp. 36-38.


ranges such as Kondapalle and Kondavidu in Krishna and Guntur districts. The fertile soils of this region are the alluvium and black regor in mid-land areas while the sandy and saline soil on areas and the coastal red soils in the interiors. On the basis of the differences in climate, rainfall and other features, in the region may be divided into three physiographic zones - the coastal area, the midland area and the upland area.

The hilly regions are covered with tropical moist deciduous forests while the plains by tropical dry deciduous forests. In between the hill ranges and Bay of Bengal, is spread the fertile land mass of black regor type which yield double to triple crops if the water source is adequate. The Godavari and Krishna delta regions are much more fertile and are considered the Rice Bowl of India. The density of population is very high in these deltaic regions when compared to the upland areas.

C. The Economic Conditions:

As the land is watered copiously by these rivers, agriculture has emerged as the main occupation of the people. Although Tobacco, Chillies and Cotton are extensively cultivated as cash crops, ninety percent of the area is used for food crops, such as rice and millet. Besides the delta areas of the Krishna and the Godavari Districts, some areas in Nellore, Guntur and Prakasam districts are brought under cultivation with water drawn from wells and tanks.

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21 Ibid.
Industrially, the coastal Andhra Districts did not grow much. The industries come out of agricultural activities - rice, oil milling and sugar. The mineral development is very limited in the Coastal districts.

Innumerable inscriptions attested to the existence of self-sufficient villages during the ancient and the early part of medieval period. But this situation underwent a radical change during the latter part of the medieval period. The advent of European Trading Companies aggravated this situation and it has resulted in the disintegration of the self-sufficient villages during the 17th and 18th centuries.

Weaving flourished as an independent craft. The production of cloth, especially printed cloth was widespread. All over the coastal region, Machilipatnam, Nizampatnam, Narsapur, Armagoan, Mangalagiri, Pulicat and Nellore gained name as notable Centres of weaving. The commodities were produce with a twofold aim: 1). Handicraft production for the market interlinked with agriculture in the peasant holds, and 2). The production carried out by artisans in towns and villages for sale in the market.23

The Europeans played a vital role in the changed situation. They introduced in India the ‘Agency System’, and by which, they advanced money to the weavers and other artisans who were obliged to sell their goods to the concerned European group alone. As a result, the freedom and power enjoyed by the Indian merchants collapsed under the Joint Stock Companies. A hierarchy consisting of Chief merchant and Subordinate merchants to the Chief Broker and subordinate Brokers, the Dubashi, the Vakil, etc., came into being with many of

23 Banarji, R.N., Ibid., p. 46.
the local merchants becoming agents and middlemen to the English East India Company. The English Factories became focal points of trade activity while the Temple Centres lost control over the markets.24

It was a misnomer to believe that private property of land did not exist in India until such time, the East India Company introduced the Ryotwari system in the early part of the 19th century. A number of inscriptions of the Medieval period mentioned eight forms of ownership: Nidhi (Treasure-trove), Nikshepa (property deposited in the land and not claimed by another), Pashama (mines), Siddha (lands yielding produce), Sadhya (produce from lands) etc.25 Water privilege was also enjoyed by the people. The epigraphical sources of the period indicate that the sale and purchase of land was carried out for religious and charitable purposes as well.

C.1. Revenue Collections:

The Zamindari system was very much prevalent in the Madras Presidency26 of British India. The establishment of British rule did not either spell doom or total destruction of the Zamindars. The Zamindars in the Andhra region were mostly from the upper caste non-Brahmin such as Kshatriyas, Velamas or Kammas.27 Even though the British had taken a sizeable portion of their land and power, they were allowed to collect rents for the Government.

Agriculture was the occupation of the people in the Andhra region. According to 1891 census of Madras Presidency, 8.35 percent of the entire

25 Ibid., p. 382.
26 Maclean, C.D., Manual of Administration, p. 385
population in that region was non-cultivating land occupants, 23.39 per cent were cultivating land occupants and 15.36 per cent were cultivation tenants and sharecroppers. The Census also showed that about 19.61 per cent of the population were agricultural labourers, working as farm-servants, the labourers employed on yearly basis, normally called as Paleru and field labourers, people employed for work during the farming and harvesting seasons, normally known as Coolie. Besides this group there were many people engaged in different professions, normally based on their caste, like Barbers, Washerman, Carpenters, Pujaris, Masons, builders, etc. It was the agricultural classes, primarily the small peasants that suffered most in society due to existing laws and regulations. Under Ryotwari tenancy, the share of the Government was theoretically put at half the value of the net produce of the land. In addition to this, the people had to pay the land tax, normally based on the total produce of the year and may vary from land to land and district to district. A.V. Ramana Rao in his study on “Economic development of Andhra Pradesh” mentions,

On an average the costs and the profits of a ryot in Krishna district were as follows: the total value of the produce from an acre was Rs. 160, out of which the ryot had to pay Rs. 80 towards government assessment, Rs. 27.30 in the form of miscellaneous taxes and Rs. 42.80 by way of cultivating expenses. The balance he was left with was a paltry sum of Rs. 10 for the whole year.

