



Research Paper

The 'Sentiment' is Central Point: Srikrishna Committee observations on Telangana Movement

Prof. Chakrapani Ghanta
Department of Sociology
Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University
Hyderabad, India

Abstract

Demand for a separate state is not new in India. Much earlier than the independence, there were demands for independent statehood across the country. After the independence also, the Indian state had to deal with the needs of separate statehood primarily based on language, culture, ethnicity, religion, etc. In some cases, people demanded different conditions for better governance and greater participation, administrative convenience, and economic viability in the developmental needs of sub regions.

Telangana is also one of such regions demanding a separate state for over sixty years. To find a permanent solution to the Telangana issue, the government of India constituted a committee by consulting the people. Interestingly the committee, which submitted its report recently observed a widespread 'sentiment' and concluded that the sentiment among the people is the driving force for the movement. This paper is attempted to analyze the observation of the Committee for Consultations on the Situation in Andhra Pradesh (CCSAP) which is known as the Srikrishna Committee.

I. Introduction

The Srikrishna Committee, also known as the Committee for Consultations on the Situation in Andhra Pradesh (CCSAP), identified several intriguing sociocultural variables contributing to Telangana's regionalism. On February 3, 2010, following consultations with eight recognized political parties on the Telangana issue, the Indian government established a five-member committee under the leadership of Justice (Ret.) B.N. Srikrishna. Professor (Dr.) Ranbir Singh, Vice-Chancellor, National Law University, Delhi; Dr. Abusaleh Shariff, Senior Research Fellow, International Food Policy Research Institute, Delhi; Dr. (Ms.) Ravinder Kaur, Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi; and Vinod K. Duggal, former Home Secretary, who will also serve as its Member-Secretary, are the other members of the Committee. The Committee's objective is to consult with people from all walks of life and all political parties and groups in Andhra Pradesh to find a "permanent solution" to the desire for Telangana to become an independent state.

In the history of state formation in India, governments have never formed committees comprised of judges, interstate relations experts, academics, etc. Intriguingly, the Committee took the work seriously, visited the field, investigated numerous issues, and delivered a 461-page report. The Srikrishna committee met thirty times, toured twenty-three districts and thirty-five villages, and interacted with approximately one hundred organizations. Instead of finding a permanent solution to the situation, the commission muddled its choices. However, the research offered some sociocultural findings regarding the statehood movement.

II. Sociological Issues

The Committee included the sentiments and desires of the people among its considerations and elaborated on them in its report. Formerly renowned committees on state creation in India, the State Reorganization Committee (SRC) and the JVP, were cited in the report as saying: 348 "The desires of the people, to the extent that they are objectively ascertainable and do not contradict with broader national interests, should play a significant role in readjusting the territories of the states." (SRC 1955) Nonetheless, suppose popular opinion is insistent and overwhelming. In that case, as democratically elected officials, we must accede to it, subject to the constraints about the good of India as a whole and conditions. "Public feeling must recognize the repercussions of any additional split to comprehend what will result from their desire" (JVP 1949).

The Committee noted that the Telangana area has continuously contended that "emotional and psychological integration" between Telangana and Seema Andhra has not been accomplished after 54 years of coexistence. Regional sentiments for and against bifurcation have been evocatively portrayed through the

metaphor of a family. During the Committee's field trips, residents of Telangana argued that a "small family" was better for growth and development than a "combined family" and that "it was preferable to separate than let dissension fester." In contrast, the other two regions emphasized the importance of family unity and keeping together. According to them, "brotherly disputes should be resolved amicably." As noted by the Committee, another powerful metaphor observed was that of the State as one human body, emphasizing the significance of Hyderabad to the entire State. Consequently, while Rayalaseema referred to Hyderabad as its head, Telangana did not want to lose its heart. All three regions believe they have contributed labor and wealth to the city's construction, and their hopes for education and employment are related to Hyderabad.

