The Historical Context of Andhra and Telangana, 1949-56

GAUTAM PINGLE

This paper sets out the historical context that led to the formation of Andhra Pradesh through a merger of Andhra state with the Telangana region of Hyderabad State. It may be that some reasonably dispassionate history based on recorded texts and academic research will help understand the reasons for past policy decisions that affect current political sentiment in Andhra Pradesh. In many ways the sentiments of the people of Telangana are no different than those of the former Andhra state who fought so long and hard to separate their region from the Tamil-dominated Madras Province. Yet the same political elite which fought for an Andhra state and, then for Andhra Pradesh, seemed not to have learnt that it is not fair or sensible to "do unto others what you do not wish done unto you". It may be too late to learn that lesson now.

Gautam Pingle (*gautam.pingle@gmail.com*) is with the Centre for Public Policy and Governance, Administrative Staff College of India, Hyderabad.

This paper sets out the historical context, which led to the formation of Andhra Pradesh through a merger of Andhra state with the Telangana region of Hyderabad State. The idea is to put before the reader an account of events that took place in the past but which seem to have current relevance inasmuch as events taking place now could have been perhaps foreseen and prevented but were not. The article does not take into account the whole sorry history of the Telangana agitation from 1969-70 to the current period as it is well-documented elsewhere and is still in the public memory.

1 Linguistic States

The history of the reorganisation of Indian states on linguistic basis goes back to the Congress Party position taken at the Nagpur Session in December 1920, when the Congress restructured its organisation and constituted Pradesh Congress Committees on linguistic lines.

Even as early as in August 1920, the Madras Legislative Council had given its consent to the proposal for an Andhra province and then, again, on 14 March 1927, under the reformed constitution, the Madras Legislative Council passed a resolution with 40 votes in favour (with 32 against) of formation of a separate Andhra province and forwarded it to the viceroy. The viceroy brought the matter to the notice of the secretary of state for India in London. Nothing happened. Much of the resistance seems to have come from Tamils, who had occupied government and other jobs in the Andhra area, and who feared for their livelihoods in a separate Andhra. Moreover, in the financial year 1932-33 alone, the 12 Telugu districts together showed an annual surplus government revenue after expenditure of Rs 133 lakh (Rao 1973: 176). This led Pattabhi Sittaramayya to predict that: "It appears that the British would grant us independence sooner than the Tamil ministers would give us a separate province".[1]

The 1945-46 Congress Election Manifesto stated that:

> The Congress has also stood for the freedom of each group and territorial area within the nation to develop its own life and culture within the larger framework and it is stated that for this purpose such territorial areas or provinces should be constituted, as far as possible, on a linguistic and cultural basis.[2]

The government of India set up the Linguistic Provinces Commission (the Dar Commission) in December 1948 to consider the issues, especially regarding the formation of new states of Andhra, Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra. The commission, however, decided against the formation of new states as "it was not in the larger interests of the Indian nation and should not be

taken in hand".[3] It also found that in the case of Andhra, all the Rayalaseema districts were facing revenue deficits, while the coastal Andhra districts were in surplus. So there was no homogeneity in the proposed Andhra state either. This caused more agitation in Andhra.

The Andhra pressure was too much and by 1949, the leadership had "practically decided to have an Andhra province, because most matters had been settled by the Tamil people, the Andhras and others concerned".[4] But the issue kept being deferred ostensibly on issues relating to Madras city and Rayalaseema.[5] In February 1949, the Bombay Legislative Assembly passed a resolution recommending the creation of a new state of Maharashtra including Bombay city. Faced with both Andhra and Maharashtra demands, Nehru formed a committee with himself, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Pattabhi Sittaramayya (JVP Committee) to examine the issue and tried to postpone the issue by 10 years. However, this did not work, and in November 1949, the Congress Working Committee asked the government to form Andhra state but without Madras city. This delayed the process – as seems to be intended – as the people of Andhra were not yet prepared to give up Madras in exchange for a separate state.

The position on linguistic states was reiterated in the Congress Election Manifesto of 1952:

> The demand for a re-distribution of provinces on a linguistic basis has been persistently made in the south and west of India. The Congress expressed itself in favour of linguistic provinces many years ago. A decision on this question ultimately depends upon the wishes of the people concerned. While linguistic reasons have undoubtedly a certain cultural and other importance, there are other factors also, such as economic, administrative and financial, which have to be taken into consideration. Where such a demand represents the agreed views of the people concerned, the necessary steps prescribed by the Constitution, including the appointment of a Boundary Commission should be taken.[6]

The implication is clearly that "wishes of the people concerned" and "agreed views of the people concerned" referred to the people who wished to have a separate state. Dealing with demand of the people of Andhra and the suggestions of a plebiscite or referendum, prime minister stated that he would "entirely agree that 95% to 97% of the people concerned would vote for it".[7]

However, having said that the leadership had accepted the creation of Andhra state as long ago as 1949, Nehru wrote to chief ministers on 2 December 1952 that "the decision to establish the Andhra state will no doubt, open out the questions relating to other demands about linguistic provinces. We shall have to consider them and it would not be wise to wait till circumstances force our hands."[8]

As late as 16 December 1952, three days before he announced the Andhra formation, Nehru wrote to Rajagopalachari, Chief Minister of Madras State saying of the people of Andhra:

> Their state will be a backward one in many ways and financially hard up. They cannot expect much help from the centre. However, that is their look out. If they want the state, they can have it on conditions that we have stated (i e, without Madras city).[9]

On 18 January 1953, the Congress passed a resolution approving the steps taken by the government relating to the formation of Andhra and reaffirmed the policy of the Congress in favour of linguistic provinces.[10]

On 2 July 1953, Nehru told chief ministers that:

