

Caste System in Medieval Kadapa Region of Andhradesa (1100-1600 AD)

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In medieval period the region was ruled by Telugu Cholas, Vaidumbs, Chalukyas of Kalyani-Imperial Cholas, and Kayasthas. Kadapa lies $13^{\circ}41'$ and $15^{\circ}15'$ middle of the northern latitude and $77^{\circ}55'$ and $79^{\circ}30'$ middle of the eastern longitude. It is bounded on the north by Kurnool district, on the east by Nellore district, on the south by Chittoor district and on the west by Anantapur district. It is having an area of 15,373 Sq Km. According to 2011 censuses it has 28,84,524 lakhs population. At the beginning of the Kaliyuga period Krupacharya visited this region. So, it was known as Kripanagara, i.e, the town of Mercy. After that, it was changed as Kadupayi and Kadapayi. Gradually, it was named as Kadapa. Ptolemy visited this area in second century AD and named it as Karipe. The famous Chinese traveler Heiun-Tsang recognized this area as Chiriya-Chola region. After the downfall of Vijayanagara Empire the Senapati of Golkonda Nawab named as Nek-nam-khan expanded Kadapa town

The caste system was fundamental coordination of Hindu society were presumed during the medieval period. It played a significant role in legitimizing the authority of rulers. The religious word for caste is "Varna"; each Varna has certain duties and rights. The chief characteristics of the caste system, which is considered unchanging.

Various explanations are given for the origin of the caste system. It is said that all human beings are divide in to four categories according to their natural aptitudes and endowments. Some possess high spiritual and intellectual qualities; other fighting qualities still others producing qualities and accordingly they are placed in various categories. The caste system is therefore, based on natural and inherent attributes found in the mankind. Such a theory of the origin of the caste system obviously serves the interests of those who want to perpetuate this system.

According to a second theory the caste system is based on notions of purity and impurity. Brahmanas possess the purity of the first degree, the Kshatriyas of the second degree, and so on. The ritual ranking of the varnas and jatis is based on their relative purity.

There is a third theory which explains the origin of caste as a legacy from the indigenous tribal communities. The community is divided in to a number of clans. When such a tribe is absorbed as a caste in the Brahmanical system, it continues to marry within the tribe or caste and refuses to have social intercourse with other castes.

A fourth theory accounts for the origin of the caste system in terms of the division of labour. It is said that the need for occupational division leading to more production and economic efficiency gave rise to castes. In Vedic times castes were occupational in nature, and change from one occupation to the other was possible. The origin and growth of the caste system can be better appreciated if we bear in mind that caste is a form of social differentiations. Since social differentiation arises out of social conflicts and unequal distribution of resources and produce. The origin and growth of the caste cannot be understood without study social processes with again are intimately connected with changes in material life¹.

The society has been based on the caste system, and it divided into four major sections or varnas, Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Sudras. An inscription² from Lomada in Kadapa district mentioned about castes i.e. Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Sudras. The highest Varna is of the Brahmanas. Members of this class are priests and educated people in the society. The second one is Kshatriyas; they are the rulers and aristocrats. Third one is Vaishyas; they are the landlords and businessmen of the society. Finally the Sudras are the peasants and working class of the society. All the varnas are having social orders. The Brahmanas occupied the highest rank, and the Sudras the lowest. The Kshatriyas is second, and the Vaishyas third in ranking, the untouchables are sometimes made a part of the Sudra varnas.

Caste system is a wonderful corporate organization. Rightly or wrongly the division of the society into four major sections or varnas. Each caste is governed by certain laws and conventions which cannot be violated according to arbitrary decisions of a single or multiple members. The major varnas or castes are again divided into numerous sub-sets basing on the region, profession, tradition, guiding etc³. According to Siddesvarcaritra Kakatiya Ganapatideva Maharaja, who was described as *Nanavarnavara mandalika Karaganda*⁴. An inscription⁵ at Tripurantakam dated 1290 AD referred that Kayastha Ambadeva Maharaja described as *Chaturvarna Samuddharna*. The Kings, Samantas, Mahasamanthas, Raja gurus and merchants also protect the Varna system. An inscription⁶ at Pushpagiri in Kadapa district dated 1182 AD mentioned that Pallava Chiddanadeva Maharaja described as *Chaturvarnasramadharna Pratisthita*. Another inscription⁷ at pondaluru in Rajampet taluk of Kadapa district dated 1260 AD referred Kayastha Jannigadeva described as *Chaturvarna Samuddharna*. He was subordinate of Kakatiya Ganapatideva. An inscription⁸ from Pushpagiri in Kadapa district dated 1302 AD mentioned the Karanam Bachiraju and other *Chaturvarnamulavaru* as the scribe and witnesses respectively.

