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Politics in the State of Telangana: Identity, Representation and Democracy

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POLITICS IN THE STATE OF TELANGANA:
IDENTITY, REPRESENTATION AND DEMOCRACY

Anil Kumar Vaddiraju∗

Abstract

In the state of Telangana, the party that spearheaded the demand for statehood enjoys massive support and became the heir to the movement and the throne. This, however, also comes with an enormous burden to lift the state from social and economic backwardness and poverty. So far, the TRS (Telangana Rashtra Samiti) has deftly managed the politics, meeting some expectations of the people. However, the state's politics happens in the context of a weak opposition and a weak civil society which have failed to provide robust opposition. Besides, the politics in the state is characterized by high stakes on symbolic politics. While the TRS government has so far sufficiently met the symbolic and emotional needs of the people, the real burden of raising the standards of living of the people and meeting their concrete expectations depends on going beyond these, and translating the prolific promises made into reality.

Introduction

The objective of this paper is to examine the politics in the state of Telangana. The geographical scope of the paper is limited to Telangana and the temporal scope to the period starting from the formation of the state till date. The data and interpretations of the paper evolved out of the long primary acquaintance of the author with the society and politics in Telangana, and recent media reports, supported by secondary literature. The methodology of the paper is basically interpretative.

The new 29th state of Telangana was formed on 2nd June 2014 within the Indian Union. It was carved out of the pre-existing united Andhra Pradesh, which was formed on 1st November, 1956. With the triumph of the Telangana movement and the formation of the Telangana[i] state, three dimensions of Indian politics have won: a) identity b) representation, and c) democracy. In the following, we will attempt to elaborate on them in some detail.

The Telangana demand basically sprang from the identity of the Telangana people, culture, and dialect and their overall character. It is not based on the grievances of backwardness. For, the districts of what forms Telangana today were well developed even before the formation of the state. For example, they are considerably more developed than north-coastal Andhra such as Vijayanagaram and Srikakulam. Therefore, the claim that the Telangana demand was based on the grievances of economic backwardness, as is popularly believed, is somewhat misconstrued. What was important in the demand for a separate state was the identity of the Telangana people.

Table 1: Districts with Least HDI in United AP*

Sl. No.	Districts	Index Value		Rank	
		Period I	Period II	Period I	Period II
1	Vizianagaram	0.236	0.402	23	22
2	Mahabubnagar	0.249	0.397	22	23
3	Srikakulam	0.269	0.453	21	21
4	Kurnool	0.327	0.473	20	19
5	Anantapur	0.343	0.458	19	20

Source: Andhra Pradesh Human Development Report 2007, page 14

* Of these districts, only Mahabubnagar is in Telangana; the rest are all in the current state of AP.

The above table clearly demonstrates that of the five most backward districts in united AP only one district is in Telangana, namely Mahabubnagar, and the rest are all in the current state of AP.

Table 2: Human Development Index and Rank

Sl. No	Districts	Index Value		Rank	
		Period I	Period II	Period I	Period II
1	Srikakulam	0.269	0.453	21	21
2	Vizianagaram	0.236	0.402	23	22
3	Visakhapatnam	0.383	0.553	15	11
4	East Godavari	0.411	0.586	11	6
5	West Godavari	0.448	0.607	7	4
6	Krishna	0.510	0.623	2	2
7	Guntur	0.490	0.599	3	5
8	Prakasam	0.409	0.532	12	14
9	Nellore	0.452	0.565	4	8
10	Chittoor	0.451	0.558	6	10
11	Kadapa	0.447	0.536	9	13
12	Anantapur	0.343	0.458	19	20
13	Kurnool	0.327	0.473	20	19
14	Mehabubnagar	0.249	0.397	22	23
15	Ranga Reddy	0.452	0.610	5	3
16	Hyderabad	0.591	0.717	1	1
17	Medak	0.385	0.550	13	12
18	Nizamabad	0.383	0.504	14	16
19	Adilabad	0.361	0.488	16	17
20	Karim Nagar	0.448	0.573	8	7
21	Warangal	0.349	0.514	18	15
22	Khammam	0.420	0.559	10	9
23	Nalgonda	0.360	0.481	17	18
	Andhra Pradesh	0.402	0.537		
	CV	20.98	13.89		

Note: CV - Coefficient variation.

