



JAI ANDHRA AGITATION AN HISTORIC PERCEPTION: A STUDY

History

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ABSTRACT

At the 25th Andhra Mahajan sabha held at Bezwada (presently Vijayawada) towards the end of October, 1937, several leaders including K. Koti reddy, M.L.A. and H. Sitarama Reddy, M.L.A. from the ceded districts maintained that it would be a Himalayan blunder if the Circar leaders gave up the effort to win back Rayalaseema. Subsequently, a Committee¹⁶ was appointed to decide on the guarantees to be given to Rayalaseema. On January 19, 1969, an all-party accord was reached to ensure proper implementation of Telangana safeguards but that did not satisfy leaders of the region. Marri Channa Reddy of the Congress launched the Telangana Praja Samiti espousing the cause of a separate state. Meanwhile, the people's agitation intensified and turned violent, leading to the death of over 350 people. In 1972, the Jai Andhra movement started in Andhra- Rayalaseema regions as a counter to the Telangana struggle. On September 21, 1973, a political settlement was reached with the Government of India and a Six-Point Formula put in place to placate people of the two regions. It was agreed upon by the leaders of the two regions to prevent recurrence of any such agitations in future. To avoid legal problems, the Constitution was amended (32nd amendment) to give legal sanctity to the six-point formula. Hereafter, peace prevailed across Andhra Pradesh and it progressed on the path of development. In 1972, Gouthu Latchanna took a leading role in the Jai Andhra movement started by students of Andhra University demanding the division of Andhra Pradesh into old Andhra state and Telangana state on the issue of "Mulki" rules. He was imprisoned in Mushirabad Central Jail and released in 1973. All the ministers hailing from the Andhra region in the PV Narasimha Rao Govt. resigned, and formed a parallel Government with Vijayawada as the Capital. BV Subba Reddy was elected as the Chief Minister and Kakani Venkataratnam was the Deputy CM. The parallel Govt. was run for a few months, even after the PV Narasimha Rao Govt. was replaced by President's rule.

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION

The 'united' Andhra Pradesh as the state stands on the verge of a geographical separation. If everything goes as per the government's plan, Andhra Pradesh will get divided into two states - Telangana and (residual) Andhra Pradesh - early this year, bringing to an end the history of a state that remained united for 58 years. Andhra Pradesh was the first state in the country to be created on a linguistic basis on November 1, 1956 by merging the erstwhile Andhra state and Hyderabad state. In 1953, Andhra state was carved out of the then Madras Presidency with Kurnool as its capital.

Subsequently, the Telugu-speaking parts of the then Hyderabad state were amalgamated with Andhra state, giving birth to Andhra Pradesh in 1956. The proposal for amalgamation of Hyderabad state with Andhra state came up in 1953 and the then Chief Minister of Hyderabad state, Burgula Ramakrishna Rao, supported the Congress central leadership's decision in this regard though there was opposition in the region that was known as Telangana. Accepting the merger proposal, the Andhra state Assembly passed a resolution on November 25, 1955 promising to safeguard the interests of Telangana.

An agreement was reached between Telangana leaders and Andhra leaders on February 20, 1956 to merge Telangana and Andhra with promises to safeguard Telangana's interests. Another agreement was then signed by then chief ministers of the respective states, Bezawada Gopala Reddy and Burgula Ramakrishna Rao, to the effect. The city of Hyderabad, the then capital of Hyderabad state, was made the capital of Andhra Pradesh.

For 13 years after Andhra Pradesh came into being, everything ran smoothly. In 1969, however, an agitation began in Telangana region as people protested the "failure" to implement the 'Gentlemen's Agreement' and other safeguards properly.

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(32nd amendment) to give legal sanctity to the six-point formula. Hereafter, peace prevailed across Andhra Pradesh and it progressed on the path of development.

Subsequently, till 1999, there was no demand from any quarters for division of the state on regional lines. In 1999, the then Leader of Opposition Y S Rajasekhara Reddy of the Congress re-ignited the regional fire making his party MLAs from the region write a letter to the high command demanding creation of a separate state of Telangana. Yet another chapter opened in the struggle for Telangana when Kalvakuntla Chandrasekhar Rao, who was seething over denial of Cabinet berth in the Chandrababu Naidu government, walked out of the Telugu Desam Party and launched the Telangana Rashtra Samiti on April 27, 2001. Though KCR launched the Telangana statehood movement in 2001, it remained rather subdued till late 2009 when he tried to sit on an indefinite hunger strike for separate state.

