

Untangling Telangana

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Fears in Andhra Pradesh over the sharing of Krishna and Godavari waters, government jobs, personal safety, state assets and liabilities, and Article 371 (D) are for the most part not based on an awareness of the steps that can be taken to allay them. The 'real' conflict is over the way the division of the state and the position of Hyderabad will affect the power bases of the state's two ruling castes, the Reddys and Kammas. The people, who only need peace and development, could do without this.

Telangana was merged with Andhra state 56 years ago. Even at that time, Jawaharlal Nehru said the merger had a "tint of expansionist imperialism." But he consoled Telangana, "*Ek masoom bholi bhali ladki ko ek natkat ladke ke saath shaadi kiya jaa raha hai, chahe toh woh milke reh sakte hai ya bichad sakte hai*"¹ ("We are marrying off an innocent girl to a naughty boy - they may get on; if they do not, they can divorce"). That marriage has failed and the union government has finally pronounced a divorce. What remains is to clear the fears and anxieties of separation.

The 13 Seemandhra districts are in an uproar and anarchy reigns there. Many Seemandhra politicians have convinced their people that their existence and livelihoods are threatened by statehood for Telangana. The agitation has disrupted everyday life, power, and transport services. These effects threaten to spill over to the rest of the state and to neighbouring states.

What are these fears?

First and most important for Seemandhra are the Krishna and Godavari rivers, which flow through Telangana. Since the annicuts were built during British rule 100 years ago, they provided kharif irrigation to both the river deltas in Coastal Andhra. After upstream dams were built in Telangana, both deltas get rabi irrigation as well and priority in early releases of water for their seed beds and transplantation operations. The fear is that once Telangana is formed, the priority will be for that area.

The government of India appointed the Bachawat Commission, which gave an award in

1976. The award gave 811 thousand million cubic feet (tmc) of Krishna river water to Andhra Pradesh and fixed Telangana's share of this at 298 tmc, Rayalaseema's at 145 tmc, and Coastal Andhra's at 368 tmc. Coastal Andhra got the lion's share (despite the river flowing only a short distance in that region) to safeguard the delta. The only problem is of projects being built in Rayalaseema, without central clearances and without legitimate water allocation, which require an additional 165 tmc over the region's share.

All of Rayalaseema's share of Krishna irrigation comes from canals taking off from the top of the reservoir of Srisailem hydroelectric project in Kurnool district. Maintaining high reservoir levels for this purpose means lower power generation. Of the 1,670 megawatt (MW) installed capacity, the left bank power house in Telangana has 900 MW. In the last three years, instead of generating power for six months in the year, these plants have done so only for 15 days—irrigation to Rayalaseema being given priority. Telangana's power deficit is about 500-1,000 MW and the left bank power plant will have to operate at full capacity when the new state is formed. Coastal Andhra has private merchant power plants based on gas with a capacity of 2,767 MW. With gas in doubt and plants idle, Coastal Andhra cannot now rely on Telangana's higher coal and hydro power.

In the case of the Godavari, the Bachawat award set aside 1,480 tmc for Andhra Pradesh, of which Telangana's share was 900 tmc. Of Coastal Andhra's share of 580 tmc, the award allocated 260 tmc specifically for the delta. These awards clearly set out the legitimate share of each of the three regions of Andhra Pradesh. But the Polavaram project in Coastal Andhra—again not only without Central clearances but also with objections by Odisha and Chattisgarh lodged in the Supreme Court—will now be objected to by Telangana where 276-odd tribal villages will be inundated and more than 300,000 inhabitants will be rendered homeless and landless.

The second fear is that government employees will lose their jobs in Telangana. The fact is that allocation of government employees to the two states will be done based on their nativity, option, and seniority by the government of India and there will be grievance redressal processes and judicial reviews of individual decisions. However, about 100,000 people from Seemandhra are estimated to have got jobs reserved for Telangana locals, and only 14,748 who have been thus irregularly appointed have been repatriated to Seemandhra. The rest may have to follow, but no one will lose their government job.

The third fear is the safety of the lives and property of Seemandhra "settlers." The experience of those living and prospering for decades in Hyderabad, Nizamabad, Khammam, Warangal, and other parts of Telangana should not be forgotten. In a decade of agitation in Telangana, no person from Seemandhra has been attacked by a Telangana supporter. On the other hand, nearly 1,000 Telangana youths committed suicide over the delay in creating the state.

The fourth anxiety is the division of the state's assets and liabilities (including pension

liabilities). This is a technical matter, which will be decided on the basis of findings by commissions appointed by the central government and consisting of non-state persons.