The Committee also acknowledged the sincere efforts of TRS and JACs in the Telangana region to instill the philosophy of Telangana Statehood among the region's populace. The survey reveals, "The Telangana area can occasionally rekindle the drive for secession. The current feeling for and against a separate Telangana in different sections of the State must be viewed in the context of the current movement, which was sparked by Mr. Chandrashekhar Rao's fast-unto-death (November 29, 2009). The Home Minister's announcement on December 9, 2010, that the Centre would commence the process of Telangana's establishment as a separate state sparked a chain of events that led to an emotionally charged climate in the State. As a result of protests by the Andhra and Rayalaseema regions over the proposed division of the State, the Home Ministry established the CCSAP to investigate the proposals for a separate Telangana and a unified Andhra Pradesh. The circumstances preceding the formation of the Committee have given rise to widespread political mobilization by TRS, the principal political party driving the demand for a separate Telangana state, and by several smaller parties. In reaction, there has been countermobilization in Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema regions. Students at Osmania University in Hyderabad and Kakatiya University in Warangal, as well as those in the Telangana region, have been heavily mobilized. During this period, various Joint Action Committees (JACs) have been founded, the most renowned of which being the one directed by Professor Kodandaram at Osmania University. Initially, all political parties were members of this JAC; however, most parties, including the TRS, have since left. In Telangana, however, JACs have grown to the district, Mandal, and village levels, resulting in a groundswell of support for statehood. Political organizers are capitalizing on the water, education, and employment concerns of the citizens of Telangana. Farmers needing irrigation water in rain-fed areas, students demanding greater access to quality education to enable them to compete for jobs, and government employees seeking promotions and a fair share of representation in administration are the three significant constituencies most heavily invested in the demand for a separate state.

At the mandal and even panchayat level, protests have taken various forms, including relay hunger strikes, demonstrations, meetings, signboards, distribution of literature highlighting grievances, and organizing written and in-person representations (in response to the Public Notice issued by the Committee). In many communities the committee members visited, enormous, printed banners greeted them. In one village, at the location of the meeting where villagers and residents of neighboring villages and towns had gathered, there was a large banner listing the grievances of the Telangana region, along with numbers demonstrating discrimination against the region in employment, irrigation, and education. During the Committee's trips to various Telangana districts, schoolchildren and college students held signs demanding Telangana lined the path. The feeling among college and university students and faculty was extremely heated, but it was encouraging that there was still opportunity for discourse and debate.

The Committee's third sociological observation is the sentiment of Telangana's border districts' settlers. During their tour to the tribal parts of Khammam, the Committee Members discovered that the Koya tribals of Bhadrachalam had little knowledge of the demand or the agitation. A throng yelling "Jai Telangana" followed the members into the villages. In contrast, in Khammam town, a district between Telangana and coastal Andhra, attitudes on Telangana's separate statehood were split. A teacher whose parents had worked for the government and lived throughout the State felt she could not call any district or region her "native" location. Young kids, however, are wholly associated with the concept of Telangana, believing that a separate state would solve all problems. During the Committee's visit to a village in Khammam district, located close to the border of Krishna district in coastal Andhra, with a large percentage of the settler population from the coastal side, the Committee was surprised to learn that none of the settlers were present among the roughly two hundred people who had come to make representations before the Committee. Upon further inquiry, the Sarpanch revealed with reluctance to the Committee that the settlers had been requested not to attend and were too terrified to express their opinions. In Adilabad, adjacent to Maharashtra, many Marathi speakers favored the creation of Vidarbha as a distinct state.

In the district of Nizamabad, where the Committee visited a settler's village, the people were mobbed by TRS party supporters. The settlers were reticent and reserved in their expressions of opinion. The Nizam initially invited longtime migrants from the Godavari delta to engage in irrigated agriculture following the completion of the Nizamsagar dam in these villages. The locals' complaint about these "settlers" is that they tend to keep to themselves and have not genuinely assimilated with the local populace. Their riches set them apart

from the rest of the people in Telangana, which sometimes inspires envy and promotes the notion that they have deprived the locals of resources and opportunity.