Source: 1.Computed using Economic Survey of Andhra Pradesh 2005-06 for Per Capita District Income; Census data for Adult Literacy and School Attendance; and Irudaya Rajan's Study on Infant Mortality Rates as quoted in Andhra Pradesh Human Development Report 2007, page 14.

Table 3: Districts Arranged by Rank

Period I		Period II	
Rank	District	Rank	District
1	Hyderabad	1	Hyderabad
2	Krishna	2	Krishna
3	Guntur	3	Ranga Reddy
4	Nellore	4	West Godavari
5	Ranga Reddy	5	Guntur
6	Chittoor	6	East Godavari
7	West Godavari	7	Karim Nagar
8	Karim Nagar	8	Nellore
9	Kadapa	9	Khammam
10	Khammam	10	Chittoor
11	East Godavari	11	Visakhapatnam
12	Prakasam	12	Medak
	Andhra Pradesh		Andhra Pradesh
13	Medak	13	Kadapa
14	Nizamabad	14	Prakasam
15	Visakhapatnam	15	Warangal
16	Adilabad	16	Nizamabad
17	Nalgonda	17	Adilabad
18	Warangal	18	Nalgonda
19	Anantapur	19	Kurnool
20	Kurnool	20	Anantapur
21	Srikakulam	21	Srikakulam
22	Mehabubnagar	22	Vizianagaram
23	Vizianagaram	23	Mehabubnagar

Source: Andhra Pradesh Human Development Report 2007.

The second dimension that triumphed with the formation of Telangana is representation. It was essentially a political question. The people of Telangana and the political leaders of Telangana were long denied political representation within the politics of united Andhra Pradesh. This means that even though the formal structures of liberal democracy were there, the elected representatives never were taken seriously, and given positions of power or responsibility to take care of the constituencies and the people who they represented within the united AP. Political power always belonged to leaders from Rayalaseema and Coastal Andhra (Ram: 2007, Kumar:2007). With the triumph of Telangana demand, what succeeded was the political representation of an area in real terms and not just in formal terms.

The third aspect that triumphed with the formation of Telangana was democracy. The formation of the state within the Union was largely peaceful and democratic. Except sporadic incidents here and there, there was no major instance of violence or bloodshed in the formation of the state. Indian democracy has obviously triumphed in accommodating a long-standing demand peacefully. The process of mobilizing people to support the demand, and the process of articulating this were all thoroughly democratic and were done within the space provided by Indian democracy. There was no

rioting, arson or violence of any kind throughout the mobilization process. In this, the Telangana Joint Action Committee (TJAC) has played a major role.

It is important to mention that before the formation of the state, all the three dimensions of Telangana politics mentioned above -- identity, representation and democratic participation -- were seen by Telangana people as suppressed because of the dominance of Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema politicians. Therefore, the formation of a separate Telangana state can be seen as the triumph of identity, representation and democracy/ democratic participation.

Precisely because these three aspects were seen as blocked, if not suppressed, the post-Telangana state politics can be compared to politics in post-colonial nations in some sense. This can be viewed in two senses: firstly the source/s of perceived oppression are removed from power; and secondly, there is a fresh new beginning in politics in the sub-region generating tremendous hope and energy. TRS, the party that led the separate Telangana movement, inherits these energies and hopes. It is much like the fresh beginning made in a post-colonial state when the colonial oppressor has left, handing over the reins to the new local leaders. The Telangana state is also much like many post-colonial nations, wherein a single party dominated the state in the aftermath of the separation from the previous dispensation. The party that led the movement for a separate Telangana has become a ruling party and there is no other party equal in strength or support in the state. It is, therefore, a one-party dominant state, where TRS is the leading party in power with a weak or non-existent opposition in the state assembly. This was also the case with the Congress party when Independence was won for the Indian nation. Gradually, however, democracy and opposition strengthened over time. That is why the party that led the movement for separate statehood enjoys all the support carried over from the movement to the government.

Table 4: Party Performance in Telangana during 2014 Elections

Political Party	Seats in *Lok Sabha*	Seats in Assembly	Vote share(%)
Congress	2	21	24.5
TDP+BJP	1+1	15+5	22.6 (TDP+BJP)
TRS	11	63	34.7
YSRCP	1	3	4.5
AIMIM	1	7	3.5
Others	--	5	10.2
Total	**17**	**119**	

Source: Karli Srinivasulu(2015)

Popular Expectations and Policies:

However, having won the mandate of the people, the TRS has to meet their expectations on four fronts: employment; agriculture; irrigation; and further decentralization.

