
THE BIFURCATION OF MEDIA IN THE BIFURCATED STATE OF INDIA, ANDHRA PRADESH

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Fundamental change in political organization; especially: the overthrow or renunciation of one government or ruler and the substitution of another by the governed is called revolution (Merriam-Webster.com). A series of organized activities working toward an objective; also: an organized effort to promote or attain an end is called a movement (Merriam-Webster.com). These definitions best suit the case for the Telangana movement that started in the year 1956. The second phase of Telangana movement started when K. Chandrasekhar Rao (also known as KCR) had begun a hunger strike on November 29, 2009, demanding statehood separate from Andhra Pradesh for Telangana. On December 09, 2009, the then union home minister P. Chidambaram announced the formation of Telangana state. But, all the political parties which supported the formation of Telangana till then took a 'U' turn. Subsequently, from December 10, 2009 till date many transformations have taken place in the political scenario of Andhra Pradesh. The regional press and television has been playing a crucial role in the cause of formation of separate state of Telegana. There is no doubt that the media owned by the business conglomerates from either region: Telangana and Seemandhra have used the media for their own benefit, keeping the journalistic and media ethics aside. The objective of this study is to examine how and why the Telugu media got bifurcated in recent years in the backdrop of Telangana movement.

Keywords: Telangana, Telugu, Seemandhra, Andhra Pradesh, print media, electronic media, mass media, Nizam, ethics, India.

The erstwhile Hyderabad state consisted of 16 districts (8 Telangana districts, 5 Marathwada districts and 3 districts of Karnataka) had been under the rule of Nizam from 1724 to 1948 (P.V. Kate 1987, 193), for a period of 224 years. While India got its independence on August 15, 1947, the people of Hyderabad state got their independence on September 17, 1948 (Ongrotto et al 2007, 311; Suman K. Kasturi 2013, 190) with the intervention of the then union home minister of India Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Subsequently, the 8 districts of Telangana were merged with Andhra State for the formation of a new state of India – Andhra Pradesh. Paradoxically, the state of Andhra Pradesh was formed on November 1, 1956 (P. Pratap Kumar 2013, 13) - ignoring the wishes of people from 8 districts of Hyderabad state (people of Telangana districts), against a categorical recommendation of the States Reorganization Commission (SRC) and contrary to the views of the supreme leader of the time, Jawaharlal Nehru (Indian Express, October 17, 1953). The merger of Telangana districts was rather conditional. An agreement remarkably known as The Gentlemen's Agreement of 1956 (A.P. Thakur and Sunil Pandey 2009, 362) was made prior to the formation of the state of Andhra Pradesh. The ruling governments (mostly dominated by the people of Andhra region) never bothered to implement the agreement in both letter and spirit. As a result, the people of the Telangana region went for regular agitations, more prominently from

1969 onwards. Recently in 2009 the agitation saw its second and strong phase. Owing to the demands of the people of Telangana region, the Central Government of India announced the statehood for Telangana region on December 09, 2009. After the announcement for the formation of Telangana state and all the political parties who supported the Telangana movement took a 'U' turn and changed their opinion on the issue. Thereafter the central government ordered the formation of a commission headed by Justice Srikrishna. From, December 10, 2009, both the print and electronic media owned by people from different regions of Andhra Pradesh took the sides of Telangana and Seemandhra, respectively.

Despite the fact Hyderabad state got its independence and joined Indian union, there was no separate government for the people of this region till the state assembly elections were conducted in India, in 1952 (Subodh Kapoor 2002, 241). In these elections the Indian National Congress emerged as the winning party with 93 seats in Hyderabad state. Dr. Burgula Ramakrishna Rao got elected as the first chief minister of Hyderabad state. Till that time i.e. From 1948 to 1952, the state of Hyderabad was under the military rule (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/State_Assembly_elections_in_India,_1952). On the other side, the people from Andhra region, part of erstwhile Madras state started

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agitating for a separate state. From October 19, 1952 Potti Sriramulu went on an indefinite strike seeking a demand for a separate state for Andhra people with a share in Madras city (B.B. Kumar 1998, 53) (presently, this city is known as Chennai). The union government of India accepted the demand for a separate state of Andhra Pradesh but denied it a share in erstwhile Madras city. After 56 days of indefinite strike, Potti Sriramulu passed away on December 15, 1952 (Ibid). His death led to , Andhra movement reaching its height. Consequently, on October 1, 1953 Andhra State emerged as a new state of India with Kurnool as its capital.