1. BRAHMANAS

The Brahmanas retained their status in the fields of educations and religious affairs. They held the power to accord religious sanction and recognition to the rulers. The Brahmanas lived mostly on the patronage of kings and the charity of the public. The Brahmanas were described as men with Vedas emanating from their mouths, lords of the goddess of learning, praised by learned men and performers of numerous sacrifices. The rulers donated Agraharas to the Brahmanas to accrue religious merit. Agraharas were Brahmanas settlements formed out of land reclamation by rehabilitation of people in deserted villages⁹. An inscription¹⁰ from Peddamudiam in Jammalamadugu taluk of Kadapa district dated 1124 AD referred Chalukya Tribhuvanamalla ruling from Jayantipura his feudatory Chiddana Chola Maharaja is stated have made a grant to Tribhogabhyamtarasidhiyam of the village Mudivemu of that place. P.V Parabrahma Sastry observed that Brahmanas Agraharas which come under Sarvamanya tenure or tax free village were subjected to a concessional rate of tax¹¹.

Some Brahmanas who held important position in royal service gifted lands, villages to temples. An inscription¹² from Indukuru in Kamalapuram taluk of Kadapa district referred the grant of a *pannasa* to a Brahmanas Kochchiyagotra named Revasarmaru by Erigal Dugaraju while Chola Maharaja was ruling. Another inscription¹³ at Arakatavemula in Proddatur taluk of Kadapa district mentioned the grant of *pannasa* to Charuva Sarma of Vanganurlu by Bhujangadibhupaditya of Perbanavansa. An inscription¹⁴ from Balapanuru in Pulivendla taluk of Kadapa district mentioned that Dhavaleyara and the grant of some *pannasa* to certain Kamaya, in 9th century AD. The Brahmanas played a significant role in legitimizing the authority of the local chiefs as well as kings.

The Brahmanas guided the villages in religious life. They after consultations the *panchanga* (Calendars), selected auspicious days for commencing various agriculture operation like tilling, planting, irrigation, harvesting etc. They also performed *Yajnas* as well to propitiate the rain gods. They performed *Sraddhas* for the departed souls for which they were granted *vrittis*. The Brahmanas were imposed and collected different types of taxes. They also settled disputes that arose between the people and villages. Brahmanas were occupied important posts in the kingdom.

Vayideva pandiya and his son Namadeva pandita served as ministers of Gangayasahini. Namadeva's Tripurantakam inscription¹⁵ dated 1250 AD described himself as *Suragarusamana, Sakalasastra paravaraka mantri- manikya, niti-Chanakya, pati-karya durandhara* etc. Ghodaraya

Gangadeva minister of Ambadeva was a Brahmin¹⁶. Thus, Brahmanas not only acted as religious leaders but also rendered meritorious services as chiefs, governors, ministers and head of departments. This trend continued later during the Vijayanagara period also.

2. KSHATRIYAS

The Kshatriyas who basically belonged to the fighting class were renowned warriors and served the kings as soldiers, commanders and governors of forts. They claim to belong to the solar and lunar dynasties or *Suryavamsa* and *Chandravamsa* dynasties. The Kshatriyas claimed *dinakara-kulanandana*, *kashyapa gotra karikalanyya* (suryavamsa) as we noticed in the case of Renate Cholas. The Vaidumbs appear to have claimed that they were Kshatriyas as they are referred to as belonging to *Maharaja-Vamsa*. An inscription¹⁷ at Abbavaram in Rayachoti taluk of Kadapa district dated 1234 AD mentioned that, the Vaidumba Rayadeva Maharaja described as *Kshatriyapavitram*. Another undated inscription¹⁸ at same place referred, the Vaidumba Maharaja described as *Kshatriya-Kulapa-Pavitra-Yatreya-gotra*, this inscription not mentioned about the name of the Vaidumba king. An inscription¹⁹ at Pushpagiri in Kadapa district dated 1255 AD referred, the Pallava king Khandeyaraya described as *Ravikula Kshmapala Bhushamani*, and also it mentioned about Kayastha Gangasenapati described as *Kayastha Vamsarnava Karnadhara*.

The inscriptions referred many people with the suffix *Raju*, *Varma* and *Maharaja*. All those associated with ruling power were called Rajus or Varmas. Generally, these suffixes, Varma and Raju, were used to denote the Kshatriyas community in the inscriptions. But Varma appears to be more appropriate to that community and Raju seems to have been used for other castes as well. Thus, it appears that the Kshatriyas who distinguished themselves as rulers and great warriors played a commendable role in safeguarding the Kakatiya kingdom. Many of the Kshatriyas families scarified their lives on the battle field in an attempt to save the Kakatiya kingdom.

3. VAISHYAS

The Vaishyas are generally referred in the inscription as *Komatis* are *Settis*. Their main occupation was trade and commerce. Being skilful in commercial activities, these successful merchants amassed wealth by virtue of their qualities, they commanded respect in society. The Vaishyas made liberal grants in cash or kind, particularly to temples and welfare activities. Often they gifted a portion of their income earned by trade or a part of their merchandise. There are instance of merchants constructing temples and naming them after their guild or community. An inscription dated 1249 AD refers that Kannisettees is mentioned as *Samaya Senadhipati*, the commander of the army. It is possible that the Vaishya merchants maintained contingents of forces to protect the caravans from highway robbers and dacoits in the forests during the Kakatiya period. Some of the merchants of the period are allowed to enjoy privileged positions in the royal courts and also held public Officers²⁰. An inscription²¹ at Lebaka in Rajampet taluk of Kadapa district dated 1413 A.D June 10 Saturday refers that , the Sadepalli Singamasetti of Vetanda gotra, the *vyavahari* merchant of Kota-Nellore. Unfortunately, we did not find much inscriptional evidence of Vaishyas in Kadapa region during the medieval period. The Vaishyas enjoyed a privileged position as the head of corporate bodies and looked after the internal and overseas trade.

