In the foregoing chapters we have presented a picture of the political situation in Karnataka at three levels, viz., at the State level, at the District level and the Taluka level. While at these three levels the scenario that emerges being the same, at the macro, i.e., national level, it gives a different picture. That means to say, that at the State level, the caste factors and the local interests become predominant and at the National level, the issues and the parties become important. That does not mean that caste is unimportant at the national level elections. It must be pointed out that even for the national elections, the contesting parties take care to see that candidates are selected in such a way that they have the support of the dominant and the populous caste(s) of the area.

In the last forty years of our independence the political style has undergone change. In the initial stages of independence, the national party i.e., the Congress party, had a sway over the masses and over a period of time its political base got eroded and this was reflected in the pattern of the candidates and parties.
selected to the various legislatures and parliament. However, at the State level, even when the regional or other parties come to power, the caste and religious factors have become the determining ones.

The politics does not operate in a vacuum. The political process is closely linked with the social structure. In the case of Karnataka, as in other States, several factors seem to have contributed to the emergence of such a situation. The first and foremost is adult franchise. The second is the backward classes movement and lastly the introduction of democratic institutions at the local levels. These factors accentuated the collective consciousness of the different groups to have access to power and access to scarce resources.

In the pre-independence era, the power was vested in the upper castes, especially Brahmins, who are smart enough to make use of the opportunities thrown open by the British, especially English liberal education. Because of the structural constraints, the middle and lower castes were very slow to make use of the opportunities. In such a situation, it was natural for the deprived classes and castes to agitate for power. Although these deprived groups achieved some of their objectives partially, it
was only with the achievement of independence that they got full opportunities to capture power. It is in this context that the adult franchise came to the aid of the deprived classes, relegating the top castes, especially the Brahmins, to the background.

While the non-Brahmin castes have captured power at all levels, they are not a homogeneous group. It consists of several castes situated at different levels of hierarchy and population size and many of them are in conflicting situations with other groups. For example, the Scheduled castes and tribes are lowest in the hierarchy, and they represent about 17 per cent of the population. In spite of its large numbers, it has a very weak economic base and still subservient to the upper non-Brahmin castes. Although, they have reservations (quota) to political positions at all the levels, they have been unable to capture power at all levels. But, in contrast, the dominant castes, who are also in similar population sizes, have become determining factors in the political life of the State. As long as the lower castes are economically dependent on the dominant caste, it is difficult for the weaker sections to wrest power from the dominant castes, though Devaraj Urs during his regime did wrest power from the dominant castes for some period. In this, however,
the splitting up of the Indian National Congress Party, the factionalism within the dominant castes and the charisma of Mrs. Gandhi and Devaraj Urs aided the situation. This was also possible because of the conflict between the two dominant castes viz., Vokkaligas and Lingayats and their inability to produce a candidate who was acceptable to all. In fact, even after Urs till today* these two communities have not been able to produce a Chief Minister in the State, but then they have been effective as pressure groups. It is interesting that Devegowda, a former Irrigation Minister in the Janata government and the leader of the dominant Vokkaliga caste, held the Janata Party to ransom along with his dissident supporters, who are mostly from the Vokkaliga community, which ultimately resulted in the collapse of the Janata**

* S.R. Bommai, a Lingayat, became the Chief Minister of the Janata, later Janata Dal, Government for a brief period. This has created a rift, and further increased the estrangement between the two major community leaders.

** The Janata Party merged with one faction of Lok Dal and turned into Janata Dal Party. Devegowda and his supporters did not approve of this and remained outside the Janata Dal Party as its ardent critics. The expansion of the Janata Dal Ministry led to the downfall of the Government. The caste and factional politics can be seen at their best during this period. The conflict between the two dominant caste groups was also an important factor for this downfall of the government. Bommai, the Lingayat Chief Minister, became a victim of this intense power struggle between individual factors and castes. Devegowda now heads one faction known as the original Janata Party. In fact, Devegowda with a few outside leaders was responsible for a vertical split in the party at the national level. This demonstrates how the caste and individual rivalries at the local/State level, concealed in some ideological (sic.) jargon affect the parties of national level.
Government. In this context, the International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences has made an interesting observation regarding American Polity: "Available evidence suggests that politically active individuals in most democratic systems have turned from the political party to the pressure group as the primary instrument of access in these systems... since world war II, political interest groups have increasingly tended to issue formal enunciations of their stands on a variety of political issues and have moved toward a more thorough integration of the group within one of the two major political parties" (1968: 13). These observations hold good even in the Indian context.

