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Masna Venugopal
Ph.D. Research Scholar,
Department of History and
Archaeology, Acharya
Nagarjuna University
Nagarjuna Nagar, Guntur,
Andhra Pradesh, India

Dr. D Venkateswara Reddy
Associate Professor,
Department of History and
Archaeology, Acharya
Nagarjuna University
Nagarjuna Nagar, Guntur,
Andhra Pradesh, India

Corresponding Author:
Masna Venugopal
Ph.D. Research Scholar,
Department of History and
Archaeology, Acharya
Nagarjuna University
Nagarjuna Nagar, Guntur,
Andhra Pradesh, India

The rise in social consciousness of the lower caste and the degradation of upper castes in 17th and 18th centuries of Andhra Desa

Masna Venugopal and Dr. D Venkateswara Reddy

Abstract

The society of 17th and 18th centuries Andhra consisted of two main sections namely the Hindu and the Muslims. The Hindus, being the original inhabitants of the region constituted the bulk of the population. The Muslims, though a minority in numbers, constituted the ruling elite. They held the reins of power in their hands. The Europeans came to Andhra Desa in the 17th century and formed the third important section. They never claimed to be a native of this region and continued to stay here as outsiders. They were very few in numbers but by mid eighteenth century, they came to acquire power over the region and became an important constituent of the local population. With the passage of time, while the Muslim started calling the region as their motherland, the Europeans never forgot the countries that they came from. They took pride in calling themselves as British, French, and Danes etc.

Keywords: The panchanamvaru, vishwakarma, devangas, vemana, veera brahmam

Introduction

The contemporary political changes like the decline of the Vijayanagara Kingdom from 1565 A.D., leading to the rise of the Nayakas, the emergence of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty, the subsequent occupation of the Golconda Kingdom by the Mughals, the establishment of the Asaf Jahi rule over Hyderabad, and finally, the establishment of British rule over Andhra Desa, led to a lot of changes in the social structure of the region. The age old dominance of the upper casts was replaced by the newly literate and economically stronger Sudra community. These changes are vividly reflected in the Shataka literature of the 17th and 18th centuries.

One of the most remarkable change witnessed in the 17th and 18th century Andhra, was the professional mobility in the Sudra community. The traditional caste jobs were replaced by the new vocations. The Sudra was making inroads in the profession hitherto forbidden to them by the Sastras. They were adopting the jobs of the upper castes ^[1]. The main reason was that the various sub sects of the Sudra caste had taken to education and learning. This gave them the self-confidence to take onto new jobs. This process had already started under the Vijayanagar Kings. The Panchanamvaru community claimed equality with the Brahmins and called themselves the Vishwa Brahmins ^[2]. They had taken to learning and education. They claimed divine origins and tried to climb the social ladder. They claimed that were the descendants of God Vishwakarma and his five sons. They conducted their marriages under their own priests; they wore the sacred thread and challenged the supremacy of the Brahmins. Similarly, the barbers or the Mangala caste claimed equality with the Brahmins. They formed an important part of the temples as musicians and exploited it to their advantage. They called themselves as Nai Brahmins.

Later on, in the seventeenth century the Kapus and the Gollas made an attempt to better their position by taking to reading and writing. Koochimanchi Timmanna, 1690-1760, a contemporary poet of the Pittapur region, says that the Kapus were becoming poets and the Gollas were becoming Pauranikas ^[3]. These professions had not been ordained to them by the caste system. It was an attempt by these communities to change the existing pattern of society. The fishermen were taking to astrology and the untouchable Mala caste had become Gurus. The people of the smith caste could be seen as seers, the Sathanis as Vaishnava and the educated weavers had become government servants under the British rule.

All these professions had earlier been in the hands of the Brahmins. The job of a priest was also being taken over by the Jains. The poet was not able to comprehend the situation and blamed every change to “Kali Dosham”.