Employment has been a major issue throughout the Telangana movement, which claimed that most government jobs have been taken away by the coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema people. The first edition of the Telangana movement indeed began with the agitation for government jobs for local people. This began with what is known as '*Mulki* rule' (i.e., priority for sons of the soil over others), and

the overriding of this rule by successive governments. Subsequently, there has also been the issue of G.O. 610 to hire local people for government jobs, but which was ignored by the subsequent governments led by the Congress and the Telugu Desam. (Unfortunately, we cannot provide data on regional distribution of government jobs here; that data is too sensitive to be made available!) Thus the jobs in the government, with its implications for state resources, had become a major political issue throughout the Telangana statehood movement. The new government has a major responsibility to meet the employment aspirations of the Telangana people in the government sector.

Secondly, the state of Telangana is an agriculture-dominated state, and the demands of the various sections dependent on agriculture are of great importance. The third issue of irrigation that we mentioned above is also connected with this issue as most of the farming in the new state is rain-dependent and providing irrigation facilities pose major challenges. The TRS government has made a promising beginning by carrying out the de-silting of irrigation tanks in the state through the government's 'Mission Kakatiya'. Through this project the government has made an attempt to rejuvenate tank irrigation by de-silting and renovating all the irrigation tanks in the state. This was a major step in addressing the issue of agriculture and irrigation[ii].

Irrigation is crucial for Telangana as most of the agriculture in the state is rain-fed and droughts have been a recurrent phenomenon. These droughts have taken a heavy toll on farmers' lives and livelihoods. Telangana has also been witnessing farmers' suicides since 1997 (Kumar: 2004). These were largely by debt-ridden cotton farmers. The heavy penetration of market forces into agriculture has now reduced farmers' lives vulnerable. On the one hand, farmers in Telangana, as in most other rain-fed regions of India, are vulnerable to droughts and lack of water for irrigation. On the other hand, the same dry-land agriculture is completely integrated into, and influenced by, the capitalist market. According to the latest Telangana Human Development Report (THDR:2015), nearly 80 to 85 percent of the farmers are small farmers vulnerable to the fluctuations of rains as well as input and output markets. Whenever these fluctuations are extreme, farmers have been committing suicides. Different views in the media provide differing figures, ranging from 1,000 to 2,500 since the new state was formed. There is no official or scholarly report on these suicides, though the media, both local and national, has highlighted this issue from time to time. Therefore, the importance of Mission Kakatiya in these circumstances cannot be underestimated.

The last task that we mentioned in the to-do list for government was further decentralization of political and bureaucratic power. This has been achieved successfully by increasing the number of districts from 10 to 31[iii]. This makes the redrawn districts smaller in size and easy to govern. The sub-district level units of governance, the 'Mandals', too have been sub-divided and are now smaller and more amenable to better governance. This is definitely a step in the direction of further decentralization of political and bureaucratic power. However, this is also an intelligent ploy to accommodate the burgeoning cadres of the TRS in the various posts that open up with the creation of new districts and Mandals. Nevertheless, political and bureaucratic power will definitely be decentralized with the smaller districts and Mandals. This is yet another step to enhance representation and democratic participation.

This decentralisation stands in contrast to the other regional party-led state governments, which refuse to devolve power below the level of state capitals. Unlike many other regional party-led

states like Tamil Nadu and Punjab, the further devolution of power to districts and sub-districts through decentralization is a welcome move in Telangana.

The TRS has been making prolific promises on employment, agriculture, irrigation and further decentralization. Of these, employment generation also depends on private industrial growth, which requires fresh capital for setting up new industries and factories. Agricultural development is, however, closely linked to expanding irrigation, and this requires dealing with river water issues with other states, mainly with the new Andhra Pradesh. While the TRS has been trying its best to invite capital to start industries, it has been constantly in talks with the neighbouring Andhra Pradesh regarding irrigation. However, implementing the promises made on the fronts of employment and agriculture/irrigation is too daunting to be realized immediately.