4. SUDRAS

The emergency of Sudras as the ruling class is a unique Characteristic of Medieval Andhradesa. The ruling families of the period belonged to *Chaturthakula* or Sudras caste. The Sudra rulers not only styled themselves as Kshatriyas after acquiring great wealth and power but also went to the extent of inserting mythical and semi-mythical personalities. People, other than Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, belonged to the Sudra community which consisted of several endogamous groups of communities. Different communities comprising various professions: Carpenters, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, stone-cutters, oil-mongers, weavers, potters, basket-makers, shepherds, barbers dommari, washermen and a host of others were members of this Varna, thus making it the largest section of society.

Almost all people in different professions received some stipulated share in the agricultural produce from the villages as remunerations for the services rendered by them. Another important

community in the society was *Panchanamvaru* of five groups viz; goldsmith, carpenters, blacksmiths, braziers and stone-cutters are collectively referred in inscriptions. An inscription²² from Dongalasanu in Sidhout taluk of Kadapa district referred *Panchanamvaru*. An inscription²³ at Chilamakuru in Kamalapuram taluk of Kadapa district dated 1546 A.D mentioned, the grant of remission of the barbar tax in the simas (regions), names lost, to Kondoju Kandavanavolu, by Nala timmarajayya of Chagalamaru at the instance of Ramarajayya. Another inscription²⁴ at Porumamilla in Badvel taluk of Kadapa district dated 1546 A.D refers, that the remission of barbar tax as *sarvamanya* in the villages of Sakalisima of Gandikota rajya to kondoju son of Timmoju by Nandela Timmaraju. An inscription²⁵ at Varikunta in Siddhavatam taluk of Kadapa district dated 1546 A.D reveals, that the remission of the taxes *katapannu*, *kanika*, and Dommari pannu as *sarvamanya* to the barbers of Varikunta by Nagarajayyadeva Maharaja at the instance of Ramaraja. Another inscription²⁶ at Pushpagiri in Kadapa taluk dated 1547 A.D mention, that by order of Sadasivadevarayalu and Aliya Ramarayalu the tax payable by the barbers throughout the whole empire was granted as *sarvamanya* to the barber Kondoju and accordingly Nandyala Timmayadeva, who was governing Gandikota remitted the tax payable by the barbers throughout the Gandikota and that the barber tax due from Puturu, Ravulapalli and Dumpalagattu belonging to the temple of Indranathadeva was also remitted to the barber Timmoju. Above these inscriptions reflected about the barber community.

An inscription²⁷ at Nandaluru in Rajampet taluk of Kadapa district dated 1433 A.D July 2 Thursday, mention about Reddis. An inscription²⁸ at Potladurti in Kamalapuram taluk of Kadapa district dated 1546 A.D refers that, the local taxes called *stavara* and *gramakatnas* like *angadistavara*, *maggastavara*, *chakrastavara*, *idigastavara*. The disease indicates different castes like Potters (Kummari) and Ediga. An undated inscription²⁹ at Dulamvaripalli in Badvel taluk of Kadapa district mention that, the king Bukka and his son Bhavadura subordinates named Desiya and nagaya were belongs to Gopalaka caste. Another undated inscription³⁰ at Bedaduru in Jammalamadugu taluk of Kadapa district mention about Madigas. An inscription³¹ at Animela in Kamalapuram taluk of Kadapa district dated 1531 A.D May 9 Tuesday, mention about Veeralalija caste. Another inscription³² at Pulivendula taluk of Kadapa district dated 1535 A.D refers, that the *setti pattanasvamis*, *rerris*, *karanams* the people of the eighteen castes (astadasa peoples).

An inscription³³ from Pushpagiri dated 1519 A.D November 9 reveals that, the gift of Dommari pannu due from the Kapus of Pushpagiri agrahara to the god Chennakesavadeva for a lamp and flower garden by some Dommari. Another inscription³⁴ at Koduru in Jammalamadugu taluk of Kadapa district dated 1548 A.D refers that, the gift of the money derived as Dommari pannu in the village Koduru for conducting worship and offerings to the god Chennakesavaswami by some members of the Dommari community. An inscription³⁵ at Valluru in Kadapa taluk dated 1553 A.D reveals that, the gift of Dommari pannu to the gods Hari Hara by Kaki Padmaraju, Tipparaju and Misarigandani ponnareddi all belonging to the Dommari caste. The Agraharam inscription³⁶ in Pulivendula taluk dated 1554 A.D January 18 Thursday mention that, the gift of two *varahas* for the offerings to the gods Mallikarjunadeva and Madhavarayadeva of Agraharam Golladinnepalli by Dommari Sangamanayaka for the merit of 24 castes of Dommari. Above inscriptions indicates the Dommari castes.

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