Objectives of the study

1. To identify social reform movements
2. To identify immigration and migration
3. To identify relations between the religions
4. To identify discrimination among Hindus

The establishment of the East India Co. on the soil of Andhra Desa caused the emergence of the Sudra communities as the economically stronger groups. Though in the traditional caste hierarchy they remained in the fourth place, the economic gain had given them secular power. The most benefited caste was the land owning people. Vemana, the contemporary social reformer, spoke about the importance of the land owning class ^[4] He spoke of the accumulation of wealth and said that the acquisition of wealth was a duty of all and to live in poverty was a sin. He said that poverty was fire that burnt not only the person concerned but all those that were near him. The other sub sects of the Sudra caste, which become rich, were the Devangas or the weavers ^[5]. The demand of textiles from Andhra region had increased manifolds after the arrival of the Europeans merchants in the region. This benefited the weaver caste a lot and they accumulated a lot of wealth. The new merchants from the Balija sect had become so powerful that they had started using Shetty after their names. The use of the title shows that they had become undoubtedly the leading caste in trade and commerce. The Golla community too has been described as rich.

Instead of patronizing the Brahmins, the neo rich Sudras spent their wealth on sycophants who belonged to their own caste ^[6]. The caste of the Dasaris was maintained and sustained by them. They did not want to spend their newly acquired wealth on the snobbish Brahmins. It might be also that the Brahmins would not have agreed to be entertained by them as they have been mentioned to bear a snobbish and condescending attitude towards the neo rich Sudras ^[7]. The wealth remained in the same caste though it did change hands. The writer of the Shatakas who were mostly Brahmins have all condemned this attitude ^[8]. The money of the rich was being spent on the dancing girls and the rope-trick performers. The Devangas spent their riches in maintaining the Jangams, the Kapus on the Pambakani community ^[9]. The Balijas spent their money in maintaining the Dasaris, the Gollas maintained the Pitchukuntis, while the businessman spent his money on the prostitutes. The Shreshti Karnams spent their money for the maintenance of the Parijala community. The main reason for the lack of patronage has also been given by these writers. The wealth of the neo rich Sudras, was so little that they could not afford to please the Brahmins whose demand were always too high. The principalities of petty chieftains were so small that they could not grant land to the Brahmins. On the other hand, the newly literate Sudra castes were happy to receive even a little amount as a gift. The new “Pandits” were pleased by meagre gifts like a measure of salt, a handful of millet or a glass of butter-milk only ^[10]. They, being new aspirants and rebels against the age old system, were satisfied with these gifts. As such one can see that the liberated Sudras helped their brethren by patronizing them.

Another remarkable change, witnessed during the period under study, was the degradation of the upper castes, which had till now enjoyed unlimited powers and wealth. The upper castes including the Brahmins, Khatriyas and the Vaishyas felt a change in their status in the society of the Andhra region. While the first two castes faced a downright deterioration in their position in the social ladder, the Vaishyas faced strict competition in trade and commerce from the new communities. Because of the changed political scenario, the Brahmins had lost the patronization of the kings and the powerful people. The Agraharas had been terminated and they remained only in names ^[11]. The Manyams were reduced in size. The attitude of the people towards the Brahmins was that of utter contempt. The Muslim kings had their own favorites and donated lands to Muslim officers and the Islamic religious institutions. The Inam lands acquired by the Muslim nobility in the 17th and 18th centuries consisted of the old Agraharams, Manyams and the Srotiyams held earlier by the Brahmins. Later on, these lands were taken away by the British and given to the highest bidder of the land revenue who was called the Zamindars. The position of the Brahmins economically had become very precarious. The contemporary Brahmins writers bemoaned and said that the happy days of the scholars were over and that the good for nothing rulers are squandering their wealth in useless pursuits ^[12]. They forced take up jobs under the Sudra village headman. The Sudras had become the lords in every village and the Brahmins become the Karnams or the accountants under them ^[13]. Some were forced to take to the tilling of the land. As such the lofty ideals and the high position of this caste were lost. The petty chieftain's also no longer patronized the Brahmins but the story tellers and the literates of the Golla community.