> So far as we are concerned, we have declared quite clearly that *after* the Andhra state is *well* established; we shall appoint a high-powered Commission to consider the question of reorganisation of states *in all its many* aspects. We do not propose to consider the question of one state separately now. Instead, this cannot be considered because *in every* such instance many states are concerned. Nor do we propose to consider this matter on the *purely* linguistic plane, although language and cultural are necessarily important…I am surprised that *suddenly* some people should have galvanised themselves into activity in regard to Hyderabad State and demanded its disintegration...I am sorry for this because it denotes an outlook with which I have no sympathy whatever, and which, I am sure, if given free play, would bring utter chaos in a great part of India and lead to other disastrous consequences also.[11]

On the issue of splitting Hyderabad State, Nehru considered it was "injurious to Hyderabad and would upset the whole structure of South India". "It would", he added, "be very unwise to do anything that would destroy the administrative continuity that has been achieved in Hyderabad after so much effort".[12] Finally: "I think it will be extremely undesirable, unfortunate and injurious to Hyderabad".[13] In response to the Communist Party of India (CPI)-Front demand for disintegration, Nehru stated forthrightly to chief ministers on 2 October 1952:

> Then there is the cry for a division of Hyderabad on a linguistic basis. For my part, I am entirely opposed to this. If it is accepted, I am sure it would retard progress in Hyderabad for many long years and would create all manner of problems and upset that balance of south India. All our Five-Year Plans and the like will have to be put on the shelf till some new equilibrium is reached.[14]

Nehru also stated in Parliament on 7 July 1952 that

> I, for my part, would be perfectly agreeable if there were a proposition that Uttar Pradesh, for instance, be split up into four provinces. However, I doubt, very much if my colleagues from Uttar Pradesh would relish the idea; on the contrary they would probably like to have an additional chunk from some other province.[15]

Yet, while the leadership was prepared to concede Andhra, it (and this included both Nehru and Sardar Patel) refused to consider the request for a Gurkha province in north Bengal as "unreal, misconceived and harmful to national interest".[16]

Ambedkar had mixed feelings. However, his position on linguistic states was reasonably consistent with his earlier positions:

> We, therefore, want linguistic States for two reasons: to make easy the way to democracy and to remove racial and cultural tension. In seeking to create linguistic States India is treading the right road. It is the road, which all States have followed. In the case of other linguistic States they have been so, from the very beginning. In the case of India, she has to put herself in the reverse gear to reach the goal. But the road she proposes to travel is well-tried road. It is a road, which is followed by other States.[17]

Yet, he was afraid of the challenge to the unity of the country and to the rights of the minorities. More dominant in his mind was that "…the Union of India is far, far away, from the United States of India. But this consolidation of the North and balkanisation of the South is not the way to reach it."[18] He was also fearful of linguistic chauvinism – in this he was prescient.

2 Nehru's Attitude

Nehru tried to stonewall – for between 1949 (when he said he accepted the Andhra idea) and 1953 (when Andhra state was created) hardly any action was taken. Then when it did happen, he seemed quite eager to limit it to Andhra while opposing the disintegration of Hyderabad. Yet, he did what was inevitable and set up the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC). That bought another two-year's time but the mood instead of settling down became more assertive and fearful. With two months to go before the release of the SRC report, Nehru wrote on 2 August 1955, to chief ministers anticipating its recommendations in general and warning on the need to be balanced:

> No possible recommendation or solution to this problem can meet with universal approval, and therefore, whatever they suggest is bound to displease somebody…As far as I can see, the only statesmanlike approach would be *to accept, broadly speaking, the unanimous recommendations of the Commission*, whether we like it or not. Any other attitude for Government to take up would be to take sides in this controversy and thus be fiercely assailed for partiality. It may be that some of the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission appear to us to be unwise. It is better to accept that bit of unwisdom than to do something which leads to unfortunate consequences. *The best course, therefore, appears to me for us to accept the main recommendations of the Commission, subject to minor modifications if necessary* and thus try to put an end to these controversies and conflicts. If possible, we should try to implement those decisions before the *next general election*.[19]

On Hyderabad and Telangana, as late as 21 December 1955, he told Parliament:

> Some honourable members here may well remember that I delivered some speeches in Hyderabad opposing the disintegration of the State of Hyderabad. That was my view. I would still like the State of Hyderabad not to be disintegrated, but circumstances have been too strong for me. I accept them. I cannot force the people of Hyderabad or others to fall in line with my thinking. I accept their decision and I adjust myself to the position that Hyderabad will be disintegrated. The Commission has suggested that if Hyderabad was going to be disintegrated, the Telangana area should remain separate for five years and then decide whether it should merge with the other areas of Andhra. We have no particular objection to that, but *logically speaking*, it seems to me *unwise* to allow this matter to be left to *argument*. Let it be taken up now and let us be done with it.[20]

On 16 January 1956, Nehru wrote to chief ministers that he had spoken on the radio and government had issued a communiqué on the reorganisation of states. In the broadcast he announced that, Bombay city would be centrally administered, Vidarbha would be merged with Maharashtra and Saurashtra and Kutch merged with Gujarat and also that Hyderabad would be split. The communiqué added that the future of Punjab and the Telangana area of Hyderabad would be decided later. On 14 March 1956, he reported, "it is a happy omen that the difficult and ticklish question of the Punjab has been settled more or less satisfactorily".[21]

He was mistaken. The Akalis immediately started an agitation demanding a separate state and the Maha Punjab Samithi demanded merger as recommended by the SRC of Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU), Punjab and Himachal Pradesh. The communists demanded two states: a Hindi-speaking Haryana merged with Himachal Pradesh and a Punjabi-speaking state. The Praja Socialist Party (PSP) demanded merger of PEPSU with Punjab and a Greater Delhi or, as an alternative, the formation of Haryana.

