

**Working Paper 180**

**Democratic Process and Electoral Politics  
in Andhra Pradesh, India**

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## Glossary

<i>Andhra Kesari</i>	Literally, 'Lion of Andhra'; name given to the legendary Tanguturi Prakasam, leader of a Congress Party faction and founder of the Praja Party
<i>Amma</i>	Mother
<i>Anicuts</i>	Irrigation systems
<i>Anna</i>	Elder brother
<i>Arrack</i>	Cheap liquor, distilled usually from molasses
<i>Bahujans</i>	Literally, 'the underprivileged multitude'. The concept includes people who belong to backward castes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and minorities. It is now mostly used by the BSP and refers to <i>dalits</i>
<i>Bandh</i>	Total strikes
<i>Benami</i>	Fictitious names
<i>Bhiksha</i>	Alms
<i>Crore</i>	A unit of ten million (10,000,000)
<i>Dalit</i>	A member of the caste of Harijans or 'untouchables'; in Sanskrit, 'depressed'
Dalit Maha Saba	A socio-political organisation of the <i>dalits</i>
<i>Deepam</i>	Light
<i>Desam</i>	Land, nation
<i>Dharma Yuddham</i>	A war for justice
<i>Dharna</i>	Sit-in strike
<i>Dwijas</i>	Twice-born castes
<i>Garibi Hatao</i>	Banish poverty
<i>Gram</i>	Village
<i>Gram Panchayat</i>	Village Council
<i>Grama Sachivalayam</i>	Village Secretariat
Jagirdari System	A type of land revenue system in Mughal India and later in Nizam's Hyderabad State, in which the jagirdar was technically the holder of an assignment of revenue
<i>Jagirdars, Muktedars and Deshmukhs</i>	Feudatory chiefs
<i>Jai Congress, Jai Telengana</i>	Victory to the Congress, victory to Telengana
Janmabhoomi Programme	A people-centred participatory development process
<i>Kapunadu</i>	Conference of the Kapus
<i>Karnam</i>	Village officer in charge of land records (Andhra region)
<i>Kshamaseema</i>	Literally, 'stalking ground of famines'
<i>Lakh</i>	A unit of one-hundred thousand (100,000)
<i>Lathi</i>	A long heavy wooden stick used as a weapon
<i>Lok Sabha</i>	The lower chamber of India's Parliament; in Hindi, 'people's assembly'
<i>Mahanadu</i>	The TDP annual conference
<i>Mahila Bank</i>	Women's bank
<i>Mandal</i>	Territorial and administrative unit (with a population of about 50,000 to 70,000) between the village and district levels
<i>Mandal Parishad</i>	Intermediate level council in the <i>Panchayati Raj</i> system, made up of the heads of the <i>Panchayats</i> and representatives of the territorial constituencies (MPTCs) within the <i>Mandal</i>
<i>Swarnandhrapradesh</i>	Golden Andhra Pradesh

<i>Munsif</i>	Village headman (Andhra region)
<i>Paligars</i>	Chiefs of large territories until the early 19 <sup>th</sup> century, found mostly in the southern region of Rayalaseema in Andhra Pradesh
<i>Panchayat</i>	An institution of self-government for the rural areas
<i>Panchayati Raj</i>	System of local rural self-government with a three-tier structure, the units being the village, <i>mandal</i> and district councils
<i>Panchayati Samithi</i>	A middle-level unit of rural local government existing prior to 1986, made up of the heads of village <i>Panchayats</i>
<i>Patel</i>	Village headman (Telengana region)
<i>Patwari</i>	Village officer in charge of land records (Telengana region)
<i>Praja Deevena Programme</i>	Literally, ‘people’s blessing’; a programme initiated by the TDP to recruit intellectuals and professionals into the party
<i>Prajala Mungita Palana</i>	Government at People’s Doorstep
<i>Pukka</i>	Properly constructed; houses constructed with bricks and cement
<i>Raat-Ki-Sarkar</i>	Rulers at night
<i>Raj</i>	Rule
<i>Rajya Sabha</i>	The upper chamber of India’s Parliament; in Hindi, ‘States assembly’
<i>Reddy Raj</i>	Rule by the Reddis, a term used to describe the Congress rule from the 1960s to early 1980s
<i>Samithi</i>	An association, especially one formed to organise political activity
<i>Samrakshana</i>	Protection
<i>Sarpanch</i>	Head of a <i>Panchayat</i>
<i>Sukhibhava</i>	Literally, ‘blessing’; a programme to provide government support to post-natal women
<i>Tatkal</i>	Literally, ‘immediate relief’; a programme to provide financial support to widows
<i>Telugu</i>	The language spoken in Andhra Pradesh; also one who speaks Telugu
<i>Telugu Bidda</i>	Son of the Telugu soil
<i>Vana Samrakshana Samithis</i>	Joint Forest Management groups
<i>Varuni Vahini</i>	Literally ‘stream of liquor’; name given to the manufacture and sale of liquor by the government of Andhra Pradesh prior to 1994
<i>Visalandhra</i>	The greater Andhra, called Andhra Pradesh
<i>Votu Bhiksha</i>	Votes as alms
<i>Zamindar</i>	Type of landlord, holder and rent-receiver of an agricultural estate during the British rule
<i>Zilla</i>	District
<i>Zilla Parishad</i>	District Council

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

AIADMK	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazaghham
AMS	Andhra Maha Sabha (Andhra Conference)
APCC	Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (prior to 1956, Andhra Provincial Congress Committee)
APCCCR	Andhra Pradesh Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries
BC	Backward Caste
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BJS	Bharatiya Jana Sangh
BSP	Bahujan Samaj Party
CLP	Congress Legislature Party
CMEY	Chief Minister's programme for Empowerment of Youth
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPM	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CPI-ML	Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)
CSDS	Centre for the Study of Developing Societies
CSP	Congress Socialist Party
DMK	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
DTDP	Democratic Telugu Desam Party
DWACRA	Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas
IMFL	Indian Made Foreign Liquor
INC	Indian National Congress
KLP	Krishikar Lok Party
KMPP	Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party
MIM	Majlis-i-Ittihad-ul-Muslimeen (Association for Muslim Unity)
ML	Marxist-Leninist
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
MP	Member of Parliament
MPP	Mandala Praja Parishad
MPTC	Mandal Parishad Territorial Constituency
MRPS	Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi
NDA	National Democratic Alliance
NSSO	National Sample Survey Organisation
NTR	NT Rama Rao
NTRTDP-LP	NTR Telugu Desam Party – Lakshmi Parvathi
OBC	Other Backward Caste
PCC	Pradesh Congress Committee
PDF	People's Democratic Front
PDS	Public Distribution System
PP	Praja Party
PRIs	Panchayati Raj Institutions
PSP	Praja Socialist Party
Rs	Rupees
SC	Scheduled Caste
SCF	Scheduled Castes Federation
SMART	Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent
SMSP	Single Member Simple Plurality
SP	Samajwadi Party
SSP	Sarva Sangrama Parishad
ST	Scheduled Tribe

TCLF	Telengana Congress Legislators Forum
TDP	Telugu Desam Party
TDPLP	TDP Lakshmi Parvathi
TDPN	TDP Naidu
TPS	Telengana Praja Samithi
TRS	Telengana Rashtra Samithi
VAO	Village Administrative Officer
VDO	Village Development Officer
ZPP	Zilla Praja Parishads
ZPTC	Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency



# 1 Introduction

India is a Union of States, according to its Constitution, with state power distributed between a (federal) government at the Centre and the governments of the constituent States.<sup>1</sup> The importance of the States lies not merely in their vast territory or population, but in their distinct social structure, well-developed languages, culture and history. This tremendous diversity gives rise to different patterns of politics in different States. The government at the State level is responsible for most of the usual functions of a government, such as making laws on a wide variety of matters, their execution, maintenance of law and order, adjudication, commerce, industry, agriculture, education and health.

During the last 50 years of its existence as a republic, States have come to occupy an increasingly important place in India's political system. The political processes at the State level became significant after the breakdown of Congress dominance in the late 1960s. With the emergence of the State-based parties in the 1980s, there has been growing divergence in politics at the State and Central (federal) levels. Different party systems have taken shape in different States and the electoral outcomes have begun to differ from State to State in the last two decades, bringing a great deal of diversity among the States too (Manor, 1988). The emergence of coalition governments since 1989, in which the State parties became important partners, brought the State to centre stage. The onset of liberalisation policies from the early 1990s further increased its prominence. National and international financial institutions and agencies, companies and industrial houses began to deal directly with the States, whose governments have assumed an active role in the development of infrastructure in the State, determining a host of policies in accordance with the priorities of the ruling party at State level.

It is almost clichéd to describe India as a highly plural society characterised by tremendous socio-cultural and economic diversity, continuously undergoing radical changes. The bewildering variety of political forms at the State level would lead observers of Indian politics to think of it as in a state of perpetual flux, or 'pattern less', or a chaos out of which one could make little sense. To some extent, Indian politics today may be better comprehended by looking at the national politics as a cluster or coalescence of diverse State politics. Of course, there is a two-way interaction between the State and Central politics: while the States operate within the national policy framework and political situation, the Centre functions within the limitations imposed by the dynamics of State politics.

At the time India became Independent, the country faced, to use the phrase of Rajni Kothari (1970), the challenge of simultaneous change. It took upon itself the daunting tasks of reforming social structure, promoting agricultural and industrial development, and fostering democratic political institutions, all at the same time. The Constitution was a social covenant in democratic socialism, as it assured to its people liberty, equality and social justice, and elections have become the main agency through which democracy has been strengthened in the country. Commentators of Indian politics have observed that such a situation gave rise to both political development as well as political decay. New sections of people have been mobilised into the political firmament, participation of people in politics has been made possible on an increasing scale and activists and leaders have been recruited and nurtured. At the same, demands from the newly mobilised sections of people have increased on the state. There have been attempts to strike a balance between the claims of diverse segments of society for political power, social wealth and other opportunities, which were often conflicting. This has proved to be a difficult exercise in recent years. The era of liberalisation and economic reforms has affected thinking about the nature and role of state and

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper the word 'State' denotes a constituent province of the Indian Union and the word 'state' is used in its juridical sense.

government in the country. The new economic policies, emphasising deregulation, privatisation and de-statisation, have raised new questions about development and welfare. The tensions in the process of change are excessive. The new *Panchayati Raj* (traditional institution of local rural self-governance) system mandated by the Constitution has recently opened new avenues of political participation to include increasing numbers of representatives from different sections of society in the decision-making bodies at the local level.

The importance of the study of elections as a means to understand the political processes is well recognised all over the world. As Norman Palmer (1975) pointed out, the study of elections provides an opportunity to study the political system in action. If we take a longitudinal view of the political system, elections are situated at its interstices, but they bring out in sharp relief the interacting social forces that are at work in the polity, provide insights into various aspects of the system and its actual functioning. In India, where a democratic political framework was suddenly thrust upon a post-colonial society with age-old traditions and culture, elections became the agency for the democratisation of society and politics, as they brought politics within the sphere of the common man and common man into the political arena. They played a central role in mobilising millions of people into the political process, crystallising public opinion on a host of issues, institutional functioning and styles of leadership, and in the emergence and recruitment of a new political elite.

Elections have influenced the ways in which the priorities of the political parties and the broad parameters of the incumbent government were laid down. We have seen how elections have effected changes in the existing policies of the government, where rejection or renewal of a regime means rejection or acceptance of a political leadership. Indeed, it was primarily because of the compulsions of the electoral politics that the parties adopted pro-people policies, with an eye either to consolidate their existing electoral base or secure support from newer sections. Even after the introduction of new economic policies, the governments at the Centre and in the States are compelled to carry out welfare programmes and the rival political parties have to compete with each other in projecting themselves as protectors of the interests of the poor and the disadvantaged. Electoral support can be mobilised on emotional grounds and the feelings raised by caste, faction, gender, religion and region, but such attempts have to be backed by some tangible welfare benefits to the members of these groups. The very implementation of the economic reforms have to be justified by the political parties on the ground that they enable the government to spend more on people's welfare.

Elections have assumed further significance as hundreds of millions of voters, living under conditions of illiteracy, poverty, backwardness, pre-modern social relations, religious distinctions, and inequalities based on caste built over hundreds of years, were repeatedly called upon to exercise their political right to choose their representatives at the Central, State and local levels. Fears that elections in India would either fail because of the awesome structural limitations and unpreparedness of the country to institutionalise parliamentary democracy or that they would have destabilising consequences which the political elites could not control, proved to be wrong. There may be several limitations, deficiencies and failures in the functioning of India's democracy, which need to be overcome, but there are also commendable achievements. Few might be happy with what has been achieved or the way things happen in India, but there is the satisfaction that Indians, by and large, are able to work to solve their problems under a democratic framework.

So far, India has seen 13 Parliamentary elections and an almost equal number of Legislative Assembly elections in each State. It is indeed a great experiment in consolidating and operating democracy in a large and ancient country like India, trying to stand on its own feet after nearly two centuries of colonial rule. For a country with relatively little experience of struggle for parliamentary democracy and franchise, afflicted by congenital defects and constrained by social

problems, it was no mean achievement of its people, as they still attempt to resolve their problems in a democratic and peaceful way, that elections could take place at regular intervals, parties in government could be changed without violence, power could be transferred peacefully to new sets of leaders, political parties could transform themselves from the era of mass politics of the freedom struggle to competitive politics, and a government based on law with an assurance of basic freedoms to the people was made possible. It could equally offer lessons to some of the Western countries on how polities could be governed in a more democratic way.

An account of the democratic process and electoral politics in Andhra Pradesh during the last 50 years is presented in the following pages. An attempt is made to analyse the ways in which the regional, factional, class and caste factors have operated in State politics and shaped the electoral outcomes. As such, the paper discusses how the policies and programmes of the State government and also the strategies of competing political parties have been influenced by the logic of electoral politics. It examines the process of the emergence of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the factors for its consolidation. It also focuses on certain aspects of political decay and the challenges to the political leadership in the State and investigates the multiple and shifting strategies of the ruling TDP and the Congress in winning the elections in recent years. Since the Livelihood Options Research in South Asia project focuses on the *Panchayati Raj* system in Andhra Pradesh, the results of the recent elections to the local bodies are discussed in detail in a separate section towards the end of this paper (see Section 7). In the process it analyses the dilemma faced by the ruling party in balancing the need for economic growth through the implementation of radical economic reforms and the compulsions of competitive electoral politics as they manifest in the continuation of the welfare programmes for the benefit of the poor and the disadvantaged. Some of the major aspects of Andhra Pradesh State politics and issues that require further study are discussed in the Conclusion.

## 2 Andhra Pradesh: A Profile

The State of Andhra Pradesh was formed in 1956. The language of most of the people in the State is denoted by the terms Telugu or Andhra, although they bear no phonetic or etymological affinity.<sup>2</sup> There were two important stages in the formation of the State. At the time of Independence, the Telugu-speaking people were concentrated in the old multilingual Madras State and the princely State of Hyderabad.<sup>3</sup> The Telugu-speaking areas of the Madras State were separated on 1 October 1953 to create the 'Andhra State', with Kurnool as capital. This Andhra region itself was composed of two sub-regions, namely the Andhra region (popularly called the Andhra), and the south interior region, known as Rayalaseema. Later, the Telugu-speaking districts (referred to as Telengana region) of the old Hyderabad State were merged with the Andhra State on 1 November 1956 under the State Reorganisation Act, to form the greater Andhra (Visalandhra), called Andhra Pradesh. Hyderabad, the former capital of the Nizam State, became the capital of the enlarged State (Rao, 1988; Narayana Rao, 1973; Sarojini, 1968; Venkatarangaiah, 1965). It was the first State in Independent India to be formed on linguistic principle, creating one unified State for people speaking one language.

The State came into existence after a prolonged struggle and a great deal of bargaining and compromise by the political elites of different regions. Levels of economic development in the three regions were uneven at the time of State formation, due to variation in important factors such as political legacy, land relations, rainfall, soil fertility, terrain, cropping pattern and other agricultural practices, irrigation and other infrastructure facilities, and literacy and health standards. These inter-regional disparities and the politicisation of the regional identities, especially in the Telengana region, have affected the State politics and elections since its formation. The backward regions of the State have made impressive progress in the last four decades, but this 'congenital defect' is yet to be overcome. Although Andhra Pradesh is known as an integrated State of the Telugus, its integration in social, cultural, emotional and economic terms is not complete. The demand for bifurcation of the State and separate statehood for Telengana comes repeatedly to the surface, sometimes assuming the proportions of a widespread movement marked by violent conflict. While some sections of the middle classes, upper castes and political leadership in Telengana feel that their region remained backward because of the 'raw deal' meted out to the region by the successive governments and disproportional benefits reaped by the people from the coastal region, some sections in coastal Andhra think that they could have developed much faster if they were not encumbered by the Telengana region.

Thus, it has now become customary to look at Andhra Pradesh as consisting of three distinct regions: the 'Circars' (literally, the government districts) or the coastal Andhra region consisting of nine districts (Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Prakasam and Nellore) and comprising 41.7% of the State population; the 'Rayalaseema' (the land of kings) consisting of four districts (Chittoor, Cuddapah, Anantapur and Kurnool) with 18% of the population; and the 'Telengana' (the land of Telugus) consisting of 10 districts (Mahbubnagar, Ranga Reddy, Hyderabad, Medak, Nizamabad, Adilabad, Karimnagar, Warangal, Khammam and Nalgonda) with 40.5% of the population (Census of India, Andhra Pradesh, 2001). The coastal and Rayalaseema districts are often jointly referred to as the 'Andhra' in contradistinction to the 'Telengana'.

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2 Historians disagree on how these two terms came to be used to denote the same people. Some say that the Andhras came to the region from northern parts of the Indian sub-continent as part of their southward expansion. They found a comparatively developed people here whom they called the Nagas. The language of the local people was non-Sanskritic, and they probably called themselves Tillingas or Telingas. Both peoples lived together and united into one. The crossing of the Telugu/Tenugu and the Andhra gave rise to a hybrid and the synthesis has been so perfect that the two terms – Andhra and Telugu – became synonymous with each other (Hanumantha Rao, 1996; Nagabhushana Sarma and Veerabhadra Sastry, 1995).

3 Officially called the Dominion of His Exalted Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad.

There are 28,123 villages in Andhra Pradesh, which constitute the State's rural frame. All villages, except forest villages, are revenue villages with distinct revenue boundaries. The 117 'Statutory Towns' (including the six Municipal Corporations of Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, Vijayawada, Guntur, Warangal and Rajamahendravaram) and 93 'Census Towns'<sup>4</sup> together constitute the urban frame of the State. As part of the decentralisation of the administrative system set up in 1986, each district is divided into a number of *Mandals* (intermediate territorial and administrative unit, with a population of about 50,000 to 70,000, between the village and district levels) and *Gram Panchayats* (village councils or the area that falls under a village council). At the time of the elections to local bodies in July–August 2001, there were 22 *Zilla Parishads* (district councils) (excluding Hyderabad, which is entirely urban), 1094 *Mandals* and 21,943 *Gram Panchayats* in the State. At the end of the year 2000, the electorate of the State stood at 50.58 million. The State has 42 *Lok Sabha* (the lower chamber of Parliament) constituencies; in *Rajya Sabha* (the upper chamber of Parliament) it is represented by 18 Members and the strength of the State's Legislative Assembly is 294.

## 2.1 Nature and environment

Andhra Pradesh forms a major cultural and geographical link between the northern and southern parts of India. It is situated in the tropical region between the latitudes 13–20° north, and the longitudes 77–85° east. It is bounded by the Bay of Bengal in the east, Orissa in the north-east, Chattisgarh and Maharashtra in the north, Karnataka in the west and Tamil Nadu in the south. Andhra Pradesh has the second longest coastline in India (972 km), running from Ichchapuram in Srikakulam district in the north to Sriharikota in Nellore district in the south. There are seven working ports in the State, including one major port (Visakhapatnam) and two intermediate ports (Kakinada and Machilipatnam).

The climate of Andhra Pradesh may be described as tropical–monsoonal. The State receives its rainfall from the south-west and the north-east monsoons. Rainfall varies from region to region and fluctuates widely over time. The average rainfall ranges from approximately 74 cm in the south to approximately 200 cm in the north, but the annual fluctuations are considerable. As more than 60% of the net sown area has no assured irrigation facilities and depends on rainfall for cultivation, monsoons play a crucial role in deciding the agricultural performance of the State and the overall condition of the economy. Most parts of Telangana and coastal Andhra receive fairly good rains. However, Rayalaseema is a zone of precarious rainfall, the annual average being 69 cm, and as the monsoon often fails in this area, it has long been known as the 'stalking ground of famines' (*kshamaseema*). Annual fluctuations in the rainfall are sometimes so heavy that several districts are often subjected either to floods or drought. Excess rainfall is as bad as a deficit and a flood is as disastrous as a drought. Cyclones and floods periodically devastate Coastal Andhra, causing heavy damage to standing crops and putting the economy of this region in great peril.

Rivers constitute a vital element of the consciousness and way of life of the people in the riverine areas. The *anicut*s (irrigation systems) across the Godavari, Krishna, and Penna rivers, described as 'poems in concrete', were built more than a century ago. It was due to these irrigation projects that the Krishna–Godavari tracts of Andhra experienced an 'agrarian revolution' in a manner quite unlike any other part of the Madras Presidency in those days; the changes in the social and political organisation of Andhra that followed were immense. These irrigation projects are also responsible for the central coastal districts' status, which still endures today, as 'granaries' of the State. The sharing of river waters has become a contentious issue between various regions of the State in the last two decades or so.

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<sup>4</sup> A town with a minimum population of 5000, 75% of the male working population engaged in non-agricultural pursuits and a population density of at least 400 per km<sup>2</sup>.

Andhra Pradesh is also rich in a variety of minerals, the most important of them being coal, limestone, natural gas, barytes, manganese, mica and iron ore. Much of the industrial growth of the State is in mining and industries dependent upon these minerals.

## 2.2 Population characteristics

Andhra Pradesh is the fifth largest State in India, in terms of both area and population. In 2001, the State's population stood at 75.73 million (Census of India, 2001), which accounts for 7.4% of India's total population. The sheer enormity of the State can be gauged against the fact that only 12 nations of the world have a population larger than that of Andhra Pradesh. The State population has more than doubled since its formation, although its decennial growth rate of population came down to 13.86 between 1991 and 2001.<sup>5</sup>

Literacy rate in Andhra Pradesh has increased from 44.1% in 1991 to 61.1% in 2001, but it is still lower than the all-India figure of 65.4%. The difference in literacy rate between rural and urban population, tribal and non-tribal people, socially backward castes and the upper castes, and males and females is still very wide.

With approximately 27% of the population living in urban areas, the level of urbanisation in the State is almost on a par with the national average. Although the proportion of urban population as a whole has been increasing in the State, the rate at which it has grown has declined substantially in recent years. If high rates of urbanisation during the earlier three decades were attributed to the stagnation of the rural economy, the steep decline in the rate of urbanisation between 1991 and 2001 needs to be examined. Although the proportion of people living in rural areas has declined from 82.6% in 1961 to 72.9% in 2001, the living standards of the rural people overall remain low, as most of them live in conditions of agrarian overpopulation and limited opportunities for productive work. Speaking to members of peasant families in rural areas, it becomes clear how eager the peasants are to move to towns if any opportunity to do so arises. Parents are not usually inclined to give their daughter in marriage to a person living in the village or engaged in agriculture, preferring a minor office employee in an urban area.

The data on workforce distribution indicate a high magnitude of dependency on agriculture. Nearly 80% of the total workers in the State are still engaged in agriculture (cultivators and agricultural labourers combined). While the proportion of cultivators among the 'main workers' has declined, the proportion of agricultural labourers has been on the rise. The proportion of agricultural labourers in Andhra Pradesh is the highest among all the States in India and their proportion tends to be even higher in the agriculturally advanced areas of the State. It is well known that all those who are involved in agriculture do not have sufficient work. With mechanisation, the need for manual labour in villages has been on the decline. Such a situation leads to overcrowding in agriculture and disguised unemployment. The elders in the villages often speak about the laziness syndrome prevailing in the rural areas, indicating that there is insufficient work for all members of the village. Since dependency on agriculture over time has not notably declined in the State, the per capita income of the agrarian population can be improved only with a significant rise in productivity levels, diversification of livelihood options in rural areas or a major shift of the rural population to urban areas, relocating people in different occupations.

In terms of religious identities, Andhra Pradesh is a mosaic of different faiths. Although Buddhism was said to be the major religion until around the early medieval period, it has become virtually non-existent today. The 'Hindus', including the scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribe (ST)

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<sup>5</sup> For the first time, the growth rate of the population has come down compared to the previous decade and is the lowest since Independence. This is much less compared to the all-India decennial growth rate of 21.34.

people, constitute about 89% of the total population.<sup>6</sup> North coastal Andhra has a preponderance of Hindus with about 99% in Srikakulam and Vizianagaram districts, and about 97% in Visakhapatnam and East Godavari districts. Muslims occupy second place with about 9% of the population. Although Shias are considerable in number, the majority are Sunnis. Muslims are located largely in certain districts and towns – they are considerable in number in Rayalaseema region (about 13%), Guntur district (11%) and parts of Telengana. The capital city, Hyderabad, where communal politics thrive, has 26% Muslims. Christians constitute about 1.8% in the State, with a high concentration in Guntur district (6.7%), followed by Krishna and West Godavari. Christianity spread mainly among the socially depressed castes, to which it rendered great service, but there is also a small section of upper-caste Christians. The percentage of Christians may be apparently low because a larger number of *dalit* Christians claim to be Hindu for technical reasons. Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs constitute about 0.4%, 0.3% and 0.3% respectively of Andhra Pradesh's population.

## 2.3 Economy

Andhra Pradesh, like most States in India, has a multi-structured economy, ranging from shifting cultivation in Agency areas of Srikakulam district to high-tech industries in Hyderabad. As mentioned earlier, agriculture is still the mainstay of the Andhra Pradesh economy. The net area irrigated was 4.38 million hectares (41% of net sown area) in 1999–2000, constituting about 8% of the total irrigated land in the country, slightly above the national average (39%). But the area irrigated and sources of irrigation vary from region to region. During the early decades of the State existence, canal irrigation was given priority, but for some time now, progress in bringing more land under canal irrigation has been negligible. Food grains account for about half of the total cropped area: rice alone accounts for nearly half of the total area under food crops, and pulses, oil seeds, especially groundnut, cotton, chillies, sugarcane, tobacco, and turmeric are the principal commercial crops of the State (Government of Andhra Pradesh, 2001).

Agricultural productivity per hectare has shown an increase since 1970–1 in the regions and crops that came under the influence of the agrarian revolution. Commercialisation of agriculture in the State became prominent from the early 1970s, but this has also had an adverse effect on the peasant economy. Agriculture has become capital intensive and losses due to natural disaster, pest or price fluctuations in the market, often depriving the peasantry of remunerative prices for their product, have meant the collapse of their economy. Several members of the peasant classes, who in search of prosperity opt for commercial crops and incur heavy investments mostly raised through loans, end up as paupers. Such 'pauperisation' from the status of an independent peasant results in loss of dignity for the peasantry as they cannot pay back their debts, marry off their daughters or support their children in their education, and the living standards of the family experience a sudden fall etc. This in turn drives the peasant to a state of despair and loss of interest in life. Suicide among farmers, especially those who grow commercial crops such as cotton, tobacco, chillies and groundnut, has become a recurrent phenomenon in the last two decades. Andhra Pradesh has the dubious distinction of recording the highest number of suicide deaths of farmers in the country in recent years.

The share of agriculture in the Net State Domestic Product fell to about 25% in 2000–1, from about 60% at the time of State formation. This decline in itself would not be cause for concern, provided it is accompanied by a corresponding decline in the proportion of the population dependent on agriculture. This, however, has not happened. The agrarian population in the State is thus sharing

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<sup>6</sup> The term 'Hindu' is a problematic one, because any person not declaring to belong to other prevalent religions, such as Islam and Christianity, is generally subsumed under this category by Census enumerators. Thus, Hinduism encompasses tribals, whose major religious form is animism.

this sharply diminished share of the total income, which means an increasing relative deprivation for the rural classes.

Data on the number and distribution of operational landholdings and the area operated under different landholding size-classes show that the number and percentage of marginal and small holdings and the area operated by them have been increasing, while the medium and large holdings have been declining over the last three decades. While in the early 1970s the medium and large landholdings accounted for 15.6% of the total holdings and operated an area of 57% of land, in 1995–6 they accounted for only 6% of the holdings with 30% of the total land. There has been a sharp decline in the number of large holdings and the area operated by them. ‘Deconcentration’ of land has been taking place in the State due to a multiplicity of factors, such as agrarian struggles by the communist and peasant organisations in the early decades, land ceiling laws enacted by the government, and emigration of members of landowning families to urban areas. Old style landlordism has broken down in many parts of the State and land ceiling laws have lost their appeal. In the pre-Independence period, land passed from the *zamindar* (a type of landlord, holder and rent-receiver of an agricultural estate during the British rule) and non-agricultural families to the members of intermediate castes, but it seems that land is now being passed from peasant families, who have lost interest in agriculture or are unable to keep their land, to members of backward and scheduled castes who are engaged in agriculture. These changes in the agrarian structure have far-reaching socio-political implications.

Andhra Pradesh was a late entrant into the country’s industrial scene. The share of the manufacturing sector in the Net State Domestic Product has increased from 7.2% in 1960–1 to 12.9% in 1999–2000 (at constant prices, 1993–4). The share of the secondary sector as a whole stood at 19.4% in that year (GoAP, 2001). Growth of industries in the State was mainly propelled by public sector industry, especially in pharmaceuticals, electrical equipment, heavy engineering and machinery, iron and steel and fertilisers. Three-quarters of total employment in the organised sector was in the public sector in 1998 (1,513,000 out of a total of 2,065,900), although it may have come down due to the stoppage of further investment and also disinvestment in the public sector in recent years.

According to the data available for 1998, the most prominent industries, judging by employment figures, were the manufacture of food products (22.9% of factory employment), followed by non-metallic mineral products (16.4%). Other important industry groups included machinery equipment and metal parts (10.9%), cotton textiles (7.1%), chemicals and chemical products (5.1%), metals and alloy industries (5.1%), paper and printing industries (3.3%), beverages and tobacco products (3.1%). During the 1990s, the textiles, chemicals, paper, machinery and metal industries recorded faster growth. Much of the industrial growth took place in and around Hyderabad and Visakhapatnam cities. Computer software exports have also seen an impressive growth in recent years and the most prominent of household industries is handlooms.

The growth of industry in the State in recent decades has been identified as one of the offshoots of agricultural growth since the 1970s. Higher agricultural productivity and incomes have contributed to the pace of industrial development through the supply of entrepreneurs and investment resources, as well as a rising demand for manufacturers. It is said that the rapid accumulation of agricultural surpluses among the top segment of peasants and landlords during the agrarian revolution, limited opportunities for further investment in agriculture in these regions due to land ceiling legislation in the early 1970s (Hanumantha Rao, et al., 1996; Haragopal, 1985). The rise of members of peasant families to political prominence and their ability to influence the industrial and credit policies contributed to the flow of agricultural surpluses into industry. The decade between 1975 and 1985 is considered a golden era for industrialisation in Andhra Pradesh State.



Poverty remains one of the major challenges to the government and society in Andhra Pradesh, as elsewhere in the country. The estimates of poverty by Minhas et al., Expert Group, Planning Commission and the World Bank (Hanumantha Rao et al., 1996: 156–7) using State-specific poverty lines, show that poverty in Andhra Pradesh has been declining since 1957–8, although the rate of decline varies from one estimate to another. The rate of decline has however been sharper since 1973–4, and it has been greater in Andhra Pradesh compared to several other States and India as a whole. The Planning Commission's estimates of rural and urban poverty in Andhra Pradesh show that poverty declined from 48.9% in 1973–4 to 22.2% in 1993–4. The figures for rural poverty were 48.5% and 15.9% and for urban poverty 50.6% and 38.3% for the respective years (Hanumantha Rao, et al., 1996). The latest government figures show that there has been a significant decline in recent years in the prevalence of both urban and rural poverty in Andhra Pradesh: rural poverty had fallen to 11.1% (5.8 million) in 1999–2000 and urban poverty to 26.6% (6.1 million), the combined poverty level being 15.8% (11.9 million) (Government of Andhra Pradesh, 2002). However, the National Sample Survey Organisation's (NSSO) 55<sup>th</sup> Round on Employment–Unemployment shows that the rate of poverty decline in Andhra Pradesh was not so high (Sundaram, 2001).