To collect revenue, many inhuman methods were employed by the Revenue Officials. The people being extremely poor, ignorant, and afraid of dire
consequences, they neither complained against tortures nor made any representations to the Government. Thus, in the first place, the Land Revenue System became an oppressive force and people were unwillingly pursued cultivation and many left their lands and looked for some other alternatives. Secondly, the frequent famines during the 19th century also added to their plight.  

D. Exploitation and Injustice:

On account of the caste system, ignorance, and illiteracy of the people and the concentration of economy in only one group of people, the gap between the rich and poor was too wide and the Missionaries could notice a lot of injustice being done to the poorer and Dalit section of the people, especially by the rich and the upper Caste people. The people in the power and the rich exploited the poor and the marginalized sections of the Society.

Worlein, a British Officer remarked that “Outrageous injustice against the low caste people is on the agenda in India by the native employees of the British government, and the low caste people could not ‘read, write and do arithmetic’”.  

Because of their poverty, these people could not open their mouths against any injustice done to them and if they do so, they would not get any more jobs from the rich Landlords and had to go hungry. Worlein expressed his desire to help such people, who were not having regular work, and if some agricultural land is given to them, they live in a respectful manner. With regard to water to the fields also such a similar exploitation continued. There were instances when the low caste people were refused to get water to their rice fields by the Rajah and his

31 Ibid., pp. 63-67.
workers. There were many cries from the people about these unjust practices by
the workers of Rajah but nobody was there to hear them and help them.\textsuperscript{33}

**E. Social Conditions in India:**

The Hindu society is one of the most complex of the societies. Peculiar only to it is the caste-system. It was on the axis of caste-system that political institutions revolved and social relations were based. Economic relations also revolved round it. According to informed Sociologists, caste-prejudices and caste-affiliations became intensified and emerged as the single great hurdle to India’s homogeneity and progress. Indian political institutions, economic and social relations largely reflect caste-propensities. The statement may appear exaggerated, but it is true.

In the ancient period, the Hindu society was divided into four \textit{varnas} as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra,\textsuperscript{34} and it is the social ladder in which the Brahmins occupied the top most rung and the other three placed in order of prominence. According to the ancient lore which was Puranic in nature, God created the four \textit{varnas} referred to supra from different parts of his body- the Brahmin from his mouth, the Kshatriya from his shoulders/arms, the Vaisya from his thighs and the Sudra from the feet.\textsuperscript{35} The 10\textsuperscript{th} Mandala of the \textit{Purusha Sukta} of Rigveda says:

\begin{quote}
\begin{center}
Brāhmāasya mukhamāśīt Bōhūrajanyā kruthahī
\end{center}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\begin{center}
Ōru thadasya yadvaisyahī Padbhōgyum Sudrō ajāyathāī
\end{center}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{33} Hanumantha Rao, B S L., Ibid., p. 263.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Vasisista Dharma Sastra}, Chapter IV
It was vigorously preached and universally believed without demur even by the lower caste Sudras that the first three castes are the twice born (Dwija), while the Sudras were born only once. Naturally as centuries passed by, the first three castes came to occupy the place of prominence in every aspect of human life and the Sudra was pushed down, and ultimately emerged as servile category for the upper caste people. What used to be a division of labour and was completely flexible with inter-marriages and inter-dining later became utterly rigid. The Hindu society came to be divided into watertight compartments and many restrictions came to be placed on the Sudras. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, after thorough research gave his opinion that at the beginning of the emergence of caste-system in Indian there were only three castes - Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaisya. The fourth varna known as the Sudra was an outcome of the fight between Brahmins and Kshatriyas for the supremacy in the caste hierarchy and those that were vanquished became Sudras.36

As generations passed by, many social taboos and evils sucked the Sudras and they were barred from witnessing religious rites, from consuming soma, from wearing the yagnopavita, from studying the Vedas and from kindling the sacred fire.37 As time passed, the Sudra got entangled in the thick of social mire. The Sudra’s social status was no more than that of a servant. Vedas could not be recited in his presence. Recitation of Vedas should be stopped even at the distant sight of a Sudra woman.38 The situation further deteriorated during the period of Manu, the Lawgiver. What was a social taboo became a political one

37 Kathaka Samhita (XXXI-2), Satapatha Brahmana (III.i.110), Maitravani Samhita (VII.1.1.6) and Panchavamsa Brahmana (VI.1.11) refer to the restrictions imposed on the State.
too. Sudra was considered as unfit to govern or take the mantle of any responsibility. A Brahmin, it was ruled, should not reside in a Kingdom if a Sudra was at the helm of affairs.\textsuperscript{39} If a Brahmin consumed food prepared by Sudras, he would be born in the next birth as a pig.\textsuperscript{40} If a child was born to a Brahmin man and Sudra woman, the offspring of such a union would never find place, however righteous he or she might be, in heaven.