The States Reorganization Commission (SRC) set up by the government of India in early 50s to examine the issue of reorganization of states of India was not in favor of merging the Telangana region (8 districts of erstwhile Hyderabad state) with the erstwhile Andhra state. Even, the then Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, was also not in favor of merging Telangana districts with the Andhra state. He ridiculed the demand for Visalandhra as an idea bearing a tint of expansionist imperialism (Indian Express, October 17, 1953). Yet, paradoxically, the state of Andhra Pradesh was formed on November 1, 1956.

The merger of Telangana with Andhra was done with many conditions. As a sort of protection against the possible exploitation by the people of Andhra region over Telangana region in the enlarged state, the merger was facilitated by a number of solemn promises with constitutional safeguards (Y.V. Krishna Rao and Dr. S. Subrahmanyan 2002, 4). These promises were repeated every time the rights of people were violated. Nobody ever thought about the merger of Telangana with Andhra to be eternal. Jawaharlal Nehru compared the merger to matrimonial alliance having provision for divorce if the partners in the alliance could not get on well (Deccan Chronicle, March 6, 1956).

The Gentlemen's Agreement of 1955 was scuttled in various means and forms, beginning the very same day on which the state was born. This resulted in a massive revolt by the people of the region in 1968-69 demanding separation of Telangana from the state of Andhra Pradesh. This was more significantly known as Jai Telangana Movement (SC Bhatt and Gopal K. Bhargava 2006, 192). It was then realized by both the state and central governments to make an attempt to undo the damage done to the Telangana region. The first initiative was taken by the All Party Accord of January 1969 at a meeting of the leaders of all political parties in the state convened by the then chief minister Kasu Brahmananda Reddy. It was shelved in less than six months time. Thereafter, a couple of packages known as

Eight Point Formula and Five Point Formula were announced by the then prime minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi. When the modalities of giving effect to these packages were being worked out, the supreme court of India gave a historic judgment validating, what have been known as Mulki Rules. This judgment dated October 3, 1972 (Kingshuk Nag 2011, 34) upheld the rule of reserving employment and educational opportunities in Telangana region exclusively for the residents of this region. But the political elite of Andhra region could not ingest these corrective measures given by the Supreme Court of India. This led to another agitation for demand of a separate state from the people and politicians of Andhra region known as the Jai Andhra Movement. Jai Andhra Movement demanded either to scrap all the safeguards given to the people of Telangana including the judgment of Supreme Court of India on the validity of Mulki Rules or bifurcating Andhra Pradesh into Andhra and Telangana states. As a result, an alternative solution, called Six Point Formula was suggested, which again was never implemented. Over the years, people of Telangana have been deprived of their legitimate share in the fruits of development, marginalized in the political process and administrative setup. The people of Telangana region have been belittled on the cultural and linguistic fronts and have been virtually reduced to the status of second-rate citizen in their own homeland.

K Chandrasekhar Rao (the president of Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) party) began a hunger strike on November 29, 2009 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Telangana_movement) demanding a separate Telangana state. All the media channels including those owned by the Seemandhra people had to give wide coverage of this historic incident. Every happening in this episode was given wide publicity. On the eleventh day of K Chandrasekhar Rao's indefinite fast for Telangana, on December 09, 2009 (Ibid), the union government emerging after a late-night meeting at Prime Minister's residence announced that the process of formation of a separate state of Telangana was being set into motion. Since then the Seemandhra owned and oriented media became cautious and conditioned. Though it was not declared publicly, it is understood that it was decided not to give much coverage to Telangana movement; and incase if at all it was inevitable, then least coverage could be given. In this way, the Seemandhra owned and oriented media showed its colonial nature. From December 2009 till date many developments have taken place in the Telangana movement. On July 30, 2013 The Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) took its final decision on bifurcating Andhra Pradesh and creating a separate Telangana state. It is said that history repeats itself, people

and politicians of Seemandhra region started agitating for united Andhra Pradesh, widely known as Samaikya Andhra movement. Unlike the case of Telangana agitation that took place from November 2009, this movement has been getting a wide coverage in print and electronic media owned by the people of Seemandhra region, pushing the journalistic and media ethics aside.