Nehru exploded. Writing to chief ministers on 15 June 1956, regarding the Punjab agitation, he stated:

> I cannot remember having seen a more misguided or misconceived agitation. I do not expect anyone to agree with me or the Government, but one does expect a modicum of intelligence in understanding and appraising any step taken. I regret that this is completely absent today in Punjab among those who are getting so vastly excited about the regional formula.[22]

He continued:

> …there is a loud demand for a Maha Punjab including Himachal Pradesh. If there is one thing that is quite clear it is that the people of Himachal Pradesh do not want to be merged with Punjab. In fact, they resent the idea. Are we to compel them simply because the Maha Punjab group so desired? The entire regional formula of the Punjab is on a line with regional formulas we have suggested to some other part of India.[23]

Regarding Bombay city and its independent status, on 2 and 3 August 1956, the government was confronted with a memorandum from 220 members of Parliament in the Lok Sabha proposing a bigger bilingual state of Bombay State to include Saurashtra, Kutch and Vidarbha as a solution for the tangled issue of Bombay city. The proposal was accepted by the government on the 6 and by the Lok Sabha on 9 August. The bill was altered radically to reverse the bifurcation and ensured that Bombay would continue to be one province with the additional areas added to it. Promptly, violent demonstrations began from 8 August in Ahmedabad.

3 The SRC and Telangana

The idea that there could be many states speaking the same language was applied only to the Hindi-belt, where nearly five states spread-eagled from east to west from Rajasthan to Bihar and from north to south from Himachal to Madhya Pradesh encompassing most of northern India. The SRC's recommendation for Telangana was clear and balanced. It considered the case for Vishalandhra and Telangana and dealt with all those "other factors" that Nehru often referred to in the larger context.

The SRC stated the argument for merger of Andhra and Telangana:

> The advantages of a larger Andhra state including Telangana are that it will bring into existence a State of about 32 millions with a *considerable hinterland, with large water and power resources, adequate mineral wealth and valuable raw materials*. This will also solve the difficult and vexing problem of finding a permanent capital for Andhra; the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad are *very well suited to be the capital of Vishalandhra*.[24]

Referring to the river water issue its pointed out that:

> Complete unification of either the Krishna or the Godavari valley is not, of course, possible. *But if one independent political jurisdiction, namely, that of Telangana, can be eliminated, the formulation and implementation of plans in the eastern areas in these two great river basins will be greatly expedited*. Since Telangana, as part of Vishalandhra, will benefit both directly and indirectly from this development, there is a great deal to be said for its amalgamation with the Andhra state.[25]

Despite these strong arguments, it contended that:

> The case of Vishalandhra thus rests on arguments, which are impressive. *The considerations which have been argued in favour of a separate Telangana State are, however, not such as may be lightly brushed aside*.[26]

The first problem was the poor state of Andhra finances:

> *The existing Andhra state has faced a financial problem of some magnitude ever since it was crated and in comparison with Telangana the existing Andhra state has a low per capita revenue*. Telangana, on the other hand, is much less likely to be faced with financial embarrassment. The much higher incidence of land revenue in Telangana and an excise revenue of the order of Rs 5 crore per annum principally explain this difference. *Whatever the explanation may be, some Telangana leaders seem to fear that the result of unification will be to exchange some settled sources of revenue, out of which development schemes may be financed, for financial uncertainty similar to that which Andhra is now faced*. Telangana claims to be progressive and from an administrative point of view, unification, it is contended, is not likely to confer any benefits on this area.[27]

The per capita annual government revenue for Andhra was Rs 11, while that of Telangana was Rs 14. Whatever the differences in economic activity, the state revenues in Telangana were better, and in 1954-55, yielded a surplus of Rs 0.51 crore, while Andhra had a deficit of Rs 5.18 crore. Moreover, Andhra had an overdraft of Rs 2.67 crore, while Telangana had Rs 11 crore in marketable securities.[28]

This was anticipated by the SRC:

> *Telangana it has further been argued, can be a stable and viable unit considered by itself. The revenue receipts of this area on current account have been estimated at about Rs 17 crore*, and although the financing of the Krishna and Godavari projects will impose a recurring burden on the new State by way of interest charges, *the probable deficit, if any is unlikely to be large*. In favourable conditions, the revenue budget may even be balanced or indicate a marginal surplus. This fairly optimistic forecast can be explained or justified by a variety of reasons.[29]

With regard to river waters, the SRC felt that:

> When plans for future development are taken into account, Telangana fears that the claims of this area may not receive adequate consideration in Vishalandhra. The Nandikonda (i e, Nagarjunasagar) and Kushtapuram (i e, Pochampad) projects are, for example, among the most important which Telangana or the country as a whole has undertaken. Irrigation in the coastal areas of these two great rivers is however, also being planned. *Telangana, therefore, does not wish to lose its present independent rights in relation to the utilisation of the waters of Krishna and Godavari*.[30]

On the issue of employment the SRC pointed out that:

> One of the principal causes of opposition of Vishalandhra also seems to be the apprehension felt by the *educationally backward people of Telangana that they may be swamped and exploited by the more advanced people of the coastal areas*. …The real fear of the people of Telangana is that if they join Andhra they will be unequally placed in relation to the people of Andhra and in this partnership the major partner will derive all the advantages immediately, *while Telangana, itself may be converted into a colony by the enterprising coastal Andhra*.[31]

Summing up the SRC stated that:

> It seems to us, therefore, that there is much to be said for the formation of the larger State and nothing should be done to impede the realisation of this goal. At the same time, we have to take note of the important fact that, while opinion in Andhra is overwhelmingly in favour of the larger unit, *public opinion in Telangana has still to crystallise itself. Important leaders of public opinion in Andhra themselves seem to appreciate that the unification of Telangana with Andhra, though desirable, should be based on a voluntary and willing association of the people and that it is primarily for the people of Telangana to take a decision about their future*.[32]

Therefore,

> After taking all these factors into consideration *we have come to the conclusions that it will be in the interests of Andhra as well as Telangana, if for the present, the Telangana area is to be constituted into a separate State*, which may be known as the Hyderabad State with provision for its unification with Andhra *after the general elections likely to be held in or about 1961 if by a two-thirds majority the legislature of the residual Hyderabad State expresses itself in favour of such unification*.[33]

Many of the forebodings of the SRC, which dissuaded it from recommending merger, continued to exist and form the basis of continued unsatisfied demands.