Studies point out that rural poverty is inversely related to agricultural production: in years of higher production, poverty falls, and in years of low production or drought, it rises (Government of Andhra Pradesh, 2000; Hanumantha Rao, et al., 1996). But it is surprising that the pace of reduction of poverty has slowed down since 1983, during a period in which the poverty alleviation programmes, including food subsidy (Rs2 per kilo rice), were implemented on a very large scale. Thus, it is difficult to establish any likely inverse relation between large-scale welfare schemes and poverty levels or a direct relation between economic reforms and poverty levels. Despite several welfare schemes, the incidence of poverty tends to be higher among the backward and scheduled castes and scheduled tribe population. While poverty causes hardship to those who have to live under it, it has its own political and electoral implications. The promise of providing basic physical needs has dominated the election strategies of the political parties in recent decades because of the prevalence of poverty. It is often heard that votes are purchased with money and other allurements and the politicians seek to divide the poor people on caste and communal lines. The 'public servants' become arrogant and behave as if they are masters because of the preponderance of poor people, who tend to be fearful of the elites and hence submissive; the politicians tend to be corrupt and populist at the same time.

## 2.4 Society

It is well known that Indian society and politics are unique in character because of the caste structure. The caste factor has occupied a prime place in academic analyses and political discourses in Indian politics. Although most politicians would affirm that the goal of India should be to build a casteless society, the caste factor invariably enters their electoral calculations. Nonetheless, there are those who would argue that the role of caste has been over emphasised and that Indian voters have been exercising their franchise based on considerations other than caste. Since it is somewhat difficult to relate class category to political process and electoral behaviour, and in any case there is little data available on this dimension, it seems easy to employ caste category, as it is easily perceived and well articulated in politics. Studies on caste and class reveal a great deal of overlap between caste and class categories; some analysts presume that analysis of caste politics would also subsume, to a certain extent, the analysis of class politics.

Due to the changes in social relationships and the logic of universal adult franchise in a fairly open and competitive electoral system, the nature of caste identities and inter-caste relations have been undergoing continuous transformation in Andhra Pradesh. Much of the research on the sociology of

Indian politics in the post-Independence period has focused on how the dominant castes came to occupy an important place in politics and the means they have adopted to retain political control. In the recent past, the emerging elites from the backward and scheduled castes have been applying pressure for a 'due' share in the power structure. As a response, the established political parties have provided more room to these new elites in the higher echelons of the party and public/political offices.

The caste structure in Andhra Pradesh is akin to that existing in most other parts of India, if it is viewed as a traditional social order in which people are functionally dependent on each other but separated as distinct groups, stratified as high and low. Nonetheless, the nature of the caste system has been undergoing tremendous changes over hundreds of years, with varying patterns in different regions and as such, caste should not be viewed as a fixed and rigid social relation. All castes in Andhra Pradesh (except the Brahmans) share the linguistic boundaries of the State, although they have several features in common with other castes similarly placed in the social hierarchy in other States. The distinct character of Andhra Pradesh State politics can be largely attributed to this feature. There is also some difficulty in speaking of a uniform caste structure in Andhra Pradesh, as there are inter-regional and intra-regional variations. For example, the three north coastal districts differ greatly from those of the central and south coastal region.<sup>7</sup> There are also variations between the three regions of the State (Suri, 1996). As such, only the broad outlines of caste structure in the State can be determined. Another problem is that reliable data on the population proportions of various castes are not available. We can speak of only approximate figures (Ram Reddy, 1989) and often the leaders of various castes make exaggerated claims about their caste population.

Among the *dwijas* (twice-born castes), the Brahmans constitute about 2–3% of the State's population. For many years they held a pre-eminent position in society, and this continued until about the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Brahmans were the first to have recourse to English education and they occupied important positions in the British administrative set-up. They were able to exploit the initial advantages of the British rule and dominated the political scene during the freedom struggle and in the early years of Independence. Most of them gradually severed their rural roots and land connection and steadily shifted to urban areas for a variety of social and economic reasons. As members of a community which has a historical head start, they are still in large numbers in the bureaucracy, mass media, academic institutions and other important professions such as law, scientific research, medicine and management. The Komatis in Andhra Pradesh, who claim Vysya status, constitute another 2–3% of the population. Engaged in the traditional occupation of trade, Komatis are omnipresent in the State. There are some wealthy businessmen among them and the members of the caste carry on most of the trades – textiles, grain, banking, money-lending, grocery, shop-keeping, pawn-broking, etc. Currently they are also engaged in entrepreneurial activities of greater proportions. Their members are more or less equally distributed in all the districts. Rajus, who claim Kshatriya status, are mostly confined to the north and central coastal regions and constitute less than 1% of the State's population.

The non-Brahman caste groups, such as the Reddis, Kammas, Kapus and Velamas, whose main occupation has been cultivation, are the most important social groups in the State in terms of numerical strength, land control and access to political power. The term 'dominant caste', coined by Srinivas<sup>8</sup>, suits them very well and during medieval times and the early British period, they enjoyed power and prestige analogous to the Kshatriyas in the north. Some of these peasant communities consider themselves as the local variants of the ruler caste, while all of them have experienced a

<sup>7</sup> In the three north coastal districts of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam, the most politically influential communities are the Turpu Kapus, Kalingis and Koppula Velamas, who are not found in other coastal districts. They are the middle-level peasant castes, which have backward status for the purposes of reservation in educational institutions and government employment. Similarly, the Reddis and the Kammas, the two dominant castes in State politics, are absent in these districts.

<sup>8</sup> 'For a caste to be dominant, it should own a sizeable amount of the arable land locally available, have strength of numbers, and occupy a high place in the local hierarchy' (Srinivas, 1972).

continuous ascendancy in Andhra society and politics since the 1920s. The huge irrigation systems constructed in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (mentioned earlier) enabled some members of these communities to accumulate agrarian surpluses and use the economic resources to lead a better lifestyle and have an English education. A class of rich peasantry began to emerge among these castes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century pre-Independence period due to, among other factors, a rise in the price of agricultural produce, money lending and trade in commercial crops. Their economic and educational advancement enabled them to challenge and dilute the Brahman dominance in the cultural and political spheres (Suri, 2000; Ramakrishna, 1993; Innaiah, 1985; Barnett, 1976; Baker, 1976; Washbrook, 1976; Baker and Washbrook, 1975; Irshick, 1969). Their participation in the anti-colonial and anti-feudal struggles politicised them a great deal and produced a rich crop of leadership.

The Reddis, who represent about 8–10% of the State's population, can be found in all three regions of the State, particularly in the five Telengana districts of Karimnagar, Warangal, Nalgonda, Mahbubnagar and Khammam, the Circar districts of Guntur, Prakasam and Nellore and the four districts of Rayalaseema. In the past, they were rulers in some parts of Andhra Pradesh.<sup>9</sup> Several factors give the Reddis a pre-eminence among the peasant castes in Andhra Pradesh: their state-wide spread and their high proportion among the peasant proprietor castes in Andhra Pradesh; their traditional power in many districts and villages and glorious antecedents of local rule in many parts of the State; their political initiative and involvement in the Congress and communist politics before and after Independence; the availability of better caste leadership from village, *mandal*, district and State levels; and above all, their firm base in agricultural wealth (Khan, 1969).

The Kammas, who make up about 4–5% of the State's population, are mostly concentrated in the Krishna and Godavari delta and are considerable in number in Nellore, Chittoor, Ananthapur and Khammam districts.<sup>10</sup> Much of the analysis of state politics has hinged upon the Kamma–Reddi rivalry, although it is often exaggerated and distorted. The Velamas constitute another 1–2% of the population. They are as wealthy as the Reddis and the Kammas and are concentrated mainly in the two Telengana districts of Karimnagar and Khammam and in the northern coastal district of Visakhapatnam. They are scattered in smaller numbers in the Telengana districts of Warangal, Adilabad, Mahbubnagar, Nalgonda and Nizamabad, and in the Circar districts of Godavaris, Krishna, Guntur and Nellore. Reddis and Velamas were traditionally landlords and constituted the bedrock of the feudal social and political order in the pre-Independence period. The Kapu category amounts to 10–12% of the population. There are various sub-castes within the Kapu category, such as Telaga, Baliya, Kapu, Munnuru Kapu, Ontari, etc. but nowadays they want to be addressed as Kapus only. Like Reddis, Kapus also have a state-wide spread, although there are few inter-sub-caste marriages and inter-regional marriages within these communities.<sup>11</sup>

Various caste groups by the names of traditional hereditary occupations, mainly artisan and service occupations, constitute a large proportion of the population in Andhra Pradesh. These castes are today known as 'backward castes' (BCs). Out of the 50-odd backward castes listed by the government of the State, the major ones are the Yadava, Gowda, Padmasali, Rajaka, Mangali (who

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9 The caste title 'Reddi' comes from the Telugu word 'redu' or 'rat', which means 'ruler'. During the medieval period they were described as the enterprising class of warriors and military chiefs. In the modern period, most of the *paligars* (chiefs of large territories until the early 19th century) in Rayalaseema and *jagirdars*, *muktedars* and *deshmukhs* (feudatory chiefs) of Telengana regions came from the Reddi community.

10 According to one Kamma caste historian, the central coastal Andhra region, consisting of East and West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur and Prakasam districts, was once known as 'Kamma Rashtra'. The Kammas consider themselves as Kshatriyas in the Varna hierarchy and recall their privileged position in the reign of the Kakatiya dynasty (13–14<sup>th</sup> centuries). The Kammas of coastal Andhra carried out a non-Brahman movement in the 1920s and later.

11 It seems the term 'Kapu' is a generic category which denotes 'cultivator'. It is said that once all the peasant communities were considered Kapus; in fact, in the 1921 Census, the present Reddis were enumerated as Kapus. In several places, the landowning cultivators are addressed by the agricultural labourers as 'Kapu'. The Kapus keep the caste title 'Naidu', but the Kammas also use this title in certain areas.

call themselves Nai Brahman), Kamsali (Viswa Brahman), Mudiraju, Boya, Waddera, Uppara, Kummari, Kammari, Medara, Pallekari (Agnikula Kshtriya), Perika, Gandla, Bhatraju and Kalavanthavulu. They represent about 35–40% of the State population, although the Second Andhra Pradesh Backward Classes Commission (1982) estimated that the BCs constitute 44%. All these castes have a caste pride and regard themselves as having high social status, different from that ascribed by the orthodox Brahmans. The Padmasalis and the Kamsalis regard themselves as the *dwijas* and as culturally superior to several other communities. Some of these castes, such as the Yadavas and Gowdas, are engaged in cultivation, enjoy a good social standing and in recent years have been growing in strength in education, employment and economic and political ascendancy. These castes have been given reservation under the Other Backward Castes (OBCs) category since 1961.

Andhra Pradesh is one of the main States in India to have a large concentration of the scheduled castes, with about 8% of the total SC population of the country. There are about 59 SCs in the State, taking up approximately 16% of the State's population. Their proportion is more than 14% in 19 districts. More than two-thirds (68%) of the SC population are agricultural labourers and the proportion of SCs living below the poverty line is also very high. Large sections of them are still subjected to social discrimination, especially in rural areas, although the situation has undergone a great deal of change after Independence. In recent years the term '*dalit*' is preferred to denote these communities. Malas and Madigas are the two foremost scheduled castes, and together they constitute more than 90% of the State's SC population. Numerically the Madigas are slightly greater than the Malas, but the latter are better placed in terms of education, urban employment and political opportunities. During the late 1990s, the Madigas waged a struggle for improving their lot and for categorisation of SC reservations to ensure equal distribution of benefits among the subgroups of the SCs (Suri, 2001b; Balagopal, 2000).

Andhra Pradesh incorporates about 33 tribes, which form about 7% of the State's population. Koya, Banjara/Lambada, Konda reddy, Gond, Chenchu, Yerukala, Yanadi, Savara, and Jatavu are the major ones. There are exclusive tribal tracts in the northern Circars and Telengana. The educational level among the tribals is extremely low and sections of some tribes still live under the conditions of natural economy. In the Agency areas, they are the victims of land alienation, indebtedness and bonded labour. There is also growing awareness among these people about their rights and they are starting to organise themselves and form associations to wage their respective campaigns and struggles to secure constitutional guarantees and protect their customary rights over their lands.

### 3 An Outline of Politics and Elections in Andhra and Telengana prior to the Formation of Andhra Pradesh

The majority of the tendencies and issues that have come to the fore since the formation of Andhra Pradesh could be seen in embryonic form during the period of State formation itself. The period between Independence in August 1947 and the formation of the State in November 1956 witnessed a series of militant struggles in the Andhra and Telengana regions, policy measures that brought about far-reaching changes in the agrarian structure, shifts in caste and class relations, the emergence of new leadership from peasant communities, factional strife within the Congress and also its consolidation, and political realignments among various political forces of the State.

#### 3.1 Politics in Andhra Region (1947–1956)

At the time of Independence, the Congress Party in Andhra was rife with factional rivalries, which often made use of caste identities. There were two prominent factions in the APCC (Andhra Provincial Congress Committee). One was led by the legendary figure, Tanguturi Prakasam, known as *Andhra Kesari*, the ‘Lion of Andhra’ (Rudrayya Chowdary, 1971). The other group was led by Pattabhi Sitharamayya, another senior Brahman Congress leader, and later all-India Congress President in 1949–50 and the party’s official historian (Prasanna Kumar, 1978). The elections to the offices of Madras Congress Legislature Party Leader and APCC President provided the occasions for a trial of strength between these rival groups. In a keen contest for the APCC presidency in April 1951, Sanjiva Reddy, sponsored by the Pattabhi group, defeated Ranga, whom Prakasam supported. The struggle between Ranga and Sanjiva Reddy was seen as a turning point in the Kamma–Reddi rivalry that was emerging in Andhra Pradesh in the post–Independence period.

The outcome of the election led to the exit of Prakasam and Ranga from Congress and their formation of a new party, called the Praja Party (PP). Subsequently, when the Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party (KMPP) was formed in June 1951, the Praja Party in Andhra merged with it. But Ranga later wanted to dissociate himself from Prakasam and formed, in August 1951, the Krishikar Lok Party (KLP), with himself as Chairman (Lingamurthy, 1994b). Thus the Andhra Congress presented a picture of disunity and appeared to be quickly fragmenting, unlike in other States. While the Congress appeared to be weak in the State, perhaps weaker here than in the other major States of India, the Communist Party appeared to be gaining in strength.

The growth of the Communist Party prior to the formation of Andhra Pradesh was extremely fast in Andhra and in Telengana.<sup>12</sup> The communists grew as leaders of the peasant associations and led militant peasant struggles in some of the zamindari areas; their strength began to increase at a rapid pace during and after the Second World War. But after Independence, in response to the militant struggles waged by the communists in Andhra and Telengana regions, the party was banned in the Andhra area in January 1948. When the ban was lifted, the Communist Party and its mass fronts, especially the student’s wing, participated actively in the campaign and agitation for the formation of Andhra State.

In the first General Elections to the Madras Assembly in 1952, the popular support enjoyed by each of the different parties became apparent. The Congress in the Andhra area suffered a serious

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<sup>12</sup> The Communist Party in Andhra can be said to have been founded in September 1934 when the Andhra Provincial Organizing Committee was formed at a meeting of communist representatives from different districts at Vijayawada. The communists started the Labour Protection League in 1935 as an open platform and started working in different towns in the coastal districts. Later they joined the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) and soon became its leaders (Krishna Rao, 1998; Krishna Rao, 1989; Satyanarayana, 1983).

setback: many of its Ministers and stalwarts were defeated. The Communist Party emerged as the single largest party in Andhra region with 41 seats (out of 63 contested) and about 25% of the vote. Only Kerala (then Travancore-Cochin) came close to Andhra in terms of electoral support enjoyed by the communists in those days. Although the Congress secured about 30% of the vote, it won only 40 seats out of the 133 it had contested (Table 1). The Communist Party was highly successful in the central coastal region. Apart from the support it enjoyed among peasant classes and agricultural workers, the agitational activity of the party for a separate statehood strengthened its position. The poor performance of the Congress was generally attributed to the internal factional rivalries, the presence of the KMPP and the KLP as its rivals and the evasive attitude of the Central leadership of the party towards the demand for a separate linguistic State. After the General Elections, the Legislative Members of the KLP agreed to join the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) as 'Associated Members'. The KMPP merged with the Socialist Party to form the Praja Socialist Party (PSP).

Thus, when the Andhra State was finally formed in October 1953, Congress strength in the Assembly was only 40 Members, but with the support of the KLP and independents, it formed the largest group with 60 Members. As a result, only a coalition government was possible. In a politically astute move, the Congress offered the post of Chief Minister to Prakasam, the President of the PSP, if he agreed to return to them. Prakasam could not resist the bait of the topmost executive office and the prestige of going down in Andhra history as the first Chief Minister of the State; the 'old man' (b.1872) found little difficulty leaving the PSP and returning to the Congress to this end. As a result, the KMPP group, which supported the Prakasam Ministry, left the PSP and formed the Praja Party. N. Sanjiva Reddy, who also lobbied for Chief Ministership, became the Deputy Chief Minister.

From the beginning, the coalition government was a precarious one. The KLP withdrew its support to the Prakasam Ministry over the issue of the location of the capital. The location of the capital at Kurnool in Rayalaseema region was seen as a victory for the dominant Reddi caste, some of whose leadership was emerging as a cohesive political group within the Congress Party. However, the Prakasam Ministry failed to survive for more than a year. It fell in November 1954 after a motion of no confidence on the issue of prohibition, supported by the communists, the KLP and the PSP Members, was carried by a majority of one vote.

The mid-term elections in Andhra were held in February 1955. It turned out to be a 'critical election' in Andhra political history. On the eve of the election, the Communist Party was confident that it would form the next Ministry in the State. Sensing the danger and the strength of the Communist Party and given the experience of the 1952 elections when the communists stood to win a large number of seats due to the division of the Congress vote, the Congress leaders realised the need to consolidate all the forces opposed to communism. They forged an electoral alliance with the KLP and the Praja Party to form the United Congress Front. On the other hand, the communists, due to overestimation of their electoral prospects and doctrinaire attitudes, failed to forge an alliance with either the splinter groups of the Congress Party or the PSP. While the anti-communist forces formed a powerful array, the communists had ideologically outdistanced themselves from other political parties and groups. This proved to be disastrous to the communists, but highly advantageous to the Congress Party. The Congress leaders also launched a virulent attack on the communists as presenting a danger to family, private property and democracy. The combination of the socialist orientation of Congress Party policies, the impact of some agrarian reforms and praise showered on the Congress by the socialist Soviet leadership served to seriously deflate the Communist Party.

The grand strategy of the Congress Party paid very well, as it secured a decisive majority of 119 seats on its own, with about 40% of the vote. Out of a total of 196 seats, the United Congress Front

won 146 seats with an aggregate vote of about 52%. The communists won a paltry 15 seats, although they secured about 31% of the vote (Table 1). The election also took a heavy toll on the other parties: all the candidates fielded by the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), 18 of the 45 PSP candidates and more than two-thirds (111 of 162) of the independents lost their deposits. Paradoxically, the Communist Party polled more votes than earlier, both in absolute terms and in terms of percentage, but lost a good number of seats. It lost heavily in its stronghold of coastal districts such as Godavaris, Krishna, Guntur and Nellore. The rout of the Communist Party and the defeat of the other parties enabled the Congress to emerge as the dominant party in the region. Thus the results of mid-term elections indicated the onset of a new era of Congress dominance.

### 3.2 Politics in Telengana Region (1947–1956)

Before its merger, Hyderabad State was the largest of all the princely States in British India, and comprised the three linguistic sub-regions of Telengana (Telugu speaking), Marathwada (Marathi speaking), and Karnataka (Kannada speaking). What was started in the early 1920s as a campaign to promote Telugu language and culture in the Telugu-speaking areas of Hyderabad State was gradually transformed by the 1930s into an effective mass-based, peasant-oriented forum for the articulation of the demands of the Telugu population of Telengana. By 1937, the Andhra Maha Sabha (AMS; Andhra Conference) became strong enough to demand responsible government in Hyderabad. The Hyderabad State Congress was formed in 1938. It tried to link the popular democratic movement in Hyderabad with the larger national movement for Independence.

Around the same time, a Muslim organisation, Majlis-i-Ittihad-ul-Muslimeen (MIM; Association for Muslim Unity) emerged on the political scene, advocating the establishment of a permanent Muslim dominion in Hyderabad. The Majlis was supported by the Muslim elite, which included Ministers, bureaucrats, professionals and courtiers of the Nizam. Its para-military wing, the Razakars, joined the Nizam's army and the police, which unleashed a reign of terror over the communists and the AMS activists, as well as some Congress sections, fighting for the liberation of Hyderabad from the Nizam's rule.

The communists tried to radicalise the movement by taking up the questions of tenancy rights, forced labour, and the oppressive regime of the Nizam and the feudal lords. By 1945, the Communist Party had captured the leadership of the AMS and increased mass support for their programme of land reform and anti-Nizam struggle. They took to armed struggle and established a parallel government in parts of Telengana, which was known as '*raat-ki-sarkar*' (rulers at night). The communists declared about 4000 villages liberated, occupied government lands, abolished forced labour, imposed land ceilings (a limit of 200 acres) and distributed the surplus lands to the tenants and poorer sections (Sundarayya, 1972). When the Nizam's State was tottering under the blows of the communists, the Indian military entered Hyderabad in September 1948 and, with little resistance, captured it within five days. Hyderabad State was merged into the Indian Union. Immediately the *jagirdari* system (a type of land revenue system in Mughal India and later in Nizam's Hyderabad State, in which the jagirdar was technically the holder of an assignment of revenue) was abolished, ceiling on landownership was imposed, cultivators were given proprietary right over their land and a tenancy act gave protection to the tenants (Khusro, 1958).

The communists continued their armed struggle against the Indian government, despite serious differences among the leaders over whether to carry on under the changed circumstances. In the process, the Communist Party suffered immense losses, as hundreds of its activists were killed. Although the communists failed to realise their objective of establishing a 'people's state' in Hyderabad, the impact of the communist movement on Telengana society and politics was immense. It brought about a new awareness among the people, especially the oppressed sections of

society. The land reform policies introduced by the government between 1948 and 1950 in Telengana, which were regarded as the most bold and progressive at that time in India, could be understood as a result of and a response to the militant agrarian struggles waged by the communists.

After the integration of Hyderabad into the Indian Union, the Congress emerged as the biggest political party in Hyderabad State. In the 1952 elections, the Congress entered the electoral arena as the party that had ushered in democracy in Hyderabad and freed the oppressed people from the shackles of the feudal *Raj* (rule). The Communist Party, which was banned since the launch of its armed struggle, did not contest the elections under its own name, although on the eve of the elections most of its leaders were released from prison. It fought the elections under the banner of the People's Democratic Front (PDF), which won 42 out of the 78 seats it contested. The Congress, with better organisation and support from the Central leadership, secured a clear majority in Hyderabad State by capturing 93 out of the 173 seats it contested. However, in Telengana region alone, the Congress did not achieve a majority but emerged only as the single largest party (Table 1). In Telengana region, the communists emerged as a strong force with 37 seats (30.8% of the vote) as against 44 seats (38.9%) for the Congress. As the Congress achieved an absolute majority in the Hyderabad State Assembly, it formed the first popular Ministry in March 1952, with Ramakrishna Rao as the Chief Minister. His Ministry continued in office until the merger of Telengana with Andhra to constitute the State of Andhra Pradesh.

On the formation of Andhra Pradesh on 1 November 1956, Neelam Sanjiva Reddy became the first Chief Minister of the enlarged State. A combined Legislative Assembly of 103 Members from Telengana region and 194 Members of the Andhra Legislative Assembly came into existence. The party position in the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly at the time of the State formation was: Congress – 163, Communist Party – 51, PSP – 24, KLP – 22, Praja Party – 5, SCF (Scheduled Castes Federation) – 3, and Independents – 29. While the creation of Andhra Pradesh had ended one type of factionalism, especially among the Brahman leaders, it paved the way to a new type of factionalism. Sanjiva Reddy tried to accommodate diverse factional, regional, caste and communal groups in the Ministry, but with five Reddis finding a place in his Cabinet, a new phase of Reddi domination began in the State politics.

Within a few months of the formation of the State, there was another trial of strength between the Congress and the Communist Parties in the second General Elections in 1957. The dominance of the Congress Party became abundantly clear when it won 35 out of the 42 *Lok Sabha* seats with about 52% of the vote (Table 2). There was a perceptible increase in the Congress vote in the districts that were earlier considered to be the strongholds of the Communist Party, such as Nalgonda, Warangal, Khammam, Karimnagar and Medak. Thus the election results weighed in favour of the Congress, making its position more stable in the Legislature and outside. They signalled the beginning of a new era of Congress dominance in the State politics. The communists never recovered from this blow, although they continued for some time as a major party in Andhra Pradesh.

Thus, from the time of Independence to the formation of the enlarged State of Andhra Pradesh, the Telengana and Andhra people passed through a period of rapid political change, full of possibilities and uncertainties. In the preparation for the eventual merger of the two regions in 1956, the seeds of most of the political trends and intricate problems that surfaced later were sown during this period. Several of the political processes that were set in motion during that time are still unfolding, and several dilemmas of that period are yet to be resolved, although their intensity and importance vary from time to time and their political manifestations take different forms.



## 4 The Era of Congress Dominance (1957–1982)

For nearly two decades after the formation of Andhra Pradesh, the Congress Party remained dominant in State politics: it won all the elections held for the Parliament and Legislative Assembly in the State after 1957. Even when the ‘Congress system’ was breaking down elsewhere during the 1960s, and especially when the non-Congress parties formed governments in several States in 1967, Andhra Pradesh remained the ‘citadel’ of the Congress Party. Any threats that it encountered came from factions within the party, often taking their toll on the incumbent Chief Ministers, without either posing a challenge to the Congress dominance in the State or the Central leadership. Its ‘retentive capacity’ proved to be very high, as the party was able to keep different factions and groups within the party fold, often by the intervention of the Central leadership. The period also witnessed a further decline in the strength of the communists. Other parties failed to develop in a way that would constitute an alternative to the Congress, and as such remained at the periphery. This was also the period during which the Congress emerged as a ‘catch-all’ party, with an overflow of electoral support. However, the decline of the Congress had set in by the late 1970s, as the negative side of factionalism began to reveal itself. Sections which hitherto supported the party began to favour other parties and the traditional non-Congress elements began to look for an alternative, paving the way for the emergence of a regional party. The present section deals with some of these aspects.

The consolidation of the Congress Party began with the emergence of the Andhra Pradesh State itself. Like in other States, it had certain advantages as the party that led the freedom struggle, of having well-educated, experienced and highly respected leadership and a well-developed organisation in all regions of the State. By the mid-1950s, the Congress had acquired the image of a progressive party trying to restructure society on socialistic lines, without destroying private enterprise and individual liberties. The impact of reservations in education, employment and politics gradually began to be felt. The integration of Andhra and Telengana regions led to a preponderance of Reddis in the power structure, who became the mainstay of the Congress Party in the State for decades to come. The introduction of the three-tiered *Panchayati Raj* system in Andhra Pradesh – *Gram Panchayat*, *Panchayati Samithi* (a middle-level unit of rural local government existing prior to 1986, made up of the heads of village *Panchayats*), and *Zilla Parishad* – in 1959 further strengthened the Congress hold in the rural areas. The ‘democratic decentralisation’ provided fresh avenues of power and prestige to the rural elites. They utilised government machinery, resources and patronage in exercising control and commanding loyalty from the lower classes. Factional networks were built from the village to samithi to district and to State level. These rival factions within the Congress Party were to become crucial in the functioning of the Congress Party (Ram Reddy, 1977; Walch, 1976; Weiner, 1967; Gray, 1963).

Unlike some other States, Andhra Pradesh did not have a ‘supreme leader’ at the State level, in the sense of one who could authoritatively take decisions in organisational and governmental matters and who enjoyed an overwhelming following among the general public. The stature of most of the leaders, who later played some role in the freedom struggle and politics, was on a comparable level. This led to multiple power centres within the Congress Party. Just at a time when it appeared that Sanjiva Reddy was able to consolidate his hold on the government and party, he was persuaded by Jawaharlal Nehru to take over the Congress presidency in January 1960. This reopened the doors of factional struggle in the APCC once again (Khan, 1969).

After a great deal of factional wrestling in the State Congress over finding a successor to Sanjiva Reddy, a young and energetic Harijan leader from Rayalaseema, D. Sanjeevaiah, was finally chosen. He was the first *dalit* to become Chief Minister of an Indian State. Among the reasons put forward for his candidature was that, as a *dalit* at the helm of affairs, he would neutralise or slowly

erode the communist influence among the weaker sections of society, especially the Malas and the Madigas, and bring these numerically large social groups closer to the Congress Party. In pursuance of this strategy, which also suited him in promoting his own popularity, Sanjeevaiah began to court the 'weaker sections' through a variety of means. In May 1961, his government issued orders for 25% reservation of seats in educational institutions and jobs in government services for the socially and educationally backward classes, or the OBCs (a euphemism for backward castes). While the programmes initiated by Sanjeevaiah were generally welcomed, they also led to resentment among the forward caste leaders, who formed a strong opposition within the Congress in the name of the 'Unity Group'. The organisational wing of the Congress was dominated by forward caste leaders and this created friction between the 'organisational' and 'ministerial' wings of the party. However, it can be said that the policies of the Sanjeevaiah government helped in the gradual building of a powerful and reliable support structure for the Congress among the lower castes, who constituted the bulk of the population in the State and accounted for an overwhelming majority of the proletariat (Elliot, 1970).

During this period the Congress had to contend with a new all-India political party, the Swatantra Party (the Freedom Party), which came into existence in 1959. N. G. Ranga, once a popular leader of Andhra and a known champion of peasants' interests, resigned as Secretary of the Congress Party in Parliament to become one of the founder leaders and the Chairman. Ranga had been a strong opponent and a bitter critic of communist politics in the State. The Swatantra Party in Andhra Pradesh provided a platform to those who opposed communism as well as the socialist-oriented policies of the Congress that, it was feared, would result in too many state controls restricting individual liberties and private initiative, impeding economic progress and social well-being in the long run. The Swatantra Party was candidly conservative and emerged as the authentic 'Right' party. It favoured free and private enterprise and protection of peasant interests. However, belying its expectations, there was no exodus from the Congress into the Swatantra Party, nor was it able to attract non-Congress, non-communist elements as it was expected to do in 1959.

Thus, in the 1962 elections the Congress faced two major opponents – the communists on the Left and the Swatantra on the Right, justifying its characterisation as a Centrist party. For the first time after the State formation, Assembly elections were held across the entire State. In the elections the Congress polled 47.4% of the votes, winning 177 seats out of a total of 300. The communists faced the elections with an obvious handicap due to the newly demonstrated belligerence of communist China and the consequent divisions in the party. The equivocal stand of the Left wing of the Communist Party of India (CPI), known as the pro-China wing, had an adverse impact on the agitated nationalist mind. There was a sharp decline in their combined vote – a drop of 10% compared to the earlier elections (from 29% to 19%), although they won a greater number of seats (51). The CPI emerged as the single largest party after the Congress, ahead of the Swatantra. The Swatantra Party won 19 seats (nine from Rayalaseema, seven from Circars and only three from Telengana) accounting for 10.4% of the votes (Table 1). One important feature of this election was the elimination of socialist parties which had played an important role in State politics earlier. The combined vote for Samyukta Socialists and Praja Socialists was below 1%. All but one of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh's 70 candidates lost their deposits.