People from the Andhra and Rayalaseema regions felt that Mulki rules were unfair to them and they were "being treated like aliens in their own land". The agitators, most of whom were students, felt that the Mulki rules in place were unjust, unfortunate and further deepened the rift between Telangana and other regions. The proponents of separate Andhra Pradesh viewed their demand as logical in light of the separate Telangana movement. Under the Mulki rules in force at the time, anyone who had lived in Hyderabad for 15 years was considered a local, and was thus eligible for certain government posts. When the Supreme Court upheld the Mulki rules at the end of 1972, the Jai Andhra movement, with the aim of re-forming a separate state of Andhra, was started in Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema regions.

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Thirteen people killed in 3 places in Andhra on 21 November during the bandh call given by student body. In the police firing eight people were killed on 23 December in Vijayawada. Kakani Venkataratnam, a

former minister, died of shock at the height of separate Andhra agitation on 25 December 1972, when eight people were killed in police firing. Before analyzing the separatist agitations in A.P. it is necessary to go into the various factors and events that led to the formation of Andhra in 1953 and Andhra Pradesh in 1956 as those factors still influence the politics of the state. In fact the seeds for separatism were sown even at the time of the formation of the state of Andhra Pradesh. Hence in the following pages, the formation of Andhra and Andhra Pradesh is discussed.

The state of Andhra Pradesh is made up of three distinct regions known as the circars or the Coastal Andhra, the Rayalaseema or the Ceded Districts and Telangana. At the beginning of the century the first two regions had formed part of the Madras Presidency and the third of the Nizam's State of Hyderabad. The five districts of Guntur, Krishna, East Godavari, West Godavari and Visakhapatnam, Constituted the Circars or the Coastal Andhra. The four districts of Bellary (a part of which is in the present Karnataka State), Anantapur, Cuddapah and a part of Kurnool were ceded to the British by the Nizam in 1800 in return for military help and protection. These districts earlier known as "the Ceded Districts" form the present "Rayalaseema". The district of Chittoor, which is now in the Rayalaseema region, was carved out of Cuddapah and North Arcot districts.

The Nine Circar districts including the district of Nellore and the four districts of Rayalaseema now constitute the area known as the Andhra region. Until 1953 the Telugu-speaking people of the Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema did not have a State of their own. Though the Telugu districts accounted for forty percent of the population and forty-eight percent of the territory of the Madras presidency, the Telugus had no voice in the politics of the region. As far back as 1910 the Andhras started a movement aimed at bringing about a reawakening of the Andhras with a view to reviving their ancient glory and greatness. Orissa as separate provinces in December 1911. At a series of conferences starting with the conference at Bapatla in 1913, the need for a separate Andhra Province was canvassed and resolutions were passed demanding the formation of a separate Andhra province on linguistic basis. A separate Andhra Congress circle also came into being in 1917 which meant that the Congress Party leadership conceded linguistic basis for structuring its own organization.

While the demand for a separate Andhra Province was intensified, the people of Rayalaseema were non-co-operative and indifferent. Some prominent leaders of Rayalaseema region feared that the interests of the people of this region would not receive proper attention in a separate Andhra state. The economic disparity between the two regions has also contributed to the apathy of the people of Rayalaseema towards the formation of a separate province. The five districts of Rayalaseema were very backward compared to the Circars and with the exception of Nellore, all its districts lacked irrigation facilities and were considered infertile. The Circar districts which constituted the delta on the other hand were well endowed with natural resources. "Kammas" were predominant in Coastal (Circar) districts whereas "Reddy" were chiefly found in the five Rayalaseema districts. The nagging fear that they would be dominated by the well-developed and culturally advanced Coastal leaders caused them grave concern. Hence the leaders of Rayalaseema had demanded certain safeguards from the leaders of the Coastal Andhra as a precondition for their acceptance of a separate Andhra State.

At the 25th Andhra Mahajan sabha held at Bezvada (presently Vijayawada) towards the end of October, 1937, several leaders including K. Koti redy, M.L.A. and H. Sitarama Reddy, M.L.A. from the ceded districts maintained that it would be a Himalayan blunder if the Circar leaders gave up the effort to win back Rayalaseema. Subsequently, a Committee was appointed to decide on the guarantees to be given to Rayalaseema.

The Pact conceded almost everything Rayalaseema had wanted. It conceded the demand that every district, irrespective of its population, should have equal representation in the state legislature. There were then only 11 districts. Rayalaseema arid Nellore accounted for 6 districts and the remaining five were the Circar districts. If each district was equally represented even in the matter of general seats, Rayalaseema and Nellore would have an effective voice in the legislature as well as in the formation of ministry. The needs of Rayalaseema were to be first met in the matter of irrigation. And Rayalaseema's opinion was to be decisive in the choice of the capital or

the location of the High Court. In short, the Circar leaders agreed to let the Rayalaseema leaders to have all that they wanted in order to win their cooperation for forming a powerful joint front that favoured the creation of an Andhra province.