**E.1. Karma Siddhanta:**

Law in primitive society was an instrument for exploitation to keep the weak in subjugation. The *karma* theory, which was the bane of contention in the Hindu society, encouraged the people to accept whatever that comes in his or her way. Such unquestioned loyalty to the existing laws and social systems would assure good place in the next life. To do anything contrary to this injunction would be to invite a worse life in the next birth. Vast majorities in the Hindu society believed in karma theory and continued to follow it generations after generations and even today.\textsuperscript{41} The karma theory therefore kept large sections of Hindu society in a state of bondage and servility.

The Sudras were in this state of servility in all activates of life. If ancient and medieval judicial processes are observed, one finds naked discrimination. For similar offences, punishment prescribed and awarded was rigorous for the Sudra, whereas the Brahmin escaped with a little or no punishment at all. Even for social offences, the Sudras were subjected to

\textsuperscript{39} *Manusmriti* is replete with such propositions.
\textsuperscript{40} *Vasisista Dhrama Sastra*, Chapter VI, verses 27-29.
\textsuperscript{41} Ambedkar, B.R., op. cit., p. 203.
floggings and even capital punishment.\textsuperscript{42} In a nutshell, the Sudra in the ancient and medieval times had only duties to perform, but no rights to exercise.

The Sudras with the passage of time especially during the modern period, secured professional skills and acquired lands. They gained economic security and with it social respectability. When agrarian society began to be transformed into an industrial one with the progress of Industrial Revolution, the Sudras became a capitalist class and have overtaken the Brahmins, the Vaisyas and the Kshatriyas,\textsuperscript{43} and with their initiatives and enterprise and through hard work resulting in economic power, they acquired vast political power as well.

The emergence of the fifth caste called the \textit{Panchamas} was not the result of some sudden historical development; but evolutionary. As years rolled by, the position of the fifth caste in the Hindu hierarchy became so miserable that the people of this caste were equated with mean animals, and considered not even touchable. A mere touch of a person of the \textit{Panchama} caste rendered the people of other castes inclusive of Sudras polluted and a laborious ritual and ceremony had to be observed to obtain ablation.\textsuperscript{44}

The \textit{Panchamas} were treated as casteless. So, they came to be called as \textit{avarnas}. Centuries of oppression of the \textit{avarnas} reduced them to servitude. They had no question to ask, but only orders to take. Centuries of continuous misfortune suppressed the heat of his anger, and he patiently swallowed his miseries. This was India’s untouchable, who was subjected to every kind of suppression and oppression. They had become the weakest threads in the Indian

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Manudharma} narrates harsh punishment that should be awarded. For similar offences, Brahmins as a legal right escaped unscathed. Capital punishment was unthinkable in the case of a Brahmin because killing a Brahmin was one of the \textit{Pancha Mahapatakas}.

\textsuperscript{43} Hanumanth Rao, B S L., op. cit., p. 203

social fabric. They had a variety of nomenclatures such as Harijans, Depressed Classes, outcastes, Pariahs, Mlechas, Chandalas, Avarnas, Nishada, Paulkasas, Antyajas, etc.

Much literature⁴⁵ has emerged on the evils of the untouchability and much research has been carried out by the social Reformers belonging to Maharashtra, Bengal, Travancore and Cochin and Coastal Andhra. But in spite of the best efforts of research by Historians and Sociologists, the origin of untouchability is still couched in mystery and controversy.

There has been also a traditional touch as to the emergence of untouchables. According to Purushasukta, a part of Rigveda, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras were created by God from his mouth, arms, thighs and feet respectively. The people of the four castes according to traditional belief were Savarnas and those who emerged a new caste in the passage of time were named as Avarnas - people without caste. These Avarnas ultimately ended as untouchables. This theory is based on traditional belief but does not throw any light on how Avarnas came into being. It propagated however that the Avarnas were enmeshed in many Social Taboos. It does not even point to any mythological origin. Hence, this theory stands exposed as an unnatural and unscientific one.

Untouchability, which is the only one of its kind in the world assumed diabolical propositions in India in the course of time. The Manusmrithi⁴⁶ narrates the degradation in human state of the untouchables. Their dwellings shall be

outside of the villages. Their dresses are the skins of the dead animals. They should eat their food from broken dishes; their ornaments should be made of black iron; and they must wander from place to place. A Man who had to fulfill a religious duty should not have any physical touch with them. At night only, they should walk in villages and towns. By day, they might go about for the purpose of work confining themselves to marks made at the King’s command; they should carry the corpses of persons, who had no relatives. By the King’s order, he should execute the criminals. A person who is polluted by the touch or shadow of the untouchable should purity himself by bathing.