Between the third and fourth General Elections, India witnessed momentous political change in the country at large. The Chinese aggression, Nehru's demise, a split in the Communist Party and war against Pakistan followed in quick succession. Among these, the first three had enormous impact on the State politics. The leadership vacuum created by Nehru's death was sought to be filled by a group of senior Congress leaders (known as the 'Syndicate') consisting of strongmen from the major States and including Sanjiva Reddy from Andhra Pradesh. This made the factional fights in the State more virulent.

The split of the CPI into a moderate wing (CPI) and an extremist wing (Communist Party of India (Marxist, referred to here as CPM)) had far-reaching consequences in Andhra Pradesh politics. The reasons for the split in the communist movement at the international and national levels are well known. While the ideological controversies and differences over strategy and tactics had their own place in the split, the relative strengths of two factions differed from State to State due to the specific situations that prevailed in different States. What distinguished Andhra Pradesh from the other States, as far as the split was concerned, was that the party was split almost vertically, with both sides claiming to be the legitimate successors of the undivided party. Compared to the communist pyramid with its rigid and centrally controlled party structure, which outlaws the survival of dissenting factions in the party and tolerates no internal opposition to the 'party line', the Congress Party, with its loose organisational structure approximating the 'stratarchy' as described by Samuel Eldersveld in his study of political parties in the United States, appeared to be more democratic. It was more flexible, open and accommodative to diverse interests and divergent views; it allowed one faction to dominate the scene for some time and another faction at another; it did not close doors for dissidents, allowing them to function within, unless a member, in sheer frustration, chose to leave the party of his own accord.

On the other hand, the 'Rightist' Swatantra Party was equally unable to emerge as a strong political force in the State. It proved to be no match for the Congress in playing the caste and regional factors to build up support. It failed to exploit the factional troubles in the Congress or the split in the communist movement to strengthen itself. Although initially some regarded Swatantra as the 'real opponent' to the Congress, it could not increase its sphere of influence beyond some parts of Rayalaseema and coastal Andhra and it was virtually a non-entity in Telengana. With the elapse of time there were more defections from this party to the Congress. The Swatantra in Andhra Pradesh mainly articulated the grievances and demands of the rural landowning classes, as much of its support base consisted of rural rich peasantry and large landowners; the party leaders openly declared that theirs was a peasant party. Precisely because of its '*kulak*' character, the party found it difficult to mobilise the support of agricultural workers and marginal peasants. In fact, the Swatantra Party activities in Andhra Pradesh appeared to be at variance with its all-India stance to promote market economy and private enterprise. For instance, the party in Andhra Pradesh vehemently fought against the proposed land ceilings and warned the State government against bringing in such laws on urban property, business, employees and industrialists. The bias towards agriculturists and opposition to accumulation of wealth in urban classes had an adverse impact on the growth of the party. Another important problem for the Swatantra in Andhra Pradesh was that the Congress leaders hailed from a background similar to the Swatantra, and they too claimed to stand for the protection and promotion of peasants' interests.

The 1967 elections were held in the wake of mass agitation in Andhra region over the locating of a steel plant at Visakhapatnam under consideration by the Central government. The Anglo-American consortium, in its experts' report, felt that Visakhapatnam would be a suitable site for the plant and the Union Ministry of Steel had accepted it (Hanumantha Rao, 1993; Jatkar, 1979). However, other States such as Orissa, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka also pressured for steel plants to be set up there. Fears grew among Andhras that the plant location might be changed to appease the leaders of other States acting unjustly towards Andhra Pradesh in the matter of industrialisation. However, in July 1965, the Andhra Pradesh Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution for the steel plant at Visakhapatnam during the Fourth Five-year Plan period.

Sanjiva Reddy, the Union Minister for Steel, accused his opponent, the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Bramhananda Reddy, of fomenting unrest in the State by stirring up popular emotion over the steel plant issue. What he meant by this was that the agitation was aimed to embarrass and defame him. Members of the Bramhananda Reddy group openly blamed Sanjiva Reddy for his failure to stand by the decision to set up the steel plant in Andhra. The agitation gradually gathered

momentum and by October/November 1966, it turned militant. There were two aspects to this agitation. Firstly, it reflected the people's anxiety as well as their desire to secure a proper share of public investment in industries in the country, because the government was the largest investor in this field and it was felt that the government would not yield unless it was subjected to popular pressure. Secondly, it reflected the power struggle between the rival groups in the Congress. The opposition parties tried to take advantage of the troubled situation with a no-confidence motion against the State government for its mishandling of the steel plant issue. As a climax, 67 Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) from the opposition parties (31 CPI, 20 CPM, and eight Swatantra, two National Democrats, one SSP and five independents) resigned their Membership in November 1966, just before the 1967 General Elections. But the opposition parties became mutually suspicious: each of them did not want to see the other gain in strength. Their eagerness to strike at both the ruling Congress and rival opposition parties simultaneously damaged the prospects of any unity of opposition against the ruling party.

The Congress won the election with a comfortable majority (Tables 1 and 2). The result showed that the Congress in Andhra Pradesh, despite the open factional rivalries, was strong when it was losing ground in several other States across India. The loss of Congress dominance in other States was due to the crossing over of some sections of support to other political parties, the consolidation of non-Congress forces under a single regional party (such as Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu) or the unity of the non-Congress parties. In Andhra Pradesh, however, none of these factors were at work. Political analysts and commentators spoke of Andhra Pradesh as the bastion of Congress hegemony in the South (Ram Reddy, 1976; Gray, 1968).

The combined strength of the communists came down from 51 in 1962 to only 20 in the 1967 elections. They were involved in their own fratricidal struggles and together they could win only four seats in the coastal delta districts. While the CPI polled more votes than the CPM in 10 districts, the latter polled more votes in exactly the same number of districts than the former. They were virtually decimated in their previous strongholds. The final outcome was that the communists lost the position of main opposition to the Swatantra Party, lost a sizeable proportion of the popular vote and many of their top leaders were defeated. The decline of communist strength in Andhra Pradesh was in contrast to the increase in the Left vote in other State Assemblies and the Union Parliament. Bharatiya Jana Sangh succeeded for the first time in sending three of its party men to the Assembly. However, 69 out of its 80 candidates lost their deposits and its popular support was as low as 2.1%. It bore the character of an urban high-caste-oriented (especially the Vysyas) party banking upon the Hindu vote. The socialist parties were virtually wiped out.

The period between 1969 and 1973 witnessed two massive and violent disturbances, demanding separate statehood first in Telengana and then in Andhra region (Gray, 1971; Seshadri, 1970; Gray, 1974; Acharya, 1979b). The impetus and leadership for both separatist agitations came not from the opposition parties but from the 'dissident' factions of the Congress. They are classic examples of how the disgruntled leaders in the ruling and dominant party put the regional identity and the sense of injustice that prevails among the people of a region to political use. The way in which these separatist agitations arose and experienced sudden death also reveals the inner dynamics of the Congress Party politics.

What started as an agitation in Khammam district by a small group of students and employees for 'safeguarding' domicile rules for employment in Telengana region, soon escalated into a major agitation spread over several districts. By early 1969, the Telengana Praja Samithi (TPS) was formed by a group of young lawyers, teachers and journalists, and set itself the task of coordinating the activities of Telengana students and non-gazetted officers in the State service. A feeling had arisen in Telengana that people from Andhra region were dominating their region, cornering the larger share of employment and growing rich in Hyderabad City and around. The leaders argued

that the Telengana region and its people were discriminated against by the government and that the development of Telengana was possible only if it was a separate State. Initially there were no professional politicians involved in the agitation, but Konda Lakshman resigned from the Andhra Pradesh State Ministry and associated himself with the TPS. Channa Reddy declared himself in favour of a separate State for Telengana and became the top leader of the TPS.<sup>13</sup> A Separate Telengana Congress Committee was formed, including some Congress MLAs from Telengana.

In May/June 1969, clashes between police and demonstrators resulted in the police firing on the processions. The non-gazetted officers went on an indefinite strike, paralysing district administration, students boycotted colleges and universities, and large sums of money came from different interested groups to sustain the movement. No harm was done to non-Andhra businessmen and settlers in Hyderabad. Chief Minister Bramhananda Reddy and the Central leadership of the Congress stood firmly against bifurcation of the State. The leaders of the TPS began to demand the resignation of the Chief Minister, and his replacement by a Telengana Congressman. This demand later became more important than the safeguards and the separate State. The communist parties opposed the agitation, describing it as diversionary, misguided and misled, and a majority of Muslims remained indifferent, fearing that Telengana Hindus were more communal minded than the Andhras (Gray, 1971). Even a majority of the Congress MLAs from Telengana was not in favour of a separate State.

Some members of the TPS feared that the take over of the movement by professional politicians would result in it being used in the Congress factional struggles. These fears came true. By August 1969, the agitation began to fade. Channa Reddy and others sent sufficient indications that they would reconcile if Bramhananda Reddy was asked to leave. Interestingly, both factions in the Andhra Pradesh State Congress, opposing and spearheading the separate Telengana agitation, stood by the side of Indira Gandhi when the Congress was split in November 1969. In the 1971 (March) mid-term elections to Parliament, the Congress headed by Mrs Gandhi, secured a landslide victory in Andhra region. But the popularity of the TPS became evident when it emerged victorious in 10 out of 14 seats in Telengana region. The High Command (a euphemism for Mrs Gandhi at that time), wanting the TPS leaders to come back to the Congress fold, conceded some of the demands of the TPS, including the removal of Bramhananda Reddy as Chief Minister. As a result, the TPS merged with the Congress in August 1971. After consultations, PV Narasimha Rao (hereafter PV), a leader from Telengana with no factional affiliation but highly loyal to Mrs Gandhi, was chosen as the first Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh from Telengana region on 30 September 1971. Thus, the ruling Congress Party was able to reabsorb a section of its leadership which had previously left the party, to retain its electoral base, and to prevent the emergence of a rival party. While the opposition parties, which were expected to launch agitations and create situations to embarrass the ruling party, appeared defensive and lackadaisical, the dissident Congress leaders took the credit for guiding and leading the agitation which led to the downfall of the Congress Ministry.

The continued dominance of the Congress reached its zenith in the 1972 Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections (Table 1). As part of Mrs Gandhi's strategy to undercut the dominance of the intermediary State leaders hailing from upper castes, the party wanted to give more seats to the 'weaker sections' in the name of restructuring the party leadership in the State. This had an important psychological impact on the electorate. The number of women (26) and Muslims (10) legislators elected on Congress tickets increased. However, there was no significant increase in the backward caste representatives (Bernstorff, 1973). The performance of the opposition parties reached a new low and all of them together polled only 15.6% of the vote and won 11 seats. However, what was significant was the large percentage of votes polled and seats secured by independents, although

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<sup>13</sup> Channa Reddy was biding his time after he was forced to resign from the Union Ministry following a Supreme Court decision that made his election in 1967 invalid (due to malpractices). He nursed a grievance against Bramhananda Reddy for not coming to his rescue when he was entangled in legal problems.

much of this was attributed to the rebel Congress candidates and internal opposition within the Congress.

Following the 1972 Assembly elections, PV Narasimha Rao again became the Chief Minister. There were objections to his reappointment from other aspirants, but once the Centre's wishes were made known he was 'unanimously' elected as leader by the Congress legislature wing. A feeling of resentment grew in Andhra region that the government was trying to appease the Telengana leaders after the separate Telengana agitation, ignoring the rightful interests of the Andhras. The students, youth and employees felt that they were being deprived of opportunities in education and employment, even in the State capital. The spark that ignited the pent-up anger in Andhra was the Supreme Court judgement on 3 October 1972 upholding Mulki rules as legally valid.<sup>14</sup>

While it was welcomed in the Telengana region, students in Andhra reacted swiftly to the judgment, organising meetings and strikes with a demand that the Mulki rules be abandoned in order to preserve the integrity of the State. Total strikes (*bandh*) were organised and the Andhra non-gazetted officers went on an indefinite strike. At the State level, relations between Andhra and Telengana Ministers deteriorated and they began to meet in separate regional groupings. The agitation intensified as the Jana Sangh, Swatantra, some dissident Congress leaders and independents rallied together, demanding a separate Andhra. Supporters of PV alleged that the movement was led by vested interests and landlords, as they were threatened by the 'progressive' land reforms initiated by the PV government (Gray, 1974). However, it is difficult to measure the extent to which the land reform policies were responsible for the agitation. As in the case of the Telengana agitation, the communists opposed bifurcation of the State. They saw the problem as being essentially due to imbalances in development between the two regions. They characterised the agitation as reactionary since, according to them, it was launched to serve the interests of landlords and businessmen. However, the splinter Naxalite groups supported both the agitations. There was a series of meetings between the Prime Minister and the leaders from Andhra and Telengana. A new formula was worked out rendering the continuance of Mulki rules unnecessary. PV resigned as part of the package, and Mrs Gandhi chose J. Vengala Rao as Chief Minister in December 1973.<sup>15</sup>

The two regional movements demonstrated the strength of regional identities in State politics. They cut across caste divisions, the Reddi leaders of Telengana and Andhra fought against each other, and they also showed that cultural and emotional integration between the people of Andhra and Telengana was yet to be achieved fully. In addition, the movements proved that when two regions with unequal development were brought together, the people in the relatively backward region would develop a tendency to complain of 'injustice' and 'neglect'. Indeed, it was through slogans of fighting 'injustice', 'neglect' and 'discrimination' that the emerging elites would seek to promote their self-interest. It is difficult to estimate the extent of the role of envy, jealousy and resentment in the separatist agitations – the dissident factions in the Congress in both regions fanned these feelings with a motive to secure political power themselves. The same leaders, who vowed to sacrifice their lives in the cause for a separate State found no difficulty, immediately after the agitations, in becoming Ministers in the Congress government. Their political manoeuvres left people bewildered and frustrated.

Another movement that attracted the attention of the people in Andhra Pradesh in the 1970s was that of the 'communist revolutionaries', also referred to as Maoists, but popularly known as Naxalites, so named after the abortive uprising of the peasants of Naxalbari area in West Bengal. During the split of the Communist Party in 1964, the more radical elements of the undivided party

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<sup>14</sup> Mulki rules were the rules of residency in force in the Nizam's Hyderabad State. Under these rules no person could be appointed to a superior or subordinate service of the State if he had not been a permanent resident of the Hyderabad State for at least 15 years.

<sup>15</sup> Vengala Rao was a Velama from Telengana region but a migrant from coastal Andhra. He was considered to be more favourably inclined towards the Kammas and Andhras.

accused the dominant section of the leadership of being revisionist and abandoning the revolutionary path. Leaders from Andhra Pradesh played a crucial role in this internal ideological struggle. After the formation of the CPM, the leadership ironically faced the same charge. Inspired by the 'China path', some front rank leaders of the CPM (a large number of them from AP) felt that the Communist Party should immediately wage an armed struggle to overthrow the Indian state as it stood thoroughly exposed and as the Indian masses were ready. However, national leaders of the CPM, who now took a middle path (called the 'Indian path'), maintained that armed struggle was not the only means available to the communists in India to bring about the revolution, although it might in turn become necessary to capture power. As a result, fissures developed among the CPM leaders and cadres. The 'revolutionaries' accused the CPM leadership of trying to put chains on the revolutionary spirit of the people and termed it as 'neo-revisionist betrayal'.

Once again, the CPM was vertically split in Andhra Pradesh in 1967. The sections which left the CPM were temporarily united under the Andhra Pradesh Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (APCCCR), with the aim of launching a 'new democratic revolution' against the semi-colonial and semi-feudal state headed by the 'comprador bourgeoisie'. They called themselves Marxist–Leninists (ML), although their guiding philosophy was Maoism. However, differences soon surfaced among them on the strategy, tactics and timing of the armed struggle that led to further splits within splits. One group led an armed struggle in Srikakulam district primarily in tribal areas, hailed as 'Yenan of India' by the CPI–ML, with the aim of 'seizing' the state power. They could not sustain the armed struggle for long. Another group tried to conduct an armed struggle in Telengana area, but with little success (Mohan Ram, 1969; Shanta Sinha, 1979). They faced severe repression by the state for several years, during which hundreds of their leaders and activists were killed, often in fake encounters. However, as a result of the Girijan tribe struggles led by the Naxalites, the government brought in legislation to protect the interests of the Girijans and also introduced welfare and developmental schemes designed for them.

Although the Congress lost heavily in most States in the crucial *Lok Sabha* elections held after the 'Emergency' period of March 1977, the party stood its ground in Andhra Pradesh by winning 41 out of 42 seats. While the Congress secured only 34.5% of the total votes polled in the country, in Andhra Pradesh, surprisingly, it secured 57.4% of the votes – the highest in the electoral history of the State (Table 2).<sup>16</sup> An equally significant aspect of this election was that for the first time the opposition parties (except the communists) relinquished their separate identities and came together to fight under one symbol. The Janata Party secured 35% of vote but it won only one seat – that of Nandyala – through Sanjiva Reddy.

The defeat of the Congress Party across the country in the *Lok Sabha* elections led some Congress stalwarts in Andhra Pradesh to believe that the party was doomed. When Mrs Gandhi split the party in January 1978 and declared it as the real Indian National Congress (INC) under her presidency, there was also a split in the State unit, but the majority of the senior party leaders chose to remain with the 'official' Congress led by Bramhananda Reddy – the Congress (R). The APCC leadership also rejected Mrs Gandhi's new Congress Party, describing its formation as 'illegal, unconstitutional and dictatorial, aimed at destroying collective leadership and establishing personality cult.' (Satya Mani, 1985). Channa Reddy was one prominent leader who played an important role in the formation of the Indira Congress (Congress (I)) in Andhra Pradesh.

Within a month of the formation of the new Congress Party, elections were held to the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly in February 1978. These elections became crucial because they were seen as a test to judge the claims of the rival Congress parties (Acharya, 1979a). In order to survive, they had to demonstrate their electoral strength. A good number of fresh candidates entered the fray as there was dearth of candidates for the Congress (I). There were mostly triangular contests as the

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<sup>16</sup> Interestingly this was higher by 2% than the votes it secured in the 1971 elections, held at the height of Mrs Gandhi's popularity.

Congress (R) and Janata parties contested separately. The Congress (I) won an absolute majority of 175 seats out of 294), while the Janata Party won 60 and the Congress (R) 30 (Table 1).

The resilience of the Congress Party was evident in the fact that the same Channa Reddy who had recently led the violent agitation for a separate Telengana State, now became Chief Minister. For the first time, a strange situation had arisen where the Congress was out of power at the Centre and the State unit was in power. However, the Congress victory in the mid-term elections in 1980 altered the equation between the High Command and the Leader of the Congress Legislature Party in the State. Andhra Pradesh was unusual in having four Chief Ministers during the same period of legislature (1978–82), although the ruling party enjoyed a comfortable majority throughout. One after the other, the Congress governments were dismantled, not by the opposition parties, as usually happens in any parliamentary democracy, but by their own party men and with the blessings of the party's Central leadership. The main difficulty for the new Chief Minister in composing his Cabinet was in dropping some of the senior Ministers from the earlier Cabinet. Most of the senior Ministers belonged to what in Andhra political parlance came to be known as the 'headquarters quota', meaning that they owed their Ministership to their direct contacts with the High Command (i.e., Mrs Gandhi). The Chief Minister had to seek the Centre's permission for every change in his Ministry. He had to fight in the initial months to settle the dissident factions, and later to placate both them and the Central leadership so that he would not be eased out of his position.

Between 1978 and 1982, the democratic principle of the election of the Chief Minister by the legislators was totally ignored. Appointing an observer to find out from the legislators their choice became a shallow democratic exercise. All the Chief Ministers during Mrs Gandhi's tenure asserted that the High Command was not interested in replacing them, yet all around them, opinion was gathering for their ouster beginning with a whispering campaign, escalating into a dissident struggle, and finally assuming the dimensions of a major political crisis shaking the foundations of their governments. Since Mrs Gandhi became the sole factor with power in the Congress party and government was highly centralised, most of the State leaders turned into sycophants. The factions in the party resorted to all kinds of means to impress upon the High Command their influence in the State.

The preoccupation of the State leaders in the game of changing the Chief Ministers and securing themselves a place in the Ministry, made them insensitive to the feelings of the people and the problems of the State. The factional divisions in the State, which were often abetted by the Central leadership, became problematic as their number became too many. It was not easy to keep the delicate balance between factions in and out of power, with too many leaders aspiring for 'coveted posts'. Scant respect for political values, erosion of inner-party democracy, and destruction of local leadership with some amount of self-respect and extreme cynicism in party politics, all combined to widen the gulf between the Congress and the people. The State began to slip away from the Congress rule. However, even more than the government policies, it was the shameless factional politics and farcical developments in the party that were primarily responsible for the electoral collapse of the Congress in Andhra Pradesh in 1983.



## 5 Emergence of the Telugu Desam Party: Politics of Populism and Confrontation

The emergence of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) brought radical changes to the structure of politics in Andhra Pradesh. Increasing dissatisfaction among the people towards the Congress style of functioning, its all-round decay and the inability of the national opposition parties, both liberal and communist, to present a viable political and electoral alternative to the Congress provided a fertile ground for the birth and growth of a regional party in the State. The launching of a new political party on 29 March 1982 by 60-year old Madras-based multi-millionaire cine star, NT Rama Rao (who was popularly called NTR), heralded a new era in Andhra Pradesh State politics.

This regional party was not born out of any sustained movement or struggle, like that of Akali Dal in Punjab or National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir, or any sustained social movement like the DMK in Tamil Nadu. Neither is it entirely true to say that the TDP became successful because of NTR's cine popularity among the Andhra Pradesh electorate. The explanation lies somewhere else. In Andhra Pradesh politics the non-Congress/anti-Congress opposition vote was always substantial, with different parties and independents in the electoral fray securing a considerable percentage of votes in the Assembly elections held prior to 1983. Most of the leaders of the former Swatantra Party, Lok Dal, and Socialist parties and later the Janata Party joined the Telugu Desam. The vote bases of these parties were welded together under the name of the Telugu Desam (the Telugu nation). Thus the TDP could be seen as a unified reincarnation of the hitherto divided anti-Congress and non-Congress groups in Andhra Pradesh politics. NTR's cine popularity was useful to him in the sense that he was not new to the Andhra Pradesh electorate and he used this as an effective means to convey a political message to them. It fell on receptive ears as the electorate too was looking for an alternative – a leader who could bail out the State from the reckless factionalism, rampant corruption and the political morass into which it had been dragged by the Congress rule between 1978 and 1982.

The TDP mounted a blistering attack on the Congress, its 'eunuch' leadership at the State level and the 'puppet shows' constantly staged on the Andhra political theatre. The party, in its manifesto, promised to provide a clean administration and the elimination of corruption; it would strive to remove the meaningless and unrealistic restrictions on industrialists and thus attract capital from outside the State and encourage the enterprising industrialists within the State. The TDP called the Congress pro-merchant and anti-peasant for its failure to give remunerative prices for agricultural products and to supply electricity for the peasants at subsidised rates. It completely rejected any proposal of imposing tax on agricultural income. Regarding the Centre-State relations, the TDP said that Indira Gandhi, in her endeavour to perpetuate her family rule over the country, had gradually transformed the States of India into glorified 'municipalities'. It proclaimed its belief in complete federalism and opposed the argument that the delegation of more powers to the States would weaken the Centre. It demanded that the Centre should confine itself to the matters of defence, foreign affairs, currency and communications. NTR later went so far as to say that the Centre was a 'conceptual myth'. Thus the TDP's proclaimed policies were oriented to liberal industrial growth and pro-peasant agricultural development and it was said to have made a good impact on the regional industrialist class and the rich peasantry, who supported the Congress during the 1970s. The TDP also partially took the philosophy of the former Swatantra Party and as a consequence, effectively weaned away a large section of peasant voters from the Congress and the Janata Party.

NTR used vituperative language in his speeches with theatrical gestures. He stressed that the prestige of Andhra Pradesh was tarnished because the Chief Ministers were installed by Delhi instead of being elected in Hyderabad. He generated a euphoria over the slogans of 'restoration of

self-respect of the Telugus', 'humiliation of the Telugus by a system of imposing the Chief Ministers from Delhi', and 'fight against the inefficient and corrupt administration of the Congress'. These were combined with populist schemes, such as providing rice at Rs2 per kilo and midday meals for school children, which he borrowed from neighbouring Tamil Nadu experience. Overall, NTR's speeches were exhortative and his policies populist. Initially, the Congress underestimated the significance of the TDP and the crowds drawn towards NTR. Mrs Gandhi regarded NTR as no more than a freak phenomenon incapable of posing any sustained political challenge. She scorned NTR as a 'political joke' being played in Andhra Pradesh by someone who did not know anything about politics but had entered the electoral fray. Some Congress leaders tried to isolate NTR as a leader of the Kamma community alone and called Telugu Desam, '*Kamma desam*' (land of the Kammass).

The 1983 elections became a battle between *Amma* (mother), i.e., Mrs Gandhi and *Anna* (elder brother), i.e., NTR. The TDP recorded a landslide victory ending the one-party dominance of the Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh of nearly three decades (Table 3). It secured 46.8% of the popular vote and two-thirds of seats in the Assembly. The Congress Party recorded the lowest percentage of the vote (33.6%) ever in Andhra Pradesh electoral history. It polled the least percentage of votes in the coastal Andhra region (30.8%). The party won only 20% of seats (60 out of 293) in the Assembly. The percentage of seats was extremely low for the coastal Andhra (8%) and Rayalaseema (8%) regions. The Left parties, who had now entered into an alliance with each other, were utterly defeated: CPI took only 2.8% of the vote with four seats and CPM 2.1% of the vote with five seats. The elections showed that if a political party, whether regional or national, convinces the electorate of its ability to form a government by projecting itself as a viable alternative to the ruling party, it stands a fair chance of gaining political power. It also showed that a negative swing of 4–5% of the vote polled by a party yields a highly adverse result in terms of its position in the Assembly. The Congress Party assumed, for the first time in Andhra Pradesh, the role of an opposition party in the Assembly and outside.

The Central and State Congress leadership, which had grown accustomed to dominating State politics for a long time, found it difficult to reconcile to the changed realities. It failed to establish a working relationship with the TDP and took a hostile attitude towards the ruling party. On his part, NTR too was hostile towards the Congress for his own compulsions and repeatedly talked of the State's autonomy vis-à-vis the Congress-dominated Centre. The TDP and the Congress naturally held divergent views on the place and role of regional parties in India. NTR decried the continuous propaganda of the Congress Party in the State, claiming that the regional parties represent fissiparous tendencies and render harm to the State's interests. He maintained that the Congress rule had deprived the State both the authority and the financial capacity to promote the development of its economy and the welfare of its people. He described the TDP as a regional party with a national perspective and asserted that a regional party alone was capable of articulating the aspirations of the people.

After one-and-a-half years of TDP rule, the Congress pulled down NTR's government in August 1984. The Congress gave support to the plans of a ginger group within the TDP led by Nadendla Bhaskara Rao to oust the Chief Minister from office while he was away in the United States of America undergoing heart surgery. As the Congress Party was in power at the Centre, it used the office of the Governor for the purpose. The meeting of the 17 national opposition parties, including the CPI, CPM, Bharatiya Jana Party (BJP) and the Janata, came down heavily on the Congress for indulging in the game of toppling the non-Congress governments and felt that the coup d'état staged in Hyderabad was engineered in Delhi by the Prime Minister and the coterie around her. They launched a 'Save democracy movement', which led to a massive anti-Congress and anti-Centre upsurge in the State against the dismissal of the TDP government. NTR called it a *dharma yuddham*

(a war for justice) – a war against the authoritarian and autocratic rule of the Centre, for restoration of democracy and safeguarding the Constitution.

Owing to the powerful mass agitation and the force of the united opposition, the ‘defectors group’, despite the support of the Congress Party, could not muster enough numbers in the Assembly to continue in power. Since the 1984 *Lok Sabha* elections were approaching, the Congress leadership wanted to salvage the party’s image to any extent possible. It abandoned its efforts to prop up the ‘defectors’ government, called back the Governor, making him a scapegoat, and finally reinstated NTR. This was the only instance in the political history of India when a dismissed Chief Minister was reinstated. The whole episode proved that if people stand firmly for safeguarding democratic norms, the manipulation of the political leadership in weakening the democratic institutions and structures to fulfil personal, factional and partisan ambitions can be curbed, resisted and even defeated.

Although the opposition parties were not able to forge a united front against the Congress at the national level in the December 1984 *Lok Sabha* elections, the TDP in Andhra arrived at a bilateral seat adjustment with the non-Congress national opposition parties. Thereafter, the TDP and its allies came to be known as ‘friendly parties’. It was remarkable that they managed to stem the country-wide sympathy wave in favour of the Congress after the assassination of Mrs Gandhi and deliver a miserable defeat to the Congress in the elections. In his election speeches, the Congress Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi focused on the theme that the regional parties were harmful to national unity. The TDP countered the Congress’ criticism by saying that it stood for the strengthening of the federal political structure in India, in the spirit of the Constitution. NTR alleged that the Congress, despite its continuous rule in the Centre and in several States, was not able to forge unity in the country, as it was responsible for the trouble in Punjab, Assam, Kashmir, etc. He also charged that the Congress that fought for independence under Mahatma Gandhi’s leadership died long ago and what remained of the Congress was full of self-seeking, immoral and corrupt politicians.

People’s memory of the abortive coup against NTR’s government and the political drama that followed was so fresh, and the unity witnessed during the agitation for the reinstallation of NTR’s government was so strong, that out of 41 seats for which polls were held, the TDP won 30 (44.1% of the vote) and the ‘friendly’ opposition parties – CPI, CPM, BJP and the Janata – won one seat each. The strength of the Congress was reduced from its earlier number of 41 to a mere six, but still it achieved a substantial vote of 41.8%.

Mid-term elections to the Andhra Pradesh Assembly, caused by the dissolution of the Assembly in November 1984, were held in March 1985. The alliance between the major non-Congress opposition parties and the TDP continued. NTR asked the people to ‘get rid of the Congress culture and strengthen your self-respect vis-à-vis the arrogant Centre’ (*Hindustan Times*, 2 March 2 1985). The election manifesto issued by the APCC said that the Assembly elections provided the Telugu people a ‘unique opportunity to join the mainstream of national life’ (*News Time*, 22 February 1985). Rajiv Gandhi maintained that regional parties posed a threat to the unity of the country and advocated the need for the same party to rule both at the Centre and in the States. But the Congress suffered from group rivalries. In addition, the demoralisation caused by successive electoral defeats and the collective fear of NTR was so great in the Congress, that 22 of the candidates allotted Congress tickets refused to file their nominations. The TDP won 202 seats, three more seats than it won in the 1983 elections. The Congress failed to retain the strength which it had in the dissolved Assembly (59), and won only 49 seats. It did however improve its percentage of the vote from 33.6% in the Assembly elections in 1983 to 37.4% in 1985 (Table 3). Its performance was particularly good in Krishna and Guntur districts, which had stood solidly with the TDP in 1983 and where Kamma concentration was highest in the State.

The major casualty in this election was the Democratic Telugu Desam Party (DTDP), formed by Bhaskara Rao, the rebel TDP leader. All but two of its 220 candidates lost their deposits. With this, attempts to recreate the Tamil Nadu model of having two rival regional parties as alternative contenders for power at the State level, were thwarted in Andhra Pradesh. The Congress could have been seriously threatened had the DTDP been successful in consolidating itself as the second regional party on the lines of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) of Tamil Nadu. Commenting on his victory in the elections, NTR said that the people's verdict was a mandate to remould the Centre-State relations, for strong States in a true federal structure, for a greater share in the revenue for the States and that it was a major rebuff for corrupt leaders and defectors. The communists also felt that the Andhra people gave a fitting reply to the Congress argument of the same party rule being required at both the Central and the State level by defeating the Congress Party.