When India attained independence, the Andhras hoped that their long-cherished desire to have a province of their own would be fulfilled. Their optimism was based on the congress Election Manifesto of 1947 wherein it was declared that the provinces of the country would have to be reconstituted as far as possible on the basis of language and culture. But responding to the persistent pressure from Andhra and other areas for the formation of linguistic provinces, the Constituent Assembly appointed the Linguistic Provinces Commission with S.K.Dar, a retired judge of Allahabad High Court, as Chairman and Dr. Pannalal, ICS (Retd) and Jagat Narain Lal (member of the Constituent Assembly) as members. This Commission was popularly known as the Dar Commission. The Commissions in its report strongly opposed reorganization of provinces exclusively on linguistic considerations. The commission was of the view that linguistic provinces would have a sub-national bias and militate against the working of India into one nation.

The report created much uproar in the country especially all over Andhra. To assuage the ruffled feelings of the Andhras a high-power Committee known as the JVP Committee (consisting of Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister, Vallabhai Patel, Deputy Prime Minister, and Pattabhi Sitaramaiah Congress President) to review the position in the light of the findings of the Dar Commission. The JVP Committee suggested that a beginning could be made with the creation of Andhra, provided that the Andhras would abandon their claims to the city of Madras as there were sharp differences between different linguistic groups in Madras. Since the Congress leadership of Andhra region was faction ridden, no agreement could be reached on the claim for the inclusion of the Madras city in the proposed separate Andhra state. As a result, the Government of India, not very keen on the creation of Andhra Province, took advantage of the disagreement among the leaders, shelved the issue. The people of The Andhra region became restive. It was evident in the way they defeated a large number of Congressmen in Andhra in 1952. Potti Sriramulu who began a fast unto death at Madras attained martyrdom on the night or December 15, 1952. This was followed by widespread violence all over the Andhra region. As violence continued unabated in many parts. Prime Minister, Nehru, finally conceded the demand of Andhras for a separate linguistic province. On Dec. 19, 1952 he announced the intention of his government to form an Andhra state with the undisputed Telugu speaking districts excluding the city of Madras.

Once again a good deal of controversy arose over the choice of the state capital. The Communists demanded that Vijayawada should be the capital of the State. Prof. N.G. Ranga, a prominent Congress leader, and others who were worried about the growing influence of Communists in Andhra wanted Tirupati to be the State capital. The Rayalaseema legislators demanded that the capital should be located in their region as per the terms of the Sri Bagh Pact. Finally the issue was settled when the Andhra legislators of the Madras Legislative Assembly met in Madras in the first week of June 1953 and agreed on the choice of Kurnool as the Provisional Capital. The controversy over the capita/ brought to surface the already existing Kammas-Reddy rivalry. The choice of Kurnool as the capital was looked upon by Kammas as a major triumph for the Reddys. T. Prakasam resigned his leadership of PSP (Praja Socialist Party) and became an associate member of the Congress Party. With T. Prakasam as Chief Minister the Andhra State was inaugurated on October 1, 1953.

Consequent on the resignation of Brahananda Reddy, P.V. Narasimha Rao, was unanimously chosen leader of the Congress Legislature Party in AP on September 25, 1971 with the support of the outgoing chief Minister's group and the Congress High command and became the Chief Minister of the State. He had no local base for himself and enjoyed only limited support among the Telangana legislators. Though scholarly and soft-spoken, he was considered to be indecisive. After assuming office on 30-9-71, he formed a 25-member Cabinet and made B.V. Subba Reddy (Rayalaseema) the deputy Chief Minister. However, he was not given a free hand in constituting his ministry. For the first time in the history of A.P. the Congress High Command played a major role in determining the composition of the ministry. The lieutenants of Brahananda Reddy were kept out of the ministry. K.

Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy, Narasimha Rao's style of functioning was very much resented by many of his Cabinet-colleagues. There was a feeling that the Chief Minister did not trust his Cabinet-colleagues and relied on a few of his friends for advice. As he did not have a group of his own, he had to depend heavily on the Central leaders. His frequent visits to Delhi for consultations even on minor matters also came in for severe criticism. Around this time the Andhra NGOs who were worried about the revival of Mulki Rules appealed to the Full Bench of Andhra Pradesh High Court, which in their judgement dated 18 February, 1972 ruled that the Mulki Rules had been validly repealed. P.V. Narasimha Rao Government went on appeal to the Supreme Court. The people of Andhra felt that Narasimha Rao did this to placate the people of the Telangana region.