4 Electoral Situation in the Two States[34]

4.1 Andhra

The Andhra state came into being on 1 October 1953. The legislators from the Andhra area who were elected to the Madras Legislature in 1952 were transferred (without fresh elections) in 1953 to a new Andhra Legislative Assembly that consisted of 140 members. The Congress had 38 members of the legislative assembly (MLAs) (with 28.4% of the popular vote) and the CPI 41 MLAs (with 17% of the popular vote). The rest – 61 MLAs – were independents and small parties. T Prakasham (formerly a Congressman and chief minister of Madras Province), left the PSP and founded the Praja Party. The coalition government (of the Congress, Krishikar Lok Party (KLP) and Praja Party) was formed by Prakasham as chief minister and N Sanjiva Reddy as deputy chief minister.

From the start the Prakasham coalition went from one crisis to another – as is usual in an unstable coalition. The site of the capital was the first issue, where the coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema legislators differed violently. This even resulted in resignations from the cabinet of Gouthu Latchanna and with his party the KLP led by N G Ranga (a former CPI supporter) leaving the coalition and sitting in opposition. Soon as this was sorted out, came the issue of the bill to establish a new university in Rayalaseema, with further agitation. But the most important issues that divided the polity were land reform and prohibition.

The land reform legislation was pending – only the great estates had been abolished under the Madras Estates Abolition Act. However, the target was the rest of the older tenure known as *inamdari* – which were tax free lands granted for service, either for secular or for religious purposes. Brahmins held much of this land and tenant farmers who typically cultivated it were peasant castes such as Kammas, Kapus and Reddys. Tenants were being evicted in anticipation of a threat of a severe land reform similar to that which neighbouring Hyderabad State had enacted in 1950. As a result of agitation by political parties and tenants, the government issued the Andhra Tenancy Protection Ordinance of 1954 giving temporary protection to certain classes of tenants. However, this did not please the PSP and the agitation continued with satyagraha.

The CPI launched another agitation in the summer of 1954 for distribution of 13.5 lakh acres of government-owned wasteland and newly drained swamplands to landless labour and poor sections.

When the government announced its own policy in June, it was denounced as bogus and intended to benefit politically connected persons and the agitation continued. As a result of the two land agitations, the Andhra jails were crowded with 2,000 satyagrahis – which led Sanjiva Reddy, the deputy chief minister to say "Andhra state today is full of satyagraha and, in fact, too full to be good for the country".[35]

The issue that eventually brought the government down was that of prohibition. There had been considerable pressure to abolish prohibition to enable the state revenues to be enhanced and to provide employment to the toddy tapping caste. At the time of creation of Andhra, K N Wanchoo's report had warned that Andhra would face "bankruptcy" if prohibition were not scrapped. The S V Ramamurthi Special Committee surveyed the prohibition scene and in a 160-page report stated that enforcement of prohibition had failed, illicit consumption and corruption was widespread and public order was affected. It recommended repeal of prohibition. The government declined to implement the recommendations. The assembly passed a resolution moved in favour of repeal. The government remained adamant.

At this stage both the CPI and KLP introduced a no-confidence motion when the assembly reconvened in October 1954. The government lost the motion when four cabinet members voted for the motion and president's rule was enforced despite the CPI's offer to form the government with support of the PSP (which was withdrawn later at the governor's pressure). Fresh elections were announced for 1955.

The mid-term election of 1955 was a watershed not just for Andhra, but also for the country. The CPI, which had done exceedingly well in 1952, was now extremely confident that it would rule Andhra state. It promised a land ceiling of 20 acres of wetland and 30 to 60 acres of dryland, distribution of excess land to the landless and poor peasants, abolition of inamdari tenure without compensation, abolition of prohibition and a three-year moratorium on all debts due by poor peasants and landless labour and long-term interest free loans to farmers. It, along with the PSP, also supported Vishalandhra – a merger with Telangana region of Hyderabad State.

To counter this and to convince newly franchised electorate,[36] the Congress promised to continue prohibition (which had brought their government down!), to try and achieve immediate abolition of inam village rights and to enforce a ceiling on landholdings (without stating the limits). It also encouraged popularisation of neera (as a substitute for toddy), cancellation of land revenue for those paying less than Rs 10 and announced a minimum wage for agricultural labour. However, no mention of Vishalandhra was made in its manifesto.

The manifesto promises apart, the real politics lay in the "democracy vs communism" issue. The Congress High Command entrusted S K Patil with the election strategy and its implementation. Patil was a staunch Bombay-based trade union anti-communist who launched a violent and organised campaign. He consolidated the non-communist parties into a United Congress Front (UCF) giving up 49 seats to the coalition partners, which brought in the Kamma-dominated parties into the anti-communist front and split the Kamma vote. This was decisive.

The Kamma population figures (in the 1921 Census) showed sizeable proportions in the total population in critical districts: Krishna (26%), Guntur (36%), Nellore (13%), Godavari (7%) and Chittor (11%). This community had earlier supported the Kamma leadership of the CPI. The brahmin vote, considerable as it was – in Krishna (20%), Guntur (19%), Godavari (13%), Vizag (12%) – tended to go to the Congress Party and to Prakasham. With the CPI threat of a severe land reform, the richer Kamma and other landed interests would have backed the UCF.