Between 1985 and 1989, the Congress recovered lost ground by attacking the style of functioning of the TDP leader, fully exploiting the arbitrary decisions of NTR's government and taking a hostile opposition towards the TDP (Bhaktavatsalam, 1991). Although the party was routed in the Assembly elections in 1983 and 1985, it still enjoyed a considerable electoral base in the State. The encouragement given by the Central leadership of the party, which was in power at the Centre, the patronage available for it to bestow upon the State leaders and the opportunity to use the institutions of Governor and the judiciary in creating situations to embarrass the ruling party at the State level, helped the Andhra Pradesh Congress Party to regain its strength. TDP-Congress relations showed that in the evolution of a democratic polity in a developing society with too many social cleavages and mutually conflicting economic interests, political parties, especially the main opposition, seem to give less importance to parliamentary conventions and fair means. What was important for the Congress was to regain power, using any means at the disposal of the party. Apparently, it functioned on the assumption that only hostile opposition pays in a crisis-ridden society. It launched an immediate propaganda offensive against the TDP government and used every opportunity to put the ruling party in a difficult situation.

The very first major policy decision of the TDP government – reducing the retirement age of government employees from 58 to 55 years, without giving them any time to reconcile with the decision or chance to appeal against it – provoked a prolonged confrontation between the non-gazetted officers, who numbered more than 400,000 and represented a strategic section in society and government. For the first time, government employees were subjected to scathing criticism by a leader no less than the Chief Minister. He criticised them for becoming anti-people and corrupt, branding them 'bandicoots in a granary'. The Congress, which had a majority in the Legislative Council, was able to stall some of the decisions of the TDP government and the Ordinance intended to reduce the retirement age was blocked. As a consequence, the TDP leadership decided to have the Legislative Council abolished.

The role of the Union Ministers in the State politics of Andhra Pradesh acquired significance in raising issues to embarrass the TDP, putting spokes in the functioning of the State government wheel, and bolstering the morale of the State Congress leaders. The relations between the State government and the Union Ministers, acting as the spokesmen of the Congress Party, was characterised by diatribes of the latter against the former, as they exhorted the Congressmen to launch a 'liberation struggle' against the TDP rule and to take the issues to the streets. There was a war of statements between the Union Minister from Andhra Pradesh, P. Shiva Sankar and the TDP leaders over the subsidy in the Rs2 per kilo of rice scheme.

As the Congress was in power at the Centre, its leaders often threatened the TDP government between 1987 and 1988 with dire consequences, including its dismissal. Such belligerence and aggressiveness on behalf of the State Congress leadership was, to a large extent, inspired by the

Central leaders. The position of Governor, controlled by the Central government, also proved useful for them to create trouble for the TDP and during this period, the Congress influenced the decisions of the Governor on several occasions. The TDP leaders felt that the actions of the Governor were aimed at embarrassing the ruling party, to strengthen the Congress prospects, to obstruct the government from functioning and so discredit the ruling party. In an unusual and unprecedented way, the Andhra Pradesh Cabinet passed a Resolution censuring the constitutional head of the State government. NTR complained to the President of India that the Governor was violating all the norms by carrying on ‘a relentless campaign of calumny’ against his government.

The Congress also effectively made use of the judiciary to invalidate the actions of the TDP government and to have strictures passed against key functionaries, including the Chief Minister. A judgment of a Division Bench of the Andhra Pradesh High Court in January 1988, on petitions filed by a leading Brahman Congress leader in the State, Dronamraju Satyanarayana, put the Chief Minister and the ruling party in an awkward situation. It found *prima facie* evidence of the abuse of official position by the Chief Minister on five counts and opined that the action of the State government on two other charges was arbitrary and illegal. Although the way the judgment itself was given became a matter of controversy, the Congress leaders were quick to demand the resignation of the Chief Minister. The TDP criticised the Congress for resorting to cantankerous legal actions to negate the verdict of the people of the State.

One important factor in building up an anti-TDP electoral alliance was caste. The issue was successfully played by the Congress in its efforts to stage a comeback. It assigned the task of rallying different caste people to different caste men in the party and it consolidated its position among the *dalits*, who had been staunch supporters of the Congress for the last two decades since they were weaned away from communist influence in the late 1960s. It highlighted, in the Legislature and outside, the atrocities committed against the *dalits*, especially in the Kamma-dominant villages. The Brahmans – the traditional supporters of the Congress – once again rallied behind the party by influencing public opinion through the means they had at their command, such as the media, bureaucracy and educational institutions. NTR’s policies, such as the abolition of village officers<sup>17</sup>, abolition of the privileges of priests to enjoy the monetary offerings to gods at temples, and providing the right for any person, regardless of community, to become a priest, were seen as trying to destroy the traditional position of the Brahmans in society. Instead of being understood as democratic measures, these actions were interpreted as measures to hurt the Brahman interests. The trading community, consisting mainly of the Komatis, were also disaffected with the TDP due to its alleged ‘anti-trader policies’. Since most of the Reddi elites thought of the Congress Party as their own, the Congress received overwhelming support from the Reddi community. Giving credence to the caste logic, N. Srinivasulu Reddy, one of the top leaders of the TDP and considered second in command in the TDP Ministry, resigned from the TDP and joined the Congress, along with several others, on the eve of the 1989 Assembly elections.

The Congress was also successful in separating the Kapu community from the TDP. The Union Minister, Shiva Sankar, carried out an intensive campaign to rally the Kapus, Balijas, Ontaris, Munnur Kapus and Telagas (kindred caste groups in Andhra Pradesh) against the TDP. In this campaign, background discord developed between the prominent Kapu leaders of the TDP on the one hand and the Chief Minister and his sons-in-law on the other. Chegondi Harirama Jogaiah and Mudragada Padmanabham, important Kapu leaders from Godavari districts, left the TDP to join the

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17 There were two kinds of village officers at that time: one was in charge of land records, called *karnam* in Andhra region or *patwari* in Telengana; the other was the village headman, called *munsif* in Andhra and *patel* in Telengana, in charge of law and order and judicial matters in the village. While most of the *karnams/patwaris* were Brahmans, most of the village headmen were from the dominant landowning communities of the village. These positions were non-transferrable and were held mostly hereditarily. The TDP government abolished the hereditary village officers system and replaced them with a Village Administrative Officer (VAO), who was appointed by the State government and transferrable. However, most of the *karnams* were later absorbed into government service as per the directions of the High Court of Andhra Pradesh.

Congress Kapu MLA from Vijayawada, V. M. Ranga Rao, in organising the conference of the Kapus, known as *Kapunadu* (styled after *Mahanadu*, the TDP annual conference). The killing of V. M. Ranga Rao, who by that time had become a popular Kapu leader and also a prominent Congress leader, brought caste politics to a climax. The scale of caste violence and arson, targeting the property and assets of the Kammas, which rocked the four coastal districts – Guntur, Krishna, West and East Godavaris – following the murder was unprecedented in the political history of the State. The Congress Party made immense political capital out of this murder and received overwhelming support from the Kapus in the coastal districts in the 1989 elections.

In addition, the Congress raised the issue of discrimination of Telengana and Rayalaseema regions by the TDP government and NTR, who belonged to the coastal region. The Congress leaders, who had earlier resorted to the resurrection of sub-regional identities in order to secure their individual and factional hold on the party and government, this time used this card against the TDP government.

However, the decline of the TDP electoral base cannot be attributed to the efforts of the Congress alone. The style of NTR's functioning, both in the party and the government, alienated individuals and social groups from the TDP. He regarded himself as the sole leader with no superior, equal or second to him in the party. He wanted people to believe that he was on a God-sent mission to govern the State; probably he imagined himself to be so, as he always thought himself to be infallible. Often his actions were arbitrary and rash – some of the policies and laws enacted by his government had to be withdrawn immediately after they were made or struck down by the courts. He attacked the Congress for depriving people of self-respect, undermining the democratic institutions, encouraging the principle of family rule in the country, etc. But his own actions were no better: he encouraged people bowing down before him and touching his feet, and he bestowed favours on them; he never cared to build a democratic-party structure, or to make it function on any democratic principle; he dismissed all his Ministers in February 1989 just before the elections and constituted a new Ministry of all-new faces; and he never allowed elections to the 'Politburo', the top decision-making body in the party. Once, in a public meeting at Madanapalli, he announced his actor-son Balakrishna as his successor, but later denied this in the face of severe criticism. All these issues became favourite themes of those who opposed the TDP in the 1989 Assembly elections. Even those who openly supported NTR in the initial years gradually became disenchanted with his style, both in the party and in government. Several party leaders either became passive or they revolted against NTR and left the TDP, as they saw in him a highly 'authoritarian personality' and raised the issue of loss of self-respect for the leaders and workers in the party. Most of those who left the party joined the Congress, saying that it was more democratic and responsive to the wishes of the people.

The decline of electoral support for the TDP and a corresponding increase in Congress strength became clear even before the 1989 Assembly elections. The elections to the Zilla Praja Parishads (ZPP) and Mandala Praja Parishads (MPP), created by the TDP government, were held in March 1987. Although the results signalled a victory for the TDP (they secured 18 out of the 21 ZPPs and 632 out of 1058 MPPs), an analysis of the voting pattern indicated electoral gains for the Congress. The Congress won 42.4% of the vote and 330 MPPs as against the 200 expected in proportion to its strength in the Assembly. The poll also boosted the local-level party organisation, as the APCC President gave authority to the District Congress Committees to select candidates, making a break from the tradition of nomination from above. On the contrary, the TDP's selection of candidates at Gandipet (headquarters of the party) through computer processing caused discontent among the local leaders.

Close on the heels of the *Panchayat* elections came elections to as many as 95 municipalities and two Municipal Corporations. For the first time, the method of direct election for the positions of

Municipal Chair and Corporation Mayor on party basis was introduced. The results of the civic elections confirmed the growing disenchantment among the urban population with the ruling party. The Congress secured 42.1% of the votes as compared to the TDP's 40.2%, as well as 49 municipal Chairs and 1292 wards, as against 40 and 948 respectively for the TDP. The Congress won all the municipalities in the districts of Guntur, Prakasam, Srikakulam and Karimnagar. They also wrested the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation from the CPI and the CPM, which had jointly controlled it for the previous five years. Adding together the votes polled by the Congress in the *Panchayat* and Municipal elections, the Congress managed to narrow down the overall difference between itself and the TDP to a mere 16 *lakh* votes. It established leads in about 140 out of the 294 Assembly segments, which meant an increase of 90 over its tally of 50 in 1985. The outcome of the elections was so reassuring to the Congress that the APCC President declared that his party was set to triumph in the next elections.

Simultaneous elections to the *Lok Sabha* and Andhra Pradesh Assembly were held in November 1989. The Congress recorded impressive victories at both levels: it won 39 seats in the *Lok Sabha* with 49.1% of the vote, while the TDP managed to win only two seats with 41.6% of the vote (including votes polled by the allied parties). Curiously enough, the Andhra Pradesh electorate, as in the 1977 *Lok Sabha* elections, returned a spectacular victory for the Congress at a time when the electoral verdict in the country at large went against it. Over time, especially since 1977, the Andhra Pradesh electorate has earned the dubious distinction of voting against the national political current. In the Assembly elections too, the Congress turned the tables on the TDP. It won 182 seats with 47.2% of the popular vote as against 94 seats won by the TDP and its allies – the CPI, the CPM, the BJP and the Janata Dal – with 43.9% of the popular vote. On its own, the TDP secured 73 seats with 36.6% of the vote (Table 3). While the Congress improved its electoral support by 9.7%, the TDP lost ground by 9.6%. However, the margins of victory either for the Congress or the TDP were miniaml; the overall difference in popular vote between the Congress and the TDP and its allies was only 3.2%. But the electoral victory for the Congress did not mean a return to the one-party dominant system that existed prior to the 1980s in Andhra Pradesh, as some thought at the time.

With the Congress back in power in 1989, factionalism in the party once again came to the fore as early as 1990. The newly formed Channa Reddy government came under fire from both the opposition TDP and the rival factions of the Congress. The government was accused of corrupt practices and the dilution of welfare schemes, especially the subsidised rice scheme. Channa Reddy was held responsible for the deterioration in law and order due to the surge in Naxalite violence. During his tenure, the State was also rocked by anti-*Mandal* agitation. The factional struggle in the party went so far that the Chief Minister accused the dissident faction leader, N. Janardan Reddy, of engineering Hindu-Muslim communal riots in Hyderabad in order to discredit the government (Hanumantha Rao, 1993). Interestingly, the communal violence came to an abrupt end with the exit of Channa Reddy, and Janardan Reddy taking the oath as Chief Minister.

Some of the governmental policies and decisions made during Janardan Reddy's tenure became highly controversial. Feeling was widespread that everything under the Congress regime had a price tag and that nothing was impossible if one was ready to pay the bribe. Corruption charges were levelled at the Chief Minister, especially in the affairs of leasing out the mines and awarding the contracts for World Bank-funded cyclone reconstruction works involving hundreds of *crores* of rupees. It was also alleged that *crores* of rupees had changed hands in allowing liquor barons and influential persons to start several private medical and engineering colleges with hefty capitation fees.<sup>18</sup> All this provided sufficient fuel to the opposition fire. The TDP once again became active.

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<sup>18</sup> Janardan Reddy also granted permission to start a medical and an engineering college to a trust run by his wife and son. Although there was not much objection to opening new professional colleges under private management, the way he went about the business made him a target of easy attack for the opposition parties. Probably they were also aggrieved because they were not given their due share in the whole affair.

The High Court passed severe strictures against the Chief Minister for granting capitation-fee colleges of medicine and engineering. The Congress image had suffered so much that it was thoroughly defeated by the TDP in the earlier phase of the 1991 *Lok Sabha* elections, held before the killing of Rajiv Gandhi. It was Rajiv's death that saved the Congress in the second phase of *Lok Sabha* elections.

Even after PV Narasimha Rao, (the former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh), became the Prime Minister of India, the stock of the Congress in the State did not improve much in the public eye. In the Congress Legislature Party meeting held to 'elect' a replacement Chief Minister for Janardan Reddy, the 'sealed cover' from the Prime Minister and Party President was sent to appoint the veteran faction leader from Rayalaseema and a former Chief Minister of the State, Kotla Vijayabhaskar Reddy, to the post. Soon the dissident factions intensified their activity against the Chief Minister, but at the same time proclaimed unflinching loyalty to the High Command. The Chief Minister was criticised for his feudal attitude and for behaving like a factional leader. The anti-*arrack* movement by women, *dalit* assertion and the growth of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in the State, and the Naxalite activities also led to the dampening of morale among the Congressmen and erosion in the Congress electoral base. These social and political movements are discussed later in this section.

In the elections to the Assembly in December 1994, the Congress High Command talked of a 'rainbow' coalition of factions, meaning that different factional interests would be accommodated in selecting the candidates. When there was a demand for a greater number of candidates from the BCs and reduced representation for the Reddis, PV Narasimha Rao stressed the need for 'social balancing' in a way that did not upset the Congress agenda. The Congress President took upon himself the responsibility of carrying the election campaign. He started by invoking the Telugu sentiment, saying that he came as a son of the Telugu soil (*telugu bidda*) to seek votes as alms (*bhiksha*). He urged the people to save him from the ignominy of Congress defeat in his home State. He also harped upon the old theme of the need to have the same party in power both at the Centre and in the States for harmonious functioning and to avoid any mismatch between the policies of the Centre and the State governments.

The issue of 'development' versus 'welfare' came to the fore in the elections. PV focused on his economic policies of liberalisation, the rise in the nation's creditworthiness under his leadership, and the Centre's record of economic achievements. He counterpoised development and welfare implying that development would suffer if welfare (populist) schemes, as promised by NTR, were implemented. Countering the Congress argument, NTR focused on the theme that it was the responsibility of the government to provide the basic needs to the people, namely food, clothing and shelter. He questioned the theory of development in opposition to the welfare of the poor. He said that development for him was the welfare of the poor, while development for Congress meant enrichment of party leaders. NTR lambasted the Congress for legalising corruption, for amassing wealth by Congress politicians at the expense of society and for neglecting the needs of the poor. In his well-attended meetings, he promised to reintroduce the subsidised rice scheme, to impose total prohibition on liquor and to supply electricity to farmers at subsidised rates. Although NTR himself was one of the richest persons in the State, he succeeded in projecting himself as the champion of the disadvantaged and the weaker sections. The presence of the two communist parties on his side enhanced the image of NTR as progressive and pro-poor. The TDP and its Left allies projected the new economic policy of the Congress government and the liberalisation process as 'pro-rich'. The Congress Party proved to be no match for NTR's populism. If Mrs Gandhi had upstaged her rivals in the late 1960s with the slogan '*garibi hatao*' (banish poverty) and her radical postures, NTR could upstage the Congress with the slogan 'basic needs to the poor'. If the Congress had always exploited the rich-poor divide and talked of the poor without hurting the rich, NTR proved to have scored an advantage over the Congress in its own game.



Belying all projections and predictions in the media, the TDP scored a massive victory in the 1994 Assembly elections (Suri, 1995). The TDP achieved a three-quarters majority in the Assembly on its own, winning 219 seats out of the 251 it contested, and more than four-fifths of the seats won by the allies were added. The Left parties, the allies of the TDP, won in 34 constituencies. TDP's success rate (candidates contested and won) of 87%, as compared to 76% of the Congress in 1972, was a record in Andhra Pradesh's electoral history. The TDP and its allies swept the polls in all the three regions, winning 120 (out of 133) in coastal Andhra, 42 (out of 52) in Rayalaseema and 91 (out of 107) in Telengana. In this election, the Congress had the dubious record of winning the lowest number of seats (26) and not being in a position to claim the status of an officially recognised opposition party in the State Assembly. The Congress failed to win a single seat in 11 districts, seven of them being in the Telengana region. The TDP and its allies, CPI and CPM, polled 51.3% of the valid votes (the TDP, on its own, achieved 44.8% of the vote), while the Congress polled 33.6%, similar to the low vote it polled in the 1983 elections (Table 3). Compared to the 1989 Assembly election, when it polled 45.3% of the vote, the Congress lost 11.7 percentage points in the 1994 elections. It was not simply the defeat, but the magnitude of the Congress defeat that was significant.

Some attributed the TDP success to the charismatic appeal of NTR, the trust of the poor in his resolve to implement welfare schemes and his pro-peasant and pro-women position. NTR called his victory 'a silent revolution' of the hungry masses, suffering women and the unemployed. The Congress defeat was attributed to the poor image of the party due to factional infighting, the perception that the Congress government was dominated by Reddis, widespread corruption, the impact of the liberalisation measures on the poor, the inability of the Congress leaders to counter the TDP election campaign and the desire for a change in the government. The election results showed that the Andhra electorate did not follow the sentiment that they should vote for the Congress to ensure the continuation of a Telugu Congressman at the helm of affairs in the country, a sentiment which PV and his supporters sought to invoke during the election campaign. Another implication of the election outcome was the rejection of the theme of electing the same party at the Centre and in the State, despite the warning from the top Congress leaders that voting for a non-Congress Party would mean trouble for the people of the State and lead to Centre–State conflicts.

As mentioned earlier, the notable among the social and political movements that have affected the politics in Andhra Pradesh since the emergence of the TDP were those concerned with the assertion of the *dalits*, Naxalite struggles and the anti-*arrack* campaign by women. They have raised certain fundamental questions about the rationale of the social order, the nature of the political set-up, and the policy framework and priorities of the government.

This period witnessed the growth of *dalit* assertion and the emergence of independent *dalit* organisations and political parties in the State. After the TDP came to power, tensions grew between the upper-caste peasant communities and the *dalits* in the villages. The attack by the Kammass on the Madigas in Karamchedu village in Prakasam district in July 1985, killing six persons and injuring many, caused uproar in the State (Narasimha Reddy, 1985). The *dalits* were organised by leaders from within the community in a protracted struggle for justice against the TDP government. After the Congress came into power in 1989, the Reddy landlords and their kinsmen (including the small landowners) in the fertile and agriculturally developed Chundururu village of Guntur district hacked to death eight *dalits* in August 1991 (Raghavulu, 1992). While these attacks on the *dalits* were generally deplored by all, the *dalit* leaders launched criticism that the *dalits* were subjected to atrocities under both the TDP rule, which they described as the *Kamma raj*, and the Congress rule, termed as *Reddy raj*.

The fact that these attacks took place not in a backward area but in the fertile plains and in relatively more developed villages show that the processes of modernisation and democratisation do not in

themselves obviate the caste tensions, and in fact, may even exacerbate them. The awakening among the *dalits* and the leadership potential of its movement had been strong from the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The development of agriculture and the corresponding educational and employment opportunities and urban exposure benefited the *dalits* to some extent. The role of the Christian missionaries in the uplift of these sections, in taking them out from the oppressive Hindu fold, giving them confidence and self-respect cannot be ignored in this context. Since Independence, a small middle class began to grow among the *dalits*, consisting especially of government officers and other employees, literati, salaried persons, and those in legal and other professions. The democratic politics made it possible for the leaders from the *dalits* to exercise some amount of political power, although more often as junior partners of the dominant elites.

Those among the *dalits* who had acquired some land, received an education, and been employed in government service and had urban work experience resented the traditional attitudes of the members of peasant castes towards them. Since the law lays down total equality of citizens they demand equal treatment. The attitudes of the so-called upper caste persons have been undergoing change, but the problem is that the pace at which the members of the peasant castes reconcile to the changing realities and the demands of a democratic polity do not often match. In rural areas, the refusal of many *dalits* to adhere to the traditional norms of deference towards the members of the upper castes became a source of tension. Thus, in large parts of rural Andhra Pradesh, an atmosphere of perpetual tension between the peasant communities, be it the Kammas, Kapus, Reddis, Velamas, Rajus, or Yadavas on the one hand and the *dalits* on the other began to develop. Socially forbidden attitudes towards women or illicit relations between members of these communities often provided emotional and immediate factors for these tensions to flare up. The attacks in Karamchedu and Chundururu villages represented the violent expression of this widespread tension between these social groups at large. *Dalit* assertion of a different type was noticed in some districts of Telengana, where the Naxalite groups are active.

With the arrival of Kanshi Ram on the political scene of Andhra Pradesh, *dalit* politics were expected to take a new shape. Cashing in on the emergence of a strong *dalit* movement from 1985 to 1993, Kanshi Ram called for an end to the erstwhile pattern of the dominant castes enjoying power using the *dalit* votes. He wanted to capture political power through electoral means, ending generations of dependence and subservience to the Brahmanic castes – in the Andhra Pradesh context and according to *dalit* leaders, the Brahmans included the Kammas, the Reddis, the Kapus, the Velamas, etc., apart from the three *dwija* castes in the classical Hindu social hierarchy. Several leaders of the Dalit Mahasabha (a socio-political organisation of the *dalits*) some independent *dalit* leaders, and some former Naxalite activists joined the BSP in Andhra Pradesh. The middle-class sections that emerged among the scheduled castes lent support.

Although some BC leaders initially showed interest in the BSP, they later turned lukewarm or left the party. The BSP thus largely remained a party of the *dalits*, although according to Kanshi Ram, the concept of *bahujans* (literally, ‘the underprivileged multitude’. The concept includes people who belong to backward castes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and minorities. It is now mostly used by the BSP and refers to *dalits*) is a broad one that includes people who belong to backward castes, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and minorities. The BSP accused the upper-caste leaders of the TDP and the Congress of perpetuating the rule of the dominant castes by building alliances of caste elites. The CPI, the CPM and some leaders of Left extremist groups were critical of organising the *dalits* on the basis of mere caste consciousness. The Congress Party appointed a *dalit* leader as Deputy Chief Minister as a symbolic gesture in the hope of attracting and retaining electoral support among the *dalits*. Hopes as well as fears were raised during the early 1990s about the possibility of the BSP emerging as a major force in the State politics (Srinivasulu, 1994). As an anti-climax of the drive to carve out an autonomous role for *bahujans* in Andhra Pradesh politics came reports of a clandestine deal between the Congress and the BSP for a

Congress victory in the 1994 Assembly elections. The BSP was effectively a non-starter in the elections – it secured only 1.3% of the vote, losing deposits in all except two of the constituencies it contested.

Around the same time, the representatives of the BCs began to have a larger role in politics, especially after the TDP came to power. A feeling of resentment among the BCs in the State grew against the Congress Party during the 1970s. They perceived that the Congress Party was more interested in wooing the SC voters, that the welfare and developmental programmes introduced by the government had mainly benefited the SCs and that the problems of the BCs were neglected, although they too suffered from socio-economic backwardness. Due to such resentment, the BCs, it is said, voted overwhelmingly for the TDP in the 1983 elections. The TDP also accommodated BC candidates in good number – there were 61 MLAs from BCs in 1983 and 59 MLAs in 1985. During the TDP rule, the Congress leaders tried their utmost to attract the BC vote by organising meetings of various backward caste associations. This task was assigned to the respective Congress leaders.

In order to counter the Congress' moves, the TDP government accepted, in July 1986, the Muralidhara Rao Commission Report on reservations for backward castes in education and employment and raised the reservations for the BCs from 25% to 44%. NTR neither cared to gather a consensus on reservation quota for the BCs nor consulted other parties in this matter. His decision was hasty, lacked conviction and was a part of the political game of one-upmanship. Those who opposed the enhancement of the quota formed the Nava Sangharsha Samithi and launched an agitation opposing the government decision. The pro-reservationists formed another body – Sarva Sangrama Parishad (SSP) – to defend the rise in reservation quota. The State was engulfed in a caste conflagration for two months during August/September 1986. While the majority of the Congress leaders whipped up feelings against the TDP government, the upper-caste party cadres of the Congress actively supported the anti-reservation agitation. However, some Congress leaders supported the increase but decried the opportunistic way in which the TDP government made the decision. Later a three-judge Bench of the Andhra Pradesh High Court struck down the increase as unconstitutional. Faced with the wrath of the anti-reservationists, NTR took shelter under the Court decision and withdrew the Government Order with equal haste. This episode clearly revealed the politics of reservation policy in the State – it showed how the interest groups based on caste defined justice in a way that suited them and thus brought pressure to bear on the government to bestow benefits on them, and how the political class sought to use governmental power either to demand or enact laws in the name of social justice, but actually to suit their own interest, i.e., to keep power to themselves.

From the early 1990s, various BCs began to organise State-level meetings to articulate their economic and political demands, attended by the Congress Chief Minister and his Cabinet colleagues. To meet the rising aspirations among the BCs, V. Hanumantha Rao, a BC leader, was appointed APCC President by Rajiv Gandhi. He became an aspirant and strong contender for Chief Minister's post after Channa Reddy's exit. Later, Majji Tulasi Das, a BC, was made APCC President. Vijayabhaskara Reddy had to expand his Ministry to include one Member from each major BC community in the State. After the BSP–SP victory in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election, the Congress leaders in Andhra Pradesh began to talk about the need for giving more space to the BCs in the power structure. When M. Padmanabham, a Kapu MLA, launched an agitation for inclusion of Kapus in the BC list, the Congress government issued orders in August 1994, just on the eve of the Assembly elections, including not only the Kapus but also the Muslims in the backward classes. But the move was opposed by the BC representatives, who felt that inclusion of the Kapus – a forward community – in the BCs list would adversely affect their interests. All political parties in Andhra Pradesh made a conscious effort, under mounting pressure, to give more importance to the BCs and accommodate a greater number of leaders from these castes in party committees and government positions.

The women's movement for prohibition of *arrack* (cheap liquor) was another important social movement in the 1990s (Narasimha Reddy and Patnaik, 1993; Ilaiah, 1992). *Arrack* contractors, united into syndicates, became a powerful lobby in State politics, funding the political parties and candidates in elections, including those of the communist parties. A good number of liquor contractors were politicians themselves, either directly or under fictitious names (*benami*), or they were close relatives of the politicians or the real force behind some legislators and Ministers. After the TDP came into power, the government took over the production and distribution of *arrack* in the State, giving it a beautiful name, '*varuni vahini*' (stream of liquor). In order to augment revenue from the liquor business, the TDP government auctioned shops throughout the villages. Government revenue from *arrack* sale, which was Rs1500 million in 1982, shot up to the staggering amount of Rs6300 million in 1991. It was estimated at that time that around Rs14,000 million were transferred annually from *arrack* consumers, who were mostly labourers and poor people, into the hands of contractors, of which 45% went to the government. The contractors therefore appropriated nearly Rs8000 million every year. Imagine a situation where the government made arrangements, to overcome resistance from people agitating against *arrack* sales, for selling it in police stations in Telengana region!

The network of *arrack* contractors and sub-contractors was very extensive from the State capital to the village level, to maximise *arrack* sales with all necessary employment of muscle power to carry on the business and bribing of the administration. As a result, consumption of *arrack* increased by several-fold, household economies of the lower classes were ruined and family problems increased. The rural women, who were the worst victims of the *arrack* menace, organised themselves in the villages, attacked *arrack* shops and prevented the government from conducting their auctions. The police mercilessly beat the women and large-scale arrests were made in November 1992. The hirelings and musclemen of the contractors disturbed the sit-in strikes (*dharnas*) held by the women agitators by attacking them with *lathis* (heavy wooden sticks). The active participation of the Left parties in the agitation gave it momentum. With an eye on 'women votes', NTR extended support to the agitation, although liquor consumption actually became a problem during his regime. In the midst of the agitation, the government sanctioned another 12 distilleries to private agencies. As there was a huge public outcry, and as pressure from women agitators mounted, the Excise Minister resigned from the Ministry and the Assembly. The nexus between the politicians, bureaucrats, contractors and the police was exposed during the agitation. In the by-elections in April 1993, prohibition became an important issue. The government was finally forced to introduce partial prohibition in April 1993 in Nellore district, where the agitation had started and was widespread, and from October 1993 throughout the State. But sufficient damage had already been done to the Congress electoral prospects. Total prohibition (of *arrack* as well as Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL)) became an important issue in the 1994 Assembly election and it was considered a major factor in swinging the women vote in favour of the TDP in its spectacular victory.

## 6 Politics of Pragmatism

The fact that NTR, the patriarch of the TDP, was ignominiously removed from power and party position his party MLAs and Ministers in a surreptitious revolt only a few after months of his massive election victory in December 1994, was a major paradox in Andhra Pradesh State politics. It was again a paradox that Chandrababu, NTR's younger son-in-law, who played a crucial role in 'guarding' the TDP MLAs from deserting NTR during the 'coup' against him in 1984, for which NTR publicly expressed his gratitude, was the central figure in this revolt against him in August 1995. The removal of NTR and the assumption of the twin offices of Chief Minister and Party President by Chandrababu Naidu (hereafter Chandrababu) marked the end of an era of charismatic, populist and autocratic politics and the beginning of a new political phase in Andhra Pradesh, characterised by pragmatism and economic reform.

Paradoxes exhibit seemingly contradictory qualities, but they have their own rationale. In a way, the ouster of NTR could be seen (with hindsight of course) as the tragic outcome of NTR's politics itself. The evolution of the TDP as a party showed how a democratic upsurge among the people could be used, in the name of mass democracy, to establish an autocratic regime. Although NTR lambasted the Congress for perpetuating family rule over the country, he pursued the same line much more vigorously in Andhra Pradesh. Under the prevailing conditions in which political power was treated by the top ruling elite as property to be bequeathed at their will to their family members, the inheritance of power became an issue during the lifetime of NTR himself. On one occasion, he designated his actor-son, Balakrishna, his political heir. Two of his sons-in-law, who occupied crucial positions in the party, did not relish this dynastic wish. In addition, the growing authority of his much-maligned wife, who was so dear to NTR, perturbed his other family members and some senior leaders of the party. The Ministers and MLAs were also unhappy as NTR reduced them to non-entities and did not allow them to use patronage and power to get things done for themselves and their supporters. There was also growing resentment among the elite, given the shifting policy environment in the country, against his 'populist' schemes that they now thought were burdensome, unproductive and anti-development. They saw in Chandrababu, the Revenue and Finance Minister in NTR's Cabinet, a prudent and pragmatic leader with views commensurable to the emergent paradigm of economic development.