To improve drinking water supply to all the villages through a central water grid, 'Mission Bhageeratha' has been taken up. This is an ambitious project for the construction of massive water pipelines throughout the state. When completed, this project is supposed to make the right to drinking water a reality in Telangana. This would make Telangana the first state to supply potable drinking water to all villages at an affordable rate and provide 24/7 availability of piped water in all rural homes, which is viable because of the availability but non-utilisation of water in the Krishna and Godavari rivers.

Politics and Identity:

An important aspect of Telangana state politics today is the absence of a credible opposition. We say credible opposition because during their long rule of the state previously, both Congress and Telugu Desam party consistently opposed the state's bifurcation though in the end it is the Congress party at the Centre which acceded to the demand for statehood. Democracy requires that there be an opposition to critique and counter-balance the ruling party. The two main opposition parties, Indian National Congress and the Telugu Desam Party, have some presence in the new state. Congress and TDP+BJP together have 41 seats in the legislative assembly and had 47.1 per cent vote share in the 2014 elections. But their main weakness is that they are not sufficiently vocal and do not enjoy the symbolic political capital that TRS has.

The left parties, which traditionally had some presence in the state, are in a weak position both electorally and morally in comparison with the tremendous power of identity politics unleashed by the TRS on one side and the juggernaut of growing capitalism in the state on the other. TRS, which rules the state, also knows very well how to demonize its opponents constantly using the Telangana identity card. In the current situation of a single party dominated state, any individual or party criticizing the TRS becomes the enemy of Telangana state and Telangana identity. Demonization of political opponents becomes easy when a state of emotionally-loaded identity politics prevails.

The marginalization of opposition has its roots in the past. In the united state of Andhra Pradesh, either Congress or TDP ruled the state. Both under the Congress and TDP, the Telangana region was marginalized and the political leaders hailing from Telangana were given a raw deal. For example, there has never been a Chief Minister for a full term from the Telangana region. The demands of Telangana for irrigation water and employment in government sector too were ignored under the dispensations of the Congress and the TDP. These are the very issues on which the movement for

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statehood was fought. The issues are '*Neellu, Niyaamakalu, Nidhulu'*, that is, equitable distribution of 'water, employment and resources'. While the leadership of the Congress has come from both coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema, the leadership of TDP has been from coastal Andhra. Therefore, when the separate state demand was made, both Congress and TDP became the targets for criticism for marginalising the people and leaders of Telangana. Therefore, the electoral fortunes of these two parties in Telangana were not particularly high when the new state was formed. As a consequence, when the new government of Telangana state was formed, they could not form a solid opposition. That being the case, the present Telangana happens to be a state dominated by a single regional party, Telangana Rashtra Samiti, and lacks a strong opposition from either a national party such as Congress or a regional party such as TDP.

Needless to say, the Telangana Rashtra Samiti champions the Telangana identity, which is a sub-national identity within India, and has emerged from the once unified linguistic identity of Telugu-speaking people. The earlier united state of Andhra Pradesh was formed out of the single linguistic identity of Andhra/Telugu speaking people, where there was no special place for Telangana Telugu or Telangana sub-national identity. But with the breakaway Telangana state, the Telangana identity is now constantly emphasized by the TRS, against the Andhra identity or the identity of the state of Andhra Pradesh. The strength of identity politics is always built against the identity of the 'other' side. It is also defined 'against' the other. In order to exist at all, they have to have an 'other'. For TRS, this 'other' is the Andhra Pradesh, its leader Chandrababu Naidu and broadly the culture of the people in that state. And this is not the only 'other', thought it is the most prominent. The less prominent ones are the Congress party, the Bharatiya Janata Party and any 'other' that is not TRS. There are some reasons why TRS champions this Telangana sub-national and cultural/ political identity. This is because cultural/ political identities and politics are inherent in the linguistic identity construct and politics. But once the overarching identity of language is questioned and/ or falls apart, building the sub-national identity becomes important. However, beyond a point, emphasis on such sub-national identity is not a very healthy development for the Indian nation or Union.