The Hyderabad State Congress sent in hundreds of party workers. Donations of money, jeeps and loudspeakers poured in from all over the country. He was responsible for mobilising money and men from all over India. S K Patil thoroughly revamped the Congress Party structure and conveyed the idea to the voters that if the communists came to power, the union would not allow them to rule much less permit funds to flow to a "bankrupt" state, which needed them to survive

The then Hyderabad Chief Minister, B Ramakrishna Rao, from his sickbed issued an appeal to the Andhras to vote Congress otherwise:

> …the people of Telangana, who have had bitter experience of the Communist atrocities, would be loath to accept a Vishalandhra in case a non-Congress government is formed in Andhra. If there is a Government favourable to the Congress ideas in Andhra, the way for the formation of Vishalandhra will be clear. ……A non-Congress Government in Andhra would be against the early execution of the Nandikonda (Nagarjunasagar) project, which would do good to people in Hyderabad and Andhra States.[37]

Less than three weeks before the Andhra election, the Congress Working Committee met at Avadi and endorsed a socialist line to pre-empt the communists. This would be the famous "Socialistic Pattern" which borrowed the Stalinist model of heavy industry led-growth as opposed to the line of Gandhi, which was based on cooperatives and handlooms, etc. With this, the Congress took much of the economic argument away from the communists.

Among other communist defectors was C V K Rao who called his party "fascist" and "opportunist and anarchic". He contended that the CPI was dominated by what he called *kulak pettamdars* – aiming at the Kamma caste leadership and resource base of the CPI.[38]

The masterstroke was to come. A month or two before the election, Khrushchev and Bulganin, leaders of the Soviet Union, arrived on a state visit to India. *Pravda* on 26 January 1955 published a glowing tribute to Nehru and the new India – a tribute that was copied, translated and circulated in thousands during the Congress election campaign. Moscow had done the damage.

The election had a high voter turnout (64%) and out of total of 194 seats the Congress got 119 seats and the CPI only 15! With the KLP and PSP getting 22 and 13 seats each, respectively, the UCF had, to everyone's surprise, cleared the board. The Congress formed the government with Bezwada Gopal Reddy as chief minister.

Yet, while the Congress got 37% of the vote, KLP 9% and PSP 5%, the CPI still got 31% (doubling their 1952 share), which showed that sentiment was still strong and widespread despite the enormous efforts to counter it.

Among the defeated CPI candidates were stalwarts like T Nagi Reddy, leader of the opposition (brother-in-law of the Congress

leader N Sanjiva Reddy), M Basava Punnaiah, C Rajeshwar Rao, while Puchallapalli Sundarayya got a majority of only 821 votes.[39]

The caste equations also were reversed in favour of the UCF. The merger of the Kamma-dominated KLP of N G Ranga, the panic of Kamma and Reddy landlords and Kulaks who due to the threatened land reform, the achievement of statehood and the need to placate the Congress-ruled union government and the neat technique of the UCF on matching communist candidates with similar caste candidates – all helped to mobilise the caste equations in critical areas. Thus, the Congress had made severe inroads into the political and caste base of the CPI. With this development, the Kamma-Reddy rivalry moved from the CPI-Congress level to the intra-party factions in the Congress Party.

4.2 Hyderabad

The communist insurgency of 1948-50[40] had been crushed by the Indian army, which had by 1948 occupied Hyderabad State in order to displace the Nizam's government. To add to this, Moscow's Zhadanov line in favour of armed insurrections had been dropped after the death of Stalin. Thus the Congress Party (which was never a force in the Princely State) got a breathing space, helped also by the drastic land reform, initiated and implemented during 1950s by the military/civil administration of the state by the government of India.

In the 1952 elections, the Hyderabad State electorate had voted 26% in favour of the CPI-Front parties – with the socialists getting another 12%. The CPI-Front parties (the Peoples' Democratic Front and the Peasants and Workers Party) got 37 seats in the Telangana area alone polling 31% of the vote. In the Telangana region, Congress had polled 39% of the popular vote and got 44 seats. The Congress, having won 93 seats, was, however, in a governing position.

The cry for disintegration of Hyderabad State was due largely to the general hostility to the former Nizam's State, which had defied the union government and Indian national movement.[41] The agitation for disintegration was also led by the Maratha and Kannada elements in Hyderabad State, who preferred to merge their areas with Bombay Province and Mysore State, respectively.[42] Yet, with the disintegration of Hyderabad, the Congress position in Telangana would have to be reassessed both in party political terms and in terms of the caste dominance.

5 Caste and Merger[43]

Once the 1947 Partition was over, the idea of linguistic identity raised its head – an issue that the Congress had used as a handle against the multilingual British provinces and princely states. The Pandora's box was opened and like the earlier religious issue proceeded inexorably to its logical conclusion. Andhra Pradesh and most other states even after linguistic unity was achieved – or especially, after it was achieved – began to think no longer on linguistic terms but on the next level of identity – caste. This was to dominate party and legislative politics.

5.1 Andhra

The elections of 1955 saw caste equations crystallised and united in the UCF. Yet, the communists were not a spent force – they had contested for 169 of the 170 seats (though getting only 15 seats) and doubled their earlier share of the popular vote to 31%, while

the UCF got 50% of the vote (and receiving 146 seats). The Congress had doubled its share of vote compared to 1952, when it had fought alone. Of the 146 seats won by the UCF, Reddys represented 45, Kammas 24 and Telegas 15.

The Congress had become a Reddy-dominated party – something Ambedkar had warned of in 1953 when he said:

> Take Andhra: there are only two major communities spread over the linguistic area. They are either Reddys or the Kammas. They hold all the land, all the offices, and all the business. The untouchables live in subordinate dependence on them…. In a linguistic states what would remain for the smaller communities to look to? [44]

The battle over location of the state capital, which involved Kamma landed and real estate interests in Vijayawada (supported by the communists and KLP) – had already revealed the caste antagonism within the Congress. This resulted in N G Ranga the leading Kamma Congressman walking out in 1951 and setting up the KLP, despite Nehru's all efforts to unite the two caste factions. In the end, it was the Madras Legislature that decided in favour of Kurnool – the Rayalaseema faction supported by the Tamil MLAs won out.