When NTR was previously overthrown in 1984, it was projected as the murder of democracy. This time in 1995 however, there was much pity but no mass upsurge. NTR toured the State, bemoaning his fate and imploring the people to fight for his restoration, but to no avail. The whole affair was passed off as an event of episodic significance, or as just a family matter (Balagopal, 1995). Ironically, when the scene was being set in Hyderabad for upstaging him, NTR was busy with the 'Government at People's Doorstep' (*Prajala Mungita Palana*) programme in a north coastal district, along with some government officials, Ministers and party workers. He had not even the slightest intimation of the impending revolt against him until it was all over. The danger for an autocratic ruler is that all appears to be well as he/she reigns supreme and the surrounding flatterers make him/her believe that he/she is truly a great man/woman. In the process, the autocrat throws all democratic norms to the wind, personalises power, systematically destroys democratic institutions, stifles all dissent and criticism, including any that is helpful to the healthy functioning of the party and government, because he/she sees them as unnecessary impediments. Gradually he/she becomes alienated from people, disaffection brews in the party and bursts into the open when it reaches a critical point. Those who lie low, but waiting for an opportunity, now act with vengeance and great force, throwing down the 'big boss' from his/her pedestal. The entire aura, charm and the hallowed status of this 'superhuman' seem to vanish and he/she suddenly appears to everyone as somewhat less than an ordinary mortal. When the calamity befalls him/her, he/she finds himself discarded as a spent material, forlorn and deserted. Thus NTR became a victim of the conditions he himself had

engendered in the party and government. His political career should remain a lesson to any politician in the country.

NTR, who vowed to oust the ‘backstabbers’ and ‘traitors’ and to stage a comeback, died within four months of his removal from office. Heading whatever remained of his faction of the TDP, the widowed Lakshmi Parvathi imagined herself to be the true political heir to NTR and that people were on her side. In the 1996 elections, she wanted to prove that the mandate of the 1994 elections was for NTR. She toured the State exhorting people to undo the injustice meted out to her deceased husband. The 1996 *Lok Sabha* elections thus became an occasion to settle the claims and counter claims of the two TDP groups – TDP Naidu (TDPN) and TDP Lakshmi Parvathi (TDPLP) – for the legacy of NTR. The Congress Party, which remained comfortable with the developments in the TDP, was confident that its electoral prospects were considerably brighter due to the turbulence and split in the TDP. While the leaders of the Janata Dal and the BSP supported the TDPLP, the Left parties sided with the TDPN. The TDPN polled 32.6% of the votes, about the same the TDP polled in the 1991 elections, but improved its seats tally from 13 to 16. Faced as he was with a formidable rival faction of the TDP, this was something of a victory for Chandrababu. It greatly helped him to exorcise NTR’s ghost hovering over the party and emerge as a leader in his own right. The TDPLP polled 10.6% of the votes but failed to get any seats. The marginalisation of the TDPLP was completed in the 1998 *Lok Sabha* elections, by which time the leaders who remained with NTR when he was overthrown shifted their allegiance either to the TDPN or to other parties (Srinivasulu and Sarangi, 1999).

Viewed in the context of its worst electoral defeat in the 1994 Assembly elections, the performance of the Congress had improved in the 1996 *Lok Sabha* elections. However, there was only a marginal difference in the electoral strength of the Congress and the TDP in the two *Lok Sabha* elections of 1996 and 1998. The Congress and the TDP (and allies) polled 39.7% and 37.9% of the votes respectively in the 1996 elections and the corresponding figures for the 1998 elections were 38.5% and 37.5% (Table 4).

The emergence of the BJP, whose prestige and visibility was growing due to its position at the Centre, as a new political force to be reckoned with in the State was a significant feature of the 1998 *Lok Sabha* elections. It had an electoral alliance with the TDPLP, which seemed to have benefited it much more than the latter, as the estranged sections of the TDP who earlier rallied behind the TDPLP might have seen a better alternative in the BJP, whose status had changed by now. It won four seats, taking two each from the Congress and the TDP. From a modest electoral support base of 2% in the 1989 *Lok Sabha* elections, the BJP increased its vote share to 18.3% in the 1998 *Lok Sabha* elections.

More importantly, the period between the 1996 and the 1998 *Lok Sabha* elections witnessed a departure from NTR’s type of politics and public policies in the State. It is surprising as to how Chandrababu, who was a prominent leader of the TDP during NTR’s regime, effected a major change in the policy orientation of the government. Before he became Chief Minister, he was known more for his abilities as ‘an outstanding back-room organiser’ (Chandrababu Naidu and Ninan, 2000). He did not speak of any tension in the early 1990s between the competing paradigms of ‘development’ and ‘populist welfarism’. By that time, the new economic policy had already been ushered in by the Congress Party while the TDP stuck to its populism, impressively articulated by NTR. Even after the 1994 elections, he became a Member of NTR’s Cabinet, holding revenue and finance portfolios. The same Chandrababu who acquiesced with NTR’s welfarist/populist programme began to articulate the emergent paradigm of development after the 1996 *Lok Sabha* elections, perhaps buoyed up by the outcome. Probably his experience as Finance Minister convinced him of the need for drastic fiscal reforms and change in the governmental policy framework. He might also have realised that it was expedient to own this new thinking, as he saw

the ascendancy of economic reforms and their consolidation in India. The influence of the international financial institutions in laying down the policy requirements for sanctioning the much sought-after loans could be another factor in this transformation.

Chandrababu now felt that the State was in a financial crisis due to NTR's inability to balance 'welfare' and 'development'. The TDP government issued a series of White Papers initiating public discussion on the burden of welfare schemes and how prohibition policy led to the drying up of the State's finances. The White Papers revealed a radical departure in the ruling TDP's approach to the problems of the State and future courses of action – the non-feasibility of governmental subsidies, the need for the reduction of expenditure on welfare schemes, the lifting of state controls, the dismantling of the public sector and opening doors for foreign private capital. As a result, the government went back on the three planks on which the TDP came to power: the price of rice supplied through the Public Distribution System (PDS) was raised, the power tariff for the farm sector was increased and prohibition on IMFL was lifted.

In tune with his new understanding, the TDP government launched the Janmabhoomi programme (a people-centred participatory development process) in January 1997. Its aim was to make villages self-sufficient and rural development comprehensive. The emphasis was on participatory development and its intent was to change the people's tendency to depend on the government to one of 'self-help', to make people partners in development rather than 'passive beneficiaries', to transform the role of government from 'provider' and 'controller' to that of 'facilitator' and 'enabler'. The Chief Minister appealed for a 'paradigm shift in people's thinking on growth and development' and urged everyone to change their 'mindset'. He wanted to transform the role of government from being primarily a controller of economy and provider of welfare to one of facilitator of private-sector activity and promoter of business and an investor-friendly environment (Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1999; Srinivasulu, 1999).

Chandrababu sounded earnest in his effort and there appeared virtually no alternative to the course he had adopted. By the time of the 1999 *Lok Sabha* and Assembly elections, Chandrababu was projected in the regional and national media as a 'model Chief Minister', 'dynamic reformer', 'hi-tech Chief Minister', etc. Chandrababu appealed to the voters to choose between the TDP, which stood for development, stability and SMART government<sup>19</sup> and the Congress, which stood for stagnation, disorder and retrogression. He talked of good governance, bringing professionalism into politics and the need to eliminate corruption and criminal elements from public life (Harshe and Srinivas, 2000). He appealed to intellectuals, professionals, businessmen and artists to take an active interest in politics and held open meetings (*Praja Deevana* programme – literally, 'people's blessing') to recruit them into the TDP.

Since there was a broad agreement between the Congress and the TDP on the need for a paradigmatic shift and the institutionalisation of economic reforms, the Congress could not offer any real alternative policy framework. Chandrababu maintained that he was only following the policies of Manmohan Singh, the former Union Finance Minister who had been credited with the introduction of economic reforms in India in 1991, and that the Congress governments in other States were treading the same path. The Left parties, especially the CPM, launched a sustained attack on the new policy regime of the TDP, accusing Chandrababu of surrendering to the dictates of the World Bank, of seriously harming the State's progress and people's welfare. Chandrababu retorted by saying that after the collapse of socialist countries in Europe there was no longer any place for 'isms', communism was dead, Left parties in India were representing a decadent paradigm of development and that he was only following the Chinese path of modernisation and the policies

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<sup>19</sup> An acronym for Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent government – it acquired much currency after the *Vision 2020* document (Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1999).

of Jyoti Basu, one of the top leaders of the CPM and the then Chief Minister of the Left Front government in West Bengal.

Chandrababu was a pragmatic politician too. He had realised that although his popularity might have increased among the upper classes, it might not bring sufficient votes to win the next election. He knew that despite the praise showered on the PV Narasimha Rao–Manmohan Singh duo for their economic reforms, they were badly mauled at the hustings in the State earlier. PV Narasimha Rao's appeal for votes as alms (*votu bhiksha*), on the basis that his new economic policies had bailed the country out of economic crisis, came to nothing before the populist welfare promises of NTR in the 1994 elections. One lesson the Congress leadership drew from this election was that there are limitations to neo-liberal economic reforms in a democracy, and in a country like India these have to be carried 'with a human face'. For Chandrababu, like any other politician, winning the election was paramount, and he quickly realised that in an election year, a different strategy was required.

Thus, during the few months prior to the 1999 elections, he introduced a plethora of schemes, outclassing even NTR, purportedly for the welfare and uplift of the *dalits*, tribal people, artisans, poor, handicapped, minorities, old persons and every other conceivable section of society. In that way Chandrababu too was a populist, but perhaps a self-conscious populist. He concentrated most on securing the support of women, as he feared that any resentment among them due to the lifting of the ban on liquor might adversely affect his electoral prospects. Several incentives were given to DWACRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas) groups – DWACRA bazaars were organised where women could sell their artefacts. Schemes such as *sukhibhava* (blessing) to provide government support for post-natal women, *samrakshana* (protection) for poor girls, *tatkal* (literally, 'immediate relief') to provide financial support to widows, industrial estates and *mahila* banks (women's banks), etc. were introduced. The scheme that became highly controversial was the *deepam* (light), meant to supply 10 *lakh* cooking gas connections at subsidised rates, announced just one day before the election schedule was released by the Election Commission.

No one knows how many people really benefited from these schemes, but they were publicised very well. Astounded by the torrent of welfare schemes, the Congress and the Left Parties, which had hitherto attacked the TDP for giving up or diluting welfarism, found themselves at a loss to know how to proceed. They lampooned Chandrababu for trying to beguile people with his 'schemes gimmicks' and trying to buy votes with public money. When the Election Commission gave a directive to stop the *deepam* scheme until the elections were over, Chandrababu threw blame on the Congress for obstructing schemes for women's welfare. On the other hand, it was not difficult for the elite to understand that Chandrababu had to resort to these 'politrics' because of the compulsions of the electoral market and that populist welfarism was not his real agenda. Claiming to have balanced development and welfare, he thought he could collect votes with both hands. With a view to extricating himself from this predicament, the Pradesh Congress President hurriedly announced that his party, if voted to power, would supply electricity to the farm sector free of charge. Although it had some impact in the Telengana region, where a large percentage of farmers is dependent on bore wells, it came too late.

The 1999 elections became crucial to the TDP for several reasons: (i) the TDP sought for the first time the people's mandate in the Assembly elections without its founder-leader, NTR; (ii) Chandrababu faced the electorate on his own for the first time for power at the State level, which mattered most to the TDP leadership; (iii) the elections were considered to be a test for acceptance or otherwise of Chandrababu's new style of politics and economic policies; and (iv) there was a realignment of political parties that had implications for the voting pattern and possible shifts at the base, as the BJP and the TDP came together, even as the TDP and the Left fell out with each other.



If the number of seats won is the measure to decide the victor and the vanquished in an election, then the TDP–BJP combine scored an impressive victory. Out of the 42 *Lok Sabha* seats in the State, the TDP won 29 (out of 34 contested) and the BJP seven (out of eight contested). As a fatal consequence of the quirky side of India's first-past-the-post electoral system, the Congress Party, which polled more votes than the TDP as far as the *Lok Sabha* elections were concerned (42.8% as against the TDP's 39.9%), managed to secure only five seats – the lowest score since the formation of the State (Table 4). Of the 293 seats for which elections were held to the Assembly, the TDP was contested 269 seats and won 179. The regional spread of its victory was also good as it won a majority of seats in all the three regions of the State: 102 seats out of 134 in Coastal Andhra, 32 out of 53 in Rayalaseema, and 58 out of 106 in Telengana. The BJP, which had only two seats in the dissolved Assembly, won 12 seats out of the 24 allotted to it. The Congress Party, which secured majorities in 157 Assembly segments during the 1998 *Lok Sabha* elections, managed to secure only 91 seats. Compared to the 1994 situation, there was tremendous improvement in the Congress performance in 1999, as it increased its share of the vote by 7% from 33.6% in 1994 to 40.6%. The difference between the TDP and the Congress vote was altogether only 10.56 *lakh* votes, but in a situation of straight contests, this was insufficient for the Congress to secure a majority of seats in the Assembly. Thus, based on the votes polled by the Congress and the TDP, the victory of the Telugu Desam was not as grand as it was made out to be, and the defeat of the Congress was not as miserable as first appears.

However, looking at the pattern of election outcomes in recent times, where the ruling parties had to withdraw due to an 'anti-incumbency vote', the fact that the TDP managed to retain power was certainly creditable. This aspect of TDP's victory needs careful examination. Clearly, there were several factors that influenced the election process and outcome in 1999.

One of the foremost reasons for the victory of the TDP and the BJP in this election could be attributed to the TDP–BJP alliance itself. In the 1998 *Lok Sabha* elections, the TDP secured about 32% of the vote and the BJP 18%, each going to the polls independently. There was a feeling that the BJP was emerging as the third force in the State politics. Apart from the four seats it won, the BJP stood second or third in 10 other *Lok Sabha* constituencies, securing 15% or more of the votes. In Telengana it secured 26% of the vote while the TDP took only 23.6%. While the voting for the BJP in urban areas caused less surprise, its substantial vote in the coastal districts of West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Prakasam and Nellore, besides winning two seats in East Godavari district in that election, was thoroughly unexpected by both the Congress and the TDP. The TDP leaders were worried that farmers and youth in the rural areas, especially from Kapus and backward castes, were shifting in a significant way from the TDP to the BJP.

Immediately after the 1998 elections, the TDP, which hitherto played a major role in building the 'Third Front', made an about-turn by extending support to the Vajpayee government at the Centre. Obviously this was for two reasons: firstly, it did not want the installation of a Congress government at the Centre since the very existence of the TDP in the State had been grounded in its opposition to the Congress – a Congress government at the Centre would threaten the TDP government and would bolster the Congress position in the State; and secondly, extending support to the Vajpayee government would be a shrewd political move to stem the growth of the BJP in the State, since the latter had to keep a low profile and befriend the TDP for its survival. This shift in TDP's strategy of de-linking itself from the Left as their political cohabitation became untenable due to the Left parties' hostility to economic reforms, and aligning with the BJP, a rising political force at the national level, proved to be essential to their success in the 1999 elections. The alliance with the BJP compensated more than what the TDP lost due to the estrangement of the Left parties (in the 1998 elections the combined Left vote stood at 5.5%) and also due to the split in the TDP, when Harikrishna, who played a catalyst role in toppling NTR and wanted to be the Chief Minister, launched his own political outfit, the Anna TDP.

The BJP had its own strategy, priorities and compulsions. Coming to power at the Centre was its immediate priority, and, in any case, it had no chance of coming to power on its own in the State – it required the TDP's support in the *Lok Sabha*. Since the Vajpayee government fell by one vote, every single seat it won or every supporting vote it secured in the *Lok Sabha* would be crucial, declared its national leaders. As such, it did not attach much importance to the number of seats it would win in the Assembly, but opted for a greater share in the *Lok Sabha* seats. For Chandrababu the priority was to win the Assembly elections, which he did not think he could do on his own. He extracted concessions from the BJP's Central leadership, as he knew that it needed his support to win the *Lok Sabha* elections. Thus, the complementarity of each other's priorities and pragmatic considerations made the alliance possible.

For a long time, most of the voters from the Brahman and Vysya communities had been supporters of the Congress. But as part of the nationwide shift of upper-caste voters towards the BJP, there was a sudden surge in support from these social groups to the BJP in the State. Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) data on the 1998 elections in Andhra Pradesh show that the vote for the BJP increased on moving up from the lower to higher end of socio-economic status (Table 5). In the 1999 elections, the TDP–BJP combine received 64% of votes from these upper castes. The vote among the Kapus and the forward among the backward castes was also high for this combine. There seemed to be some decline in the Muslim vote for the TDP due to the alliance, as it went down from 46% in 1998 to 28% in 1999. The support for the Congress Party among Reddis and *dalits* remained very high, while it was at a considerable level among the lower OBCs. The CSDS data show that in the 1999 election the middle-class voters favoured the Congress Party over the TDP (Table 6). It has been maintained for some time by the critics of economic reforms that the strength of the new economic policies was due to support from the middle classes who saw in them new opportunities for employment and acquisition of consumer goods. Based on this logic, a higher proportion of middle classes should have voted for the TDP instead of the Congress. It is also interesting to note that support for the TDP among the very poor was significantly high as compared to the Congress. This was true even in the 1996 and 1998 *Lok Sabha* elections.

When compared to the 1998 *Lok Sabha* elections, the TDP–BJP alliance polled about the same percentage of votes in 1999 – the combined vote of the TDP and the BJP in 1998 was 50.3%, while it was 49.8% in 1999. This means that had the BJP contested on its own and secured at least half of the votes it received in the 1998 elections, the TDP would have lost badly. The TDP leadership was initially worried when simultaneous elections were announced in the State, because when these were held in 1989, the party was utterly defeated at both levels. After seeing the enthusiasm in Congress circles and the excitement generated by Sonia Ghandi's campaign, they were afraid that a similar fate might befall them this time too. However, as it turned out, the simultaneous elections went in favour of the TDP. The pro-BJP factors, such as the anti-Sonia feeling among the upper castes, the failure of the Congress to form government at the Centre after it had pulled down the BJP government, the glorified image of Vajpayee, etc., helped the Telugu Desam too.<sup>20</sup>

The alliance with the BJP was equally important to the TDP in that it helped to play down the negative side of the TDP government and neutralised to some extent the deep-seated antipathy towards it among certain pro-BJP social groups. The upper-caste elites, who are in large number in the bureaucracy, professions, academia, electronic and print media, have a significant role in opinion formation. Earlier in 1989 some of these sections played a crucial role in generating an anti-TDP political climate. But the alliance with the BJP, coupled with the pragmatic approach of Chandrababu and his policies changed the situation. The media hype in favour of the TDP–BJP

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20 CSDS sample data show that ballot splitting was negligible as most of the voters who voted for the BJP also voted for the TDP. The TDP–BJP alliance received 49.8% votes in the *Lok Sabha* elections and 47.5% in the Assembly elections. It is not certain whether the BJP core voters would have voted for the TDP on such a scale had the elections to the *Lok Sabha* and the Assembly been held separately.

combine, creating a positive image of Chandrababu and consent to his policies, became a factor in creating a favourable environment and dampening anti-TDP sentiment.

Another important development in Andhra Pradesh politics during Chandrababu's regime, which helped the TDP to increase its vote among the *dalits*, was the emergence of the autonomous organisation of the Madigas. The Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS), led by a young man, Krishna, spearheaded the agitation for categorisation of SC reservations so that the Madigas would receive their due share in education, employment and other benefits provided by the government (Suri, 2001b). The MRPS leadership supported the Telugu Desam in the 1998 *Lok Sabha* elections, while the Mala Mahanadu, the organisation claiming to represent the Malas, supported the Congress Party. CSDS data show that about one-third of the SC voters voted for the TDP-BJP alliance while the Congress Party polled 63% (Table 6).

Commenting on the election results, Chandrababu said that the TDP succeeded because women had voted for the party on a large scale. CSDS data show that while 47.1% women voters chose the TDP-BJP alliance, 41.7% voted for the Congress. The women's vote for the TDP had been on the higher side in all the previous elections: 50.3% and 42.9% in 1996 and 45.7% and 42.5% in 1998 in favour of the TDP and the Congress respectively (Table 5). That Chandrababu could stem the partial alienation of women voters in the aftermath of lifting prohibition by introducing a number of welfare schemes for women, and instead took the women vote in favour of the TDP close to the 1996 level, is noteworthy indeed.

The numerous welfare schemes launched by the TDP government before the elections might have influenced some sections of voters. The election surveys reveal that voters are more concerned about their immediate problems, rather than long-term strategies and larger national problems. Thus during the 1999 post-poll survey when asked: 'What, in your view, should the new government attend to on a priority basis?' many mentioned programmes that would meet their basic needs. When asked: 'What was the reason for whom you voted in this election?', the overwhelming response was that the candidate or the candidate's party or the local leaders helped in securing their immediate needs, such as getting ration cards, bank loans, house sites, government assistance, gas connection, drinking water, approach roads, etc. The grand issues of globalisation, liberalisation, etc., which have a far-reaching impact on their lives, seem to have very little place in their voting decisions. Thus the welfare schemes might not have secured votes from all sections on a large scale, but whatever the marginal impact they had on the voting decisions of some people among some sections was significant enough for the TDP to improve its electoral prospects.

Certain personal traits of Chandrababu and his leadership style were also helpful to the party. Unlike the older generation of political leaders, he represented a new type of politician. He was educated, intelligent, young and hardworking. Although he neither possessed the charisma of NTR nor was he an impressive speaker, he amply compensated these qualities with his abilities of shrewd planning, extraordinary memory, management skills and hard work. He was always projected as a leader working hard, touring the districts and meeting the people. In initiating public discussion on the status of government finances, on the problems of welfare schemes, participating in Janmabhoomi programmes, and surprise visits to government offices, or in the face-to-face programmes with the Chief Minister broadcast every week on television, he made himself visible everywhere. In local meetings he showed perseverance and confidence in answering criticisms and questions. He tried to communicate with people directly, giving an impression that he relied more on people for continuation in power than on the intermediary structures of the party or government. For this, he put electronic tools and information technology to good use.

There was a feeling in some circles that the personalised attacks against Chandrababu and the negative campaigning carried out by the Congress leaders was counter-productive. They ridiculed

Chandrababu's commitment to good governance as hypocritical, but the verbal tirades of the opposition, which were mostly aimed at Chandrababu, actually made him the central figure in State politics. Everyone seemed to be talking about him, for good or bad, and others were seen only in relation to him. His seizure of power from his father-in-law might have appeared unethical in the beginning but it gradually faded from people's memory as time elapsed or they simply chose to forget it as he appeared to be working hard for the State and producing good results. While he was respected by the elite and the middle classes, Chandrababu took care that he was not disliked by the common man. Like NTR, he might not have been venerated by the party men and supporters, but he kept people around him in awe.

After 1996, the Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh found itself for the first time since the formation of the State in a distressful situation of not being in power both at the Central and State levels. When the TDP was in power between 1983 and 1989, the Congress was able to act against it with the support of its own government at the Centre and the patronage available for it to bestow on the Congress leaders in the State. But after 1996, it was like a fish out of water. Conversely, Chandrababu remained a key figure in the Central government both during the period of the united front government and later the BJP-led government, as well as holding power at the State level.

A class of neo-rich, who were benefited through government contracts and patronage at different levels, grew in support of the TDP making it financially sound. It was widely said that most of the contracts under the Janmabhoomi programme and other developmental works undertaken with funds received from international financial and aid agencies went to the TDP's supporters. The financial strength of the ruling party leaders went up with the 'commissions' and 'percentages' received from the contractors. There were also allegations that most of the welfare benefits and opportunities available through government were distributed so as to favour mainly the supporters of the ruling party. Thus Chandrababu was able to use the economic reforms, developmental works and welfare programmes to build support to the ruling party at the district and local levels.

Chandrababu also carefully groomed the party structures at the intermediate levels. Known for his organisational skills, he constantly monitored the party functioning at lower levels. In running the party organisation there was a certain advantage to Chandrababu which the Congress did not have. In the TDP he was the supreme leader. All factions and faction leaders in the TDP had to be loyal to him, unlike in the Congress where factions in the State party were always at loggerheads, each claiming to have the blessings of one or the other leader at the Centre. On the eve of the 1999 polls, there was mutual bickering among the faction leaders in the Congress as to who should become the next Chief Minister. At the district and local level most of the Congress leaders, as usual, were busy in their factional quarrels.

As far as the Left Parties were concerned, the 1999 elections showed how weak they had become under the shadow of NTR, who stood over them like a banyan tree. For the first time after 1983, the CPI and the CPM contested in the elections by opposing the major political parties of the State – the Congress, the TDP and the BJP. The Left parties secured the lowest percentage of votes since the formation of the State – 2.7% in the *Lok Sabha* and 3.3% in the Assembly elections. While the CPI did not secure even a single seat, the CPM won two. The magnitude of their defeat becomes more explicit given that in all the seats they contested, CPM stood in second position in four places and CPI in two places only.

The splinter groups of the TDP – namely the TDPLP and Anna TDP – were virtually wiped out in the 1999 elections. Neither of the two rival TDP leaders – Lakshmi Parvathi of TDPLP or Harikrishna of the Anna TDP – had any grasp of the changing policy environment or alternative plans for the development of the State. They were mostly motivated by ill will towards Chandrababu and the prospect of gaining political power. Initially there was some interest among

the TDP activists in Harikrishna's abilities to rally support – although very few in the State believed that he would emerge as an alternative to the TDP, it was felt that he could cut into the TDP vote, marring the TDPN prospects. However, once the election process began, the Anna TDP proved to be a non-starter. The Mahajana Front, a conglomerate of 13 political groups and organisations of backward castes, *dalits* and tribals, put up candidates in 131 seats. It worked out a formula whereby seats were apportioned to different castes, sub-castes, religious groups and women in proportion to their population, but the Front did not carry much weight with the electorate.

The defeat of the Congress Party in the 1994 and 1999 Assembly elections, however, did not mean that it was written off or exhausted. There were occasions when the electoral reverses of the Congress were thought to be irreversible, but they showed ample resilience and staged a comeback. It had its own network of leaders from local to State levels, operating in a peculiar democratic party organisation of its own. The array of social groups that support the Congress is still quite impressive, as became clear in the *Panchayat* elections held in July–August 2001, which will be examined in some detail in the following section.

## 7 Elections to the *Panchayati Raj* Bodies (2001)

Elections to the *Panchayat* bodies were due in March 2000, as they were previously held in February 1995, following the 1994 Assembly elections. But the elections were postponed several times. Finally they were held under the orders of the Supreme Court in July/August 2001. Since the elections to the upper two tiers of the *Panchayati Raj* were held on a party basis, they assumed the proportion of a mini General Election. It was truly a massive exercise in grassroots democracy where people were called upon to choose about 2.43 *lakh* representatives at different levels in the *Panchayati Raj* set-up. The elections became crucial to the political parties for various reasons: (i) they provided an opportunity for the Congress Party to stage a comeback or for the TDP to further consolidate its gains in the earlier elections; (ii) claims and counter claims made by the contending parties about the economic reforms and welfare programmes of the TDP and the extent of support enjoyed by them; (iii) the realignment of the Congress and the Left parties after a period of nearly two decades, and the breakdown of the alliance between the TDP and the BJP; (iv) the emergence of the issue of a separate Telengana spearheaded by the Telengana Rashtra Samithi, a new political outfit founded by the former deputy speaker of the Assembly and TDP rebel, K. Chandrasekhara Rao; and also (v) the issue of transferring powers to the *Panchayati Raj* institutions (PRIs) as stipulated in the Constitution of India as well as in the *Panchayati Raj* Act of the State.<sup>21</sup>

The *Panchayati Raj* set-up in Andhra Pradesh became somewhat complex after the present *Panchayati Raj* Act was brought into force by the Congress government in 1994 on the basis of the 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment to the Constitution. The Act provides for a three-tier structure – *Gram Panchayat* at the village level, *Mandal Parishad* at the intermediary level, and *Zilla Parishad* at the district level. Each *mandal* and district is divided into a number of territorial constituencies. Each *Mandal Parishad* Territorial Constituency (MPTC) consists of a population of over 4000 and each *Zilla Parishad* Territorial Constituency (ZPTC) consists of a population of over 50,000. There are 1094 *Mandal Parishads* with a total of 14,591 MPTCs. Since the area of a *Mandal* is coterminous with that of the ZPTC, there are 1094 ZPTCs in the 22 districts (excluding Hyderabad, which is entirely urban) of the State. Depending on the size of the population, the number of ZPTCs, MPTCs and *Mandals* varies from district to district.

34% of positions at all levels – *Sarpanches* (head of the village *Panchayat*), Members of the village *Panchayat*, MPTCs, ZPTCs, *Mandal* Presidents and *Zilla Parishad* Chairpersons – are reserved for those who belong to backward castes, 17.6% are reserved for the scheduled castes and 7.6% for the scheduled tribes. Within each of these categories and the unreserved category, one-third of positions are reserved for women. These reservations are based on a twofold criterion: their respective proportions in the population, and by rotation, i.e., the offices reserved for the BCs, SCs, STs and women during the earlier election shall not be reserved for the same category until a cycle of reservations in that category is completed.

According to the Act, elections for the MPTCs and ZPTCs should be held on a party basis, and for the village *Panchayats* on a non-party basis. Each *Mandal Parishad* consists of Members directly elected from the MPTCs and the *Zilla Parishad* consists of Members directly elected from the ZPTCs. The Members of the *Zilla Parishad* choose one among them as the *Zilla Parishad* Chairperson. Thus, elections to the *Sarpanches* of the *Gram Panchayat* and Members of the *Mandal* and *Zilla Parishads* are direct, and the elections to the President of the *Mandal Parishad* and the Chairperson of the *Zilla Parishad* are indirect. *Sarpanches* of the village *Panchayats* are permanent

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<sup>21</sup> The Andhra Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act (Act No.13 of 1994). It replaced the Andhra Pradesh Panchayats Act, 1964 and Andhra Pradesh Mandal Praja Parishads, Zilla Parishads and Zilla Abhivruddhi Sameeksha Mandals Act, 1986. The new Act was a comprehensive one as it covered all the three tiers of the *Panchayati Raj* set-up in the State.

invitees to the *Mandal Parishad* and all the Presidents of the *Mandal Parishads* are permanent invitees to the meetings of the *Zilla Parishads* (Sastry, et al., 1995).

While the Chairperson of the *Zilla Parishad*, President of the *Mandal Parishad* and *Sarpanch* of the *Gram Panchayat* are the political heads of the PRIs at the district, *mandal* and village levels respectively, the executive authority is vested in the Chief Executive Officer at the *zilla* level, *Mandal Parishad* Development Officer at the *mandal* level and Village Secretary at the *Gram Panchayat* level. The District Collector continues to have overall powers in the district administration. The *Mandal* Revenue Officer, not the *Mandal Parishad* Development Officer, remains the main administrator at the *mandal* level. Officials such as Executive Engineer (Rural water supply), Executive Engineer (*Panchayati Raj*) and the *Parishad* Educational Officer work under the control of the Chief Executive Officer, *Zilla Parishad*. The Act made it mandatory for the State government to transfer 29 subjects and corresponding financial powers to the PRIs.

The present structure of the *Panchayati Raj* has been a source of confusion, controversy and criticism. The territorial constituency Members of the *Zilla* and *Mandal Parishads* are confused as to their role in the present dispensation. Other than electing Presidents or Chairpersons and participating in the deliberations of the *Parishads*, the MPTC and the ZPTC Members have no executive powers, while the *Sarpanches*, Madhya Pradesh Presidents and *Zilla Parishad* Chairs exercise powers. The TDP government obtained a unanimous resolution by the State Assembly seeking the abolition of the territorial constituency system and direct election of *Mandal* Presidents and *Zilla Parishad* Chairpersons. An all-party meeting at Delhi in May 2001 to seek support for such an amendment was inconclusive and the judgment of the Supreme Court was passed in the meantime. Hence, the State government has no option but to hold the elections under the present structure.