Untouchability became so conspicuous that even the early Foreign Travelers to India took note of it. The Chinese traveler Fahien, who visited India in the fifth century A.D., wrote saying,

Throughout the whole country the people do not kill any living creature. Do not drink intoxicating liquor, not eat onions or garlic. The only exception is that of Chandalas. That is the name for those we were (held to be) wicked and live apart from others. When they enter the gate of a city or a market place, they strike a piece of wood to make themselves known, so that others know and avoid them and do not come into contact with them.

_Vishnupurana_ mentions that those who committed the sin of looking at or conversing with untouchables, were destined to be born as dogs, crows, pigs, etc., in the next life. Another Chinese traveler Huen Tsang who travelled in India between 628 and 645 A.D., during the reign of Harshavardhana took note of the

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untouchables as scavengers, executioners, etc., and according to him, they lived outside the villages and consumed garlic and onion. The untouchables announced their entry into the town or village by shouting loudly, so that the people might keep away from them.\textsuperscript{50}

In the above pages, the emergence of caste system and untouchability are dealt with on wider Indian canvas. Here, the caste system and untouchability with special reference to the coastal Andhra districts is presented with a view to understand the dynamics of caste system in Andhra besides making a note of their history to keep up continuity.

\textbf{F. Social Conditions in Coastal Andhra:}

As elsewhere in India, the prevalence of the traditional Varna system in the social structure of Andhra Desa is seen in 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries. Brahmins held supreme position in the social ladder but diversification of professional attitudes was a notable feature among them. The epigraphical and literary sources including the foreign travelers accounts refer to the Brahmins as priests, officers, businessman, etc.\textsuperscript{51} In the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, the Zamindars of Visannapeta in the Krishna district, and Polavaram and Lakkavarama in Godavari districts were Brahmins.

In Andhra Desa the Kshatriya caste was not as prominent as they were in North India. Hence the political authority was vested in the hands of Brahmins and Sudras. The Vaisya community confined itself to trade and commerce. Besides trade, the Vaisyas also enjoyed revenue and judicial powers which they


\textsuperscript{51} Francis, W., \textit{Vishakhapatnam District Gazetteer}, (Madras: ) 1907.,P. 4.
exercised with great skill. They were also money lenders and earned high profits by charging exorbitant rates of interest. To perpetuate their earning, they offered valuable presents to the Rulers and it lead to a great deal of corruption in the society.\(^{52}\)

Sudras are a heterogeneous caste in Andhra Desa and were divided into several sub-castes each having its own caste rules. Members of each sub-caste married within their fold, though inter-dining was allowed with some restrictions. *Hamsarimsati*,\(^{53}\) a Telugu work of the 18\(^{th}\) century, refers to Reddy, Velama, Kamma, Balija, Kammara, Besta- kumara, Vadrangi, Kanchara, Viswabrahmin and Gaandla as the prominent Sudra communities. The State appointed separate heads from each sub-caste for the collection of dues from the people and to pay a part of it as tax. Thus the *Poligar* system for collection of dues emerged as a significant feature of the period. It was recorded that in the year 1800, there were 80 *Poligars* in the ceded districts who collectively maintained 30,000 armed men under their control. These *Poligars* in the course of time became powerful and consequently virtual rulers of their respective localities by the end of eighteenth century.

Among the professional communities, the weavers were a notable group. From the 16\(^{th}\) century onwards many of them became merchants and the richer among them took to production of cloth and employed a number of workers under them. The communities which took to the profession of weaving were known as *Sale, Padmasale, Kuruba* and *mala*.\(^{54}\) The people who worked as black

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\(^{52}\) Hanumantha Rao, op. cit., p. 70.


smiths, gold smiths, masons, carpenters and stone workers were called panchanamvaru. Each of them kept their caste identity by attributing themselves as kase, kummari, kammari, vadrangi and agasala.55

F. 1. Caste Rules:

According to the rigid caste system, the society in India, in general, Andhra Desa, in particular, is divided into several subgroups within the main fourfold caste system. Although not included in the social hierarchy, caste system had become a part of the social structure and people fitted into this structure by birth. The characteristics of caste include rigid, hereditary membership in the caste into which one is born, the practice of marrying only members of the same caste, restrictions on the choice of the occupation and personal contacts with members of other casts, and acceptance by each individual of a fixed place in society.56 The existing realities showed that caste system divided the society into small fragments and given chance for discrimination oppression and injustice.

