

Andhra Pradesh

## Wrangling over Political Power among Ruling Class Parties turns Murkier

**Four** years have passed since the bifurcation and formation of two Telugu speaking states. The regional parties – Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in AP and Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) in Telangana – were ruling the states since then. The next round of election to state Assemblies and the Parliament are going to be held in less than a year. The problems that arose due to bifurcation were not addressed in earnest and many of them are still to be resolved.

One of the hotly contested issues is the distribution of Krishna and Godavari river waters. The Brijesh Kumar tribunal gave its award before the bifurcation allocating the waters to all the four riparian states. As the waters allocated to undivided AP has to be reallocated between newly formed AP and Telangana, as this task has been given to Brijesh Kumar tribunal extending its term and now all the riparian states have claims and counter-claims on allocated waters, the award of the tribunal remains in limbo even after five years.

The BJP which vehemently supported bifurcation and promised all help would be extended to the newly formed states, came to the power at the centre and started sowing seeds of discord. It wantonly set aside the spirit of the tribunal's recommendation that river water management boards should be constituted to implement its verdict for both the rivers separately with representation to all the five South Indian states along with Chhattisgarh and Odisha. The BJP constituted river water management boards with AP and Telangana alone. With keeping the other riparian states out of the boards, it made the implementation of the award impossible and consequently river waters continue to be a burning issue among all the riparian states. Even the simple problem of division of employees of state government and public sector corporations remains unfulfilled. The BJP in its drive to capture power in South India is waiting in the wings to utilise these problems and create trouble to the ruling parties, particularly in AP.

The TDP and TRS came to the power in AP and Telangana on the crest of the regional sentiment stoked by them. They became adamant and worked in the direction that there should not be any opposition party. By using their political, financial and even muscle power they bought MLAs and leaders of the opposition parties. In this process, the Congress party was decimated in AP and YSRCP is severely paralysed as many of its MNAs jumped into the bandwagon of TDP. In Telangana, the TDP leaders joined TRS en masse and Congress is holding to some pockets of influence. Even the CPI, CPM and some revolutionary organisations have to face desertions from their ranks. This made both TDP and TRS more adamant and they started bearing their fangs to silence the dissenting opinion and suppress the people.

Coming to AP, the Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu posed himself as the sole saviour of the peoples of AP and drawn grandiose plans claiming that he will build a golden AP. As the din of this propaganda does not hide the reality, he is now facing the anger of the people. In the name of capital and infrastructure and industrial projects he acquired lakhs of acres of land from the peasants only to give away to the vested interests. He joined NDA and placated Modi in the hope that the centre would provide him with more funds. He supported all the measures taken by Modi's government such as demonetisation, GST that devastated the livelihoods of the people. No single basic problem faced by the people had been resolved; rather they were aggravated during this period. The great majority of peasants are in distress and the government in no way providing solace to them. The working class is in pathetic condition as the government gave free hand to the employers, putting in limbo all the labour laws. The privatisation of education and health is breaking the backs of the middle classes, while the government is placating them as unprecedented quality development.

The YSRCP is in doldrums because it has no constructive alternative programme to offer to the people. It has single point agenda of blaming the TDP and its leaders for all types of problems and making one allegation after another without bothering whether they are tenable or untenable. Its leader Jaganmohan Reddy is showering every conceivable populist promise upon the people. Both TDP and YSRCP are using caste and religion as their plank to attract and consolidate their vote banks.

The Congress party in AP is yet to recover from its defeat in the state and depletion of leaders as they deserted to TDP.

As was happened in the past, where Chiranjeeve was brought on to political scene to be a leader of Kapu caste by the Congress high command as a check to the then CM Rajasekhara Reddy, his brother Pawan Kalyan now is testing the political waters. Many political pundits opine that he was brought on to the political scene by the BJP to weaken the TDP.

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The CPI and CPM are in a never ending dialamma of to which political party they have to truck with as they have lost their base in the toiling masses as result of their class collaborationist policies.

Sensing the mood of the people and the brazen methods BJP had used to gain upper hand in the body politic of Tamil Nadu, the TDP started distancing from BJP and finally withdrew from the NDA government at the centre. TDP started blaming the BJP for all the problems faced by the state and people. The BJP started retaliating with counter allegations. And a no holds bar vilification campaign was unleashed from both sides.

The controversy rose and centered on initially around certain substantial issues such as special category status to AP, construction of Polavaram dam, separate railway zone for AP, terms of reference to 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission etc. These issues encompass a wider issue of centre-state relations, which was defined by BJP as co-operative federalism. That these issues affect the functioning of state governments and lives of the people is an undeniable fact and needs a thorough discussion.

The claim that India is a union of states and has federal structure is a hoax. During the 66 years, the successive governments at the centre used to concentrate more powers in their hands at the expense of states. Narendra Modi is more brazen in this regard and in a single stroke of GST he cornered a substantial part of states' finances. The terms of reference to 15<sup>th</sup> Finance commission were framed by his government is such a way that states have to depend upon the centre for their finances. These issues have to be made part of the public discourse so that a solution can be worked to the vexed problem of centre-state relations.

This is not the intention of the ruling class parties. They raised these issues as the contradictions among them got sharpened. Yet they fear of the people getting involved in this. They diverted, rather thwarted a serious discussion among the people by bringing forward personal accusations, caste issues and religious sentiments. They even dragged the Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanam into the controversy in order to raise religious sentiments.

Thus the ruling classes through their political representatives have set the agenda for the coming general elections that effectively excluded any discussion on any basic problem faced by the people. They have drawn a boundary within which the so-called political discourse has to be conducted. As most of the media – both print and electronic – are owned by the leaders of various political parties, they have the assurance that the limits they have set will not be violated.

The democratic and revolu-tionary forces in the state have to expose this bankruptcy of the ruling classes and their political representatives, both at the national and regional level, and bring forward the real problems faced by the people of the state and viable solutions to them to the fore so that the peoples' awareness would advanced.

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