

'THE TELENGANA QUESTION'

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The [contributed] editorial on 'The Telangana Question' (*Frontier*, March 2-8, 2008), is an exercise in ignorance. This writer is yet to see a linguist or philologist who said Telugu is a set of languages or equated a dialect of a language with being a different language. By this editor's token, a hotchpotch of 'Dakhini' (colloquial Urdu of Hyderabad) which is spoken or understood by not more than 15-20% of the people of Andhra Pradesh is a real 'link language' and 'a standard language' but not so the mother-tongue of 85% people with centuries of literary, cultural heritage! He conveniently 'forgets' that this language was forcibly imposed on the people of Telangana, they were not permitted to study in their mother-tongue, barred to run private Telugu primary schools even, and it was against this cultural oppression coupled with cruel feudal and communal atrocities that a great people's movement began at first for cultural renaissance and later became transformed into a powerful peasant upsurge with radical anti-monarchical and anti-feudal programmes. And he conveniently 'forgets' that that great association was named, and took pride in it, as *Andhra Mahasabha*. 'HEH the Nizam' was so shaken by the movement and its name, apprehending its underlying purpose of achieving unity of Telugu people in the then Hyderabad State and Madras province to be the cause of his sure downfall, repeatedly requested its leaders to just drop the prefix 'Andhra' and keep Telugu or any like word in its place but the great leaders of the Telangana people's movement glorying in their unflinching exhibition of self-respect spurned all such overtures. The 'editor' conveniently overlooks the not-so-remote history of the 1946-56 period when a powerful popular movement of *Vishalandhra* swept entire Telangana, but for a few urban and rural centres under the stranglehold of rabidly feudal reactionary landlord forces led by Konda Venkata Ranga Reddy and Marri Channa Reddy. And it is this set of leaders again that misled the popular movement of 1968-69 which started for 'protection of Rights of Telangana' at first and later became a 'Separate Telangana' movement but was again betrayed by the same set who all chose to join and work in Congress (in spite of winning 10 out of 14 parliamentary seats—the present TRS is no match at all to that strength and popularity) and gave up the demand and slogan for a separate state. Now after 35 years of working the 6-point formula and especially about the 10 years period of NTR and Telugu Desam rule when almost everybody even forgot the slogan of Separate Telangana (including the present boastfully redoubtable K C R), the spectre is again invoked. The unity of Telugu people is being deliberately undermined and parochial sentiments are being purposely raked up. The bogey of backwardness of Telangana is being projected although over the decades Telangana has progressed fast in many spheres and in some fields it even excels Andhra and Rayalaseema regions—this observation, of course, subject to the overall underdevelopment framework in the country. Nothing but sheer opportunism, power-craziness, feudalist cultural and local petty bourgeois egoistic 'sentiments' are the life and soul of the present Separate Telangana movement. In truth there is absolutely no need for Telugu people to divide into more number of states, catering to such stinking sentiments.

One wonders why even some so-called revolutionary and progressive sections are steeped in such sentimentalism and inferiority complex and backwardness-bogey-raising when in fact they should have been in the forefront of movements for the unity and integrity of Telugu people and should (and could) have led Telanganites to lead the entire Telugu people by their militant fighting spirit with the example of the glorious past struggles waged against feudalism and for forging a wider unity of Telugu people. As this correspondent already stated in the columns of *Frontier* earlier, renaming the state as Andhra-Telangana-Seema and creating institutional safeguards for regional autonomy would in the main solve the present crisis, if realistic and non-sentimental thinking and progressive, tolerant attitudes from the peoples of different regions are encouraged.

The Kakatiyas with their capital at Warangal (Telangana) had held sway over much of the Telugu regions of the present Andhra and Karnataka states and it is after the downfall of and from the remnant fighters and feudal lords of that kingdom that the great Vijayanagara Empire had taken birth. The later Golconda Sultans were tolerant and liberal and, unlike the later Nizam dynasty, encouraged and promoted Telugu language. Even the Nizam dynasty had held sway over this entire Telugu region for a considerable period until the Northern Sarkars (coastal Andhra region) were transferred to their protectors, the British, in the eighteenth century. Likewise the Rayalaseema region seized from the Mysore rulers was transferred to the British (as *datta mandalam*). And it is an incontrovertible fact of history that but for the British support the Nizam would have been overthrown long back by the Maratha invaders who extorted *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* with impunity from many of his lands. Also this Nizam, a thoroughly miserly, communal and narrow-minded (and inefficient) feudal dictator, was still afraid of the Marathas despite the British support and so in the Hyderabad city it was the Marathas, next to Muslims, who exerted cultural and linguistic hegemony and looked down on the Telugu people with domineering attitude and conduct. Not many know that it was this Marathi overbearing conduct and insult to a Telugu speaker in a public meeting that had generated the sprouts of the great cultural renaissance movement that has been spoken about. Truly people who forget their history are condemned to relive it, and if Telanganites do not realize that they are part and parcel of the Telugu people, they are no longer backward but sufficiently developed and capable with militant leadership qualities, and look forward and march forward to lead the entire united state to prosperity and progress, then even if a separate state were to be carved out they will surely condemn themselves to another, worse sort of cultural misery and socio-economic subjugation. □□