I. Review of Literature

On media ethics Andrew Belsey argues that there are two contradictory pressures on journalists. On one hand they are subject to the attention of the lobbyists and the publicity-seeking who not only want their story told but want their own slant on it. This is an ethically – fraught area (especially if the lobbyist happens to be also the owners of the newspaper or television channel). But on the other hand what is ethically interesting and puzzling here, is a lot of journalism consists of discovering and printing information about something or some situation that those involved in would rather keep secret.

For a credible and effective media system to survive, it is important to understand and insist upon the importance of ethical standards. We need more ethical engagement. It is time to rethink, as the media channels are taking sides to ground the ethical values. Christopher Johnstone offers some words that help clarify why ethics is such an urgent matter of concern today: Questions of morality and ethics have become even more troubled, vexed by the acknowledgement that there are multiple sets of culturally grounded values having validity in our society, that moral absolutes are not universally recognized, and that individual autonomy is a value that sometimes outweighs adherence to accepted norms. So now it is more difficult than ever to justify moral claims, to argue for ethical judgements in ways that will be persuasive to society as a whole (Patrick Lee Plaisance 2009, 1-2). In the context of Telangana movement, ethics in the ongoing orientation of Telugu media in recent times is critical. In his Nicomachean ethics, Aristotle argued that human goodness requires using our rationality to tune a life of virtue. We are all social, communal beings. We live in communities and performance of our excellence must include a practical involvement in the life of these communities. There is a crucial need to follow ethics by all media organizations and personnel as so much depends on ethical values.

II. Objective of the Study

With the involvement of the personnel from either region: Telangana and Seemandhra, the mass audiences are being baffled. The biased coverage on the issues of Telangana

and Seemandhra by the Telugu media is igniting wrangles not only between the regions but also between the people from these regions. The so called Fourth estate needs to realize its latent powers and keep itself away from all kinds of preconceptions. This study is important to bring out awareness among all the concerned on the subject of bifurcated Telugu print and electronic media in addressing the Telangana-Seemandhra issue.

With the mushrooming of satellite channels after 1990's, regional channels also got a push. Presently there are more than 30 news channels alone in Telugu language. Most of these channels are either owned by politicians or political parties or the business houses. In the second phase of Telangana movement and after the announcement of statehood for Telangana region by United Progressive Alliance (UPA) on July 30, 2013, the Telugu newspapers and television channels played the fundamental but biased roles.

The objectives of this study are:

- To examine whether the Telugu print and television media have been playing a neutral or biased role in sharing information among the masses.
- To analyze the extent to which the newspapers and television channels are biased and audience faith in the news presentation of these media.

III. Research Design & Methods

In order to achieve unbiased results and ensure equal representation of all the three regions of Andhra Pradesh: Telangana, Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema, the method of stratified random sampling was adopted for the selection of sample of respondents in the selected PSU i.e. Hyderabad. A random list was drawn up for each subgroup and respondents were chosen from each subgroup.

The research was conducted in two stages:

Stage 1- Exploratory Stage: In this stage, a deep and thorough secondary research was carried out to get acquaintance on the historical facts of Telangana-Seemandhra to understand the underlying causes for the same.

Stage 2 - Survey Stage: In this stage, the newspapers and television channels considered for the research purpose were assessed for their levels of bias. The audience of both these media were interviewed in the selected PSU. The beneficiaries were the end users or the so called audiences of these media (with access to both these media).

25 end users from each region were considered for the study. A total of 75 respondents were covered from the three regions of Andhra Pradesh in Hyderabad city. 8 leading Telugu newspapers and 21 Telugu television news channels were considered and analyzed. Limitation in this study is the lack of information about non-users of both these mass media. Therefore, this study might be followed up by collecting the data from a sample of non-users across all the three regions in the same socio-economic context, as the respondents.