The Brahmins were condemned by the non-Brahmin writers of the Shataka literature for their haughty and hypocritical behavior. The Brahmins have been described as greedy, gregarious and avaricious and who did not mind travelling great distance just to attend a feast held in their honour ^[14]. Vemana, the social reformer of the contemporary period, also criticized them and said that the Brahmins learnt by heart the scriptures, become proud of their learning and treated the other castes with contempt. He said that the Brahmins called themselves as ‘Soomayaajis’ or the performers of sacrifices and wore sparkling ear studs, consumed large quantities of goat's meat on the pretext of animal sacrifices, drank ‘Soomarasa’, an intoxicating drink from a certain plant, and made merry in a most licentious way ^[15]. Though in the study of the Vedas and the observance of the more important ceremonies of the caste the Telugu Brahmins were not inferior to their caste men in the southern districts, they were less scrupulous in several minor matters ^[16]. They smoked and ate opium. They had less influence in religious and social matters over other castes. They did not hold themselves as strictly aloof from the upper non-Brahman castes as in the further southern region. They did not live in separate quarters in the villages. Some of them even allowed the entry of the Sudra into every part of their house except the kitchen.

The arrival of the Muslims and the Christian missionaries further helped the lower castes to come up in the social ladder. The conversion of the lower caste Hindus to Islam or Christianity immediately enhanced the position of the convert in the general society of Andhra. A reference is

there of Ramagadu, a leather worker of the Hindu castes who could not draw water from the village well. He got converted to Islam and became Abul Hassan and since then drew water from the caste well unchallenged^[17].

Social reform movements

The emergence of two important personalities on the scene of social reform in Andhra, further gave a boost to the struggle of the lower castes to reject the age old caste hierarchy. However, one should always remember that during the period under study only an attempt was made to come out of the drudgery of the caste system. It cannot be termed as a revolution. The sayings of Vemana and Veerabrahmam on the scene of the 17th and 18th centuries respectively, can be visualized as an attempt to show the truth to the people and give confidence to them. It can also be said that their works mirrored the mood of the contemporary society. Vemana spoke against the caste system and was deadly against the sectarian strife that took place due to the evils of the caste system. He condemned caste and emphatically stated that "it is worth, not birth, that should determine a man's position"^[18]. He condemned the war of words and the show of supremacy over each other by the Vaishnavites and the Saivites. Neither of these sects tried to stop the immoral activities going on in their sects, but only condemned the other sect for its wrongs. Vemana advised them to stop their bickering or else the Muslims might destroy them. He has criticized the Brahmins for their hypocritical behavior and wanted to expose them. He showed contempt for the Brahmin ritualistic and ascetic devotees who set their hopes of salvation upon formal ceremonies¹⁹. He also tried to put an end to the superstitious and the Brahmanical practices, which stood in the way of social progress. He wanted to do away with the caste system and to establish a social order with no distinction of race, caste, religion and class. He says in following stanza:

"Kulumheccutaggukoduvalapaniledu,
Saanufadamayyesakalakulamu,
Heccutaggumaatanetterungagavaccu?"

The meaning of the stanza is God has created all human beings equal, of whatever caste they may be. Then how can one tell that one is high and the other is low? Therefore, men should give up all differences of caste and religion and become one caste and one class. All should live in harmony like brothers and sisters. They must forget caste, mingle heart with heart and live with mutual affection and respect. Swami Potuluri Veerabrahmam popularly known as Brahmagaru belonged to the eighteenth century and he came after the Vemana period^[20]. It is believed that he was influenced by the teachings of Vemana. It is also believed that he belonged to the Vishwa Brahmin community. Like Vemana, he was against the caste system. He condemned the hierarchical system of caste and believed that Vedic knowledge could be gained by one and all. The followers of his teaching were from all the classes^[21]. The foremost amongst his disciples were Siddaiah, a Dudekula or half Muslim; Kakkayya, a Madiga or untouchable; and Annajayya, a Brahmin. He was against untouchability and idol worship. He strongly criticized superstition^[22]. He exhorted his followers to start wearing the sacred thread of the Brahmins and to apply 'bottu' on their foreheads. His disciples were many in number and after his death, they

continued to spread his teachings through Tatvalu or philosophical songs. After his death, temples were built in his name and his followers started worshipping him as a God.