This definition of the self (Telangana) *vis-à-vis* the 'other' is not only limited to political culture but is applicable to cultural politics as well. In a world where the media dominates as much as in ours, cultural politics plays an important role. In terms of building a cultural identity, the coastal Andhra identity has largely been built up through a very dominant film culture (this is a the result of the culture of prolific production of Telugu movies through a film industry which represents Andhra Pradesh positively but other Telugu- speaking areas negatively [Kumar:2007]). The Telangana response to that culture has been to emphasize a) folk art and folk culture b) promoting a new religiosity. Previously taken-for-granted festivals and celebrations of every day Telangana life are now highlighted with special fervour and are given state recognition. Some examples are the festival of *Bonalu* (Mother Goddess) in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad and the celebration of *Bathukamma* festival all over Telangana and even overseas, with exceptional arrangements of grandeur. These were age-old cultural festivals of Telangana, whether they belonged to male or female gods and goddesses. But now their popular status is given a further impetus with these being declared as state festivals. That is to say, there is clearly a process of building of cultural identity of Telangana *vis-à-vis* the new state of Andhra

Pradesh and others. This new cultural identity promotes mass religiosity among both men and women. The point, however, is that the promotion of this new religiosity and mass religious culture, of the majority religion is done to such an extent that the distinction between the promotion of an identity and the promotion of mass hysteria disappears. (And there are many reasons for fear here as this may not promote a liberal and tolerant culture or politics in future). To sum up, now that the state of Telangana is formed, the promotion of Telangana cultural identity through all folk and mass forms is being encouraged to an excessive extent.

Besides the TDP and Congress, there is also a distinct role played by the left in Telangana politics. Telangana is traditionally known as the stronghold of both parliamentary and non-parliamentary left. Of the two parliamentary parties, the CPI (Communist Party of India) supported the demand for a separate Telangana state. The other parliamentary party CPI(M) has not supported it. The non-parliamentary left has largely supported the demand for a separate statehood for Telangana. This being the case, CPI(M) stands thoroughly delegitimized in Telangana because it did not support the cause. Both the electoral and non-electoral left exist in Telangana, and even though they may not directly be in positions of power, do wield substantial moral influence on politics. The discourse in Telangana politics therefore is liberally loaded in terms of left language, though in actual terms the substance of the politics may be very different.

When we say that the left parties have a weak moral influence, we mean that the actual policies of the respective governments both in undivided Andhra Pradesh and in Telangana have little to do with socialism. At best they may have been populist but not socialist. The governments in the past and now have always been promoting private industry and private sector, i.e. capitalism in the broad sense. Also, governments both past and present have not hesitated to crush ultra-left insurgency in the state. The state of Telangana always had an active ultra-left insurgency and successive governments have consistently been following the policy of crushing this movement. However, the left holds mass appeal but weak moral influence on the parties in power. Also, since the intelligentsia, academia and journalists are largely in favour of different shades of the left, the left discourse has a higher currency in Telangana than in other states. Most of the ideologues of TRS themselves hail from different shades of left politics. Therefore, TRS certainly carries more left influence on its government than any previous dispensation. However, this is in sharp contrast to the current TRS' policies of inviting capital and private industry to invest as much as possible in Telangana. There is a clear contradiction in the ideological background and the current functioning of Telangana Rashtra Samiti. It is quite possible that many of the popular intellectuals who supported the movement enthusiastically from their left ramparts are today somewhat unhappy about TRS as it actively promotes private capital and private sector policies, though tinged with the populist social policies.

In fact, during the movement for separate statehood different shades of intellectuals had pressed for different ideas of Telangana. For example, the Dalit intellectuals and activists had pressed for what they imagined as a caste-less 'social Telangana'. The revolutionary intellectuals supporting the insurrection in the countryside had hoped for a Telangana which would be a revolutionary base area for the rest of the country. The liberal democratic political parties had hoped for a liberal democratic Telangana. However, despite the many ideas of Telangana mooted at the time of separate statehood

what has been realized so far is a liberal democratic Telangana that supports the capitalist development path. The present TRS government is aggressively trying to attract capital for industrialization and development. Thus while what was realized may be different, there were, and still are, different views about what an ideal Telangana should look like or what the idea of Telangana itself should be.