The fifth concern is that Seemandhra students will not be able to study in Hyderabad and Telangana. Students have a "local" status in any university jurisdiction that they have studied for four consecutive years. Alternatively, if they have studied seven years in the state, they are defined as "local" in the area where they have studied the most number of years. Most education is in any case privately owned and anyone who pays fees from anywhere is welcomed.

The sixth delusion is that Hyderabad will get a huge share of state revenues (Rs 69,146 crores), which Seemandhra will be deprived of. It is now clear from government figures for 2013 that Hyderabad generated Rs 11,730 crore revenue of which only Rs 8,900 crore was by way of sales tax. About Rs 3,000 crore of this is related to oil companies and liquor sales throughout the state, which will be automatically transferred to each consuming state. Other revenues are based on the locations of businesses and consumers.

The seventh concern is Article 371 (D) which was enacted to implement the Six-Point Formula to safeguard local interests in Telangana and also to Seemandhra, but mainly to protect Telangana government employment and education opportunities.

The Bombay and Punjab Reorganisation Acts amended Article 371 using power under Article 4. Article 371 (D) - earlier applied to Andhra Pradesh - through a textual amendment may continue to be useful to both residuary Andhra Pradesh and to Telangana to protect local employment and education opportunities. It can be seen by this that it has created vested interests who want to the protection to continue and also to protect their seniority in the local zones so created. This is despite more homogeneous states!

(In order to make reservation for local candidates in specified local area within a State, a Constitutional amendment was required. So in Part XXI - " Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions" , the Seventh Amendment in 1956 replaced Article 371 - a poor cousin of the famous Article 370 relating to Jammu and Kashmir. Article 371 applied originally to Andhra Pradesh and Punjab to enable creation of Regional Councils there. This Article was further altered as time went on and many other States were given powers to discriminate between residents in their own state on the basis of residence or for creation of regional councils. They were Bombay(Maharashtra and Gujarat), Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Sikkim , Mizoram and Goa . This really illustrates the fact that even after states were reduced to apparently homogeneous entities, this reservation was considered necessary to protect locals.)

Article 371 D empowers the president to issue orders, and it is the Presidential Order of 1975 which was the operative instrument of the reservations in Andhra Pradesh. Presidential Orders can be changed suitably to take into account the division. To give effect to Article 2 and 3 legislations (for reorganisation of the states etc), Article 4 enables

amendments in the Constitution which are specifically outside the coverage of Article 368 (which requires two-thirds majority in Parliament and for states to consent). Thus reorganisation bills need only a simple majority in Parliament.

The media, lawyers, judges, civil servants, and professionals are all divided on regional lines—even non-resident Indians (NRIs) from the state. In spirit, the people are already divided. As it is said, there is nothing to fear more than fear itself, and that fear is rife and being nurtured by ignorance and deception. One can be afraid of the unknown, but one cannot be afraid of what is known, what has been experienced and has been implemented in the past in similar cases.

What then are the “real” issues?

Andhra Pradesh is ruled by two castes—the Reddys and Kammas. Even B S Ambedkar had warned, *“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.”* A seasoned politician with experience of both told me, *“There are only two lobbies in India, Ambani and Seemandhra.”* The Seemandhra tycoons who are also Members of Parliament (MPs)—one even sits in the union cabinet—and are fully invested in infrastructure, real estate, and power and irrigation projects. They fear the loss of political control that made them what they are. Hyderabad is their key area of operations.

The Reddys concentrated on political power and the Kammas on making money. The neat separation of interests was broken when the Kamma-dominated Telugu Desam Party (TDP) seized power with support from Telangana. To control Andhra Pradesh, you needed to control Telangana, which has 41% of the assembly seats. Without Telangana, the Seemandhra polity will have to be reconstituted and no one knows what the outcome will be.

As one astute politician told me, *“The Reddys need Telangana for political power and the Kammas need Hyderabad for their economic power.”* Telangana and Hyderabad need neither Reddys nor Kammas—they need peace and development. So does Seemandhra. Life after divorce is difficult enough without making it worse by creating ill will and resorting to self-destructive actions.

¹ Speech of 5 March 1956 at Bharat Sevak Samaj Conference, Nizamabad, reported in *Indian Express*, 6 March 1956. Nehru seems to have had the indelicacy to say the same at the “wedding” of the new state of Andhra Pradesh on 1 November 1956 (*Indian Express* Madras Edition, 2 November 1956.) *Deccan Chronicle*, 2 November 1956

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