Immigration and migration

Migration means to move out of one's country, whereas immigration means to move into a country of one's choice. Migration and immigration have been worldwide phenomena. Throughout the history of India we witness one tribe or another entering and very few leaving for destinations outside India. Migration and immigration may take place due to unfavorable conditions at home or favorable and lucrative opportunities abroad. Sometimes the local population may oppose this inflow of people into their country from outside. On the other hand, the immigrants may gradually get integrated into the prevailing conditions of their adopted home and become one with the already existing population. This interaction between people of different cultural backgrounds may lead to a unique society which has different tenets drawn from all the cultures.

The sources for the study of emigrating people into Andhra are the Persian manuscripts, the contemporary Telugu literature and the Travelogues written by various Europeans visiting the region. The East India Company Records also provide us with some valuable information. Though the sources are many, yet the desired information is very scanty and one has to be very careful in critically analyzing them.

The Qutb Shahis were reigning in Andhra Desa in the 17th century. By 1687 A.D. Golconda had come under the suzerainty of the Mughal Empire. With the establishment of the Asaf Jahi rule in 1724 A.D. the region once again had an independent ruler till the mid-20th century. During the Qutb Shahis, Golconda witnessed an unprecedented inflow of immigrants the received a setback during the Mughal governorship. However, the number of people setting down in Andhra from outside once again got a boost up during the Asaf Jahi rule. The number of migrants leaving the region was unquestionably less than those entering it. Migration was mainly due to unfavourable climatic conditions that resulted in many hardships for the local people, forcing them to abandon the land of their ancestors. While the immigrants brought with them the culture and traditions of different regions into Andhra, the migrating people took the culture and traditions of Andhra Desa to faraway places.

Abbe Carre, a French missionary visited Deccan in-between 1672 and 1674 A.D. He described Hyderabad as a place "full of strangers and merchants" who belonged to different nationalities and came from different parts of the world^[23]. There were merchants from Central Asian countries, from South East Asian countries and the European merchants. Thevenot referred to the Persian and Armenian merchants of Golconda who were very rich and prosperous. The local Hindus were merchants as well as bankers in the capital city of Golconda, i.e., Hyderabad. The Europeans had established their factories in Hyderabad^[24]. The English and the Dutch were very successful in their business. Some French and Portuguese were also found to be residing at Golconda. These Europeans were mainly interested in sea borne trade and had established their factories even in ports such as Masulipatnam, Bimlipatnam, Petapoly or Nizamapatanam, Vishakapatanam, Yanam, Coringa etc. which came under the jurisdiction of the Sultan of Golconda. They exported textiles from these parts to their

motherlands and to South East Asia. They paid for these textiles in gold, silver and copper. They were immigrants who had come to Golconda mainly for economic gains and were happy to accumulate wealth.

There were other immigrants to Golconda who were accorded grand welcome on their and were always sure of being patronized by the Golconda court. These people came from Central and West Asian countries like Persia, Arabia, Turkistan, Iraq, Afghanistan etc. Some came from Georgia and some from the African countries such as Abyssinia. They were all followers of Islam and belonged to both the sects of Shia and Sunni.