IV. Results & Discussion

Data analysis shows that both newspapers and television have tremendous influence on masses in all the three regions of Telangana, Andhra and Rayalaseema. The results of this study are appended below:

- Figure 1. illustrates details about orientation of the 8 newspapers under study. Based on the opinion of 75 respondents of the 8 Telugu daily newspapers, 37.5% of newspapers fall in the category of purely Seemandhra oriented, 25% of newspapers fall in the category of partially Seemandhra oriented, 12.5% fall in the neutral category. While for both partially Telangana oriented and Purely Telangana oriented, the percentage lies at 12.5%.
- Figure 2. presents details regarding orientation of the 21 Telugu television news channels under study. Based on the opinion of the respondents, 23.8% of Telugu news channels fall in the category of purely Seemandhra oriented, 33.32% of news channels fall in the category of partially Seemandhra oriented, 28.56% news channels fall in the neutral category while partially Telangana oriented and Purely Telangana oriented channels have the share of 4.76%, 9.52%, respectively. Responding to a question regarding the satisfaction of the news stories presented by the newspapers on the issue of Telangana-Seemandhra agitation, only 15.33% felt that they were fully satisfied; 28% people felt that they were partially satisfied and 44% people felt that they are satisfied to some extent while 12.67% people responded that they were not satisfied. Figure 3 presents details regarding the level of satisfaction among the newspaper readers.
- Figure 4. presents details regarding the level of satisfaction among the television news channel audience. In case of television channels, only 6.67% people felt that they were fully satisfied with the news stories presented on these 21 news channels considered for the study; 18% respondents felt that they were partially satisfied and 30% people felt that they were satisfied to some extent and 45.3% people responded that they were not satisfied.

- Regarding confidence in the content of Newspapers, 50.67% people felt that they have a high confidence in the news stories presented in the newspapers they follow. 18.67% people felt that they have moderate confidence. While 11% people felt that they have no confidence, 20% people felt that they have a neutral opinion. Figure 5. presents details regarding the level of confidence in the news stories on Telangana-Seemandhra related issues.

- Figure. 6 presents details regarding the level of confidence in the news stories telecast on news channels on Telangana-Seemandhra related issues. About 5.33% people felt that they have a high confidence in the news stories presented on the news channels they watch; 26.67% people felt that they have a moderate confidence. While 48% people felt that they have no confidence, 20% people felt that they have a neutral opinion.

- One important finding in this study is that almost all the respondents felt that the television channels are more biased than the newspapers. On deep investigation, it was observed that the newspapers manage different versions of the same story in different editions of the newspaper. The findings also showed that the same daily newspaper which reported news regarding the declaration of formation of Telangana state in a favourable way in Telangana editions, reportedly published a different news version for Seemandhra districts of Andhra Pradesh.

- Almost all the respondents of Telangana region felt that most of the popular news channels did not present a holistic coverage of the Telangana movement. However, they felt that they hyped the incidents happening at Seemandhra regions by repeated telecasts. Almost 30% of the respondents from other regions of Andhra Pradesh i.e. from Andhra and Rayalaseema also agreed to this view.

- All the respondents shared that they accessed only those newspapers and television news channels, whose opinions were close to their own views.

V. Conclusion

Therefore need of the hour is that - experts from different sectors should come forward and involve themselves to clear the quandaries on such issues like Telangana-Seemandhra through all possible mass media. All the stakeholders have to be equally responsible for diffusing information to the masses in a befitting manner. Such an attempt should have the true journalistic and media ethics as its base.

The people of Telangana have been fighting for a separate

statehood for themselves for nearly sixty years. This legitimate fight for creation of a new state with Hyderabad as its capital has a constitutional validity. Telangana movement is unique for its mass democratic character. The agitation over regional inequality, cultural differences, and denial of rights of the people of Telangana region has been distinguished by wide ranging and active participation of diverse sections of population. The agitation has a very strong foundation. But, due to the biased role played by both Telugu newspapers and Telugu television channels, mainly, those owned by people of Seemandhra region, the projection of Telangana movement has not been projected properly. From the other side, the Seemandhra agitation has been given the due coverage; and neglecting all other issues, even a wide publicity is given.