In February 1972, elections were held to the A.P. State Legislative Assembly. Given a free hand by the Centre, P.V. Narasimha Rao chose a large number of candidates belonging to the backward classes and minorities. And a good number of them won the elections. Narasimha Rao became the Chief Minister again on 20-3-1972 and formed a large Cabinet of 29 members. He provided greater representation to the weaker sections and minorities in the Cabinet sidelining many prominent leaders belonging to the dominant communities. Earlier these communities, namely, Brahmins, Reddys, Kshatriyas Vaisyas, Velamas, Kapus and Kammas used to snatch away at least a half of the ministerial positions. For instance, during 1969-1971, 67 percent of the portfolios were held by these upper castes. But this was reduced to 55 percent in Narasimha Rao's ministry. Particularly the Kammas and Reddys were hard hit by Narasimha Rao's policy. They were completely relegated to the background. Their stranglehold on the positions of political power was thus loosened.

An analysis of the caste composition of the Congress Legislature Party shows that between 1956 and 1972, three principal castes, namely, Reddys, Kammas and Kshatriyas held the upper hand in the Party. They constituted more than 60 percent of the strength of the legislature and held 70 percent of the posts of Chairmen of the Zilla Parishads. Both in rural as well as urban areas they had a strong economic base. Hence, the sudden loss of political prominence made these classes very angry. Further, the Chief Minister reduced the powers of the Zilla Parishads and initiated measures to bring about certain structural changes in the Panchayat Raj institutions. The Chief Minister's decision to implement progressive measures like land-reforms had also adversely affected these class. After the 1972-Assembly-elections, Narasimha Rao Government went about implementing the land-ceiling Acts in all seriousness without evolving a consensus. The introduction of such revolutionary measures alarmed the powerful land-owning communities in the Andhra region. They were greatly disturbed at the prospect of losing their vast tracts of lands. It was feared that these land-ceiling Acts and the proposed changes in the local bodies, if implemented faithfully, would affect them politically and economically. Hence, the dominant communities of the Andhra region, the vested interests and disgruntled politicians ganged up against the Chief Minister. They were waiting for an opportunity to unseat P.V. Narasimha Rao from power and the Supreme Court's judgement validating the Mulki Rules came in handy for them to start a movement.

Six - Point - Formula

During the first week of September 1973, the centre, encouraged by the response from the separatists, extended an invitation to all the congress leaders of the state to come to New Delhi with a view to evolving a compromise - formula. Once again there was movement en masse of Congress leaders to New Delhi. And after protracted negotiations with the Union Home Minister and his junior colleague, K.C.Pant, the integrationists and separatists agreed upon a formula which was hammered out and presented to them on September 21, 1973 by K.C.Pant. This plan to resolve the Mulki deadlock, known as the 'Six-Point Formula', received a near-unanimous endorsement from the Congress MPs and MLAs belonging to Andhra and Telangana regions. Though the formula had been evolved by the Centre on the basis of the consultations held with different groups, it was not presented on behalf of the Central Government. Instead, the Centre wanted that it should emanate from among the State leaders, MPs and legislators themselves.

CONCLUSION

They should not involve themselves in political agitations. However, it is not to deny them their rightful role in the affairs of the state. In fact,

the student community has often played a crucial role in opposing or removing dictatorial regimes throughout the world. But it is sad to note that the student community indulges in wanton destruction of private and public property and react violently to every issue. As a result, unrest among students has become a universal phenomenon causing immense concern to those who are genuinely interested in our future citizens. In the separatist Telangana and Andhra agitations a large number of students were killed by the law enforcing agencies. In the anti-Mandal agitation, scores of students lost their lives in self-immolations. This is indeed a grave loss to the entire nation. It is essential that the students devote their undivided attention to their studies, without frittering away their energies playing into the hands of self-seeking politicians. The elders, too, have a duty to ensure that their attention is not distracted from the pursuit of studies. A popular movement cannot succeed through violent means. At the time of the separatist agitation in Telangana that preceded the Jai Andhra movement, the agitators has resort to violent methods for achieving their ends. But they failed to produce the desired results. In this context we may remember how a large number of students got massacred at the Tainaman square in the People's Republic of china, when a mob clamouring for Civil rights turned violent. That incident serves to prove the validity of the time- tested principle of non-violence preached and practiced by Mahatma Gandhi. His motto that "the means justify the ends" shall be a guiding principle to every civilized human being.

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