In any stratified society, where groups are placed high or low, their access to power and resources depends on various factors. In such situations these groups become interest or pressure groups. It must be noted that the terms 'interest groups', 'pressure groups', 'organised interests', 'lobbies', 'political groups', or 'power groups' are used interchangeably. Therefore, in this thesis we use the term 'interest groups' to represent all these terms. In the nexus between economic, social and political power (Newman, 1957), interest groups translate economic power into social power and share with parties the function of transforming social power into political decisions,
(Newman, 1957; Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. 7, p. 486, 1968). It is in this context, that caste groups can be considered as interest groups.

In traditional societies, like India, on the way to becoming modern, primordial loyalties like caste and kinship play a decisive role in the political operations. A person to be elected should have a good social base, and the support of the people. Especially when elections are based on adult franchise, people or human resources become a fundamental source of power. But then here people are not just individuals but members of a family, a kinship group, a caste or a village community. The interests of the individual and the interests of the group will either overlap or become merged. Therefore, the people expect that their elected representative represents their interests at the political level and make possible for them to have access to resources. Extending this idea further, if we examine our own society, we find that our legislators represent people who are grouped on the basis of caste and for a legislator to perpetuate his power, he has to cater to the needs of the groups which have elected him and in the process his interests also become group interests. This is one of the reasons why caste has become a powerful force in Indian politics.
In Bijapur district, Lingayats operate from a position of strength. Numerically they constitute the highest segment of the population. But among Lingayats a sort of caste system prevails; and it is hierarchical in nature. Each caste is based on traditional occupation and are actively building up separate caste associations. Each of these sub-castes is bound to exploit its numerical strength in the constituency while electing representatives to various representative institutions; and thus seen in conflict with the other sub-castes competing for political power. This infighting among the Lingayat sub-castes is also found to be adequately exploited by other non-Lingayat factions and political parties. Despite this, the Lingayats are consolidating their strength and are found to be capturing political power beyond proportion to their numerical strength in the district. In 1972, they had seven M.L.As out of a total of fifteen, which, percentagewise, works out to 44.66 per cent which steadily increased subsequently to eight in 1978 and nine in 1983 and 1985 elections. Percentagewise it rose from 44.66 per cent to 53.33 per cent during 1978; and 60 per cent during 1983 and 1985 elections. All the elections have produced strong caste feelings among the natives. In the political process, the caste groups are seen fighting with one another to gain the election results in favour of their caste which.
ultimately means sharing power as well as receiving major share of state benefits to their caste members. In this process of political/ caste rivalry for devising political power, strong and seasoned politicians are seen emerging to play their roles in public affairs both at the national level as well as at the regional level. Some of these politicians have held and are still holding important and key positions in the party as well as the government. The notable personalities of the district are B.D.Jatti, R.M. Patil, J.S.Deshmukh, Ramesh Jigajivanagi, G.S.Bagalkot, K.T.Rathod, S.S.Arakeri, S.G.Nanjayyanmath and B.B.Chimmanakatti.

The caste and sub-caste feelings are so intense that the district politicians were primarily responsible for the downfall of two state ministries during two periods covered in this thesis.

Even in the era of Indira Gandhi which is known for the emergence of a new political force solely based on the non-dominant caste politicians, the district political process continued to be under the tight grip of politicians from the dominant caste group - the Lingayats. During the 1978 elections to the State Legislature, caste became the chief factor in the selection of candidates put up both by
the Congress Party as well as the Janata Party. In the process what is revealing is that the "caste interests override all other considerations and thus defeat even the party interests."

In the 1983 elections, in which the Congress party lost the eligibility to form the ministry, to the combined strength of Janata party, Kranti Ranga and the B.J.P., Congress fared better in the district. It had a representation of eight M.L.As out of fifteen. Yet, the dominant caste - the Lingayats - dominated the political process by winning in nine constituencies. This further demonstrates that the caste interests override all other considerations including the political ideologies.