The contrast between the TDP and the Congress came to the fore during the *Panchayat* elections. As in the 1995 elections, the candidate selection in the TDP was highly centralised, especially for the ZPTCs. In his capacity as the President of the TDP, Chandrababu spent several days at the NTR Memorial Trust (the headquarters of the party) to select candidates for the ZPTCs. The district leaders were summoned to Hyderabad for one-to-one interaction with the Party President. District-wide meetings, attended by Ministers, MPs and MLAs from the district, the district unit President, State Secretaries in-charge of the district, etc. were held one after the other. The final lists of candidates were released in instalments in Hyderabad. The selected candidates were then called to Hyderabad to take a pledge of loyalty, administered by the Party President. In contrast, the Congress chose the rather easy route of giving a free hand to its district leaders and MLAs to select candidates, in what the Pradesh Congress President, Satyanarayana Rao, termed 'select and elect' policy to decentralise the selection process and campaigning by the party. District Coordination Committees, consisting of a district coordinator, nominated by the Pradesh Congress President, MLAs, ex-MPs, ex-MLAs, and representatives of affiliated bodies of the region, were formed for this purpose. The President of the District Congress Committee acted as the convenor of the Committee. The Committee members toured the district extensively, often in a bus, and interacted with the party functionaries before finalising candidates. The names of candidates were announced at the district level. The selection of candidates in the Congress might not be very structured as in the TDP, but the Congress has learnt to operate democracy at local level in its own style, which appears to outsiders as chaotic and a free-for-all situation.

With the advantage of being a ruling party with a strong organisational network, the TDP had a head start in the election campaign. An impression was sought to be generated that the Congress or, for that matter, any other party in the State was no match for the TDP and the organisational skills of Chandrababu. 'None can halt our march to victory', Chandrababu declared and asserted that the TDP would win all the *Zilla Parishads* in the State (*Times of India*, 2 July 2001). He criticised the

Congress leaders for attempting to mislead the people and raise hopes among them with false promises, such as free supply of electricity to farmers. According to Chandrababu, while this was a ploy to foment dissatisfaction against his government, it would harm the development activity in the State. The tension between 'development' and 'welfare' came to the fore once again. With 'A vote for the TDP is a vote for development' as his slogan, he said that he wanted to turn every village into a 'mini *swarnandhrapradesh*' (a golden Andhra Pradesh in microcosm). Being a pragmatic politician, Chandrababu was astute enough to temporarily suspend on the eve of elections, as in 1999, the theory of the state as 'facilitator' and talk of the state as 'provider'. Based on the general notion that a large number of voters in India are mainly concerned about their local, personal and immediate problems, rather than the larger national issues and debates, he did his best to attract voters by announcing the large-scale recruitment of teachers (about 20,000 of them) for schools managed by local bodies, the release of 15 *lakh* new liquified petroleum gas connections for cooking to DWACRA and self-help groups under the deepam scheme, the sanctioning of new medical and engineering colleges and laying foundation stones for irrigation schemes in the Telengana.

Badly beaten in the Assembly elections, stunned by the publicity blitzkrieg of the TDP, and not very certain of its fortunes in the polls, the Congress' campaign was initially not as aggressive as that of the ruling party, except for a few bold-faced statements of some local leaders that the party would sweep the polls. In contrast to the highly centralised high-voltage election campaign by the TDP, Congress electioneering slowly picked up momentum with the leader of the Congress Legislature Party, Rajasekhara Reddy, coming down heavily on the TDP government. He charged the TDP with making a mockery of the *Panchayati Raj* institutions by depriving them of all powers, making them ineffective and running the show with bureaucrats. He alleged that the Janmabhoomi programme was a farce and did not accrue any benefit to the people and that the welfare schemes, 'which the Chief Minister remembers only on the eve of elections', were aimed at deceiving the voters. The Congress campaign focused on the promise of supply of free power to agriculturists in the State, which the Congress leaders thought helped them in 1999 to secure a large number of votes from the peasantry who depend on bore-well irrigation, especially in Telengana and Rayalaseema regions.

One issue that became significant in the *Panchayat* elections in Telengana region was the demand for a separate State. In the wake of the creation of three new States by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government, the demand for a separate Telengana State once again came to life. While it was the dissident Congress faction that launched the separate Telengana struggle in 1969, this time it was a dissatisfied TDP leader and later a rebel, Chandrasekhara Rao, who led the campaign. He launched his own outfit, Telengana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), which attracted the attention of educated youth and middle classes in Telengana region, and several unemployed and marginalised political leaders of different parties came to its fold. He carried out a whirlwind tour of Telengana districts, attracting large crowds in several places. Apart from gaining power and popularity, which he was denied in the TDP, Chandrasekhara Rao wanted to use the *Panchayat* polls as an occasion to prove again that people of Telengana desired a separate State.

In fact, most of the leaders of the Congress and the BJP of the Telengana region were in favour of a separate State and they were unhappy that the TRS was trying to steal the show over this issue. The BJP's regional leadership was caught. Since the NDA government at the Centre was dependent on the support of the 29 TDP MPs for its survival, the BJP could not openly take up the separate Telengana demand lest it antagonised the TDP, which stood for a unified State. It was unable to give up its commitment to a separate Telengana but at the same time could not openly speak about it. Those BJP leaders who took a firm stand in favour of a separate Telengana had to fall in line in due course owing to party compulsions. In a game of one-upmanship, the Congress legislators from the Telengana region (about 40 of them) formed the Telengana Congress Legislators Forum



(TCLF), and actively campaigned for a separate Telengana. The slogan of the TCLF was '*jai Congress, jai Telengana*' (victory to the Congress, victory to Telengana). Thus the Congress leaders took quite contrary positions on the Telengana issue: the TCLF and some other leaders of Telengana demanded a separate State, while the State leadership pleaded their helplessness by remaining silent. Of course, there were also fears that an open stand in favour of a separate Telengana would jeopardise its electoral prospects in the coastal region.

The Congress and the Left parties mounted a scathing attack on the TDP government for undermining PRIs, for diverting funds to Janmabhoomi programmes – funds which should have been channelled through the local bodies, and stamping out the powers of the people's representatives in the PRIs by the imposition of nodal officers. The Left parties said that the Chief Minister's talk of people's participation in government and decentralisation was prompted by the World Bank, which made it, according to them, an empty rhetoric. They accused the Chief Minister of striking at the roots of local self-government by depriving them of funds due to them, illegal diversion of Central government grants to meet the State government expenditure and refusing transfer of vital powers to the *Panchayats*. Interestingly, the BJP too was critical of the TDP government. The State BJP *Panchayati Raj* cell convener criticised the Chief Minister for keeping the *Panchayati Raj* in his 'grip'. It was not that parties other than the TDP were genuinely interested in strengthening the *Panchayati Raj* bodies by giving them necessary powers and finances; what they found truly objectionable was the way Chandrababu sought to promote 'parallel' bodies, such as Water Users' Associations, Joint Forest Management Groups (Vana Samrakshana Samithis), School Education Committees, Watershed Committees, Mothers' Committees, Chief Minister's programme for Empowerment of Youth (CMEY), etc. to accommodate a large number of the TDP activists in the local authority structures in the name of promoting participatory development.

The *Panchayat* elections saw the realignment of the Congress and the Left parties after almost two decades. Having been estranged from the TDP in 1999 on its decision to jettison the debilitated Left parties and embrace the rising BJP, the Left parties became critics of their former ally for its support of the 'communal forces' coupled with its economic reforms. Although the electoral support that the Left parties commanded in the State was not very substantial, their support, given the radical tradition of Andhra society and politics and their ability to launch people's campaigns, was significant in lending a progressive aura to the party they were in league with. In fact, the CPI wanted to ally itself with the Congress Party in 1999, but it did not come through due to resistance from the CPM and insufficient enthusiasm from the Congress leaders, who thought they could win the elections on their own. However, the Congress and the Left parties later began to coordinate their campaigns against the TDP, which became evident in the building up of a popular and militant campaign against the rise in electricity charges during June–August 2000. This time in the *Panchayat* elections, the CPI and the CPM had a broad 'no mutual contests' understanding with the Congress in most of the districts.

Equally important was the breakdown of the TDP–BJP alliance. It is said that Chandrababu wanted to show the BJP its place and to pre-empt any possibility of the BJP emerging as a force to reckon with in the State – an ambition that the State BJP leadership had been nurturing for some time now. In addition to this, the BJP support base was believed to be stronger in the urban areas and marginal in rural areas, where the *Panchayat* elections were held. Initially, both the BJP and the TDP reacted positively to the idea of continuing the alliance, which paid them rich electoral dividends in the Assembly (1999) and Municipal (2000) elections. The BJP asked for 165 ZPTCs, whereas the TDP was willing to concede only 62. The State leadership agreed to leave the seat adjustment talks for both the MPTCs and the ZPTCs to their respective district units. However, as part of their pressure tactics, the TDP went ahead and announced the party candidates for most of the ZPTCs in various districts, saying that its candidates would withdraw in favour of the BJP when a seat adjustment was worked out, knowing well that it would be very difficult to persuade a candidate to withdraw once

the nomination was filed. However, the seat-sharing talks came to a deadlock in several districts and finally both the parties went their own way in 12 districts. In the 10 districts they contested together, the BJP was given 53 ZPTC seats, while it fielded candidates in another 135 seats in the remaining 12 districts on its own, in what the two parties termed 'friendly' contests. The calculated disregard for reaching a comprehensive alliance left a trail of bitterness in the BJP leadership.

The election results caused dismay among the TDP leaders while they were received with jubilation among Congress circles. Chandrababu conceded that his party did not perform as well as he had expected. The Congress Party emerged stronger in all the three regions of the State and made significant inroads in districts, such as East Godavari and West Godavari, which the TDP considered its strongholds. Causing further trouble for the ruling TDP, the fledgling TRS emerged as a formidable political force in Telengana. It was responsible for a situation where no party secured majorities in most of the Telengana districts. The TDP was reduced to third place in some districts of Telengana, while in Khammam, the Congress left the TDP far behind. The TRS eclipsed the TDP in Nizamabad and Karimnagar and picked up a significant number of ZPTCs in Medak and Warangal. The TDP leaders acknowledged that they underestimated the strength of the TRS in Telengana and that of the Congress in the coastal districts.

The TDP won the posts of Chairperson of 12 *Zilla Parishads* (Srikakulam, East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Prakasam, Anantapur, Kurnool, Ranga Reddi, Mahabubnagar, Warnagal, and Adilabad); the Congress eight (Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, Nellore, Cuddapah, Chittoor, Nalgonda, Medak, and Khammam); and the TRS two (Nizamabad and Karimnagar). In the elections held for the post of *Mandal* Presidents, the TDP's nominees were elected President of 480 (44.3%) *Mandals*, the Congress 434 (40%) *Mandals*, the BJP 8 (0.7%), the CPI 17 (1.6%), the CPM 20 (1.9%) and the TRS 83 (7.7%). Out of 1094 ZPTCs in the State, the TDP secured 512, the Congress 446, the BJP 13, the CPI 8, the CPM 15, the BSP 3 and the TRS 84. Out of 14,580 MPTCs to which elections were held, the TDP secured 6351, the Congress 5651, the BJP 279, the CPI 204, the CPM 280, the BSP 30 and the TRS 1043. In the elections to the *Sarpanches* of the village *Panchayats*, although they were held on a non-party basis, the TDP claimed that candidates either belonging to it or with TDP backing were successful in 10,080 out of 21,431 village *Panchayats*, working out at 47%. For the sake of comparison, it may be mentioned that in the last *Panchayat* elections held in 1995, the TDP captured all of the 22 *Zilla Parishads*, 653 (63%) of the *Mandal Parishads*, 694 of the ZPTCs (67%) and 7227 (51.2%) of the MPTCs. The Congress at that time won a meagre 283 (27.3%) *Mandal* President positions, 274 (26%) of the ZPTCs and 4696 (33%) of the MPTCs (Table 7).

A regional analysis of the election results shows that the TDP secured 232 (55%) of the ZPTCs, and 3229 (50%) of the MPTCs in coastal Andhra, 123 (53%) and 1373 (50%) in Rayalaseema, and 157 (35%) and 1749 (32%) in Telengana. The Congress surpassed the TDP in Telengana both in the number of ZPTCs and MPTCs, and came very close to the TDP in coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema. Although there are limitations in drawing inferences by comparing the performance of political parties in two elections, held at two different levels and at two different points in time, a comparison of the voting pattern in the 1999 Assembly elections and the 2001 *Panchayat* elections reveals certain aspects which are interesting. The TDP lost heavily in terms of number of seats (both the ZPTCs and MPTCs) although there was no loss in vote percentage, while the Congress made impressive gains, although its vote share had not gone up (Table 8).

In coastal Andhra, the TDP gained marginally over the Assembly performance by securing 49.5% of the vote while the Congress improved their share by about 4%, securing 45.9% of the vote. In the Rayalaseema region both the parties stood their ground. In Telengana region both the TDP and the Congress suffered a slide, but the loss of the Congress vote was substantial. In the 1999 Assembly elections, the Congress polled slightly more votes than the TDP in Telengana region. This time the

TDP had the satisfaction of polling more votes than its principal adversary, with a share of 35.4% of the vote compared to the Congress' 32.5%. However, the TDP won only 157 ZPTCs as against 164 by the Congress and 84 by the TRS. The loss suffered by all the major political parties is roughly equal to the votes secured – 20.4% – by the TRS, (including 9.7% suffered by the Congress, 5.9% by the TDP, 1.5% by the CPI, 0.5% by the CPM, and 0.3% by the BJP). Thus the percentages of votes secured by the two rival parties in the State do not indicate any major shift, compared with the 1999 Assembly elections, in the voting pattern in the State, although the Telengana has become a deviant case due to the entry of the TRS (Table 8). The voting figures reflect a highly polarised political situation in the State.

However, one outstanding feature of these *Panchayat* elections is that it exposed the apparent electoral supremacy of the TDP attained in the 1999 Assembly elections due to the arithmetic of electoral alliances (Suri, 2001a). In the local body elections, however, since the size of the territorial constituencies was much smaller, the actual strengths of the various parties were more truly reflected. At the same time, the verdict cannot be classed as a 'defeat' of the TDP because (i) the percentage of votes it polled in this election was slightly higher than the percentage of votes it polled in the 1999 Assembly elections; (ii) to retain the same percentage of votes two years after the Assembly elections, despite any anti-establishment sentiment that might have crept in, is certainly creditable for a ruling party; (iii) the TDP managed to thwart the Congress onslaught at a time when the latter was in a positive mood after winning the recent Assembly elections in other States and the NDA government was in disarray; and (iv) winning about half the positions in the *Panchayati Raj* bodies, where several local and regional factors play a rather important role, is not an easy affair given the constraints under which the TDP functions. Also, it cannot be termed as a verdict against the policies of the TDP. The assumption that voters exercise their vote based on an evaluation of parties' policies and what good they bring to society at large cannot be taken as always valid. The economic reform policies of the TDP government were not an issue, since the available alternative party, i.e., the Congress, also adhered to a similar policy framework, although it might have differed with the specific mode of their implementation.

The question therefore remains as to why the TDP did not perform as well as was expected by its own leadership. Few accept the argument put forward by Chandrababu himself that the setback was due to the failure of the party and of himself to properly project the welfare schemes implemented by the TDP government and the positive side of economic reforms, because the party spent enormous amounts of money on publicity and he toured extensively, conducting the election campaign himself. Political commentators and party members pointed out several local factors for the poor performance of the TDP, such as lack of coordination among local leaders, factional animosities, back-stabbing, caste factor, dislike for local legislators or leaders and selection of unworthy and ineffective candidates. But these are present on the Congress side too, perhaps with less intensity because it is in opposition, but they alone do not explain the election outcome.

One important factor that seemed to have played a crucial role in the poor performance of the TDP and the impressive electoral gains for the Congress was the forging of an electoral alliance between the Congress and the Left parties on the one hand and the falling away of the TDP–BJP alliance on the other. With a substantial following in the urban areas, the TDP–BJP combine was able to secure an impressive electoral victory in the 1999 Assembly elections. The social base of the BJP is very thin in the rural areas of Andhra Pradesh and the assurance of the Congress to supply free power to the farmers might have weaned away more votes from the TDP. There are also other problems over which the TDP had little control, such as poor crops, lack of remunerative prices for agricultural produce, rising prices, plight of farmers and high suicide rates among weavers, etc., which might have damaged the TDP's electoral chances in the rural areas.

Two points mentioned by some TDP leaders are worth consideration in this context. One is that reservations for the backward castes in the *Panchayati Raj* bodies reduced the electoral advantage of the political parties heavily dependent on the support of these social groups. The TDP relied heavily on the votes of the backward castes, which constitute about 40% of Andhra Pradesh population, as well as the women's vote. Since reservations were provided for the BCs in the *Panchayat* elections and the Congress also put up strong BC candidates in the places allotted to the BCs, the TDP might have lost some of its edge among the BCs. A split in the BC vote might have given the Congress an advantage, so the argument goes.

The second point is that the welfare schemes do not necessarily always bring back votes; they could even become counter-productive in unfavourable circumstances. When welfare schemes were excessively publicised but little was done or they were implemented in a way that gave rise to dissatisfaction among the beneficiaries and a feeling of deprivation among the non-beneficiaries, this could cause damage to the ruling party. For instance, the deepam scheme was launched with great fanfare and two *lakh* liquified petroleum gas connections were distributed at subsidised price. But later, those who had received a connection found it difficult to buy gas regularly because of the 'high' cylinder price. Similarly, in the construction of houses for weaker sections, the beneficiary faced several hurdles in getting his/her name included, securing the subsidy, and ensuring proper construction. Having to bribe many in the process and finding it faultily constructed results in a dissatisfied beneficiary. It cannot be said that beneficiaries of such welfare schemes would invariably vote for the ruling party. If that were the case, NTR, with his large-scale welfare schemes of subsidised rice, cloth and *pukka* (properly constructed with bricks and cement) houses, would not have suffered in the 1987 and the 1995 *Panchayat* elections. Even in the case of Kuppam, the Assembly constituency represented by the Chief Minister, most people there would readily say that their area has experienced tremendous improvement in terms of infrastructure, drinking water and other benefits after Chandrababu became the Chief Minister, but the TDP's majority there reduced to about 25,000 votes in the ZPTCs, compared to about 65,000 votes in the Assembly elections; and in Kuppam town, putting together all the four MPTCs in the town, the TDP secured a majority of only 235 votes.

What is instructive in this election process relates to the leadership style of Chandrababu and the functioning of the TDP. While it is important to note that Chandrababu wields both the positions of President of the ruling party and Chief Minister, what is more important is the way in which the party and the government are operated. No doubt Chandrababu has been widely acknowledged as a competent organiser. But after 1996, the TDP came to be identified with him, much in the same way that it was identified with NTR, but NTR had a mass appeal and exercised a great deal of personal authority in the party. With a view to compensate for NTR's charisma and oratorical skills, Chandrababu relied more on the organisational network, his abilities in managing people, hard work and publicity – areas where he is perceived to be strong. While most of the party leaders agreed that Chandrababu was an all-important leader, his omnipotent image, which fostered a feeling that nobody else mattered in the party and government, and his virtual monopoly of power came to be resented. Had this been in the Congress Party, the disgruntled leaders would have had an outlet in appealing to the Central leaders. But in the case of the TDP, the 'State' leadership itself was the 'Central' leadership. The other leaders had either to accept the situation or leave the party.

Furthermore, Chandrababu's tendency to rely on the bureaucratic machinery rather than the party leaders and elected representatives for advice, information and decision-making became a source of antagonism among the latter. A feeling that a 'bureaucratic *raj*' was prevailing in the State, that the bureaucrats were giving scant respect to political functionaries and that the bureaucrats were mainly emboldened due to the Chief Minister's style of functioning gained ground among the district and local leaders of the party as their image, standing and authority suffered. Often driven by considerations of bestowing patronage on their clientele, exercise of power over others and also

money-making, most of the local leaders became frustrated and demoralised when denied access to these avenues. Besides, the bureaucrats were hardly the embodiment of virtue, talent and objectivity themselves. The bureaucratic corruption had assumed as ominous proportions as that of political corruption. This therefore begs the question of where is the justification for giving more prominence to bureaucrats over politicians in a democracy, where the bureaucrats should learn to obey the instructions of the elected representatives.

The Telugu Desam President set up a committee to identify factors responsible for the below par performance of the party in the 2001 *Panchayat* elections and to recommend corrective measures. Given the party structure and functioning, this introspection exercise is not guaranteed to lead to any promising outcome. Most of the TDP leaders, and even some of the opposition leaders, say that lessons have to be learnt from the verdict in the *Panchayat* elections, but the big question is whether the party is in a position to draw lessons in an objective manner and how it can implement them. Chandrababu says that the party organisation should be further strengthened. The party leaders want to end the feeling of alienation prevailing among the intermediary leaders, and to look for a more open party system, an increased role in the decision-making process, more power for themselves, and higher access to the means of profit and patronage. Thus the TDP faces several dilemmas. Firstly, how to de-concentrate powers both in the party and government – is it possible in the given circumstances and with what consequences? Secondly, Chandrababu says that there is no question of going back on economic reforms. But some leaders speak against the reform process which they believe has alienated the poor from the party. A reversal of the reform process might knock down the pedestal on which the present TDP government rests. Another dilemma is whether to strengthen the *Panchayati Raj* bodies by transferring constitutionally stipulated powers to them and giving more importance to elected representatives at that level. Such a course would however undermine the leverage that the Central leadership now enjoys and loosen its control, not to mention giving more room for the Congress Party in political power, which controls almost as many *Panchayat* bodies as the TDP does now. The TDP appears to have been caught in the contradictions of its own creation, both within the party and governmental structures. These dilemmas are not easy to overcome, much less to resolve, but the success of the TDP will depend on how its leadership addresses them in future.

As far as the Congress is concerned, although outwardly it appears to be a rather disparate group without any cohesive leadership, it is extremely strong in having a multitude of autonomous local leaders with considerable hold in their respective areas, a remarkable capacity for articulation, an extraordinary ability to join ranks with each other at crucial times and an enviable skill in voter mobilisation. Reared in the age-old Congress culture of freely pursuing the interest of the self and the group through manipulation and bargaining, these political entrepreneurs are also adept at the process of consultation, compromise and consensus. Since it is a national party, it has no 'High Command' at the State level, unlike the TDP. Although organisational elections in the Congress Party are seldom held, quite unlike the TDP, communist parties or the BJP, its consensus approach makes it more democratic in its functioning – democracy understood here as accommodating diverse interests, viewpoints and groups and also allowing freedom of dissent. Depending on the circumstances, factionalism, localism and competing factions could be the party's weakness or its strength. Even at its lowest points it has a minimum support base of about one-third of the electorate in Andhra Pradesh – sufficient to regain ground and stage a comeback. It has some committed traditional supporters, who would vote for the Congress and no other party. It also enjoys the overwhelming support of a powerful array of social forces in Andhra Pradesh society.

The Congress Party is once again knocking at the doors of the TDP, proclaiming its readiness to occupy the treasury benches in the Assembly. It has established majorities in about 100 Assembly constituencies in rural areas, which include 50 constituencies where the TDP or the BJP secured majorities in the 1999 Assembly elections. This is the best performance of the party in any

*Panchayat* elections after the emergence of the TDP in the State's political arena. The mood is jubilant in Congress circles. Leader of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP), Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy, said that the result of the *Panchayat* elections was only a 'beginning' and that it would continue in that direction. The Congress leaders maintain that the party is poised to stage a comeback, although both the President of the State Congress and the Leader of the CLP feel that it has to overcome its 'organisational deficiencies', meaning groupism and indiscipline in their party. But the question is, can they do it? Can the Congress become a real alternative to the TDP?

In the 2001 *Panchayat* elections, the Left parties regained some lost ground, especially in their strongholds, Khammam and Nalgonda districts. Suffering from the stigma of clinging on to the TDP leader for too long and being eclipsed by the shadow of NTR, the Left parties are re-learning, although with great difficulty, to stand independently. It is ironic that the Left parties, which, theoretically speaking, stand for a highly centralised party organisation and state structure, have come to champion the decentralisation of power, a cause which has been vouchsafed by the Gandhians and socialists in India. They have been recommending the West Bengal and Kerala model of decentralised administration for adoption by other States.

The greatest loser in this election was the BJP. The results show that there was a deep erosion of the party throughout the State. Reports indicate that the BJP cadre deserted the party to join the increasingly popular TRS. Securing 28% of the popular vote in the 1998 *Lok Sabha* election in Telengana region, the BJP had to be content with 13 ZPTCs (with 2.4% of the vote) this time. It has yielded much of the political space it occupied earlier to other parties, especially the Congress in coastal Andhra and TRS in Telengana regions. Caught in the constraints of running an insecure coalition government at the Centre, precariously dependent on the TDP for its survival, the BJP's Central leadership allowed itself to be outwitted by the TDP and over time forced, as some State leaders say, a political hara-kiri over the state unit.

The TRS has emerged as a strong force in Telengana. Although it won the majority of ZPTCs in one district (Nizamabad) only, it was responsible for a situation where no party secured majorities in most of the Telengana districts. But the *Panchayat* elections also showed that the TRS does not enjoy as much support as it boasted. Even though the backwardness of the region was the main plank for the TRS in its campaign for a separate Telengana State, interestingly, the TRS failed to make any impact in Adilabad and Mahabubnagar districts which are among the most backward in the region. However, the TRS chief said that he was concerned not so much about the *Panchayati Raj* bodies or the outcome of the *Panchayat* elections, but more to show that the Telengana people want a separate State and 'to weaken Chandrababu, the enemy of separate Telengana' (*India Today*, 31 July 2001).

But the main rival for the TRS is not the TDP, but the Congress Party, because the TRS and the Congress are adopting the same postures on the Telengana issue, targeting the same sections of people for electoral support and addressing the same concerns in pursuit of political power. The leadership of the Congress in Telengana has been championing a separate State since the TDP came back to power in October 1999. The PCC (Pradesh Congress Committee) President himself stated that he was in favour of a separate State. The Congress leaders campaigned in the *Panchayat* elections with the slogan of a separate State and with the map of a separate Telengana in the backdrop. As a part of the game of one-upmanship there has been a war of words between the Congress and the TRS, each trying to belittle the other and claiming that a separate Telengana is possible only under its leadership. Chandrasekhara Rao branded the Congress leaders traitors of Telengana and worse than villains, while the Congress leaders called the TRS chief a power-hungry and unreliable politician. It is clear that each can gain only at the cost of the other, to the extent that one will replace the other. This is the reason why, in the election results, the Congress and the TRS,

despite much speculation, could not capture the *Zilla Parishad* Chairs in some of the Telengana districts where they could have formed a majority if they had joined forces.

Recently, there have been initiatives to devolve more powers to the PRIs and to restructure the village administrative system. The introduction of a *Grama Sachivalayam* (Village Secretariat) has begun. With appointment of Secretaries to the village *Panchayats*, who work under the *Sarpanch*, the two parallel posts of Village Administrative Officer (VAO) and Village Development Officer (VDO) have been disposed of. The Chief Minister considered it to be a radical measure, the same as that of the *mandal* system introduced by NTR in 1986, to take the administration to the doorstep of the people. Under the new convergence formula, the government thinks that the new system will achieve the goal of rendering faster, quicker and efficient service to the rural people. The Village Secretary is expected to handle the *Gram Panchayat*, revenue, development and welfare subjects.

## 8 Conclusion

The study of elections in Andhra Pradesh over the last 50 years enables us to understand the major issues and trends that emerged in Indian politics in the post-Independence period, with variations that are specific to the State. In this section, an attempt is made to review the broad trends, major factors and issues in Andhra Pradesh State politics and elections in the last 50 years.

One may begin with the problems in the emergence of the State itself, because politics in Andhra Pradesh to some extent reflect the dilemmas faced in redrawing the political map of India and the issues present in the continuous reconfiguration of the federal structure. The formation of Andhra Pradesh was the result of a protracted struggle for a separate statehood for the Telugu speaking 'nation'. The movement was the first of its kind in post-Independent India, and provided the backdrop for the electoral battles in 1952, 1955 and 1957. The leaders of the Andhra movement argued in favour of strong and autonomous States in a true federation, where each of the federating units could develop equally and successfully and cooperate with each other. Their vision of future India was a federation, called the 'United States of India', which strives to discover a general harmony among communities, presenting a variety of structure and development. The communists too were not far behind the Congress leaders in advocating Telugu nationalism. In fact they tried to outdo the Congress in championing the demand for regional autonomy and a greater Andhra. The strength of the Communist Party and its electoral successes in Andhra Pradesh in the initial years after Independence was partly attributed to its ability to champion Telugu nationalism, at a time when the Congress leaders prevaricated on this issue due to internal factional rivalries and personal power considerations. It is interesting to study how the communists were able to reconcile their theory of a highly centralised party organisation and their advocacy of greater powers to nationalities in India and demand for a federal state.

This Telugu nationalist pride was one of the bases for the emergence of a regional party in the early 1980s, which changed the entire course of State politics and the nature of relations between the Centre and the State. Its founder, NTR, called it a party of the Telugu nation (*desam*). It achieved a spectacular victory in the 1983 elections based on the slogan of preserving the self-respect of the Telugu people, the demand for more powers to the States and opposition to the Centre's excessive interference. It managed to weld together the non-Congress political forces and galvanise the anti-Congress sentiment among the electorate. NTR repeatedly invoked the theme of Telugu self-respect whenever he was in trouble, as was evident in his struggle to keep power between 1984 and 1989.

Interestingly Andhra Pradesh remained a bastion of the Congress Party for a very long time, despite the fact that the non-Congress opposition was strong in the State during the early years after Independence and there was widespread speculation that it would disintegrate under the weight of its internal factional rivalries. Even in the years when non-Congress parties successfully challenged its supremacy and came to power in several other States, it maintained its electoral supremacy in Andhra Pradesh. It took longer in Andhra Pradesh than any other State for the one-party dominant system to break down.

With the emergence of the regional party, the State ceased to be merely an arena for the warring factions of the Congress Party. A veritable two-party system had established itself within few years of the emergence of the TDP. The TDP, which was thought to be a transient phenomenon, if not an aberration, in the initial period of its emergence, became an enduring feature of the State politics. Those who hoped and believed that it would pass on with NTR were also proved wrong. It not only survived NTR, but also consolidated itself. Nor did it disintegrate in the wake of the splits and rival claims for the inheritance of his legacy. But the attempts to institutionalise two regional parties in the style of the neighbouring Tamil Nadu politics were not successful in Andhra Pradesh. As far as



the State politics are concerned, the TDP remains a major force and the national parties are compelled to co-exist with the regional party, either as partners or contenders for power. The Congress Party still persists that a regional party will cause harm to the interests of the State and that there is a real need to elect the same party at the State and the Central levels to build a strong and united India. While the BJP's vision of India might conflict with the reality of different regional parties ruling in the States, each claiming to represent the will and aspirations of specific nationalities, the party leaders have learnt to live with the TDP in the State. The Left parties too had an alliance with the State party for much of the time after it came into existence, before they parted in the 1999 elections. The survival of the TDP depends upon its ability to maintain its image as the representative of the Telugu people, working for the development of the State.

Opposed to the Telugu nationalism, the State also has strong tendencies of regionalism, which continue to affect State politics and electoral outcomes.<sup>22</sup> The formation of the integrated Andhra Pradesh passed through several stages and this process involved a good deal of bargaining, political manoeuvring and a series of compromises made by the leaders of the three regions – coastal Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telengana. Given the unequal development between the regions at the time of State formation and other social and cultural factors that gave them each a distinct identity, the possibility of living in a united State was doubted from the beginning by the leaders of Rayalaseema and Telengana. On occasion, the regional identities and interests were so agitated that it led to mutual distrust and ill will among the people of the different regions.