Even though many participants, particularly young people from various districts across the State, were unaware of the earlier Telangana or Jai Andhra movements, the current round of mobilization was found to be overwhelmingly pro-Telangana. Individuals were frequently oblivious or uncommitted when one made unannounced stops in rural regions or among the impoverished and inquired about the movement and involvement.

The Committee thought that organizing sentiment remained highly visible and that people's complaints were frequently general. The Committee has investigated these concerns thoroughly and determined that some are true, but not all.

The Committee did not observe any actual economic or development deficit in Telangana. It was determined that the Telangana region's development has been generally robust, particularly over the past three decades. However, passion and feeling are not quickly addressed by objective analysis. As a result of recent development trajectories that have led to increased Hyderabad-centric development and the strengthening of some inter- and intra-regional inequities during the growth process, the current movement has allowed for the expression of numerous complaints. The movement was fueled by political inequality, the desire for a more significant share of political power, and the perception that the historic Gentlemen's Agreement had been breached. Popular opinion readily hooks onto well-defined "enemy" (in this example, the "Andhras") and magical solutions: a new state of Telangana that will provide water, jobs, and education magically. The movement has also effectively educated the public about Telangana's problems, to the point where even kids are now aware of the reasons underlying the desire for a separate state. Equally beneficial to this cause have been NRI Telanganites, who reportedly support the movement in various ways and have also represented the Committee. (NRIs on the opposing side have opposed the formation of Telangana.) People believe the current activity is far more significant than the one that mainly occurred in cities in 1969. Modern methods of communication and political administration have assisted in this trend.

While respecting the "wishes of the people," the Committee believes that this sentiment must be viewed in the light of other equally significant concerns. First, the Committee had to consider opposing the State's partition in Rayalaseema and coastal Andhra. Rayalaseema is anxious for its future if an autonomous state of Telangana is established. Therefore, the feeling in this region has been passionately opposed to the State's separation. After the merger in 1956, "the water went to coastal Andhra, and the money for a capital city went to Hyderabad," It sacrificed everything for a unified Andhra Pradesh that speaks Telugu. Now, it risks losing access to Hyderabad, the capital city, a significant source of jobs, education, trade, and commerce for the people. The region is likewise concerned about the loss of irrigation water, upon which it depends from Telangana. After the division, Rayalaseema's strong sentiment is that people do not wish to remain in the Andhra area.

A few voices in coastal Andhra favor the State's split, while the majority is opposed. Coastal Andhra groups feared losing access to irrigation water and the metropolis of Hyderabad, to whose rise they believe they have contributed significantly. While certain delta districts are relatively secure in their ability to manage independently in the event of bifurcation (or trifurcation), the north coastal Andhra area is fearful of losing its connection to Hyderabad, which it views as a destination for education and employment. Many economically vulnerable households in north coastal Andhra explained how they relied on agricultural labor in their original villages for part of the year and traveled to Hyderabad, frequently as manual laborers, for part of the year. In light of the above first-hand observations made by the Committee during its tours of the regions, the Committee believes that the question of sentiment must be evaluated alongside several other issues. While not ignoring people's desires or feelings, the overall repercussions of bifurcation are significant. To arrive at a responsible proposal, this must be meticulously outlined.

III. Understanding regional sentiment

Even if a state is recreated on a linguistic basis, there is no reason to assume that all areas will receive equal attention or that areas that feel their claims are not receiving appropriate attention will not develop an equally strong sense of irritation and neglect. (SRC:39).