The Qutb Shahis belonged to the Central Asian region and were the followers of the Shia faith. They followed a policy of encouraging immigrants especially from Persia to come and settle down in Golconda. The Persians being Shia too, always received patronage in the Qutb Shahi court. As such intellectuals, poets painters architects, musicians, soldiers, doctors, theologians and other from Persia came in large numbers to Andhra in 17th and 18th centuries. The nobility of Golconda, during the rule of the Qutb Shahs, was of Persian origin with a few exceptions. They formed the nobility and nearly 80% of them were appointed as the supervisors over the other high officials belonging to the Hindu faith. Allama Meer Mohammad Momin Astrabadi and Allama Ibn-e-Khatoon were the two Persian intellectuals who attained the high post of Peshwas in the Golconda Kingdom ^[25]. The important palaces and mosques of Hyderabad were all built on the styles of Persia by Persian architects. In 1679, the English Governor visited Ellore and described it as “one of the greatest towns in this country ... where are made the best carpets (after the manner of those in Persia) by the race of Persians, which they told us came over about 100 years ago ^[26]. The Ambassador was stationed always at the court of the King. At the port of Nizampatnam, rich Persian merchants carried on sea borne trade. They were very proud of their origin. Reference is made to their haughtiness in the travelogues of Europeans. Though many poor Persians but of high birth came down to Andhra Desa from Iran, they never indulged in farming or worked at low positions in administration. They never worked below the post of a supervisor. The state came forward to help the destitute Persians and took care of them. Sherwani says that it became fashionable for people and of Iran to come to Hyderabad. Many undistinguishable poets came down to the court of Hyderabad, stayed for a few years at the court's expense, received high gifts from the kings and went back to Persia ^[27].

The Turks were the military men and some were also slaves. The immigrants from Abyssinia who were called the ‘Habits’ had been appointed as nobles under the Brahmani rulers. These continued to hold to their posts under the Qutb Shahis also. The majority of them were the ‘Jangu’ or the warriors and they were the slaves. The slaves that were brought to Andhra were generally warriors and later on came to occupy honourable positions. The Afghans or the Pathans formed the warriors’ class exclusively. The Arabs or the Sayyids were a much respected class. They were appointed as teachers, leaders and nobles of the highest rank. They belonged to the Shiah faith. Most of them were also warriors ^[28]. The Iraqis were the architects or the ‘Mimar’, the artists of the ‘Naqqash’, and the ‘Hukama’ or the Physicians. The majority of Iraqis were in the army of

the Qutb Shahs. The people of Tajkistan or the Tajiks were on par with the Turks ^[29].

The land also witnessed the arrival of a Hindu class of merchants, Saurashtras or the Gurjaras to the Golconda to the Golconda Kingdom ^[30]. They mainly got settled down around areas of the diamond mines of Golconda. The merchants were mainly from Gujarat who “for generations gave forsaken their own country to take up the trade” ^[31]. Even now there are some Gujarati families in Guntakal and other places whose ancestors settled there a few hundred years ago. In Kamalakota itself there is a pond called Gujarati-Gunta and a temple of Venkata Swami built by the Gujaratis ^[32]. They were quite well to do and had acquired considerable wealth as the contemporary Telugu literature says that the thieves stole the money of the ‘Gujaras’ or the Gujarati businessmen ^[33].

The presence of Odde Rajulu, Odra Brahmins, Oddyulu and the Kalinga Komati in villages of Vijayanagar and Bobbili indicate the immigrants of people of Oriya origin into the north coastal Andhra villages. They might have immigrated during the rule of the Gajapathi kings when the above mentioned areas were a part of the Ganga and Gajapathi Kingdoms ^[34]. It has been mentioned that the Gajapati Governor, Raghudeva, of the Rajmahendranagara province established an Agrahara on the banks of the River Godavari for the Brahmins he brought from Orissa.

The region also witnessed the migrations of the Hindus from the region of Golconda to the Tamil lands and to the kingdoms of the Nayakas. These were the ‘Kalamkari’ printers of clothes ^[35]. Their work was the printing of the temple hangings whose themes were mainly based on the Hindu religious mythology. The Qutb Shahi Kings patronized the Persian artists only. They were accustomed to being regaled by sophisticated Persian miniatures and did not find a taste in the Kalamkari painting. Those of the artists who could manage to get employment with the Hindu political successors of Vijaynagara monarchs moved further south. For employment sake these people had to leave the land of their ancestors and settle down in foreign lands.