Thus, caste system not only contributed to the promotion of injustice, oppression and discrimination but also made people to develop a pessimistic attitude towards life. This pessimistic attitude developed into fatalism, by accepting things and events that come by as inevitable, thereby making people not to attempt to do anything to change their life situation.57 Some, like traders (balijas and komatis), artisans (kamasalas and kummaras) and more skilled weavers (devangas, thogatas, sales) were regarded as caste people. Others such as

57 Ibid., p.6.
stone workers, toddy-tappers and farmers were considered as Dalits, the untouchable communities.

From the documentation at hand it appears that the caste system was then less rigid in Andhra than in the rest of south India. Another social fact stands out rather clearly. The womenfolk, particularly among the Reddys and Kammas, were less male-dominated, more independent and freer to accept changes, especially in religious matters.

F.2. Dalit Communities:

The next social group which was not included in the fourfold caste system in Andhra are Dalits who are untouchable communities of Mala and Madiga groups, popularly known as *Panchams, Pariyas, Chandalas* etc., and were segregated and treated as virtual slaves in the society and hence they were relegated to the bottom of the social hierarchy. Despised, abused, abhorred and shunned by all, they did not receive even the same consideration allowed to the cattle and dogs of the land. Their shadow was considered pollution. Even money was not received directly from their hands but must be placed on the ground before it can be accepted by another. If they were to bypass a caste man in the street, no matter how heavy the burden on their shoulders, they were hardly allowed to enter in to the village, and in cases of necessity and were to enter the residential areas of upper castes, they were compelled to carry a bowl in one hand to spit, a small bell in other hand to heralds their presence in the street and a broom stick be fastened to their back hanging to wipe away their foot prints.58

From the hygienic point of view, the residential areas of the untouchables were in the most miserable conditions. Their houses were small, wretched and closely packed together and were always located at the refuse and insanitary part of a village. Under no circumstances, they were permitted to draw water from the village tank or well. The schools of the land were virtually closed to them. It was an exception to find a pariah in any school, save those were sustained only by the Missionaries. When admitted to the school they were compelled like culprits to occupy the farther most corner of the class room.\(^{59}\)

They were not permitted to enter the Courts presided over by native Magistrates but were forced to stand outside the door step or window to give their evidence.\(^{60}\) Not a temple in the land was open to them, but they had to content themselves with a few unsheltered shapeless stones for their gods and appoint their own ignorant priest to administer their religious rights. They literally have no standing in society.

From the civil point of view, these people were deprived of all rights among their fellow Indians. The acquisition of land was out of question, except to a very few. These people were at the mercy of merciless creditors who can at any time possess themselves of houses, cattle, loom or tools in a civil action from the unfortunate people in lieu of the money they loaned.

Rev. L. L. Uhl, an American Missionary observed that the untouchables in Andhra were least cared for and if cared for at all by the Hospitals and Dispensaries having caste men in-charge who cannot make full examination

\(^{59}\) Ibid.

of the patient. They were deprived of vaccination in a majority of cases and even if any kind hearted person were willing to give vaccination they were afraid of the social prejudice. This had often resulted in high morbidity among the untouchables as the diseases like Malaria, Leprosy, Guinea worm, Hook worm and Influenza were endemic among them.\textsuperscript{61}

From the intellectual side, they were not given chance to think systematically and were denied of all forms and methods of thought with the result that they became almost like monomaniac and their consciousness to new stimulus was painfully slow.

Added to the above features, mention may be made that they were by no means a homogenous group. In fact, they consisted of two main competing communities - the Malas and the Madigas, with the social separation between them, being almost as great as a gulf dividing untouchables as a whole from their caste neighbours above. The Malas claimed superior status and considered themselves above the Madigas who were in a clean majority in Krishna, Godavari and Visakhapatnam Districts. The Malas were employed mainly in weaving and agricultural labour. The Madigas on the other hand lived in hamlets, quite separate from the Malas\textsuperscript{62} and their main duty was curing and tanning of hides and the manufacture of leather articles which include sandals, trappings for bullocks and large leather buckets used for irrigation purposes. In spite of the inferior social status, the Madigas were more prosperous and independent than the Malas, because of less competition in tanning work.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{62} Oddie, \textit{op. cit.}
In addition to the primary tasks, Malas and Madigas alike performed many other subsidiary services which though regarded as low and polluting were never the less essential for the smooth functioning of the village community. The Malas acted as village grave diggers and also removed and burnt the bodies of Brahmins and other caste people. Malas and Madigas were employed as porters, sweepers and scavengers and also considered eating the carcasses of the cattle.64

The Malas were mostly agricultural laborers and some of them were engaged in their duties like watching over the village tanks, performing animal sacrifices at the village festivals (Jathara), etc. They were mostly dependent on other caste people in the village for their daily bread and livelihood.65