Social Structure of Telangana: More Change than Continuity

While in the section above we discussed the question of politics and identity, in this one we discuss briefly the changing social structure of Telangana and its contradictory nature. Firstly, nearly seventy percent of the population of Telangana lives in rural areas, i.e. in villages. There have been significant changes in these villages and in their social structure and power structure. Traditionally, land served as the basis for social dominance and power. The three top ranking castes in the Telangana social structure who owned most of the land were the Brahmins, Reddys and Velamas. Over time, especially since the sixties there has been the emergence of the middle castes. Land ownerships have shifted to the middle castes as the aforementioned upper castes have moved to urban pursuits. Rural social structure today is dominated by middle ranking peasant castes (Vaddiraju:1998). There is also an emerging phenomenon of Dalit (formerly untouchable) castes in some villages. The shift in land ownership pattern towards the middle castes and the urbanization of the upper castes, who are leaving the villages, do not mean that the position of elites in the power structure has changed. The recent Telangana Human Development Report for example notes in its very *Preface* the following fact:

> *'The social structure in Telangana is uniquely skewed towards socially marginalized Sections - backward classes, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and religious minority Groups - which constitute 85 percent of the state population. Social backwardness often converges with economic backwardness and low human development'.* (THDR, Preface: i-ii)

The elites still come from the upper castes, who now are mostly urban based and have extended their ties overseas, particularly the US. The US link is of particular significance to the Telangana elites. In fact, most upper caste families in Telangana have one or two members of their families in the US. They form the elite of society. This being the phenomenon, this has resulted in an increase in the gap between the elite and the newly emerging middle ranking peasant and Dalit castes. To conclude, social structure as such has come to be dominated by middle ranking peasant castes and Dalit castes, but the numerically smaller upper castes at the same time have become even more powerful by establishing overseas linkages. Therefore, while Telangana polity has seen the emergence of masses, this has not much affected the elite bastions. Power at the state level still continues to be controlled by the elite castes, though certainly more number of people from the middle and lower castes hold the levers of power now. The elite-mass distinction only appears to increase over time, in spite of the increasing emergence of the middle ranking peasant and Dalit castes at the level of rural society. The summary of the story is that there is definitely more change than continuity, which however does not mean that the elites have disappeared from the story. In fact, they have very well managed to retain their positions of power. As the reviewer has rightly noted, the change is contradictory but when

we see reality dialectically the real contradictions of the society become apparent. (These observations of Telangana society, including rural society, are based on this author's close acquaintance with the society over the past half century.)

Civil Society and Modernity

As a result of the above changes, politics has seen the emergence of masses in a big way. How can we look at this? Does it lead to a civil society? Or does it lead to a political society? Or does it lead to modernity? On these three questions, Partha Chatterjee has put forward three theses in his article 'On civil and political society in postcolonial democracies' (Chatterjee, 2001: 178-179). They are as below:

> '1. The most significant site of transformations in the colonial period is that of civil society; the most significant transformations occurring in the post-colonial period are in political society.
> 2. The question that frames the debate over social transformation in the colonial period is that of modernity. In political society of the post-colonial period, the framing of question is that of democracy.
> 3. In the context of the latest phase of globalization of capital we may well be witnessing an emerging opposition between modernity and democracy, i.e., between civil society and political society.'

When we consider these three theses in the context of Telangana society, we find that the first transformation has never occurred there because Telangana has not seen a colonial transformation and therefore colonial modernity. The second question of political society and democracy are superimposed on a society that has not seen the colonial mediation. That is to say, Telangana, despite the rule of Congress and Telugu Desham, had originally never undergone modernity such as colonial modernity. On the other hand, coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema have seen colonial modernity to some extent. Telangana jumped from princely Nizam rule to post-colonial democracy when the merger happened. The point therefore is that in spite of the mediation of post-colonial democracy from 1956-2014, the society of Telangana still finds modernity and civil society as progressive forces. Since the colonial mediation has not happened, civil society and modernity are not spent forces in Telangana, as may be the case with Bengal. In Telangana, aspiration for modernity and civil society co-exists and overlaps with the post-colonial condition of democracy. Therefore, the mediations of modernity (especially for the people coming from rural areas to urban areas and modern institutions) and post-colonial democracy (for the same numerous people who have found peacefully an elected government of their own after a long time) exist simultaneously. In this type of historical evolution, conflict between civil society/ modernity and political society/democracy appears unlikely. Both these sets of aspirations coexist. Moreover, there is a problem here with the term democracy. The plasticity of the term democracy makes the entire political society concept very loose. Anything could be called democratic because the term democracy is used by all shades on the political ideological spectrum, and is often the broadest concept being employed by the anarchists. Be that as it may, the Telangana situation is particularly apt for a discussion of these concepts because, 1. There is the emergence of masses in

social structure and politics, 2. There is democracy and there are political movements for stretching democracy to its maximum limits, 3. There is simultaneous aspiration for modernity, civil society and liberal democracy. And finally, there is a historical mediation that has not happened: colonialism, because of which there is no disillusionment with modernity. Unlike Bengal, Telangana did not witness colonialism firsthand. Therefore, the Telangana situation is fecund for conceptual discussion of the type begun by Partha Chatterjee and has become popular.

