

DEMAND FOR SEPARATE STATE: A STUDY OF TELANGANA

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ABSTRACT

Historically speaking, the Constitution of India has a provision, under Article 3, which facilitated the creation of at least one dozen new States in the last 50 years, and that too without the recommendation of any so-called SRC. Irrespective of the opinion of the concerned parent State, the provision empowers Parliament to alter the boundaries of any State, if such a demand is found to be democratic and popular. The process of territorial division by the State stems from two fundamental objectives: territorial control and integration. Optimal control and efficient administration of the geographical area require that the latter be broken up into a series of smaller units joined together constituting either a simple subdivision of central power, or individual geopolitical players in their own right. The desire to mitigate the centrifugal forces that can threaten territorial integrity also justifies the creation of units based, partly, on the recognition. The changes in the internal boundaries of the Indian Union took place from 1956 onwards. The process of decentralisation initiated in the 1990s itself aimed at delegating part of the central government's responsibilities to the lower levels and favouring a better Distribution of power and by giving more independence to the states.

INTRODUCTION

From the very beginning, the demand for the creation of Telangana was characterised by its opposition to the linguistic principle. Right from the time when Andhra Pradesh (AP) was created in 1956, by integrating Telangana with the State of Andhra, created in 1953, the opponents of the merging put forth the idea that linguistic homogeneity did not justify a political union of the two regions, which had d The Gentlemen's Agreement of 1956, which was an assurance of fair play given to the people of Telangana to facilitate the formation of Andhra Pradesh, was scuttled the very same day on which the state was born, by the very same "Gentlemen" who were signatories to the agreement. The result was a massive revolt of the people of the region in 1968-69 demanding separation of Telangana from the state of Andhra Pradesh.

It has come to be known as Jai Telangana Movement. The governments of the time in the state and at the centre then woke up and tried (or pretended) to undo the damage done to the region. The first step taken in that direction was the All Party Accord of January 1969 arrived at a

meeting of the leaders of all political parties in the state convened by the then chief minister Brahmananda Reddy. But it was shelved in less than six months time. Thereafter, a couple of packages were announced by the prime minister of the time, Indira Gandhi, styled as Eight Point Formula and Five Point Formula. When the modalities of giving effect to these packages were being worked out the supreme court of India gave a historic judgement validating, what were then known as, Mulki Rules. This judgement upheld the rule of reserving employment and educational opportunities available in Telangana exclusively for the residents of this region. But the political elite of Andhra region did not digest these corrective measures. The result was another agitation for a separate state, and this time for a separate Andhra state has different parts, different cultures and different levels of development. After the Andhra Agitation of 1972 and the resultant imposition of Six Point Formula, the state was divided into seven zones, within the framework of three regions, namely, Coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema, and Telangana, treating the capital city as a separate entity. The spectra of drought is a constant feature in Telangana especially. Since, no attempts have been made to fight it on a long term basis with the implementation of permanent anti-drought measures. The problem is made worse as irrigation is underdeveloped, there has been no industrialization nor has any skill development taken place in the region. The result is that a majority of the people, the poor and the landless are at the mercy of nature. Only a copious monsoon can assure them of at least three months of wages. Or else, they leave their hearths and homes and migrate to distant cities in search of livelihood.

REGIONAL LEVEL

At the regional level, the issues involved are varied in nature. In India, the majority of internal border conflicts are related to water. The states are fighting even more for this resource, as most of their population is engaged in agriculture and depends on it. Moreover, the demand for water is increasing with the development of mega cities and industries. When AP was created in 1956, one of the main justifications for merging Telangana with AP was that the merger of the two Telugu entities would considerably reduce water-related conflicts as the two major rivers of the region flowed through the new state. With Telangana state, the river Krishna will mark the new border between the new state and the rest of AP (now referred to as Seemandhra), requiring a common management of the river basin, whereas the river Godavari will mainly fall within Telangana. Thus, there is no doubt that if the authorities of the new state try to exploit to the maximum its water resources, the authorities of Seemandhra will insist on an equitable sharing of these waters.

The issue is further complicated by the fact that the coastal regions of AP have based their economic development on the exploitation of the water resources of the separatist region. The major hydro projects built over these two rivers, which have mainly enabled the irrigation of the Seemandhra regions, will see their usage diverted with the birth of a new border. With the entry of a new player, new water-related conflicts are likely to crop up, adding to those already existing between AP and its neighbours.