Regional emotion or identity is not a "given." It only comes into play when a region (which may be part of a bigger unit, a state, or spread across multiple states) feels neglected or discriminated against by other parts of the political team. This sentiment is typically rooted in a perception of being marginalized by other groups or regions that appear to dominate culturally, economically, or politically. Due to its superior economic or political strength, there may be a perception that the dominating part obtains a disproportionate amount of government attention, resources, and benefits. It may also have the political capacity to redirect a more significant portion of its resources and advantages. As we have seen in previous chapters, some of this is true for Telangana, which is dominated by Andhra Pradesh's coastal region.

As Duncan Forrester once remarked, "The tragedy of Telangana is that for so many years, little was done to recognize or address the area's legitimate problems. We may expect the results to be a heightened awareness of similar circumstances in other states. Telangana's fortunes had altered dramatically since 1970, even though Forrester may have been correct when he wrote what he did in 1970. What he stated remains instructive in the current environment.

Therefore, at this time, we may offer a different interpretation of the feelings of neglect and discrimination experienced by the Telangana region while reiterating that the Committee's responsibility was not only to comprehend sentiment but also to establish evidence of real or actual bias. Moreover, not all groups endure the same level of discrimination. Thus, according to Hanumantha Rao, in the context of Telangana, "The educated classes, i.e., students, teachers, NGOs, and professionals in general, have a greater sense of unfairness. This is due to the increased sensitivity of such classes to "discrimination" in terms of employment, promotions, and career prospects, especially as the prominence of the services sector rises at higher levels of economic development. It is, therefore, not surprising that the separatist movement has gained strength in the post-reform age when prospects for such classes have proliferated in the services sector, and the State's role in influencing the development and regional equity has greatly expanded. It is hardly surprising that separatist inclinations are stronger in comparatively developed regions like North Telangana for the same reasons.

Therefore, it can be concluded that development programs — or, more precisely, welfare measures currently being implemented — are unlikely to counter separatist sentiments and that the movement for separation may become stronger as development spreads within an integrated state as long as the perception of discrimination in development persists."

IV. Conclusion

As detailed in this chapter's study, regional movements provide varied groups and segments of the region's society with the opportunity to express complaints and demands that are unique to them. Thus, while a regional movement may present an external sense of cohesion and a shared objective, many groups join it to voice their unique demands from their perspectives. 10 Even though Andhra Pradesh was the first State to be created based on language, subsequent linguistic entities, including AP, have splintered ecological and cultural zones that are still dispersed across multiple states. Thus, the closer ties between Ananthapur in Rayalaseema and Bangalore and Tirupati and Chennai; Adilabad, Khammam, Vizianagaram, and Srikakulam's shared concerns with tribal areas of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Orissa demonstrate that regions within the territorial boundaries of linguistic states do not necessarily view themselves in terms of the State and its capital. Therefore, the homogeneity of a state's regions might be ripped at the margins and reveal fissures even within the State if there are varying levels of development or groups of enviously successful migrants.

References

- [1]. Forrester, Duncan, 1970, Sub-regionalism in India: The Case of Telangana, Pacific Affairs, Volume 43, Number 1, pages 5–21, 355,
- [2]. Rao, Hanumantha. Regional Differences, Smaller States, and Telangana's Statehood in 2010. Academic Foundation, New Delhi, p.
- [3]. Report of the JVP Committee, April 1, 1949, J.Nehru, V. Patel, and P., Sitaramaiah <https://indianculture.gov.in/report-linguistic-provinces-commission-1948>
- [4]. Report of State Reorganization Committee (SRC 1955), https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/State%20Reorganisation%20Commisison%20Report%20of%201955_270614.pdf
- [5]. Committee for Consultations on the Situation in Andhra Pradesh (CCSAP) Report December 2010 at <https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/CCSAP-REPORT-060111.pdf>.
- [6]. Srikrishna's report for the New Indian Express, Hyderabad, provides ideas but no answer. This article was first published on January 6, 2011, at <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2011/01/06/srikrishna-report-offers-options-but-no-solution-217146.html>.