In the 1985 elections, the castiest feelings were played to the brim. It all began with K.H.Patil, the Congress President of the State unit. Contending to outwit B.M.Patil in the distribution of party tickets in the district, K.H.Patil, a Raddi by caste, is widely known to oppose Lingayats to the bitterest end. And in the allotment of seats to Congress members, he preferred more of his own caste persons against the followers of B.M.Patil - a staunch Lingayat - and a key political figure in the district. B.M.Patil who was ignored in the party circles.
at the State level saw to it that not only his caste voted against the interests of the Congress (I) but also successful in causing damage to the Congress (I) in the reserved constituencies which are always considered the strongholds of the Congress (I) party. As a consequence, the Janata Party won in twelve constituencies out of fifteen conceding only three seats to the Congress party. In the process, the B.J.P. which had won two seats in the 1983 elections lost in 1985. For the swing in favour of the Janata and routing of the Congress in the district, the politics of the sub-caste alone can be given the credit. The raddies who wanted to build up a sizeable strength of their caste in the legislature and patronise their caste leader K.H. Patil failed miserably in this election and the Lingayats combined to hold the sway over all the other castes despite change in their party preference from Congress to Janata.

At the Badami taluka level and the Badami constituency the caste composition resembles the District pattern. The dominant caste at the taluka is Lingayat. The sub-caste factions among the Lingayats are very intense. The Panchamasali-Banajiga factions are seen operating well with other sub-caste segments of Lingayats. But the Ganiga faction appears to be very assertive and is seeking an independent identity by organising itself into a separate caste association.
The earlier elections were fought solely on the party lines. The scenario changed after the reorganisation of the State in 1956. The caste politics of the Mysore State before re-organisation was dominated by the Vokkaligas (of erstwhile Mysore area). But with the reorganisation of the State on linguistic basis the caste composition pattern changed. Vokkaligas began to experience the competition for political power from the Lingayats - which eventually led to a regular caste rivalry at the State level. As years passed by and elections were held periodically the caste feelings and rivalry witnessed at the State capital - percolated to the district and the taluka levels. This is clearly evident in the case of Badami taluka as well as Badami constituency. With the increasing awareness of caste's numerical and economic strength as dependable source of power, if properly manipulated, caste became the basis for both allotment/procuring of party ticket as well as the prospects of winning in the elections.

The taluka level politicians are found not permanently aligned to any political party. They are always in pursuit of power and align themselves to any party that provides them either an opportunity to contest an election or serve as an office bearer in an organisational forum.
The link-persons or the so-called middlemen play a major role in the elections. Their alignment is not based on any party membership or election manifesto. They work for a party or person mostly because the contestant belongs to their sub-caste or caste and also they work when they gain enough monetarily.

Caste in Indian politics can never be undermined for it provides identity and unity among different groups of people, and this caste consciousness gives political recognition to the dominant caste. Every caste group has its own vested interests and each supports one or the other party in order to protect those interests in Indian politics. Caste is the main base for all political activities and has become the permanent feature of Indian democracy. One of the modern political writer wrote about the caste system thus:

"The caste system made viable to the leadership, structural and ideological basis for political mobilisation, providing it both a segmental organization and an identification system on which support could be mobilised" (Kothari 1970:13-14).

In Indian democracy, the constitution has guaranteed
many rights like right to vote, right to contest for the election, right of association of every individual, etc. When the Constitution guarantees this kind of right to association of every individual then the people started associations on their caste basis. We may mention here many caste associations like Lingayat association, Vokkaliga association, Devanga association, Harijans association, Brahmins association, Kurubas association, Muslim association, etc. All these caste associations favour only their own caste men. Membership is reserved only for the concerned caste/sub-caste people. All castes try to achieve prominence and recognition only through their association and they try to corner political power.

This study highlights and further reinforces the fact that when a dominant caste's power-base was not questioned, the sub-caste groups/factions become more overtly active. A better manipulation or mobilisation of the smaller groups by the leaders of the sub-caste groups would pay better dividends for them. In the whole process, the bargaining power of the weaker sections, if properly realised, increases. If weaker sections, whose numerical strength is considerable, are properly organised and if better leadership is provided, as was demonstrated during Urs period, weaker sections can create wonders in Indian politics.
This study is also important in the sense that, "political scientists have typically been interested in the internal processes of such groups and organizations, for at least two reasons. First, in most societies such groups help to influence the way in which binding decisions are formulated, their content and their implementation. But this is only a derived interest. It flows from the hypothesis that we cannot understand the authoritative allocation for a society without becoming thoroughly familiar with internal operation of groups that influence those allocations. But a second possible reason that these organizations and social units look very much like political systems, at least in microcosm. We might even denigrate them as para-political systems, the comparative study of which might help shed light on the political processes of the broader society" (Easton, 1965 -- Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, Vol.12, pp.287-288, 1968).