The future of Hyderabad is also an issue in the conflict that is pitting the proponents of Telangana against those in favour of a united AP. The metropolis, which is today a major

economic centre and the cause of disagreement between the two parties, was mainly developed during the 1990s under the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government, headed by leaders from the Seemandhra region. Apart from international investments, the government encouraged in particular the arrival of a business class from coastal AP, which had reinvested the surplus money that it earned from agriculture, thanks to the green revolution, in the capital city.

In the metropolis, 75% of the regional companies belong to the Andhras and 80% of the employees are from the same region. The Andhras have also made investments in the nearby districts of Medak and Rangareddy, where they own more than 50% of the regional businesses. For all the people of Seemandhra, the metropolis presents an opportunity not only for young students wishing to pursue their studies, but also for those seeking employment.

For the people of Telangana, Hyderabad is all the more important, as the urban framework of the region is practically non-existent beyond the capital and because of the hardly developed second-rank cities and lack of infrastructure. The proposal to make Hyderabad a union territory or a common capital for the two future states was unanimously rejected by the proponents of Telangana. Apart from the problem of geographical discontinuity that such a solution would entail due to the landlocked nature of Hyderabad, the borders of the neighbouring districts would also have to be redefined as the city spills over into them. The future of Hyderabad seems still uncertain even though the centre appears to be in favour of a temporary joint capital for the two states, till the new AP state builds a capital with necessary infrastructure. However, this solution raises a lot of issues, for example, temporary status of governmental jobs, common management of the land and redistribution of taxes between the two states. The tribal question also requires special attention. The tribal population of AP lives almost exclusively on the edges of the border areas of the state contiguous with the tribal zones of Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Chhattisgarh, with which the connections are important. The tribes are one of the poorest and least developed segments of the population of the state. Less educated than the rest of the population, dependant on agricultural revenues and living with poorly equipped infrastructure and in areas with difficult access, they continue to be the victims of a long, old process of land alienation. In the past, the process of land grabbing was mostly organised by migrant farmers from Telangana and coastal AP, but today it is more an appropriation by the state for development purposes. The tribes of Telangana mainly support the creation of the new state with the hope that the new leaders will finally conduct targeted and concrete policies for them.

TELANGANA LEVEL

With regard to Telangana, the formation of a smaller unit will provide autonomy to the region, which until now was considered the preserve of a political minority and was subject to the decisions of the leaders from Seemandhra. This will also alter the demography of the new state in terms of castes and minorities. The population of Muslims that today constitutes 8.9% of the population of AP will go up to 12.5%, whereas the tribal population will go up from 6.5% to 10%.⁸ Apart from the fact that their political representation will be strengthened thanks to their numbers, these two minorities hope to improve their visibility and see that their interests are better served. The former, in return for their votes, could ensure that certain measures are taken

in their favour such as recognising minority languages or a renegotiation of the reservation quotas for their community. In this context, it is not surprising that the TRS leader has promised to make Urdu an official language if his party wins the elections in the new state. The advantages of small states for minorities were already noticed by Ambedkar (1955) before the creation of linguistic states:

The first safeguard is not to have too large a State. The consequences of too large a State on the minority living within it are not understood by many. The larger the State the smaller the proportion of the minority to the majority... A small stone of a consolidated majority placed on the chest of the minority may be borne. But the weight of a huge mountain it cannot bear. It will crush the minorities. Therefore creation of smaller States is a safeguard to the minorities.

Conversely, the demographic importance of the dominant castes will undergo a change. In AP, the dominant castes are numerically superior in the Seemandhra districts, where they account for about 30% of the population, whereas in Telangana they represent just about 10% of the population. Some leaders of the movement put forth the idea that in a state with 90%⁹ of the population being lower castes and minorities, they will not fail to improve their socio-economic situation and will be able to better reorient the policies of their representatives in their favour.

The creation of Telangana will in part resolve the long conflict between the two main scheduled caste (SC) groups, the Malas and the Madigas, for sub-categorisation. As most of them come from Seemandhra, the Malas benefited from the politics of education and development started by the British missionaries during the colonisation, whereas the Madigas, more localised in Telangana, saw their situation as having improved only recently. As with the primitive tribes, the Madigas consider that in a united state they were not able to compete with the Malas, who took most of the reserved jobs and positions in the universities.

While some believe that there will be a redistribution of powers within the future state of Telangana, others, on the contrary, believe that class and caste domination, already present in the region, will just continue. If most of the power remains in the hands of the state government and largely delegated to its representatives at the local level, and not to elected political institutions, the formation of a new state does not appear to be very meaningful. Similarly, the process of decentralisation at the local level cannot be effective if the already dominant castes and elite classes appropriate the political and technical powers conferred on districts, mandals, panchayats, and if real agrarian reform does not take place.