F.3. Illiteracy and Ignorance:

Illiteracy and ignorance are two other dominating features common among the people living in villages, especially among the Sudras and Dalits. The social structure of the society and the dominating role of the Brahmins kept people in dark. There was a deep division among the people – the Brahmins, normally educated people and who claimed authority in interpreting the Hindu Scriptures and the Dalits and Sudras, who were not allowed to learn to read and write. Ignorance and illiteracy are two chief hindrances to any effort to aid people in bringing them up in life. This contributed to the inequalities among the people and the dominance of the so called rich and educated people in the society, especially in the rural context. This division in traditions as they received from the dominant

65 Ibid., p. 12.
castes, and the events as they came to them, without question and logical argument.\textsuperscript{66}

Kiehne taking about the people in consideration says: “The Chief occupation of the Hindus is agriculture and cattle breeding, besides all the handwork, which were necessary for their daily existence”. For example, the carpenter to build the houses, the smith to repair the plough and carts, the dhobi to wash the clothes, the barbers to shave and cut the hair and also to operate, the night and filed watchman to protect the village and the paddy fields and the most important Brahmins to perform religious ceremonies. All these people do not receive money, but received paddy and other corn for their services. They are dependent on the farmers.\textsuperscript{67} However, these people were not educated but learnt the skills in their craft from their fathers and forefathers.

\textbf{F.4. Joint Family System:}

The joint family system was very much popular during the period of this study. However, not much was said about this system among the Dalits, but among the caste Hindus it was very much prevalent. The joint family system was built on old patriarchal idea and according to which three or four generations normally lived under the same roof and enjoyed a community life and interest. The members of the family pooled all their earnings and ere maintained out of common fund.\textsuperscript{68}

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., p. 75
Caste has the peculiar merit of developing a strong sense of responsibility in the whole family for its every member. The members in the joint family system had to follow certain rules for the ceremonies that were performed at various stages in the life of an individual, like – birth of a child, naming of the child (namakaranam), looking for a marriage partner, marriage ceremony itself and finally death and the ceremonies connected with it. But at the same time, this system made people lazy and made them dependent on others, forgetting their responsibilities. Even though the joint family system was keeping the family together and following certain rules and regulations, it did not prevent child marriages, sati, and infanticide in the community.

G. RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES:

G.1. Hinduism:

In coastal Andhra, three major religions exist, namely, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. The adherents of these religious traditions observe the same religious beliefs and practices as their fellow believers do all over the country and they are too well known to need any elaborate description.

In 18th century, Hinduism in Andhradesa was divided into two different major sects, i.e., Saivism and Vishnavism. Further, Saivism was divided into Lingayats and non-Lingayats. To the Saivites, Srisailam, Kalahasthi, Alampur and Pancharamas were the important Pilgrimage Centres. Vaishnavism was also divided into two sects viz., Vishnavas & Madhwas. The former were disciples of Ramanuja and the later were of Madhwacharya. Between the two, the teachings of

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69 Ibid., p. 6.
Ramnuja were more liberal. This might have been the reason for the popularity and spread of Vaishnavism as against Madhwaism. Tirumala, Tirupati, Ahobilam and Bhadrachalam were the important Centres of pilgrimage to Vaishnavites. Conflicts between Saivites and Vishnuvites were not uncommon. Both of them had their mutts with a large number of followers. The kernel of both sects was bhakti. The elite participated actively in religious discourses while the masses in bhajans, festivals and religious kalashepamus, etc.

The Mutts were the centers of learning attached to temples.\textsuperscript{72} The Gurukula system of education was followed in all the mutts where they imparted higher knowledge of religious ideals. However, the entry to Gurukul schools was restricted to Brahmins and in course of time to the rich and elite sections of the society.\textsuperscript{73} The Sudras and Panchamas were totally denied the learning. Hence, illiteracy and ignorance had become important aspects of the majority of population. The worship of village gods and goddesses was a notable feature during 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries. The villagers of lower castes and Dalits principally worshipped female deities like Ganganamma, Poleramma, Yellama, Maremma, Sunkulamma and Mulipolokamma. The village deities were considered to bring dreaded contagious diseases such as Malaria, Cholera and plague and in order to appease them different types of ceremonies and sacrifices were performed.