The question of modernity is interesting in Telangana because of the nature of the princely state of Nizam. Nizam's state consisted of Telugu, Marathi and Kannada speaking areas. In addition to that, Urdu was the *lingua franca*. Therefore, the influence of Hindustani and *Deccani* is strong throughout Telangana. That is why the state of Telangana and the society of its capital Hyderabad is considered not only modern but even cosmopolitan as it was open to myriad cultural and political influences and able to assimilate the same. The politics of identity in today's context is deliberately constructed. The nativist tone of TRS is increasingly being amplified through symbolic regional party politics with the invocation of Telangana identity. Therefore, this nativism is new to Telangana and Hyderabad. Even today an inclusive cosmopolitanism is apparent in Hyderabad, where different religious and linguistic communities live peacefully to a large extent. There are only rare instances of communal conflict in Hyderabad. Hyderabad basically stands for the peaceful coexistence of different communities alongside one another. Strong nativism, or what has come to become strong regionalist identity, has been rather an anomaly to the people of Telangana. That is why today's Telangana for 'its own people' is to a large extent a new phenomenon, and this strong regionalist sentiment goes against its original grain of cosmopolitanism.

Another concept to be considered is civil society in Telangana. If by civil society we mean density of non-state or non-governmental organizations, we should certainly say that the number is less. On the other hand, if by civil society we mean articulated non-state public opinion on public policies and affairs, we should say that Telangana has a considerable amount of this, thanks to the number of universities concentrated in the state capital Hyderabad, and their spread-out in the district cities. However, the latter type of articulated public opinion too is now largely overwhelmed by the mass support that the new regional party government has, and therefore the new critical stances and voices against the TRS are yet to be articulated. This adds to the point made at the beginning that both opposition and civil society (civil society defined as both NGOs and social movements) are weak in Telangana politics. Besides, given the popular capitulation to the critique of the idea of civil society in Telangana, we are yet to see how much of it will be at all born, both in the sense of density of civic associations and in the sense of articulated public opinion on public affairs. Regarding civil society, the THDR says the following:

> *'Civil society in Telangana state is active with high awareness of socio-economic and political issues due to its active participation in various social movements, especially the prolonged movement for statehood. The emergence of the middle class in recent times has also contributed to the high level of socio-political consciousness among the people. All these indicate the prevalence of an enabling environment for the social*

mobilization of people to play a vigilant citizenry role to moderate the state, market and civil society.' (THDR, Preface: i-ii)

The above paragraph provides us a very optimistic view for the future of civil society. The experience under previous dispensations regarding this is not uniform but not very optimistic either. The approach of the governments under the previous united Andhra Pradesh has been to be suspicious of civil society, and at worst, to stifle its voice (for example, Chandrababu Naidu's regime is well known for its hostility to civil society in united AP though later the Y.S. Rajashekhar Reddy-led Congress regime may have been somewhat better; this observation is based on the author's firsthand experience of working in civil society in united AP under both the Chandrababu-led TDP government and later under the YSR-led Congress government). It remains to be seen how much space TRS will be willing to provide to critical voices in the public domain and affairs concerning public issues.

Telangana within the Union: Development and Identity:

Telangana state was formed in 2014, the year when general elections were held. One major feature of the outcome of these general elections is that the earlier coalition regime at the national level led by UPA was replaced by the BJP-led government and a BJP-dominant coalition. This led to major shifts in Indian politics and also posed difficult challenges to the regional party-led states. Should they ally with BJP or the opposition? The earlier strategic role of the regional parties in multi party coalitions too has declined with the clear majority won by the BJP. In this context, the Telangana Rashtra Samiti, after its electoral win, stayed away from both BJP and the Indian National Congress. This helped the party to retain a modicum of autonomy within the Union and helped fashion its own development path. What are then the similarities and differences between the development paths of the BJP-led union government and the TRS-led Telangana government?