The *Times of India* reported on 6 June 1953 that:

> In recent years the rivalry between the Reddys of Rayalaseema and rich Kammas of the delta districts has grown to alarming proportion. Congressmen have tended to group themselves on communal lines, and the Sanjiva Reddy-Ranga tussle for leadership which finally resulted in Ranga's exit from the Congress is major instance in this regard. And rightly or wrongly, the choice of Kurnool is looked upon by the Kammas as another major triumph for the Reddys.

This rivalry and antagonism continued to plague the new Andhra state and affected party politics and even the Communist Party was not immune. Puchallapalli Sundarayya, the leading Communist (and Reddy by caste) charged that the Congress:

> …wanted to rouse regional feeling: it wanted to rouse communal feelings, and that is why it selected Kurnool as the capital….The Congress raises the slogan of Reddy vs Kamma. It says: if you want to change Kurnool to any centralised place, then Kamma domination will come and Reddy domination will go. These are facts that cannot be controverted by anybody who knows anything about Andhra.[45]

While the most of the Congress Party and the Communist Party were in favour of Vishalandhra, N G Ranga and his group were in doubt:

> It is indeed a matter of serious thought whether acquisition (sic) of Telangana would be a source of strength or embarrassment, whether it would pave the way more easily for the emergence of a Communist State in India.[46]

However, despite these fears of coastal Andhra and its Kamma MLAs of being marginalised in an enlarged state (the Telangana population was a large as that of the coastal region), in late November 1955, the Andhra assembly passed an unanimous resolution demanding the formation of a single Telugu state.

5.2 Hyderabad

If the 1952 voting pattern (Congress with 44 seats and the CPI-Front 37 seats) held also in the forthcoming 1957 general election, it would have been a near thing for the Congress to dominate a 97-member Telangana assembly. The socialists had polled 14% of the vote in 1952 and had got 11 seats with independents polling a higher 17% but getting only five seats. A separate Telangana could easily become a communist bastion. Much would depend on how the socialists would do before and after the election. With the brahmins and Reddys dominating the Congress Party in Telangana, a merger with Andhra would strengthen the Reddy element present on both sides as well as the anti-CPI-Front.

Once dismemberment of Hyderabad was decided, it would become difficult for the Congress Party (riven as elsewhere by factions – brahmin and Reddy) to hold its own in a separate Telangana. But the region already had experienced after annexation by the union of what an influx of out-of-state government officials and other can do to destabilise employment and business. This had resulted in a violent Mulki agitation (1948-52) and quieted down only after jobs were safeguarded for sons-of-the-soil or persons with a residence qualification of 14 years.

The demand for a separate Telangana state seemed to have support in the Hyderabad State Congress Party. In November of 1955, newspapers reported that seven out of the 10 Congress Committee members from Telangana, 73 out of the 105 Telangana Congress delegates, the state executive of the Indian National Trade Union Congress, and 10 MP's from Telangana supported a separate state. The team of K V Ranga Reddy, M Chenna Reddy and J V Narsing Rao who were to go to Kurnool in November to discuss the issue with Andhra leader, cancelled their trip.[47]

The eight-day debate in the Hyderabad assembly in late November 1955 on an official resolution on the issue was lively but no vote was taken – which in itself is significant. The main political actors in the Congress – Chief Minister B Ramakrishna Rao, K V Ranga Reddy, M Chenna Reddy had changed their positions depending on whether they were in office or not or on swiftly changing faction politics. Even the mouthpiece of the Telangana Congress politicians, the *Golkonda Patrika*, switched its support for Vishalandhra in 1954 and supported a separate Telangana in 1955.

Between the Andhra mid-term election of 1955 and the decision to merge Andhra and Telangana not much seems to have happened. But still all the expected outcomes were reversed. Why?

Despite the linguistic similarities, there seemed to be an economic, cultural and legacy argument against merger as stated by the SRC. Throughout most of recent history, the Telugu people have been divided: the Telangana Telugus have existed for nearly 400 years under Muslim rule, and while the Andhra Telugus have been for 150 years under British colonial rule. Fiscal imbalances between the regions, fears of the Telangana educated class at loss of opportunities and the general uncertainty of the Telangana people who had lived under military rule for four years (1948-52) all contributed to a general unease. Besides, in Andhra democratic participation under the Government of India Act 1935 in the assemblies and the district boards had empowered the elites there. In Telangana, despite the institution of representative assemblies in the Nizam's Dominions, democracy was not as developed and had only a few years experience. Even the differences in vocabulary and accents divided and identified the two Telugu populations as did also their social and other everyday practices.[48] All these issues needed sagacious statesmen to sort out and smooth over.

So did the political argument tip the balance? With 30% of the vote in Andhra (1955) and 31% in Telangana (1952) in communist hands and the coming general election in 1957, was the Congress concerned of that outcome? If after the Avadi line, Moscow's new friendliness and the experience of defeating the communists in 1955, did the Congress think merger would eliminate the communist threat once and for all from both states?

When the merger announcement came from Nehru, it was unexpected and made in Nizamabad in a public meeting held on 5 March 1956. He also said that there would be two regional councils to take care that there was no discrimination. He indicated that the decision had been arrived at with consent of all parties concerned.[49]

The Congress High Command had agreed to bilingual states in Bombay and Punjab. It had not touched United Provinces (alter Uttar Pradesh) and Bihar – though Madhya Bharat was merged with central provinces and Berar to make Madhya Pradesh. In Bengal, it refused the Gurkhas a separate state.

How did the merger take place – with no sentiment, no logical reason, no recommendation by SRC, no interest shown by Nehru? It seems fairly obvious from the historical and political context of Andhra state and Telangana region that several issues played a role in the merger decision:

(1) Andhra state was virtually bankrupt as predicted before its formation and needed resources to carry on government and take up public investment.

(2) The Telangana region had surpluses in government revenue despite being a poorer area and had substantial negotiable investments accumulated and inherited from the Nizam's government. Its industrialisation was more advanced than in Andhra with nearly 26 major industrial undertaking – many of them state-owned or controlled. However, agriculture was backward partly due to tenurial conditions and also as it did not have access to the great rivers though the two projects on the Godavari and Krishna would substantially make up for the deficiency.