\textbf{G.1.1. Hindu Beliefs:}

Religious life in the Indian society was greatly affected by the supreme position held by Hinduism. In Andhra Desa, the Brahmanical festivals like Sivarathri, Sri Rama Navami, Sankranti, Vinyaka Chaviti, Deepavali, Dasara,

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{72} Mackenzie, op. cit., p. 74.
\textsuperscript{73} Hanumantha Rao, B S L., op. cit. p. 382.
\end{footnotesize}
Vaikumtha Ekadasi were popular. Large Brahmanical shrines drew huge crowds of pilgrims, mainly from the richer sections of caste people. But the poorer sections of the people normally Sudras and Dalits offered their gifts and prayers to the local gods and goddesses. In the villages, one could notice numerous small shrines built for Grama-devatalu or village female deities such as Muthyalamma, Poleramma, Ganganamma, Maramma, Polamma and Chengalamma. Normally these devatalu neither did have any clear history nor any definite attributes and also normally they did not have any specified rituals, except in some cases where buffalo sacrifices were made. But the important feature with these village deities was/is that they were all equally worshipped as gods who avert dreadful diseases like cholera, smallpox, chickenpox, diseases to the animals and also gods who grant boons to the devotees who make vows before them. All their worship and religious practices are largely motivated by fear.

Besides regular religious worship and sacrifices, many people, especially in the villages, practice ancestor worship. Ancestor worship is reverence shown to the deceased relatives who are believed to have become powerful spiritual beings. It is based on the belief that ancestors are active members of society and are still interested in the affairs of their living relatives. Ancestors are believed to exercise great authority, having special powers to influence the course of events or to control the wellbeing of their living relatives. Protection of the family is one of their main concerns. They are considered intermediaries between the gods and the people, and can communicate with the

77 Ibid., pp. 45-46.
living through dreams or by possession. The attitude toward them is one of mixed
fear and reverence. If neglected, the ancestors may cause disease and other
misfortunes. Propitiation, supplication, prayer and sacrifice are various ways in
which the living can communicate with their ancestors. Ancestor worship is a
strong indication of the value placed on the household and of the strong ties that
exist between the past and the present. The beliefs and practices connected with
this cult help to integrate the family, to sanction the traditional political structure,
and to encourage respect for living elders. Some scholars have also interpreted it
as a source of individual well-being and of social harmony and stability. Because
family groups practice it, ancestor worship excludes proselytizing and rarely
involves a separate priesthood. It has no formal doctrines and is ordinarily an
aspect of some larger religious system.

This leads to the teachings of karma siddhanta.\textsuperscript{78} Karma is the sum
total of one’s own actions, good or bad. These actions are attached to the soul as it
transmigrates and each new body is determined by previous karma. The belief in
karma, which can be traced to the Upanishads, is accepted by all Hindus, although
they differ on many points. Some aspire to a mass good karma and a good rebirth,
while others, regarding all karma a bad, strive for release from the process of
rebirth (samsara) altogether, some believe that karma determines all that happens
to a person, whereas others attribute a larger role to destiny, divine intervention or
human effort.\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{78} Refer to the Doctrine of Karma and Transmigration in the light of the doctrine of Sin and

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
The people of 17th and 18th centuries were very superstitious. They believed in attaining miraculous powers by appeasing Goddess Durga or the village deities. To achieve superstitious powers the people resorted to self-torture, and even self-immolation. To appease their favorite god or goddess people performed dangerous deeds such as plucking out their eyes with the nail-parer, piercing their ears with arrows, cutting off their tongue with a sword and even chopping off the head with a pair of scissors etc. Some of the devotees dared even to pierce their body to a hook and kept hanging to it. This hook swinging ceremony was performed by both men and women. Another mode of self-torture practiced by some people was to walk or run over burning coals bare footed. Child marriages, denouncement of widow remarriages, sati which is the self-immolation on the pyre of the dead husband were also in practice during this period.  

Though society was tradition bound and caste ridden ancient values were still cherished. Dharma was the code of conduct that regulated a man’s work and activities. One of the virtues always advocated and cherished by the Hindu society was that of alms giving. These virtues of Hinduism include the support and respect to be given to a Brahmin and the protection of cows. Apart from these virtues, the Hindu society also advocated the need for obeying one’s own parents and teachers. The virtues of Maitri, Karuna, Seela, Vinaya, Santi, anuraga were also cherished by the devout Hindus.

Concerning the sexual morality, the virtue of Chasity was always held high with regard to the Indian women. Referring to Indian Women, Abbe Dubois observed that Hindu women are naturally chaste. According to him, the institution

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of prostitution was also prevalent in Andhradesa like any other parts of the country. This profession was not considered unholy and hence was widely accepted by people. According to an observation by Abbe Dubois “vesya darisanam punyam papa nasanam” which means that to have intercourse with a prostitute was a virtue which destroys sin.  

Adultery for a woman was thought to be a shameful act and it was condemned by the higher castes. But among the lower castes, some sections made it a profession with a certain religious approval.

Finally this period was not completely devoid of social and religious reformers who contributed much to improve the quality of life by their teachings. Among the social reformers two names viz., Vemana and Pothuluri Veera Brahmam strike as prominent figures. Vemana through his poems and discourses attacked social inequalities and distinctions based on birth. He condemned caste system and emphatically said that it was worth and not birth that should determine a man’s position. Veerabrahmam on the other hand condemned the hierarchy of caste and stood firmly for the liberation of women.