In the last years of the movement a significant change could be observed with the increasingly visible participation of the lower castes, who were demanding, besides a geographical Telangana, a truly social Telangana. Now that the decision of the centre seems irreversible, the voices of the dalits, Other Backward Classes (OBCs) and tribal civil servants and students are again making themselves heard in order to demand a recasting of the social relations within the new state. Today, these groups are demanding their integration into the decision-making process, not by forming caste-based parties, but by fighting for the replacement of the traditional elites.

Moreover, two demands define their political fight: the need for real agrarian reforms, and job reservations in private companies. In Osmania and Warangal Universities, movements based on

the Dalit-Bahujan ideology are spreading and claim more political and economic space for the backward castes of Telangana and the recognition of their identity and culture. The objective could be seen both as a fight against the social and economical influence of the forward castes and the political influence of the BJP. There is strong hope in Telangana concerning the student movement and its ability to influence the policies of the future state as noticed by Kannabiran et al (2012): "Students from oppressed classes are not only holding mainstream political formations to account in unprecedented ways, but are also providing direction to the movement."

Recently, the president of TRS reiterated his wish to make a dalit the first chief minister of Telangana, if his party is chosen to rule the future state. Beyond an obvious policy of accommodation, would this gesture be followed by a real policy of social integration? Indeed, many dalit and OBC leaders consider the TRS as the party of Velamas, a dominant caste, less powerful than the Reddys and Kammas, which could politically arise with the creation of the state. In addition, many intellectuals and activists are denouncing, through the movement for Telangana, the comeback into politics of the old landlords who were defending the idea of a Telangana state in which their interests could be protected against the rich migrants and investors from Seemandhra.

EMPLOYMENT:

- There are about 15 lakh jobs in the government and government-funded offices and establishments. Based on the size of population at least 40% of these job, i.e. 6 lakhs, should
- have gone to the job seekers from Telangana. But the total number of jobs now occupied by them is less than 3 lakhs.
- There are more than 5,000 employees in the state's secretariat. Out of them not even 10% belong to the Telangana region.
- There are more than 130 posts of heads of departments. Out of them only 7 or 8 are held by the officers belonging to the Telangana region.
- There are 23 district collectors. One rarely finds an officer from the Telangana cadres holding that position.
- The state government issued orders - the much publicized G.O. 610 - as back as in the year 1985 to remove all the non-locals appointed in the vacancies meant for the youth of Telangana and to appoint only Telangana locals against all resultant vacancies. Besides not implementing these orders further recruitment of non-locals in the Telangana region is going on.

The Sri Krishna Committee submitted a comprehensive 461-page report after their detailed across the state which included consultations with various political as well as social groups.

The Committee's report suggested 6 options of which options 1 through 4 were advised to be not feasible. The Fifth option is to bifurcate the State into Telangana with Hyderabad as its capital and Seemandhra which is to have a new capital city. The Committee noted that "Separation is recommended only in case it is unavoidable and if this decision can be reached amicably amongst all the three regions." (Page 454) The Sixth and the option that the Committee recommended as the "way forward" is to keep the state and "establishment of a statutory and

empowered Telangana Regional Council with adequate transfer of funds, functions and functionaries in keeping with the spirit of Gentlemen's Agreement of 1956"

The six options presented in the report were as follows

1. Maintaining Status Quo – Keeping the Andhra Pradesh State as it is with no change in the Telangana, Rayalaseema and Coastal Andhra regions.
2. Bifurcating the state of Andhra Pradesh into Seemandhra and Telangana regions with both of them developing their own capitals in due course of time. Hyderabad to be converted to a Union Territory – This proposal was similar to the Punjab-Haryana-Chandigarh model.
3. Dividing Andhra Pradesh into two states – One of Rayala-Telangana with Hyderabad as its capital and second one of the Coastal Andhra Pradesh
4. Dividing Andhra Pradesh into Seemandhra and Telangana with enlarged Hyderabad Metropolis as a separate Union Territory that will be linked geographically to district Guntur in coastal Andhra via Nalgonda district in the southeast and via Mahboobnagar district in the south to Kurnool district in Rayalaseema
5. Bifurcation of the State into Telangana and Seemandhrâ as per existing boundaries with Hyderabad as the capital of Telangana and Seemandhra to have a new capital. This was the *second most preferred option* according to the report.
6. Keeping the State united and providing for creation of a statutorily empowered Telangana Regional Council for socio-economic development and political development of Telangana region. This was *the most preferred option*