(3) While the agriculture of the delta districts was advanced (based on the British built Annicuts across the Godavari and Krishna rivers), industrialisation was poor with only a few industrial units – AP Paper, Andhra Sugars and a two or three jute mills. This was in the coastal area – Rayalaseema had much less of an economic base and all its districts had revenue deficits which needed the help of the surplus coastal districts.

(4) Selecting an already built-up major city of Hyderabad as a third neutral choice could eliminate the rivalry between Kurnool and Guntur/Vijayawada and give an easy access to the capital for both Rayalaseema and coastal Andhra if merger came about.

(5) The merger of the regions would also merge the two Congress parties there and present an effective defence against the CPI (which also would combine). However, the Congress felt that after the 1955 success it could repeat the same in Telangana in the 1957 general election.

After the merger, the Congress Party was enormously strengthened. By making a strategic decision not to hold the assembly election in the Andhra region in the 1957 General Election (because they had held one in 1955), it allowed the party to concentrate on the Telangana region. With the revived party, the alliance building with the other minor parties and caste group, it romped home with 68 of the 107 seats contested by polling 47% of the popular vote. The communist were reduced to 23 seats with 26% of the popular vote.

The consolidation of the two Congress parties and the infusion of revenues and industrial resources from the Telangana, the ready-made capital and the prestige of Hyderabad city, the surplus food of the coastal region, the new state was ready to move forward.

The Congress became a Reddy-dominated party with its bases largely in Rayalaseema and Telangana and maintaining its power by forming alliance with the other dominant castes in their strongholds and trying to cater to the interest of the scheduled castes. Of the 11 cabinets formed from 1956 to 1980, the Reddy contingent supplied an average of 26% of the total with the brahmin (7%), Kammas (8%) and Kapus and other backward castes (28%). This was in line with the general dominance of the Reddy community in the seven assemblies (with an average strength of 294 seats) during the period 1957 to 1985, when they had an average of 25% of the seats with brahmins getting 9%, Kammas 14% and backward castes 17%. While all this was going on, during the same period there is a total collapse of brahmin presence in the seven assemblies (from 23 to 11 MLAs) as well as in the same 11 cabinets (from 23% to 6%) (Reddy 1989: 305-06).

6 Afterword

Yet, despite its successes, the Congress Party was perceived to have ignored important interests with a regional base – of the powerful and rich Kamma community in the coastal districts and the development needs (especially, irrigation) in Telangana. It paid the price for the former when the Kamma-dominated Telugu Desam Party (TDP) took power in 1983 on a slogan of appeal to general Telugu self-respect.

However, as in 1969 and now, the Telangana youth rose in protest at the lack of opportunities, the unfair treatment to their region and the whole series of broken promises and guarantees. The blame is equally distributed between the Congress and TDP – and also on the Telangana political leadership in these parties. There was an extreme need to synchronise the Andhra and Telangana regions, which were dissimilar in almost every aspect except language (and even that too with significant differences in spoken Telugu). Moreover, there were significant differences between Rayalaseema and coastal Andhra regions, which needed to be managed. In this task, it seems obvious that successive governments failed despite the shock of the 1969-71 agitations for restoration of the status quo ante 1956.[50]

The politicians managed to handle the caste equations well in the legislative assemblies and cabinets, which were crucial to both the Reddy-dominated leadership of the Congress and the Kamma-dominated leadership of the TDP. In terms of representation of castes, the 1982 to 85 assemblies did not show any change in the numbers of MLAs elected from each dominant castes except a drop of nine MLAs seats for Reddys. In the four cabinets between 1982 and 1985, the representation of brahmins fell by 2%, of Reddys by 6% but that of the

backward caste – Kapus fell from 58% to 30%. The Kamma representation in the cabinet doubled to 6% in 1983 but fell back to 4% in 1985.[51]

By 1999, caste-based voting had become the fact of politics: survey data showed that 87% of Kammas and 62% of the peasant other backward castes in Andhra Pradesh voted for the TDP and 77% Reddys, 64% of the scheduled castes and 60% of Muslims for the Congress.[52] This meant that the overall election result rested with the other communities such as Kapus, service OBCs and scheduled tribes who voted almost equally for the two major parties[53] and could swing the very fine division of the vote (10%) which decides which party will get the majority of seats in the assembly.

Emergence of other caste groups such as the Kapu-dominated Praja Rajyam Party or issues such as separate Telangana have upset the caste balance which first came into being in 1956 and a re-established new balance in 1983. It is not clear what the 2009 balance represented, as it was too soon to tell and was overtaken by events. These events are still to crystallise but one thing is sure, separation of Telangana will change everything including the caste equations within all three regions – coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana.