The major similarities are that both the Union government and the State government are keen on attracting private capital for investment and following the capitalist model of development. Since Telangana is very much a part of the Union, the broad contours of the development policies adopted by the union government apply to Telangana as well. However, as a State within a quasi-federal union, Telangana government has some leeway in implementing policies of its own. Our point is that these policies have been more pro-poor in nature than that of the Union government. A prominent example is the social security provisions in terms of pensions and doles. These include old age pensions, small funds for the marriage of girls for families with girls of marriageable age and health subsidies in private hospitals. Telangana state is ahead of the Union government in implementing these provisions. For various reasons, discussed in the previous sections, such as the nature of identity politics, emergence of a certain type of social structure, and the nature of the political movements existing in Telangana, the government in Telangana is more pro-poor or 'populist' than the Union government. Given that the Telangana state is a surplus budget state, implementing these policies will not be a major problem.

Given these features, the development path is likely to be capitalistic with strong features of populism, wherein progressive elements of government policies coexist with a drive to attract investment and capital.

Summing up: 'Miles to go'

In this paper, we have argued that in the newly formed state of Telangana, the TRS government has sufficiently met the symbolic and emotional needs of the people for recognition of their identity, so far. However, it still has to meet the challenge of providing to its people the material benefits to be derived from forming a separate state. These benefits include: employment, irrigation, agriculture and further decentralization. Some success on these fronts has been achieved but a lot more needs to be done. The question of farmers' suicides in Telangana is perplexing. Also, we argued that the question of civil society, modernity and post-colonial political society are important for Telangana. As the recent electronic media reports show, agitational clouds are already forming over the TRS government. For example, TJAC, which spearheaded the Telangana movement under TRS, is now opposing the government. But we still need to wait for a clear evaluation of this issue.

It is only two years since the state has come into existence. However, we have argued that the prominent features of state politics relate to managing Telangana identity, meeting popular expectations after the formation of the state, coping with pressures from political movements within the state and dealing with the politics within the Union. We have argued that these pressures lead to the adoption of a more pro-poor or 'populist' development policies and politics, under the overarching rubric of the development policy adopted within the Union. For a considerable period from now, politics will likely be led by the regional party TRS, and therefore, politics and development are likely to look like any other regional party dominated state, such as Tamil Nadu or Punjab. The only exception might be that unlike Tamil Nadu, Telangana might have only one regional party, and so might look similar to the other regional party led states which have only one regional party. The development model will be a capitalist development path tinged with heavy identity and symbolic politics combined with pro-poor policies. This is still a developing story, which is happening in the context of a weak opposition in the state assembly, a weak civil society and an agriculture-dominated peasant economy. Telangana still has miles to go before it meets all the popular expectations.

Notes

[i] By now there is enough literature on the necessity for the formation of Telangana state. The literature written during the movement had amply supported it. Two notable articles in this regard are by Kodanda Ram (2007) and Melkote *et al* (2010). Besides these two, the *Economic and Political Weekly* has carried numerous articles explaining why a Telangana state is justified. Since the state was formed on 2nd June 2014, this article does not go into the same exercise again.

[ii] A detailed and critical discussion of the 'Mission Kakatiya' can be found in Kumar et al (2016), which states at the very beginning of the article the importance of agriculture and tank irrigation to Telangana in the following words:
> 'Agriculture is the primary source of income for 78% of the population of the newly carved state of Telangana, but currently it produces only 30% of the total income of the state (Pingle 2011). Eighty-five percent of the cultivated area is rainfed, tank irrigation still remains one of the major support(s) for agriculture (Deccan Chronicle 2015). Marginal and small holdings constitute 86% of the total agricultural holdings in the state, making agriculture a subsistence source of livelihood for majority of the population.' And, 'Telangana has 47,907 tanks with an irrigation potential of 2,263,498 acres spread over to districts. Between 1956 and 2001, there has been a reduction in the tank-irrigated area in the range of 4.5 lakh acres (Nag 2011). Currently, the state statistics claim that only 37% of the potential tank-irrigated area is served by the tanks in the state'

[iii] A critical point of view of this, which portrays the entire decentralisation move in negative terms, can be found in Nag (2016). The actual impact of the decentralisation programme may not be as much negative as portrayed in this article. In fact, the earlier experience of reducing the size of the Taluks into smaller mandals in Telangana by

TDP government in the 80s proved beneficial in the long run. In the same manner, the move of the present government too is likely to prove more beneficial in the long run than it may appear to flash-on-the-pan reviews of the move.

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