CONCLUSION/FINDINGS

1. The SKC remarked that "It is a fact that most of the economic and developmental parameters show that Telangana (excluding Hyderabad city but including Hyderabad suburbs) is either on par with or a shade lower than Coastal Andhra.
2. In comparison with the Rayalaseema region, the SKC remarked that "Thus, on the whole, it would appear that the deprived region is Rayalaseema not Telangana
3. Overall, in spite of 50-plus years of policy protected planning and execution, one finds regional variations in the economic development of AP. The rate of growth in the development parameters summed up below is found to be robust both in Telangana (even after excluding Hyderabad) and coastal Andhra.
4. The SKC noted that the Planning Commission had notified as backward nine of the ten Telangana districts, with the exception of Hyderabad, and resources have been allocated under its Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF). These districts contain, as the SKC says, 87% of the population of Telangana.
5. Considering the allegation that "Telangana has lower per capita income, lower access to employment, lower business opportunities and low access to education and so on", SKC says, "At the outset, some or all such allegations appear true when absolute amounts, numbers and percentages are reviewed
6. "The implementation of G.O. 610 during 1985 to 2005 was, at best, tardy, which remains a grievance of Telangana employees. This issue continues to be highly contentious even

today (p.48).” Girgliani Report on GO. 610 estimated 140,000 Telangana jobs diverted to Seemandhra persons.

7. “However, the data received from the State Government shows (Appendix 3.16) that the combined amount released to government and aided colleges together is Rs. 930 million in Telangana while it is 2.24 billion in coastal Andhra (with college-going population similar to that in Telangana) and 910 million in Rayalaseema (with population share being less than half that in Telangana
8. “The real income of the agricultural wage labourers has declined considerably in Telangana whereas it has increased considerably in coastal Andhra region. Similarly, the SCs, STs and minorities in Telangana region have suffered a decline in income during the past about decade or more, whereas these communities have gained substantially in Coastal Andhra
9. “Although as a sub-regional movement, the Telangana movement does not pose a threat to national unity
10. “The Telangana movement can be interpreted as a desire for greater democracy and empowerment within a political unit. As stated earlier, sub-regionalism is a movement, which is not necessarily primordial but is essentially modern – in the direction of a balanced and equitable modernisation. Our analysis shows that cutting across caste, religion, gender and other divisions, the Telangana movement brings a focus on the development of the region as a whole, a focus on rights and access to regional resources and, further, it pitches for a rights-based development perspective whereby groups and communities put forth their agendas within a larger vision of equitable development
11. “However, given the long-standing history of the demand for a separate State, the deep penetration of the sense of grievance and the widespread emotion around the issue, unless genuine steps are taken to address both real and perceived disparities, the demand is unlikely to go away permanently even if it is subdued temporarily
12. “Thus, from the point of view of sheer size of economy, Telangana as a new State can sustain itself both with and without Hyderabad. The other combination of regions – coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema together can also sustain themselves as a State; in fact, they can also sustain themselves separately
13. “In view of the complex background of the situation and the rather serious and sensitive emotional aspects involved, the Committee is of the unanimous view that it would not be practical to simply maintain the status quo in respect of the situation
14. “Given the above first hand observations of the Committee during its tours of the regions, the Committee feels that the issue of sentiment has to be considered only as one among several factors to be evaluated. While not discounting people’s wishes or sentiments, the overall implications of bifurcation (or trifurcation as the case may be) have to be carefully delineated to arrive at a responsible recommendation
15. “The Committee is of the view that given the long history of the demand for a separate Telangana, the highly charged emotions at present and the likelihood of the agitation continuing in case the demand is not met (unless handled deftly, tactfully and firmly as discussed under option six), consideration has to be given to this option. The grievances of the people of Telangana, such as non-implementation of some of the key decisions included in the Gentleman’s Agreement (1956), certain amount of neglect in implementation of water and irrigation schemes, inadequate provision for education infrastructure (excluding Hyderabad), and the undue delay in the implementation of the

Presidential order on public employment, etc., have contributed to the felt psyche of discrimination and domination, with the issue attaining an emotional pitch. The continuing demand, therefore, for a separate Telangana, the Committee felt, has some merit and is not entirely unjustified"

NOTES

1. AP is currently in conflict with Maharashtra and Karnataka regarding the sharing of the waters of river Krishna. AP also contests the Babli dam project on river Godavari decided by Maharashtra. Finally, the state is at odds with Chhattisgarh and Odisha regarding the Polavaram project.
2. Source: Telangana Chambers of Commerce and Industry
3. Srikrishna report 2010

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