Golconda became a Mughal subah in 1687 A.D. The Qutb Shahi dynasty suffered a great loss in the battle with the Mughals and Tanashah, the last ruler was imprisoned. All these upheavals, led to a decline in the number of the immigrating population of Hyderabad, especially from Persia. Sunnism was declared as the religion of the Suba. Infact, migrations from Andhra to different places was witnessed during 1687 A.D. to 1724 A.D. The Hindu Ministers who were appointed by the Qutb Shahi kings. Were put to death the survivors were forced to flee from Hyderabad. Many of them went over to their ancestral homes where they indulged in banditry and dacoity. A handful of them were employed in the Mughal army. However, they were removed very soon. The Muslim nobles of Golconda were re-appointed in the Mughal army and were given the posts of Mansabdars in the posts of Mansabdarsin the Karnatik and the coastal areas of Andhra Desa. About 24 such Mansabdardin were absorbed into the Mughal army. Muhammad Ibrahim, a Qutb Shahi noble was appointed the Governor of Punjab ^[36].

The migration of Telugu Nayakas to Tamil lands and to Mysore was seen in large numbers but they still preserved their ancestral language and made of life and avoid the “peculiar usages of their adoptive country. Yet they are

invariably treated with the most perfect tolerance”^[37]. The history of such Nayakas becomes the history of Telugu penetration into the Tamil country. They established the Nayakdom of Madura and Tanjore and also left for central provinces. These Nayakas settled down permanently there along with their families. Along with their political leaders, a number of people from all parts of life migrated to the Tamil lands. These included the Brahmins, Niyogis and Vaidekis, the Kshatriyas, the Vaisyas, the gold smith, barbers and a large number of common folks. The process did not stop at any one time. It continued in the following 17th and 18th centuries too. It opened new vistas for a new cultural movement, where Telugu and Tamil cultures came to be fused into one. They patronized Telugu literary persons like, Shyama Raya kavi, Sripati Ramabhadra etc. The last Nayaka of Madura was Vijayaranga Chokkanath who was a great writer of prose. His works were Sri Ranga Mahatmyany, Megha Bharatamu, etc^[38].

The Hindu population of Golconda had vacated the capital city as the Mughals had no faith in the Brahmins and the Hindus. The Comtis or Komatis, from the Telugu country, formed a large proportion of the shopkeeping class in Madras^[39]. They were brokers, and suppliers, exporters and shippers, traders in food stuffs, retail shop owners and money lenders. They are mentioned as ‘Beri-Chettis’ and were said to be very wealthy. The presence of Balijas, in the south of Andhra, has also been mentioned^[40]. The Tamilised Balijas were called as ‘Kaveri Chetties’. The Hindu merchants who could not adjust to new administration of the Mughals migrate to the southern parts especially to the Pulicatrefion and to the Gingilly coast. The Telugu agricultural community also threw up some merchants like the Reddys and the Naidis who were mainly concerned with brokerage and retail trade only. They worked for the European merchants. The European merchants like the English, who could not find favour with the Mughals, too migrated to the south from the coastal ports of Andhra Desa^[41]. The structural weakness of the Masulipatnam port was another cause for migration of the European to more secure and natural ports like Vishakapatnam and Porto Novo. The migration of the Pathans and the Persian merchants was also witness from the last decade of the 17th century^[42].

With the establishment of Asaf Jahi rule over Hyderabad in 1724 A.D., Andhra Desa once again attracted immigrants. However, there was a difference in the nationality of immigrating families from those who immigrated into Andhra during the Qutb Shahi rule. Immigration took place by land routes rather than by sea route, as the people, generally, came from the northern and western parts of India. The majority of them were Hindus by birth. Very few Muslims came over to Andhra Desa in the 18th century. The Asaf Jahs invited traders and merchants from western Indian states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and administrative officers and writers from northern Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, the people who came to Hyderabad were mainly the Khatriis, the Kayasths, the Marwadis, the Parsis and the Shroffs. The Maharashtrians and the Tamilians also came to Andhra in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries^[43]. These people were absorbed basically in the army and in administrative officers. The Kayasthas were the earliest Hindus to accompany Asaf Jah I to the Deccan. Most of the premier Nobles or ‘Umara-I-Azam’ during the Asaf Jahi period was the immigrants to Andhra region.