G.2. Islam:

The Muslims, like other followers of the Faith everywhere else, believe in Allah the one and only God and in Muhammad, the Holy Prophet as His messenger. The Qur’an is their Holy Book. Islam which means ‘submission to the divine will’, enjoins on all its faithful followers five duties which are 1) the

81 Ibid., pp. 310-311.
82 Satyanarayana, op. cit., p. 303.
recitation of the *Kalima* (an expression of faith in Allah and Prophet Muhammad),
2) the saying of *Namaz* (prayer) five times daily either individually or collectively,
preferably in a mosque, 3) *Roza* (fasting in the month of Ramdan), 4) Hajj
(Pilgrimage) to the shrine in Mecca, and 5) *Zakat* (charity in cash or kind). Many
Muslims also respect *Pirs* (saints) and visit their Dargas, particularly on the
occasions of their anniversaries called Urs.85 There are many such Dargas in
Coastal Andhra also.

Islam came to Deccan with the advent of Muslim rule. The Mughals,
the two Muslim rulers of Mysore, viz., Haider Ali and Tippu Sultan, the Golkonda
Nawabs and the Nawabs of Carnatic, Cuddapah and Kurnool helped Islam to take
deeper roots in different parts of Andhra and South India. The doctrine of
monotheism, a casteless society and equality of men which were propagated by
the Muslims has attracted many people to its fold.86

The Muslims who are numerically next to Hindus in coastal Andhra
belong mostly to the Sunni sect, though there were some Shias also. Generally
speaking, Muslims are not to be found confined to any particular profession. They
are to be found in almost in all walks of life. The important groups among them
are Shaike, Syed, Mughal and Pathan and the Shaikes outnumber the others.
*Dudekulas*, the cotton-cleaning group, can hardly be distinguished from the
Hindus in a professional sense.87

87 Rowena Robinson, “Marginalization and Violence: Concerns for India and its Muslims”, in
G.3. Christianity:

Christians of coastal Andhra, like their co-religionists all over the world, believe in God as the Sole Father of the universe and in Jesus Christ, His Son, as the messenger, who came down to earth to justify the ways of God to men. Christ is the Savior of humankind as He viewed with infinite compassion the fallibility of man and redeemed Him by shedding His own blood on the Cross. The Bible is the Holy Book of Christians and the Sermon on the Mount which is one of the most beautiful passages in all religious literature represents the *summum bonum* of Christian ethics.

Almost all the Indian Christians are converts from the Hindu fold. There are both Roman Catholics and Protestants whose Missionaries came to India from Europe, America and Canada. The Protestants however, are numerically larger and belong to various denominations such as the members of the erstwhile Church Missionary Society, London Missionary Society, SPG, SPCK and Methodist Churches who got amalgamated into one group and later came to be known as the Church of South India, Lutherans, Godavari Delta Mission, Indian Pentecostal Church of God, Seventh Day Adventists, Salvation Army and so on. The Canadian Baptist Church and the American Baptist Church also have considerable following in coastal Andhra. There were well built churches in coastal Andhra for both the Protestants and Roman Catholic Christians. The Christians of coastal Andhra have taken to a variety of professions, though a large number is engaged in the teaching, nursing and

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preaching professions. Even though Christianity does not recognize any caste system nevertheless, the influence of castes to which they belonged before conversion from Hinduism\textsuperscript{90} does operate in their general social life particularly in the matter of matrimonial alliances. Converts from the same caste tend to group together in such endogamous practices.

Almost all the sections of the Christians are found in coastal Andhra, a majority of who are converts from the so called lower castes of Hinduism. In most of the reports form the Missionaries sent to the Home Board, they had expressed their frustration at the reluctance of the other upper caste Hindus to come out openly for Baptism and become members of the local congregation. Even though many people had realized that Jesus Christ is the real Saviour and Christianity as the true religion, the caste system and the family bondage, in which they were caught up hindered them to embrace Christianity because by doing so they became aliens to their own people, and were driven away from their parents, relatives and friends and all the bonds of relationship with their own community was totally cut off, for which many people were not prepared.\textsuperscript{91}

Therefore, it can be said that Christianity was introduced at the beginning of 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries in coastal Andhra during the period, when the latter was politically in a fluid state, and economically much exploited by the European Trading Companies and socially divided by its own caste system and superstitious beliefs.\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., p. 129.
\textsuperscript{92} Oddie, G.A., Ibid.,
These observations lead the Researcher to a further study of religious beliefs, social and cultural traditions and customs and traditional practices of medical treatment in Andhra Desa during the British Colonial rule which is enumerated in the next Chapter.