Two militant and violent separatist agitations rocked the State during the late 1960s and early 1970s. They almost threatened its very survival. However, the agitations were spurred to a large extent by the power considerations of dissidents and factional leaders of the Congress Party taking advantage of the perceived fears among the people of the regions. Only the communists stood firmly for the integrated State. Again the demand for a separate Telengana has come to the fore in recent years and the creation of small States by the NDA government offered an added incentive. This time however, it is not the disgruntled factions of the Congress Party that are responsible for the agitation. Several groups now compete as the advocates of a separate Telengana. If the formation of Andhra State on a linguistic basis was the first of its kind, the separation of Telengana will mark the first division of a linguistic State in the country. Compared to several other small States of India, a separate Telengana State would be considerable in size. But the question is, what should be the basis of the formation of States in India? Where should this stop?

In the last year, the rebel TDP leader, who later formed the TRS, has been spearheading an active campaign for a separate Telengana, saying that the domination of the leaders and people of the coastal Andhra region was mainly responsible for the problems of Telengana, such as backwardness, unemployment and lack of infrastructure facilities. The entry of the TRS in the political arena in a significant way and its impressive performance in the *Panchayat* elections unsettled the major political parties in the State. The huge margin with which the TRS leader won the Siddipet by-election in 2001 revealed the extent to which the demand for a separate Telengana could command support. Several of the Congress and the BJP leaders from the Telengana region are vying with each other to project themselves as the defenders of the Telengana interests. The performance of the TRS, the creation of new associations by the leaders of the BJP (Telengana Sadhana Samathi launched by the BJP Madhya Pradesh Narendra) and the Congress (Telengana Congress Legislators Forum) show that that regional factor will remain a potent force and an issue for political mobilisation in the State in the years to come. The demand for a separate State may have to be tackled both at the political and policy levels.

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<sup>22</sup> If Andhra Pradesh is called a region in India and TDP a regional party, then regionalism in Andhra Pradesh has to be called sub-regionalism and the parties such as the TPS of 1969–72 or the TRS now, sub-regional parties. But, given the specificity of the State, this phenomenon in this paper is called regionalism. Now that the TDP is called a State party, there is no problem in calling the parties and groups that demand separate statehood, for different regions within the State, regional.

Faction is another important factor that influenced the functioning of political parties, especially the Congress Party, the government and the electoral process. The single member, simple plurality (SMSP) principle in elections did not give rise to a two-party system in Andhra Pradesh for a long time. This could be due to the ability of the party in the initial decades after Independence to accommodate diverse groups and interests in the party fold. These diverse groups and interests operated within the factional structure of the Congress Party, as pointed out by several analysts of Indian politics. The Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh, like in most other States in India, was never a united one. The intra-party affairs of the Congress were more often shaped by factional rivalries than considerations of ideology or principles. Factional rivalry in Andhra Pradesh cannot be said to be due to Congress dominance, or what came to be known as the one-party dominant system. Factionalism was rife in the Congress between 1952 and 1957, when there was stiff opposition from the communists and others. Moreover, the success of the Communist Party in the 1952 elections was partly attributed to the division in the Congress leadership. At times, factionalism threatened the survival of the Congress government in Andhra State, and in fact, the Congress government collapsed in 1955 because of factional strife. But we also find that the Congress had a remarkable capacity to reabsorb the breakaway groups back into the party fold soon after the elections were over or with some compromise between the 'official' or dominant group and the dissident groups. Factions had also exhibited the tendency to forge some amount of unity during the time of elections. Most of the observers analysed Andhra Pradesh politics during the 1960s and 1970s on the basis of the dynamics of factions within the Congress (Walch, 1976; Weiner, 1967). Factionalism did contribute to the democratic character of the Congress Party, although it became uncontrollable and ended up as a 'free for all'.

By the 1970s, we find that factionalism in the Congress had lost its mobilisational and integrative function and proved to be counter-productive. The two separatist agitations revealed how factional leaders operate to fulfil their interests. There appeared a direct relation between increased concentration of decision-making powers in the hands of Central leaders and the increase in the factional strife in the State units. As a result, the respect that State leaders, such as Chief Ministers and Presidents of the party in the State, commanded was also diluted. Between 1980 and 1982 the leaders of the State Congress Legislature Party were changed three times. The preoccupation of the factional leaders in impressing the 'High Command', changing the Chief Ministers and securing ministerships and other coveted positions in the government, dissipated the energies of the State and local leaders; it even made them insensitive to people's feelings of disgust towards politics. Encouragement of factions by the Central leaders, erosion of inner-party democracy, systematic destruction of State-level leadership with some self-respect and extreme disregard for ethical values, combined to discredit the Congress Party. Neither did factionalism in the Congress Party end with its defeat in 1983 and the emergence of a strong rival in State politics in the form of the TDP. In the 1989 elections, the factional leaders forged temporary unity, and partly because of this they won the elections. Nonetheless, factionalism became rampant again afterwards. The factionalism in the party when it was in power in 1989–94 brought back a situation similar to that which prevailed prior to 1983. Some of the top Congress leaders admit that factionalism has become a curse for the Congress Party, especially when faced with its formidable rival, the TDP. If the Congress Party could enforce some amount of discipline in the party and restrict the open factional rivalries, its chances of regaining power would increase.

Factions do exist in the Telugu Desam Party too, but to a lesser extent, and they operate in a different manner. The Congress is a national party and so factions in the Congress exist with linkages from State to the local level; so far they do not question the supremacy of the High Command. Since the TDP is a State party, factions cannot exist at the State level or operate against the wishes of the leader of the party – NTR until 1995 and Chandrababu afterwards. They operate at the district level with one or other of the Cabinet Ministers as mentor. NTR exercised supreme power and no leader or faction could exist while disregarding NTR's authority.

The caste factor has acquired importance in State politics due to the expansion of democracy and the logic of electoral politics. The paradox of modernity and democratic politics in India is that while they have contributed to weakening the caste system, they tended to reinforce group solidarities based on caste identity. Attempts to forge horizontal solidarity among caste men were made by the elite of almost all the major caste groups in Andhra region, including some of the now backward and *dalit* castes, by forming caste associations in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Suri, 2000). The non-Brahman movement, Justice party politics, agrarian struggles and the freedom movement produced talented leaders adept at political mobilisation and articulation among the peasant communities. They became leaders of the Congress, communist and socialist parties at the State and local levels, but more so at the local level.

Although the Brahman leadership was in control of the top positions in the government immediately after Independence, they were unable to continue their hold for long due to pressure from the emerging leaders from peasant communities and of democratic and electoral politics. The abolition of the feudal land relations, enthusiastically carried out by the Brahman Congress leaders because most of the feudal landlords and intermediaries belong to non-Brahman castes, in fact facilitated the rise of leaders from the rich/middle peasant background from the farming communities, such as the Reddis, Kammas, and Kapus. Such a process also helped the consolidation of the Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh during the 1950s and the decline of the communists and socialist parties. It has been pointed out by observers of Andhra Pradesh politics that while the caste–class convergence explains the political success of the peasant castes, the electoral process itself contributed to reinforcing their prominence. Thus in the first decade after Independence, leaders from these communities were able to come to the forefront, brush aside the Brahman leaders in the political arena, control the Congress Party and occupy the driving seat in the government. Although such a process began late and acquired a different form in Telengana, the rise of Reddi and Velama leadership there was impressive. This process was also responsible for the changing character of the political leadership in the State. Studies on other States have also pointed out such replacement of the Western educated, upper-caste urbanised elite by the middle caste, provincial and more rural elite. This process began much earlier in Andhra Pradesh. The leaders coming from peasant communities were not tradition bound, although they might have put traditional identities to political use. They handled the modern political institutions with reasonable efficiency.

It is the existence of competing ‘dominant castes’, unlike other States in India, that give a unique character to politics in Andhra Pradesh. Several Western and Indian scholars have characterised Andhra Pradesh politics as essentially a struggle for political supremacy between the Reddis and the Kammas. This was said to have begun at the time of the formation of the State itself (some historians traced it to the developments in pre-British Andhra!). The struggle between Sanjiva Reddy and Ranga for Congress leadership between 1948 and 1951 was cited as a major instance in this regard. The eventual exit of Ranga from the Congress was treated as a final settlement of the rivalry in favour of the Reddis, who held their sway over the Congress in the decades to come. A long time before, Selig Harrison had argued that the Kammas joined the Communist Party in order to oppose the Reddis, who were already dominating the Congress (Harrison, 1960). The interpretation was that while the Reddis captured the leadership in the Congress, the Kammas had captured the leadership of the Communist Party, since it was seen as a potential force to come into power. He related the strategies of the Kammas to acquire political dominance to the rise of the Communist Party.

However, others did not accept this interpretation. Rasheeduddin Khan observed that all the dominant castes, particularly the Reddis and the Kammas, could be found in varying proportions in different competing parties, although it was true that there were more Reddis in the Congress than in other parties (Khan, 1969). He pointed out that in the 1952 and 1955 elections in Andhra there were more Kammas than Reddis in the list of Congress candidates and that more Kammas won as

Congress than as communist candidates in 1955. Carolyn Elliot also pointed out that such a supposed rivalry did not exist in the State because normally the elites of one caste dominate in a particular locality and the comparison of the representation of the Reddis and the Kammas in the Congress and the Communist Party during the 1950s reveal little variation (Elliot, 1970). Weiner too, in his study of Guntur district in the mid-1960s, disagreed with such a 'notion' (Weiner, 1967). It might be true that a majority of the Kammas had been anti-Congress and voted for the 'opposition parties' in the State, which included the Communist Party and the KLP and later the Swatantra Party, and that a great majority of the Reddis identified with the Congress and voted for it. Since the communist movement was strong in the delta districts, where the Kammas were preponderant, the leaders hailing from this community were naturally found in larger number in the Communist Party. But we should also note that some of the ablest and topmost leaders of the Communist Party came from Reddi and non-Kamma communities. There were also important Kamma leaders in the Congress. The Kamma–Reddi rivalry thesis, although tempting, does overlook the complexity involved in the dynamics of the Andhra Pradesh society and politics.

Some tried to explain the emergence of the TDP also in terms of the Kamma–Reddi rivalry. One argument was that the Kammas backed the TDP because they had been longing for power and were aggrieved that the Reddis had dominated the political scene for too long in the State. According to this line of analysis, the Kammas never had a Chief Minister in the State even though they grew economically strong, accumulating surpluses in agriculture, industry, film, hotel and liquor business, etc. (Baru, 2000; Hanumantha Rao, 1995; Kohli, 1991; Upadhyaya, 1988; Haragopal, 1985). Since the chances for a Kamma to become Chief Minister in the Congress were bleak, the Kammas chose to support the TDP. It might be true that a great majority of the Kammas sided with NTR, but that was hardly enough to see the TDP in power. An overwhelming majority of the backward caste population supported NTR because of the feeling prevalent among them that the policies of Mrs Gandhi were mainly aimed at capturing the votes of the *dalits* and that little was done by the Congress for the development of the backward castes, even though the proportion of the needy among BCs was considerably high. Even the TDP leaders earlier admitted that the BC vote was the mainstay for the party's success in the elections.

Leaders of the Congress and the TDP are aware that in Andhra Pradesh, no party could hope to win an election if it banks exclusively on the support of any one caste, since no caste in the State has even 10% of the population (even assuming that all caste people vote for the same party) or if it is seen as the party exclusively of a particular community. Parties in Andhra Pradesh appear to forge stable multi-caste alliances: for instance, the Congress is seen as a party mainly based among the Reddis, supported by the Brahmans, the Vysyas and the *dalits*, while the TDP looks for support from the Kammas and the backward castes. The Kapu vote became crucial in the last two decades as the late 1980s and early 1990s saw the emergence of the Kapu movement for a greater share in political power. Some of them would say that as the Brahmans, Reddis, Velamas, Kammas, BCs and *dalits* had had their representative as Chief Minister, it should now be the turn of the Kapus to have their representative at the head of government. But the problem is that they do not have a single leader who can unite them to stake a claim for the position of Chief Minister.

The growth of political awareness and participation among the BCs and the *dalits* since the 1970s was striking in Andhra Pradesh politics. This was partly attributed in the initial years to Mrs Gandhi's strategy of drawing these communities into the Congress fold to undermine the hold of the provincial potentates who hailed mainly from the intermediate landowning communities. Their increasing assertion could also be due to the emergence of an elite among these communities with increased access to land, wealth, education and employment. Although caste tensions are widespread in the State and there have been occasional clashes between caste groups in some villages, these need not be construed as a result of age-old feudal oppression. On the contrary, it is the breakdown of feudal order and the social relations based on it that is mainly responsible for the

caste clashes. The democratic process, political equality, openness of the political parties and the government policies for the benefit of these 'disadvantaged groups' together have broken the back of the traditional caste system. As the government bestows benefits on the individual of a weaker section merely on the basis of caste, it tends to strengthen caste identities and the potential beneficiaries tend to perpetuate these caste divisions. This process gives impetus to the members of the hitherto backward castes, due to their 'privileged' status given by the government and their importance in electoral arithmetic, to organise themselves on caste lines.

In a situation where politicians, while amassing wealth for themselves in unethical ways, indulge in distributing largesse out of state funds and making opportunistic policies with little conviction to assist the downtrodden, but with an eye instead on the votes of these numerically large sections, and where the forward elements of the depressed and backward castes take these concessions and benefits accorded by society as a matter of routine right, then social agreement and amity break down. Such a situation breeds a feeling of resentment and unfair deprivation of equality of opportunity among the members of hitherto privileged castes, especially the backward elements in these groups, and they look for alternative strategies to safeguard and advance their interests.

On the basis that the caste solidarities, through caste associations and community activity, are forged to secure the individual and secular interests of the members and not to reinforce the norms of the withering caste system, we may speak of castes today as mere shells, devoid of their kernel, which will in the course of time wear away or develop cracks. Nonetheless, the issue at stake is what benefit or harm they render to the social cohesion and the democratic process in the meanwhile.

Most of the backward castes have their own state-wide associations and they try to put pressure on all political parties to field more candidates from their communities. Appeals have become common whereby the caste associations ask their caste people to vote for their caste candidates, irrespective of the party affiliation of the candidate. In the 1980s, we saw the emergence of autonomous *dalit* organisations fighting for the cause of the *dalits*, especially in the aftermath of the attacks against them in several villages by the upper castes, which, according to them, were abetted by the members of the ruling parties – both the TDP and the Congress. The political parties have been making concerted efforts to mobilise the votes of these communities by co-opting the community leaders and encouraging them to take an active part in the caste associations of these communities. The dexterity with which the political parties accommodated the representatives of the social backward classes and castes, including *dalits* and tribals, is quite impressive. At some critical moments, Andhra Pradesh society appeared to be a steaming cauldron, but the tensions were never allowed to reach boiling point.

The provision of reservations to the BCs, SCs and STs in the local bodies is a major experiment in democratising grassroots politics in Andhra Pradesh. It has already brought a radical change in the landscape of caste politics in the State, with thousands of persons from these communities sitting on the representative bodies at every level and becoming trained in the craft of politics. In due course, they will certainly look for positions at the State level. The more backward among the backward castes and the *dalits* are also becoming assertive, making the caste question more complicated. The struggle by the Madigas for categorisation of SC reservations based on sub-castes and for a 'due share' in political power brought to the fore the issue of ensuring justice within the disadvantaged groups. How the tensions between the contradictory pressures from competing social groups to broaden political democracy will be resolved remains a serious challenge to the political elite in the State.

The CSDS data for the 1996, 1998 and 1999 elections show that the voters of every caste were divided between the Congress and the TDP, although there were variations in the proportion of

support enjoyed by these two parties among different castes. With the emergence of the BJP there was an important shift of the upper-caste vote in its favour from the Congress. That is the reason why nearly two-thirds of the upper caste vote went to the TDP–BJP combine in the 1999 elections. TDP has been consistently polling a greater percentage of votes among the BCs and its vote was also higher among the peasant OBCs. Among the *dalits*, the TDP has been polling a consistently low percentage of votes as compared to the Congress; it secured only one-third of the SC vote in the 1998 and 1999 elections. The categorisation of the reservations for the SCs might have helped the TDP to retain support from some *dalit* sections, despite of the alliance of the TDP with the BJP.

However, caution should also be exercised in estimating the role of caste in electoral politics. Certainly caste is not the sole factor that influences the voters' decision. If it had been so, Indian polity would have been broken to pieces or at least its politics would have been entirely different. Increasing urbanisation, occupational mobility, classification within the castes, voters' ability to take decisions on the basis of individual interest, leaders' qualities and performance, and concern for certain basic values of life and issues in society, etc. make caste less salient in elections. Caste is not entirely intractable in all situations, as some would imagine. Although we often hear of vote banks or that a particular caste people vote for a particular political party, people of a caste in the State rarely vote en masse to any single candidate or party.<sup>23</sup> Even when a large number of voters of a particular caste vote for a particular party or candidate, they do so not because of mere sentimentality, but for a variety of factors. The shifts in electoral support among various communities for different parties are also worthy of consideration in this regard. The electoral system, especially the simple plurality system, compels parties to gather support from as many social groups as possible and hinders the emergence of parties based exclusively on a single caste.

It does not, however, follow from this that caste has only very little or no role to play in determining voters' decisions. It is true that at the local level, people of a caste often tend to vote to the same party or candidate, although these caste people might vote differently in different localities. Caste is the most readily available social identity which is put to political use by the local leaders. When caste factor is combined with other factors, it acquires political force. Apart from the macro-level identification of a political party with the aspirations of the political elites of a particular caste, most people of a particular caste vote for a particular party or candidate as guided by the local leaders, due to a belief that these leaders will secure them some tangible benefits, such as a loan, a place in an educational institution for their children, a job, support in the event of any individual problem, etc. It is this intertwining of community feeling with immediate needs – tangible and intangible – that make caste appear a major factor in the State politics and elections.

On the whole, the major feature of State politics in the post-Independence period seems to be that the intermediate peasant castes have dominated the political scene and that this is likely to continue in the future because of the social and economic structure of Andhra Pradesh. There was no radical shift in terms of who held political power in the last 50 years, although there are changes in the political orientations of the leaders and their styles of functioning. But it was also marked by increased space for the representatives of the backward castes and the *dalits*, and it is likely that their say will increase in the years to come. It all depends on how the leaders from the 'dominant' communities accommodate the rising aspirations of the representatives of the backward castes and the *dalits* by delicately balancing the diverse interests and social groups. The political leadership in Andhra Pradesh proved to be mature enough to negotiate with the changes that have been taking place over time. Unlike in some States, there are no caste-based parties in Andhra Pradesh, although caste still plays an important role in the decisions of the voters.

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<sup>23</sup> In the CSDS post-poll survey (1999 Lok Sabha elections) when the voters were asked about the basis of their voting, only about 6% of voters in Andhra Pradesh said that caste is an important factor; a vast majority mentioned party as an important factor.

Both the Congress and the TDP enjoy a heterogeneous and diversified social, economic and demographic base, in terms of party membership and local leaders. Electoral support comes from different castes, classes, religious denominations and occupational groups. Women and youth are also divided between the rival parties. TDP seems to have lost some support among Muslims after it entered an alliance with the BJP. It is interesting to note, based on the CSDS post-poll survey data, that the TDP secured a lesser percentage of the votes among the upper and middle classes than the Congress, despite the prevalent perception that the economic reforms implemented by the TDP government under Chandrababu were mostly welcomed by and benefit these classes. This was true of the 1996 and 1998 elections. In the 1999 elections too, the TDP secured a much lower vote among the middle classes. It secured more votes among the upper classes, and this could be attributed to the alliance with the BJP. In fact, the TDP secured a consistently higher percentage of votes among the 'very poor'. Reinforcing this trend, we notice that Chandrababu's TDP secured more votes among the illiterates than among the highly educated. The voting pattern thus raises a number of challenging questions: how do the government policies affect the voting decisions of various classes? Is there any relation between the economic reforms, which allegedly go against the interests of the poor, and the way different classes vote in State elections? Why did the poor vote to the TDP in larger numbers if the economic reforms, as often presumed, go against their interests, at least in the short term? Why did the members of the middle classes, who are presumed to support economic reforms, vote for the Congress in larger numbers? Are the middle and the upper classes convinced that the economic reforms would be in any way implemented, irrespective of the party and leader in power? Are the poor induced by short-term allurements in the form of welfare schemes to vote for the TDP? It is also interesting to note that the vote for the TDP among women did not decline, despite the fact that the TDP lifted the ban on liquor, which led to fears that the TDP's vote among women would be adversely affected.

The decline in the electoral support enjoyed by the communist parties is another major aspect of electoral politics in the State in the last five decades. In the 1950s, the Communist Party was stronger in Andhra Pradesh than anywhere else in India. At that time, the communists launched militant struggles both in Telengana and Andhra regions for agrarian reform and the radical reconstruction of social relations. The ideology of the party gripped a large number of youth from the more wealthy sections. Earlier (1940s and 1950s), the communists had secured a strong base among the peasant and urban working class, especially the *dalits*, and the Communist Party was dubbed as the party of the *dalits*. The popularity of the party was clear from the margins with which some of its candidates won in the 1952 and 1955 elections. Why the communists could not consolidate their strength in the integrated State of Andhra Pradesh remains a big question. Reasons could be many and they might have worked in combination.

The social and political transformation that the State witnessed after Independence could be one reason. History tells us that the communists were successful in countries where they could combine the social revolution and national liberation struggle under their leadership. In colonial societies it was not a question of transition from capitalism to socialism, but transition from the pre-capitalist stage to the democratic stage. It was precisely at this critical juncture of the inability of the 'liberal' parties to provide leadership to the freedom struggle, that the communists gained in strength and staged successful revolutions. But in India, it was the Congress that provided leadership to the freedom struggle in the country at large and the communists could never establish their hegemony over it. After Independence, the election process, which was fairly open and competitive, weakened the communist opposition in the political system, as people began to exercise their right to choose representatives. Also the Congress Party in the State had a mature and experienced leadership. The party was able to accommodate the elites of the major communities in its fold and they countered the theory and practice of the communists in an effective manner. Immediately after coming to power, the Congress Party undertook the task of restructuring society, almost on the lines advocated by the Communist Party. Some communists themselves hailed the agrarian reforms implemented in

the Telengana region as progressive. Congress policies, with an orientation towards socialism and democracy, and the constitutional guarantees for the weaker sections not only pre-empted the consolidation of communist strength but also led to their electoral decline.

In addition, class politics have their own limits, especially operating in a democratic polity. Democratic institutions and reasonably fair and periodical elections seem to be inversely related to political militancy. The changes in the social and economic conditions brought about by the democratically elected governments made the same classes, which earlier stood with the communists, shift their political allegiance to the Congress. Communist Party support in Andhra Pradesh was primarily based in the peasant classes, especially the middle peasantry. Certain of the demands on which the communists had mobilised the peasants were met by the agrarian reforms, and they were thus transformed from the status of tenants or exploited peasants to proprietary peasants, and as a consequence developed a stake in the existing society. Slogans of the communists ceased to be relevant motivators for these peasant classes. The implementation of the agrarian reform policies was a response to the militant land struggles waged by the communists, but the same policies undermined the electoral support for them among the peasant classes. Paradoxical it might sound, but it appears to be true.

The question, however, remains unanswered. Under similar conditions in post-Independent India, the communists in Kerala and West Bengal managed to consolidate their strength, while in Andhra Pradesh they could not. Two additional factors might have contributed to this situation. Firstly, while in Kerala and West Bengal the communists had played the united front tactics well, the Congress played them much better in Andhra Pradesh, completely upstaging the communists there. The defeat of the communists in the 'critical' 1955 elections was partly attributed to their failure to work out alliances with the non-Congress parties. They thought that they could win the elections on their own. Similarly after the 1964 split, the two communist parties in Kerala and West Bengal forged an alliance in the 1967 elections, but in Andhra Pradesh they opposed each other. Both considered the elimination of the other more important than defeating the Congress. Secondly, the split in the Communist Party in Andhra Pradesh was almost vertical, making it impossible for any of the two splinter parties to become dominant. The national leaders of the both the CPI and the CPM came from Andhra, making the fight all the more bitter. The same thing happened in 1967, when the cream of the CPM split away to form the CPI-ML group. The second split severely weakened the CPM, as the Naxalite revolutionaries projected themselves as the true heirs of the communist legacy in the State and even today the Naxalite groups in Andhra Pradesh are the strongest in India.

The alliance with the TDP further weakened the Left parties in Andhra Pradesh. They adopted a strategy of taking the side of the TDP instead of getting crushed in the fight between the two powerful parties in the State, with a view to taking advantage when one party became weak. But they were too weak themselves to take advantage of such a situation. Their growth was further stunted in the shadow of NTR, who stood like a banyan tree over them and they were too ambivalent to assert their independence when the TDP became unpopular. Between 1987 and 1989, the CPI in Andhra waged a vigorous campaign against the policies of the TDP, but had to make a volte-face just on the eve of the 1989 elections as part of the electoral alliances at the national level. Even when their electoral base was shaking and shifting as a result of their alliance with the TDP, the parties continued the alliance in the name of tactics. At times it became difficult to distinguish between the TDP and the Left voters, especially among the peasant communities, who found the alliance convenient. Some of the leaders were so accustomed to the positions and patronage available as junior partners of the TDP that they became one with the ruling party. The Left parties turned against the TDP only after the 1998 elections when Chandrababu chose to support the BJP government at the Centre for his own reasons. Chandrababu was more attracted by the larger vote of the BJP in the State than holding on to the Left parties, who were seen as marginalised due to a



variety of national and international factors. The TDP leadership also found it difficult to continue their alliance with the Left parties, given their divergent approaches to the state and economy and the growing proximity between the Left and the Congress. The Left parties launched a vehement attack against the economic reform policies of the TDP only after they broke away – this was also on the grounds that the TDP chose to support a ‘communal’ party government at the Centre.

Some other observations on the electoral process in Andhra Pradesh may be worth noting. There has been an increasing divergence in the electoral outcomes at the State and national levels since 1977. When the Congress was thoroughly defeated in the Parliamentary elections in 1977 and in most of the States, it later won massively in Andhra Pradesh in the Parliamentary elections and retained power in the Assembly elections held the following year. When the Congress was winning and appeared to be strong elsewhere, it lost badly in Andhra Pradesh in the 1984 *Lok Sabha* elections and 1985 Assembly elections. When the non-Congress opposition emerged stronger in 1989 by defeating the Congress, the TDP lost badly in the State. The electoral outcomes in Andhra Pradesh in the last two decades appear to be going in a different direction from that of national electoral trends.

It appears that a party’s victory or defeat in elections does not seem to depend very much on the policies of the ruling party and their informed evaluation by the electorate. It does not mean that public interest and opinion have no role to play in policy formulation or welfare programmes. But it is difficult to endorse the view that the electoral outcomes are due to the conscious decisions of the majority voters to punish the ruling party for its bad performance in terms of its public policies and their implementation. Policies do have their place in enhancing or damaging a party’s image or the stability of the government in the long run, but what extent this factor plays in deciding the electoral outcome is difficult to measure. It is widely acknowledged by almost by everyone in Andhra Pradesh that the Congress lost in 1983 not because of antipathy aroused among the electorate due to its disagreeable public policies, but because of disgust among the people towards the factional games that reduced the government and the party to a farce. The TDP implemented welfare programmes in an unprecedented manner between 1985 and 1989, but still it lost in 1989. Its defeat was attributed to the quixotic style of NTR’s functioning and his inability to stem the desertion of some party leaders who were regarded as representatives of major castes in Andhra Pradesh politics. Also we cannot say that the TDP received a substantial vote from the sections that benefited most from the welfare schemes. The Congress lost once again in 1994 for no specific bad policy decision. It would be a mistake to interpret this as a vote against the new economic policies of the Congress, just as it would be wrong to treat the re-election of the TDP in 1999 as the endorsement of its economic reforms.

Election studies in recent years show that a large proportion of voters are more concerned about local issues in exercising their vote than national issues. National issues might be more important to the activists, party leaders and the elite, whose role cannot be underestimated in influencing the voter’s decision, but as far as the common voter is concerned, awareness of the national issues and any importance attached to them tends to be low. The voters are more influenced by the developments in their vicinity and tend to rely more upon local leaders who could mediate between them and the government, rather than great leaders who can speak on issues of public policy. Conversely though, it can also be argued that voters do make rational choices as they vote to parties or candidates who would help to satisfy their immediate needs – such as ration cards and house sites, loans and financial assistance, drinking water, schools for their children, roads, employment, transport facilities, etc. Thus voters clearly perceive their vote as a means of improving their living facilities and conditions. Such a voting tendency is based on the belief that it is the responsibility of the government to cater to their needs. Voters think that leaders have an obligation to help them develop. They see that political contests and welfare programmes are closely related – they demand assurances and watch results (Robinson, 1988). This could be the reason why the leaders and

political parties promising, working for or trying to implement welfare schemes at local level tend to be successful. They have to be constantly alert and appear to be sensitive to the voters' aspirations and demands. If democracy is understood as translation of majority preferences into public policy, democracy in Andhra Pradesh, no doubt, was strengthened in the last two decades or so.

There has been alternation of power between the Congress and the TDP since 1983. This represents a major departure from the early decades of Independence when Congress victory was a foregone conclusion; the only issue then was which faction of the Congress would take the upper hand. The Congress was removed from power in 1983 when it was led by Mrs Gandhi, a popular leader in Andhra Pradesh. In a similar way, the TDP was defeated in 1989 when NTR was thought to be invincible in politics. The 1999 election was an exception. How do we explain this rejection of ruling parties that has come to be known as the 'anti-incumbency' factor? Is it because the governments simply do not have the capacity to meet the increasing aspirations of the people? Is it because of the mobilisation of new groups into politics? Is it due to misrule of the ruling parties or misdeeds of the top leaders or their failure to implement their election pledges? Is it that the leaders are unable to rise to the expectations of the people? Or is it that the voters find the politicians acceding to power to be such villains or that they become villains after coming into power that they have to change them in the next elections? Can we attribute it to the maturity of the voters?

Neither the government policies and welfare programmes in themselves, nor exclusive reliance on emotional and ethnic identities help the leaders to win the elections. The functioning of the government and the ruling party and the leadership styles, could also be issues in elections. The ability of opposition leaders to work up feelings of agitation among the voters and exploit resentment against the 'misdeeds' of the ruling party and those in power are also important factors in electoral success. Different issues or a combination of issues become important in determining electoral outcomes at different times.

One important feature of electoral politics in the State in the last two decades is the decline of the vote among the independents and other parties. The share of the independents gradually came down from 10% in the 1983 Assembly elections to about 5% in 1999; and in the *Lok Sabha* elections it came down from 5.4% to 1.4%. The vote of the other parties remained static. The possibilities for the emergence of either a national party or another new regional party as an alternative to the TDP and the Congress are very bleak. Thus the electoral fight has been virtually reduced to one between the Congress and the TDP. The competition between the two parties has been intense. Although defeated in two Assembly elections consecutively in 1994 and 1999, the Congress is still a major force in the State. The way in which it staged its recovery in the 1999 elections was certainly impressive. In fact, in the 1999 *Lok Sabha* elections it polled more votes than the TDP and in the recent *Panchayat* election it came very close to the ruling party. The morale of the Congress Party leadership is high; its organisation is still strong and it has active leaders and workers at the grassroots level.

In 1998, the BJP appeared as a potential alternative to the two parties when it won 18% of the vote in the *Lok Sabha* elections. Its ascendancy at the national level, coupled with the advantage it gained due to the turbulence in the TDP and changing perceptions of some of the social groups' ability to regain political importance, enabled the BJP to emerge as a force to be reckoned with in State politics. The State leaders of the BJP have their own ambitions and under favourable conditions the party has the potential to eat into the electoral bases of both the Congress and the TDP by attracting sections of dominant castes and the peasant OBCs, as well as the upper and the middle classes from these parties. But the BJP cannot rely too much on putting religious identities to political use in Andhra Pradesh as it can in the north because the religious divide in the State is not very marked, except in Hyderabad city where the Muslim presence is considerable and the

Majlis Party is strong. Nor can it bank upon the Brahman–Vysya–Kshtriya vote alone, because this is negligible in the State. Whether the BJP can upstage the TDP in Andhra Pradesh State politics depends upon a variety of factors, especially its ability to wean away large portions of the peasant and backward communities vote from both the Congress and the TDP. As part of its wider strategy to create smaller states with a view to breaking the dominance of the strong regional parties and as an antidote to the demand for federalism and the ‘centrifugal’ tendencies, the BJP leadership in Andhra Pradesh would entertain the idea of creating a separate Telengana if its dependence on the TDP for its survival at the Centre is obviated and if it thinks that this would facilitate it coming to power in a separate Telengana State. The electoral trends of the 1990s are marked by a certain fluidity and the realignment of social groups may significantly alter the fortunes of the parties involved in the electoral arena of the State.