Some of them were: the rao Rambhadamily who immigrated from North India, Fakhr-ul-Mulk from Persia to Bijapur then to Hyderabad, Salar Jung family who were the Arab Shihs to first come to Bijapur and then to Hyderabad, Shaukat Jung Hiaam-ud-daila family, the Persian Shihs to the Deccan, Rukn-ud-Daula family Persian Shihs to Deccan with Asaf Jah I, Shah Yar-ul-Mulk family Persian Shihs from Bijapur to Hyderabad, and the Chandulal family who were the Punjabi Khatriis from the north India⁴⁴. By mid-18th century, only the French and the English continued remain on Indian soil. The Dutch, the Danes, the Portuguese and other had left for places or for their respective mother lands. The English and the French were always fighting amongst themselves for supremacy. They had started interfering in the political and. By the end of the 18th century, the French had been defeated and the British become the rulers of the coastal areas of Andhra Desa. More Englishmen continued to come to Andhra not only as traders’ do but also as military officers and administrative officers to Nizam’s territory. They also brought their families with them and started to settle down in the regions of Hyderabad. As they realized the potential riches of the country they slowly but certainly started to settle down in the region of Hyderabad. As they realized the potential riches of the country they slowly but certainly started showing their intentions of ruling over the entire country.

When the Northern Circars were handed over to the English the English East India Company by the Nizam II, the Hindu population that depended on the petty Rajas for their survival was greatly affected. One such caste was that of the Bhatrazus which was the dependent caste of the Rajus or the Kshatriyas of the Andhra Desa⁴⁵. They were the ballad singers who sang the songs of royal heroism. The change of rulers forced the Bhatrazus to migrate from northern Circars to Mysore. They received patronage from Hyder Ali, the ruler of Mysore and the other small Rajas of the region. However, as the Hindu Kingdoms vanished, they were forced to take to agriculture and very few of them remained ballad singers. Similarly, an account recorded in 1801, indicates that the new immigrant warrior chiefs in Triunelveli made special efforts to bring Brahmins from the northern peninsula into their new frontier settlement. “..a great number of Brahmins of the different Nadus and sects came from beyond the Godavari river and from the eastern provinces on the encouragement of the chief to civilize and populate their districts”⁴⁶. There was a greater dispersion of the Telugu merchants or the Balajas in Tamil Nadu. The Brahmins settled in Tirunelveli for favourite administration posts. The Telugu Pariahs i.e. Malas and the Madigas, Komatisand Chettyswere living at Arani, the weaving village near Kanchipuram in the Chingleput district.

Conclusion

However, social mobility was witnessed in the caste system with the rise in the social consciousness of the lower caste people. The time had definitely changed and several high castes’ people had to work under the Sudra chief of the village. There are references stating that the Brahmins were taking to agriculture and to keeping accounts for the sake of subsistence. These were considered to be the profession of the Sudras, and the Brahmins had been forced to give up their ancient profession of teaching and priesthood. As the social position of the upper castes dwindled, that of the Sudra and the untouchables saw an upliftment. They took to

new profession of learning and gaining knowledge. The hierarchy of the caste system was very rigid. The economic prosperity of a man did not help in the up-liftment of his caste. A poor Brahmin always came before a rich Komati in the hierarchical system. The caste of a man was decided by his birth into it and not by his prosperity or by any other thing. It was almost impossible to improve upon the caste one had been born in. One could only demand certain privileges of one's caste. But it was seldom that it was accepted by the higher castes. This only resulted in caste conflicts.

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