NOTES

1 Quoted in *Andhra Patrika*, 12 October 1937.
2 Quoted in Nehru 1954, p 54.
3 See Rao 1968, Vol 4, p 482.
4 Nehru 1954, p 55.
5 Ibid, p 55
6 Quoted in Nehru 1954, p 54.
7 Ibid, p 54.
8 Nehru 1987, p 201.
9 Gopal 1979, p 258.
10 Nehru 1987, p 238, fn 24.
11 Nehru 1987, pp 320-21 (emphasis added).
12 Nehru 1954, p 60.
13 Nehru 1987, p 58, fn.
14 Ibid, p 114.
15 Nehru 1954, p 60.
16 Ibid, p 57.
17 Ambedkar 1955, Chapter III.
18 Ambedkar 1955, Chapter II.
19 Nehru 1987, p 225 (emphasis added).
20 Nehru 1954, p 179 (emphasis added).
21 Nehru 1987, p 334.
22 Ibid, pp 385-86.
23 Ibid, pp 385-86.
24 SRC,1955: para 371 (emphasis added).
25 Ibid, para 372 (emphasis added).
26 Ibid, para 375 (emphasis added).
27 Ibid, para 376 (emphasis added)
28 Government of Andhra Pradesh 1957.
29 SRC 1955: para 379 (emphasis added).
30 Ibid, para 377 (emphasis added).
31 Ibid, para 378 (emphasis added).
32 Ibid, para 382 (emphasis added).
33 Ibid, para 386 (emphasis added).
34 Much of what follows relies heavily on Windermiller 1955; Harrison 1956; Elliot 1970; Ram 1973; Rao 1973; Walch 1976; These are authoritative works on the formation of Andhra and Andhra Pradesh and the politics of that period which can be usefully read.
35 Quoted in Windermiller 1955, p 58.
36 This was the first election fought on an entirely adult franchise. The previous ones had a an electorate limited by property and tax requirements.
37 Quoted in *The Hindu*, 10 February 1950.
38 Windermiller 1955, p 63.
39 Ibid.
40 See Dhanagare 1983 for a detailed account.
41 Sherman 2007.
42 Rao 1973:289.
43 Much of what follows relies heavily on Windermiller 1955; Harrison 1956; Elliot 1970; Ram 1973; Rao 1973; Walch 1976.
44 Ambedkar 1953.
45 Speech in Parliament cited in *For Victory in Andhra*, CPI Publication 1955, p 13 and quoted in Harrison (1956, pp 398-99).
46 Quoted in *Indian Express*, 7 July 1953.
47 Rao 1973, pp 295-96.
48 Even Gray (1971, pp 464: 466) noted the social tensions between the two Telugu populations.
49 *The Hindu*, 7 March 1956.
50 Gray 1970, 1971, 1974 and Bernstroff 1973.
51 Reddy 1989, Tables 12 and 13, pp 305-06.
52 Suri 2002, Table 6.
53 Ibid.

REFERENCES

Ambedkar, B R (1953): "Need for Checks and Balances", *The Times of India*, 23 April, accessed 23 January 2010. http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/04.%20Need%20for%20Checks%20and%20Balances.htm

– (1955): *Thoughts on Linguistic State,* accessed on 23 January 2010, http://www.ambedkar.org/ambcd/05A.%20Thoughts%20on%20Linguistic%20States%20Part%20I.htm

Bernstroff, Dagmar (1973): "Eclipse of the 'Reddi-Raj'? The Attempted Restructuring of the Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh", *Asian Survey*, Vol 13, No 10, October, pp 959-79.

Dhanagare, D N (1983): *Peasant Movements in India, 1920-1950* (Delhi: Oxford University Press), (Chapter VIII-Social Origins of the Peasant Insurrection in Telangana, 1946-51, pp 180: 212).

Elliot, Carolyn M (1970): "Caste and Faction among the Dominant Castes: The Reddys and Kammas of Andhra" in Rajni Kothari (ed.), *Caste and Politics* (New Delhi: Orient Longman), 1970, pp 129-69.

GoA: Government of Andhra Pradesh Budget Speech 1955, accessed on 5 February 2010, http://budget.ap.gov.in/bs5.htm?D1=1957&Gopbs=Show.

Gopal, Sarvepalli (1979): *Jawaharlal Nehru – A Biography*, Vol II (New Delhi: OUP).

Gray, Hugh (1970): "The Landed Gentry of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh" in Edward Leach and S N Mukherjee (ed.), *Elites in South India*, Cambridge University Press.

– (1971): "The Demand for a Separate Telangana State", *Asian Survey*, Vol 11, No 5, May, pp 463-74.

– (1974): "The Failure of the Demand for a Separate Andhra State", *Asian Survey*, Vol 14, No 4, April, pp 338-49.

Harrison, Selig S (1956): "Caste and Andhra Communist", *American Political Science Review*, Vol 50, No 2, June, pp 378-404.

Narisetti, Innaiah (2002): *A Century of Politics in Andhra Pradesh* (Hyderabad: Rationalist Voice Publications), p 40.

Nehru, Jawaharlal (1954): *Speeches (1949-53),* Vol 2, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.

– (1987): *Letters to Chief Ministers (1952-54)*, Vol 3 (G Parthasarathi, ed.), Government of India.

Ram, Mohan (1973): "The Communist Movement in Andhra Pradesh" in Paul R Brass and Marcus F Franda (ed.), *Radical Politics in South Asia* (Boston: MIT Press), pp 281-321.

Rao, K V Narayana (1973): *The Emergence of Andhra Pradesh* (Bombay: Popular Prashan).

Rao, Shiva B (1968): *The Framing of India's Constitution* (five volumes), Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi.

Reddy, G Ram (1989): "The Politics of Accommodation" in Francine R Frankel and M S A Rao (ed.), *Dominance and State Power in Modern India*, Volume I (New Delhi: OUP), pp 265-321.

Sherman, Taylor C (2007): "The Integration of the Princely State of Hyderabad and the Making of the Postcolonial State in India, 1948-56", *Indian Economic Social History Review*, 44; 489:516.

Srinivasulu, K (2002): "Caste, Class and Social Articulation in Andhra Pradesh: Mapping Differential Regional Trajectories", Working Paper 179, Overseas Development Institute, London, 72 pp, Accessed 23 January 2010 http://www.odi.org.uk/projects/00-03-livelihood-options/papers/wp179.pdf

States Reorganisation Commission (1955): *Report*, Government of India, New Delhi.

Suri, K C (2002): *Democratic Process and Electoral Politics in Andhra Pradesh, Overseas Development Institute*, London, p 85, Accessed 23 January 2010, http://www.odi.org.uk/projects/00-03-livelihood-options/papers/reportdraft1.doc

Walch, James (1976): *Faction and Front-Party Systems in India* (New Delhi: Young Asia Publications), pp 275-342.

Windermiller, Marshall (1955): "The Andhra Election", *Far Eastern Survey*, Vol 24, No 4, April, pp 57-64.