Another issue that has been widely discussed in Andhra Pradesh politics is the economic reform, especially the way it is implemented by the TDP government under Chandrababu. It is not that these reforms are implemented in Andhra Pradesh on a significantly larger scale compared to the neighbouring States, rather the major political parties in the State are taking confrontationist stances on this issue. Chandrababu himself put forward a vigorous ideological and programmatic defence of the economic reforms undertaken by his government. The implementation of the reforms in a competitive political environment poses a formidable dilemma to the ruling party; the more frequent the elections, the more restrained will be the ruling party in proceeding with economic reforms. Andhra Pradesh has gone through General Elections to the local bodies, Assembly or *Lok Sabha* seven times in the last 10 years, and there have been four elections in the five years since Chandrababu came to power. Opposition comes from a variety of quarters: the vested interests, workers in the organised sectors, beneficiaries of governmental subsidies and welfare programmes, etc. In addition, there is always the political opposition, which will always find fault with the policies of the ruling party, although it might behave in the same way if it were in power.

There are fears that opposition to economic reforms may increase if the TDP fails to prove its efficacy in the near future in bringing about the assured economic growth and its percolation down the line. There are also fears about the mounting debt. Equally, contradictions might increase between the attempts to accelerate reforms and to enhance expenditure on welfare. The ruling party has to be sensitive to the perceptions and response of the majority of the people in order to survive. Thus, one major challenge before the government is to devise ways in which it could intervene, using the limited finances available to it, to insulate the poor from the harsh effects of the economic reform. It depends upon the maturity and the extent of autonomy the political leadership can exercise in determining the future course of the economic reforms in the State and to make ‘development’ and ‘welfare’ complementary processes.

Both the ruling and opposition parties suffer from a kind of dualism. While claiming himself to be the champion of economic reforms in the State, Chandrababu opposed the Central government when it sought to reform the PDS, withdraw subsidies, or to privatise some public-sector industries in the State. The Congress too faces a difficult dilemma between its support for the liberalisation of the economy and the compulsions of an opposition party to contest the policies of the ruling party, which says it is committed to economic reforms. It has to support the reforms in general, but attack Chandrababu for his ‘style of reform’. Recently it has been making attempts, along with the Left parties, to project Chandrababu as working at the dictates of the World Bank as opposed to for the people’s interests, but they have not been very successful so far. The promise of free electricity to farmers was however better upheld in 1999 and 2001. The Left parties have been vociferous in their opposition to the TDP, claiming to represent an alternative policy framework. The mass protest movement launched by the Left parties along with the Congress over the rise in electricity charges made it quite clear that the ruling party could not take anything for granted in implementing the reforms. Chandrababu asserted that there was no question of going back on the economic reforms

but he would now be more cautious in his approach to 'development' and would perhaps seek to maintain a more delicate balance between reforms and welfare.

Ironically, the Congress Party was severely beaten by the populist antics of NTR in 1994 and the reform rhetoric of Chandrababu in 1999. In 1994 it was attacked by NTR for its new economic policies – he dubbed them pro-rich, anti-people and anti-democratic, and in 1999 it was attacked for its anti-reform postures while the TDP's policies were projected as pro-development. With Chandrababu's success in presenting his discourse of development as the dominant one and adopting a populist-welfarist strategy on the eve of elections, the possibility for the Congress to return to power would depend on its ability to evolve not one, but multiple strategies, and present itself as a viable and reliable alternative to the ruling TDP.

In Andhra Pradesh politics, like in Indian politics, a kind of tension seems to prevail between the tendency to centralise power and the avowed aim of decentralisation. The problem, unlike in Western countries, is achieving the decentralisation of the state when a strong centralised state has not yet emerged or that the state-building process takes place in a hesitant and faltering manner. It appears that the leaders of the 'regional parties' stand for full-blooded federalism and decentralisation of the state by giving more powers to the States, while they are reluctant to decentralise the State and devolve powers to the local bodies. The regional parties suspect the Constitutional Amendment Act for decentralisation below State level as a ploy of the national parties and the Central government to weaken the large and relatively strong State governments. Thus, they become wary of the demands from below for greater shares in state power. Keeping aside the rhetoric of all political parties at the State level about their resolve to strengthen the *Panchayati Raj* bodies, very few leaders seem to care about the strengthening or the actual functioning of these bodies.

The emergence of the two-party system made the *Panchayat* elections more competitive. The problem, however, is that the PR bodies, over time, came to be looked upon as instruments to exercise power or a means to keep factional and party control over rural areas. In the last two decades, *Panchayat* elections in Andhra Pradesh became more of a battle between the more or less equally strong parties with a low commitment to decentralisation. NTR brought in a new *Panchayati Raj* Act in 1985 with an ostensible aim to strengthen the PRIs, but during his time we saw not only a higher degree of centralisation but also a tremendous concentration of power. The TDP stood for true federalism in the country, but it stopped at the level of Centre-State relations. Even after NTR, the TDP continues to be a highly centralised party.

Andhra Pradesh was among the first Indian States to introduce the *Panchayati Raj* system in 1959. In the initial decades there was a great deal of enthusiasm, both among the local leaders and the people to make PRIs into vibrant centres of local administration for the promotion of rural development. Earlier studies on the *Panchayati Raj* had shown that the PRIs were mostly controlled by the rural elites from the dominant castes (Ram Reddy, 1977; Ram Reddy and Seshadri, 1972). But the situation has undergone a sweeping change. The introduction of reservations for the SCs, STs, BCs and women brought about a radical shift in the composition of people's representatives. A new crop of leaders from the hitherto excluded social sections is bound to emerge and now the demand for more powers to the PRIs is becoming vehement.

The leaders of the ruling TDP seem to hold the view that since the *Panchayati Raj* set-up is part of the State government or the state as such, it does not require too much emphasis. They see several problems in the functioning of the *Panchayati Raj* bodies in that their democratic character is weak, accountability is lacking at that level and they do not promote participatory development. Chandrababu believes that the *Panchayati Raj* bodies still operate under the old paradigm of paternalism and reinforce the state-centred approach. In tune with his thinking on liberalisation and

deregulation, he seems to hold the view that the processes of decentralisation of government and de-statisation have to go together. He says that he wants to create a vibrant civil society with people's participation in associational activity at the local level to remedy the overgrown state. Probably, this is the reason why he lays more emphasis on Water Users' Associations, Joint Forest Management Groups, educational committees, DWACRA groups, etc. than the decentralisation programme. Chandrababu says that the *Panchayati Raj* bodies become more responsive and accountable only when the civil society becomes more assertive. The two processes need not, however, be thought of as mutually opposed.

There is also a view that Chandrababu has been deliberately promoting these 'parallel' bodies as a means to keep control over the distribution of government benefits and to accommodate party workers in authority structures at the local level in order to consolidate political support. There is a view that since the TDP has no control over a number of *Panchayats* and *Mandals*, Chandrababu thought it convenient to channel resources and authority through these 'parallel bodies'. There are two limitations to this kind of argument. Firstly, between 1996 and 2001, when the Janmabhoomi programme was launched and the 'parallel' bodies were promoted, the TDP controlled all 22 *Zilla Parishads* and about two-thirds of the ZPTCs and *Mandal Parishads*. Decentralisation of powers and finances to the PRIs in such a situation could still have worked in favour of the TDP, as it could have used them to augment its elite and popular support at the local level. Secondly, we may also have to consider that these stakeholders' associations or bodies were formed as part of the good governance agenda of the international financial institutions, from which the State government secured loans.

However, the need to devolve more powers and finances to the local bodies, in conjunction with the promotion and strengthening of the civic associations and self-help groups in a way that strengthens participatory democracy, is a major task before the State government. Genuine decentralisation could be a pragmatic option for the TDP government in countering separatist regional demands and shoring up its electoral support. The TDP government has to fulfil its promise. The *Vision 2020* (Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1999) document emphasised that decentralisation is an essential part of the programme to make government institutions more efficient and effective. It affirmed that the State would devolve administrative and financial powers to the *Panchayati Raj* bodies as per the Constitutional requirement. The steps the State government has taken so far appear to be inadequate to really empower the local bodies. Of the 29 items allotted to the PRIs in the Constitution, some are yet to be transferred to these bodies. Even in the items transferred, the PRIs perform only a nominal role, as the administrative control and authority to sanction funds remains largely with the concerned Ministries (*Panchayati Raj*, Civil Supplies, Irrigation, Social Welfare, etc.) and State-level government departments. Most of the political chiefs and officials of the PRIs at the district and *mandal* levels seem to be dissatisfied, as they do not see any meaningful role for themselves in the existing set-up.

The *Panchayat* elections revealed the extent to which the TDP revolves around the personality of Chandrababu. Centralisation and concentration of too much power in one person is always a vicious trap and extremely difficult to find a way out of. This situation could turn out to be Chandrababu's fatal weakness unless it is remedied at the earliest opportunity. Too great a concentration of power in the top leader not only leads to a feeling of powerlessness among other leaders, but also a certain loss of respect towards these leaders among the general public and party activists. There seems to be a widespread feeling among a large number of Ministers, MPs and MLAs that they are marginalised, aside from the matter of how worthy they are to be entrusted with positions of power and prestige. This seems to be the case with most of the regional parties, especially the ruling ones, in India. A highly centralised party with a well-integrated organisational structure under the firm control of an unquestioned leader, like the Telugu Desam Party, need not always be considered a favourable factor in winning popular elections in a competitive political situation. In such a party

there is always a tendency for the local units to lose initiative; for those activists who are innovative and enthusiastic to become alienated and lackadaisical, if not indifferent; and for the cadres to lose live contact with the people and become dependent on the leader who is often attributed with some 'super human' qualities. Leaders further down the line tend to work more out of fear or narrow selfish interest than the enthusiasm necessary for the vibrancy of a political party. Unlike bureaucratic organisations, parties which are based essentially on voluntary participation and activity, cannot function efficiently under the conditions of domination and subordination or rigid hierarchical structures.

This presents another dilemma to the political parties. If the leader allows a democratic functioning, it might lead to a loosening of his/her grip, resulting in indiscipline, groupism and disorder. If the leader does not allow a democratic functioning, he/she has to bear the entire responsibility for the decisions and performance of the government and thus becomes highly vulnerable. The party leader lives in perpetual fear that there are too many self-seekers around him/her, who would take advantage if autonomy were given to them – even those leaders who start with democratic credentials and slowly centralise power. While such a situation is partly due to the social and cultural conditions that prevail, it is also partly due to the unwillingness of the top leaders to make conscious attempts for effective democracy in the party and government.

In the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Andhra Pradesh politics witnessed a great deal of political degradation with an increase in political and bureaucratic corruption and a phenomenal increase in the role of money and muscle power in elections. The political decay in State politics was not as much due to the increasing demand on the state resources from the newly awakened social groups or the increasing difficulty to govern, as to the decay of political leadership. Political corruption assumed terrible proportions during the Channa Reddy government between 1978 and 1980, but every successive government that came to power made the previous governments appear better. A Telugu saying that, 'the one who eats lambs has gone but the one who eats buffaloes has come in', aptly described the situation in Andhra Pradesh politics. The way the politicians and officials amassed wealth at the cost of public welfare was simply amazing. Politics began to be looked on as a profession for making easy money. Sanction of licenses and permits, award of contracts, bulk government purchases, transfer of officials, and issue of orders that benefit particular persons or firms became the main means to make vast amounts of money. Some kind of helpless approval or indifference towards the corrupt politician and officials has now enveloped the State society. Since the time of Channa Reddy, the Chief Ministers themselves became very corrupt, mostly in the name of the need to collect party funds to win the next election. The epithets used to describe the Chief Ministers were amusing: Channa Reddy was known as 'Chanda (donations) Reddy' and Janardan Reddy was called 'Dhanarjan (money-making) Reddy'. NTR often described himself as a crusader against corruption at the outset, but even during his time, money was freely collected for the 'party's fund', as was exposed in several scandals about the money stacked in the party's offices. But interestingly, if we look at the declarations made by the people's representatives before the 1999 elections (which were made mandatory) about their assets and income, we find that most of the Ministers and MLAs had only a modest income and lead the life of an average individual in Andhra Pradesh society, while it is common knowledge that most of them became fabulously rich despite their humble background at the beginning of their political career.

The high level of corruption was previously attributed to the high level of state controls and intervention. But the level of corruption does not seem to have abated with liberalisation and the so-called rolling back of the state. An abundance of corruption charges have been made by the opposition parties against the Ministers in the TDP government, including the Chief Minister. The charges were mainly related to the commissions taken by the politicians of the ruling party and the bureaucrats. In the last few years, a new section of contractors have emerged with the blessings of the ruling party, who formed the basis of the TDP support in rural and urban areas. It seems that

corruption remains a big business in the post-liberalisation phase too. Since the corruption deals are highly secretive and the corrupt have refined the means to collect money and hoard ill-gotten wealth, it is difficult to speak about the extent of it. Unless the top leaders of the government and the top bureaucrats raise themselves above the greed and amassing of personal wealth – which is a remote possibility – or a type of people’s resistance to corrupt practices grows and the electorate refuse to elect the corrupt to public office, there seems to be no remedy for the widespread corruption in the State. But it hardly seems to be a major issue in the State politics or elections, perhaps because all the major parties are afflicted with this disease.

In recent years, Andhra Pradesh has also earned the dubious distinction of being the leading State in terms of election expenditure, according to the CSDS study on election expenditure in the 1999 General Elections. During election time, money flows freely on publicity to purchase votes (by distribution of money, gifts, and liquor) and to maintain battalions of volunteers, who often include hired musclemen. Buying votes has become a routine phenomenon and the price of a vote goes up if there is stiff competition between ‘resourceful’ rival candidates. Previously, it was common practice to give a lump sum of money to the caste or local leader, who would spend it either on feasting or drinking with his group members. But now the intermediary is removed and the money is distributed directly to the voters by trusted agents of the candidates, although voters sometimes accept money from more than one candidate. Not surprisingly, liquor flows freely at the time of the elections. Political parties have been nominating candidates on the strength of their financial resources and their ability to spend money, rather than their suitability as a people’s representative or commitment to the national interests. Instead of strengthening healthy democratic practices, the intense party competition that prevails in the State, from local to State level, has poisoned the atmosphere and what takes place is little more than a spending spree by the rival parties and candidates. It has become almost impossible for any decent candidate without huge financial resources to win an election under normal conditions. The actual expenditure of the candidates exceeds the limits imposed by the Election Commission by several times. Even in the *Panchayat* election, candidates spend *lakhs* of rupees. Political observers say that one important reason for the phenomenal growth of political corruption is the compulsion to spend huge amounts of money in order to win the election. Thus the voters are also partly responsible for the sad state of affairs that prevails in the election process.

Similarly over the last two decades, criminality in politics has also been on the rise. In several cities the main rival parties are backed by persons with a known criminal background. For a very long time, politics in Vijayawada city were dominated by the leaders of two large criminal gangs. The top political leaders expressed their helplessness, saying that they needed to promote this criminal gang as a countervailing force to the criminal gang supported by some other party. While the Congress leader and MLA, V. M. Ranga Rao was killed in Vijayawada when he was fasting, demanding security for his life, another TDP leader and MLA was chased and killed in Hyderabad city in daylight, in the heart of the city. The politics of Rayalaseema has long been known for being dominated by leaders of warring factions, with their private armies, operating under political cover and thriving on the percentages they extract from contractors, traders and industrialists.

A survey by Lok Satta<sup>24</sup> showed that in the 1999 General Elections, 60 candidates from the major political parties were known to have a criminal background. The rise of criminals in public affairs itself could be an indication of the failure or malfunctioning of the democratic governmental institutions, especially the police, judiciary and the general administration and their replacement with parallel networks of law and order and arbitration. Chandrababu appealed to the voters in the 1999 elections not to elect criminals, but the major political parties gave tickets to people with a criminal background. Occasionally, the criminals themselves become leading politicians or the

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24 A Hyderabad-based voluntary organisation founded by former IAS officer, Jayaprakash Narayan with an objective to strengthen democracy and people’s empowerment.

politicians themselves indulge in criminal activity. It is not that people do not know the criminal background of the candidates in elections, but still they are elected. How to ensure that criminals are kept outside the legislature and government is a sizeable challenge in Andhra Pradesh society.

Rigging has become a widespread practice in the elections in recent times. For this, leaders maintain an army of hooligans and musclemen to scare away voters from the polling booths, to threaten or beat the rival candidates or their agents, to capture the polling booths or to rig the voting. In several places 'bomb culture' has grown as the rival factions and parties freely use bombs against each other. Opponents in some places are kidnapped or maimed or killed while the leaders indulge in hypocritical talk about principles of non-violence and democracy. This has become very common in Rayalaseema region, where factionalism has assumed violent and terrorist forms. The combined strength of money and muscle power has become so great that concerned citizens often say that democracy in the State has been reduced to an empty shell, elections are becoming increasingly farcical and that they have only one function – that of giving spurious legitimacy to the rich, criminal and corrupt in Andhra Pradesh society. But in recent times, there appear some signs of positive change in the thinking of the people to elect representatives with some integrity and a clean image. What kind of institutional reforms are possible to remedy the situation is an aspect for further study.

There is a certain amount of aversion to and cynicism towards politics among the enlightened public. Politics today is understood more as a game in which unscrupulous leaders compete with each other to acquire or retain political power by means fair or foul. There does not seem to be any significant change here, although the malfunctioning governments and self-seeking leaders are continuously dislodged from power and leaders who promise clean, responsive and responsible government are elected. As one commentator on Andhra Pradesh politics observed, the voter is being defeated in election after election, whoever wins the election (Jayaprakash Narayan, 2001). In such a situation the anti-incumbency factor might continue to play an important role in the State for some time to come. Will Chandrababu's TDP prove to be different as he speaks for a SMART government?

We can, however, still take an optimistic outlook on the matter, such as Pippa Norris' interpretation that in a democracy, dissatisfaction with the performance of a regime springs from a commitment to democratic government among the public (Norris, 1999). This should be true of India's developing democracy. The preliminary tables of the recent World Values Survey (2001) in India shows that more than two-thirds of the respondents felt that a democratic political system is suitable to the country and only 5% said it was not. Nearly two-thirds felt that although a democracy may its have problems, it is better than any other form of government. We find a similar trend from the data on Andhra Pradesh and this gives some satisfaction. At different levels and in a variety of ways, democracy is at work in Andhra Pradesh and in the country at large. Elections are the main agency through which it is operated and reinforced. It is very clear that there are multiple problems in India's democratic structure and functioning and there are several hurdles that have to be overcome. The task is to make the structure more enduring and effective. The challenge is a multi-faceted one for which India needs voters who are more responsible and informed, leaders who are farsighted and trustworthy, political parties that are more open and democratically structured, and government that is more ethical and efficient.



## Appendix

**Table 1 Results of Vidhan Sabha Elections: Seats won and percentage of votes secured by major political parties in the Vidhan Sabha elections in Andhra Pradesh, 1952–1978**

Party Name	Years							
	1952 <sup>1</sup>	1952 <sup>2</sup>	1955 <sup>3</sup>	1957 <sup>4</sup>	1962	1967	1972	1978
Congress	40	44	119	68	177	165	219	175
	30.7	38.8	39.3	46.6	47.3	45.4	52.3	39.3
Swatantra	-	-	-	-	19	29	2	-
	-	-	-	-	10.4	9.8	2.0	-
Janata Party	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	60
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	28.8
Bharatiya Jan Sangh	-	-	-	-	0	3	0	-
	-	-	-	-	1.0	2.2	1.9	-
CPI	41	37	15	23	51	11	7	6
	16.4	30.8	31.3	26.3	19.5	7.8	6.0	2.5
CPM	-	-	-	-	-	9	1	8
	-	-	-	-	-	7.6	3.2	2.7
Others	41 <sup>a</sup>	11 <sup>b</sup>	40 <sup>c</sup>	8 <sup>d</sup>	2 <sup>e</sup>	3 <sup>f</sup>	1 <sup>g</sup>	30 <sup>h</sup>
	29.4	13.6	18.8	12.4	1.3	0.7	2.4	17.5
Independents	19	5	22	8	51	68	57	15
	23.5	16.8	11.6	14.5	20.5	26.5	32.2	9.2

*Note:* After the formation of Andhra Pradesh, General Elections to the Legislative Assembly in the entire State were held for the first time in 1962.

1 Elections in Andhra region in the united Madras State

2 Elections in Telengana region in the Hyderabad State

3 Elections in Andhra State

4 Elections in Telengana region of Andhra Pradesh

a Socialists won 6 seats with 6.1% vote; KMPP 20 seats with 14.7% vote; KLP 15 seats with 8.6% vote

b Socialist party

c KLP won 22 seats with 8.6% vote; Praja Party 5 (3.5%); PSP 13 (6.6%)

d PSP 1 seat (5.6%); Socialists 5 (4.1%)

e Socialists won 2 seats with 0.9% vote; Republican 0.4%

f Socialist 0.4%; Republican 0.3%

g Socialist 0.1%; Sampurna Telengana Praja Samithi won 1 seat with 2.0% vote

h Congress (R) led by Vengala Rao secured 30 seats with 17% vote

*Source:* Information compiled based on (i) Reports on Elections to *Lok Sabha* and Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly in various years by General Administration (Elections) Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh; (ii) David Butler, et al., 1991; (iii) David Butler, et al., 1984; (iv) Singh and Bose, 1988; (v) Balakrishna, 1998.

**Table 2 Results of Lok Sabha Elections: Seats won and percentage of votes secured by major political parties in the Lok Sabha elections in Andhra Pradesh, 1957–1980**

Party Name	Years					
	1957	1962	1967	1971	1977	1980
Congress	35	34	35	28	41	41
	51.5	47.9	46.8	55.7	57.4	56.2
Swatantra	-	1	3	0	-	-
	-	14.9	13.8	4.6	-	-
Janata Party	-	-	-	-	1	0
	-	-	-	-	32.3	15.2
Bharatiya Jan Sangh	0	0	0	0	-	0
	0.1	1.2	1.4	1.6	-	6.4
Socialists	0	0	0	0	-	-
	3.6	0.1	0.6	0.3	-	-
CPI	2	7	1	1	0	0
	12.0	21.0	11.4	5.9	2.7	3.7
CPM	-	-	0	1	0	0
	-	-	7.4	2.8	4.7	3.6
Others	-	0	0	10 <sup>a</sup>	0	1 <sup>b</sup>
	-	1.0	0.5	20.9	0.1	7.3
Independents	4	1	2	1	0	0
	32.8	13.9	18.1	8.2	2.8	7.6

Note: General Elections to Lok Sabha in Andhra Pradesh in the entire State were held for the first time in 1957.

a Telengana Praja Samithi won 10 seats with 14.3% vote; Congress (O) polled 5% votes, but did not secure a single seat

b INC(U) won 1 seat with 7.2% vote

Source: Information compiled based on (i) Reports on Elections to Lok Sabha and Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly in various years by General Administration (Elections) Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh; (ii) David Butler, et al., 1991; (iii) David Butler, et al., 1984; (iv) Singh and Bose, 1988; (v) Balakrishna, 1998.

**Table 3 Results of Vidhan Sabha Elections: Seats won and percentage of votes secured by major political parties in the Vidhan Sabha elections in Andhra Pradesh, 1983–1999**

Party Name	Years				
	1983	1985	1989	1994	1999
Congress	60	50	182	26	91
	33.6	37.5	47.2	33.6	40.6
TDP	198	202	73	219	179
	46.3	46.2	36.6	44.1	43.8
BJP	3	8	5	3	12
	2.8	1.6	1.8	3.9	3.7
Left Parties	9	22	13	34	2
	4.8	5.0	5.2	6.5	3.3
Others	2	3	6	3	4
	2.6	0.9	3.1	3.2	3.8
Independents	22	9	14	12	5
	9.9	8.8	6.1	8.7	4.8

Source: Information compiled based on (i) Reports on Elections to Lok Sabha and Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly in various years by General Administration (Elections) Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh; (ii) David Butler, et al., 1991; (iii) David Butler, et al., 1984; (iv) Singh and Bose, 1988; (v) Balakrishna, 1998.

**Table 4 Results of Lok Sabha Elections: Seats won and percentage of votes secured by major political parties in the Lok Sabha elections in Andhra Pradesh, 1984–1999**

Party Name	Years					
	1984	1989	1991	1996	1998	1999
Congress	6	39	25	22	22	5
	41.8	51.0	45.6	39.7	38.5	42.8
TDP	30	2	13	16	12	29
	44.7	34.5	32.8	32.6	32.0	39.9
BJP	1	0	1	0	4	7
	2.2	1.5	9.9	5.7	18.3	9.9
Left Parties	2	0	2	3	2	0
	3.6	4.3	4.4	5.3	5.5	2.7
Others	2	1	1	1	2	1
	2.3	2.3	3.1	13.0	4.0	3.3
Independents	1	0	0	0	0	0
	5.4	6.5	4.2	3.8	1.7	1.4

Source: Information compiled based on (i) Reports on Elections to Lok Sabha and Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly in various years by General Administration (Elections) Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh; (ii) David Butler, et al., 1991; (iii) David Butler, et al., 1984; (iv) Singh and Bose, 1988; (v) Balakrishna, 1998.

**Table 5 Who Voted Whom in Andhra Pradesh 1996 and 1998 Lok Sabha Elections**

Social Background	1996			1998		
	INC	TDP	BJP	INC	TDP	BJP
<b>AGE</b>						
25 years and below	46.6	47.3	2.7	42.1	43.0	14.0
26–35 years	44.7	42.9	4.7	44.5	41.6	13.2
36–45 years	42.2	46.9	7.0	37.2	38.9	23.9
46–55 years	47.3	50.0	2.0	47.9	39.7	11.0
56 years and above	50.6	42.7	2.2	44.1	40.7	13.0
<b>GENDER</b>						
Male	49.0	40.6	5.7	43.1	36.7	19.4
Female	42.9	50.3	2.6	42.1	45.7	1.7
<b>EDUCATION</b>						
Illiterate	38.4	55.4	3.6	43.9	46.7	8.2
Primary and Middle	48.7	42.7	5.3	44.8	42.5	12.6
Intermediate	60.9	30.9	3.6	42.0	38.4	18.8
Graduate and above	48.7	23.1	5.1	36.8	22.1	39.7
<b>LOCALITY</b>						
Rural	42.1	49.9	5.1	44.0	42.0	13.2
Urban	58.8	30.5	0.8	44.4	38.6	19.9
<b>ECONOMIC CLASS</b>						
Very poor	34.4	59.7	3.8	42.8	50.3	5.8
Poor	49.0	40.7	8.3	41.3	41.3	16.7
Middle	50.0	41.3	2.5	42.2	33.3	24.5
Upper	53.1	37.0	0.0	45.2	32.2	22.6
<b>CASTE – COMMUNITY</b>						
Upper Caste	48.5	40.2	10.6	36.8	38.4	24.0
Other Backward Caste	43.6	47.9	6.4	40.3	42.7	16.6
Scheduled Caste	55.8	40.3	3.9	53.5	34.9	9.3
Scheduled Tribe	32.6	56.8	10.5	47.4	41.0	10.3
Muslims	55.9	37.3	5.1	46.4	46.4	5.4
Others	50.0	50.0	0.0	70.0	30.0	–
<b>TOTAL</b>	45.8	45.6	7.4	42.8	40.9	15.3

Notes: In 1998 the TDP had alliance with the Left Parties, while the BJP had alliance with NTRTDP-LP. Percentages do not add up to 100 because votes for 'Other Parties' are omitted.

Source: Tables based on post-poll surveys in the 1996 and 1998 Lok Sabha elections conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi.

**Table 6 Who Voted Whom in Andhra Pradesh 1999 Lok Sabha Elections**

<b>Social Background</b>	<b>INC</b>	<b>TDP plus BJP</b>
<b>AGE</b>		
25 years and below	47.6	46.2
26–35 years	41.9	47.9
36–45 years	38.1	50.8
46–55 years	50.4	37.0
56 years and above	41.9	51.6
<b>GENDER</b>		
Male	45.0	47.5
Female	41.7	47.1
<b>EDUCATION</b>		
Illiterate	41.3	47.0
Primary and Middle	41.4	49.4
Intermediate	54.2	43.3
Graduate and above	44.0	48.6
<b>LOCALITY</b>		
Rural	42.7	46.7
Urban	44.6	48.8
<b>ECONOMIC CLASS</b>		
Very poor	37.7	49.1
Poor	41.3	50.5
Middle	53.1	41.1
Upper	44.9	46.6
<b>CASTE – COMMUNITY</b>		
Upper Caste	32.8	63.9
Reddy	69.8	27.9
Kamma	6.5	87.1
Kapus	45.2	53.4
Peasant OBCs	35.0	62.1
Lower OBCs	40.3	45.5
Scheduled Caste	63.5	33.3
Scheduled Tribe	31.9	42.2
Muslims	60.9	28.2
Others	51.4	45.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	43.3	47.3

*Note:* Percentages do not add up to 100 because votes for ‘Other Parties’ are omitted.

*Source:* Tables based on post-poll surveys in the 1996 and 1998 Lok Sabha elections conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, New Delhi.

**Table 7 Results of the elections to ZPTCs, MPTCs, and Mandal Presidents, 2001 and the seats won by various political parties in the 1995 Panchayat elections**

Party/Region	Total constituencies	TDP	Cong	BJP	CPI	CPM	TRS	Others and Ind.
<b>ZPTCs</b>								
Coastal Andhra	422	232	178	1	2	-	-	9
Rayalaseema	231	123	103	1	1	-	-	3
Telengana	441	157	165	11	5	15	84	4
Andhra Pradesh	1094	512	446	13	8	15	84	16
1995 Panchayat elections, Andhra Pradesh	1038	694	274	6	12	23	-	29
<b>MPTCs</b>								
Coastal Andhra	6429	3229	2655	53	44	54		394
Rayalaseema	2729	1373	1189	26	19	10	-	112
Telengana	5422	1749	1807	200	141	216	1043	266
Andhra Pradesh	14580	6351	5651	279	204	280	1043	772
1995 Panchayat elections, Andhra Pradesh	14129	7227	4696	160	281	342	-	1423
<b>Mandal Presidents</b>	<b>Posts</b>							
Coastal Andhra	420	233	163	2	3	2	-	17
Rayalaseema	229	113	110	1	1	-	-	4
Telengana	435	134	161	5	13	18	83	21
Andhra Pradesh	1084	480	434	8	17	20	83	42
1995 Panchayat elections, Andhra Pradesh	1036	653	283	6	18	26	-	50

Source: Andhra Pradesh State Election Commission, *Elections to Panchayati Raj Bodies, 2001*, Hyderabad, 2001.

**Table 8 Percentage of valid votes secured by major political parties in the three regions of the State in the Panchayat elections, 2001**

Party/Region	TDP	Cong	BJP	CPI	CPM	TRS	Others	Ind.
Coastal Andhra	49.5	45.9	1.0	0.7	0.6	-	0.5	1.7
Rayalaseema	49.5	45.3	1.6	0.6	0.7	-	0.4	1.9
Telengana	35.4	32.5	4.2	1.8	3.5	20.4	0.1	1.9
Andhra Pradesh	44.1	40.7	2.4	1.1	1.7	7.8	0.3	1.8

Source: Andhra Pradesh State Election Commission, *Elections to Panchayati Raj Bodies, 2001*, Hyderabad, 2001.

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