Findings of the study show that only a negligible number of Telugu newspapers and television channels are acting neutrally. Therefore it is suggested that all the media organizations should feel responsible for the wellbeing of the society and inculcate good journalistic approaches. Also the readers & audience choose newspapers or televisions, selectively, they read or watch what they want to and even comprehend the content in the manner they look at an issue. Hence, the media should act neutrally and let the audience decide on any issues or matter.

There is no doubt that the reaction from the government to most of the issues is based on the intensity of media exposure to that particular issue. Hence, taking sides to a particular issue like Telangana-Seemandhra would definitely aggravate the prevailing conditions as clear from the present political scenario of Andhra Pradesh. Adding fuel to fire, some media channels are conducting baseless debates. Such debates have been responsible for the varied apprehensions of the people from all the three regions of Andhra Pradesh. They have become a trigger of instigation to promote conflicts among the people of different regions of Andhra Pradesh.

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Figure 1: Orientation of Telugu Daily Newspapers

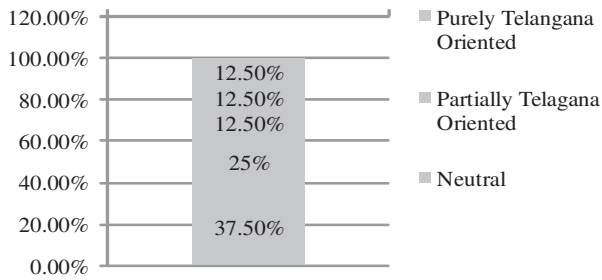


Figure 4: Levels of Satisfaction among the Audience: Telugu Television News Channels

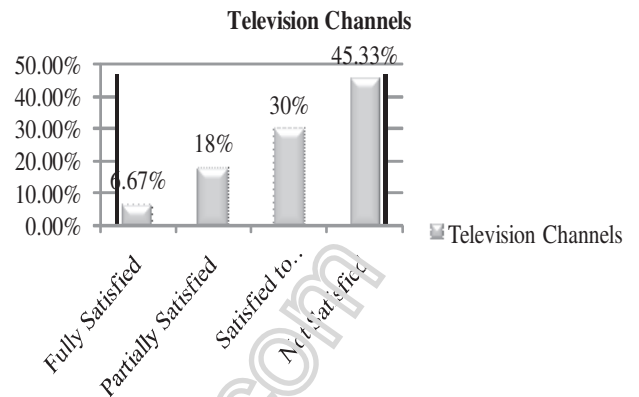


Figure 2: Orientation of Telugu Television News Channels

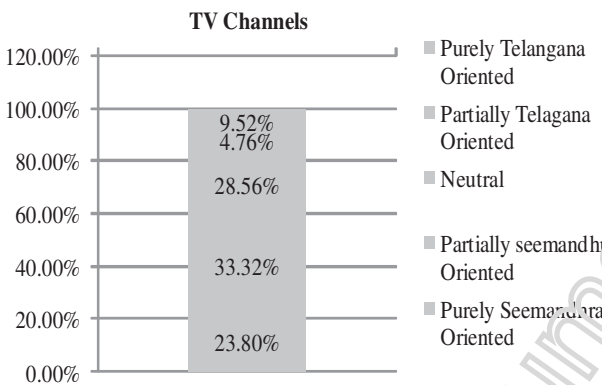


Figure 5: Level of confidence among the Readers: Telugu Daily Newspapers

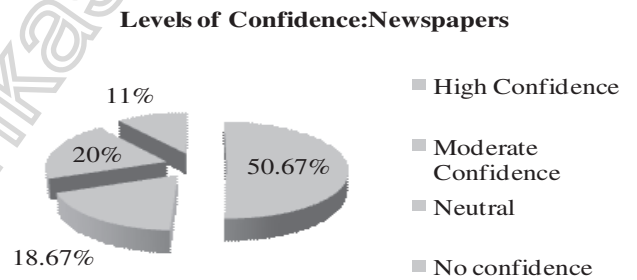


Figure 3: Levels of Satisfaction among the Readers: Telugu Daily Newspapers

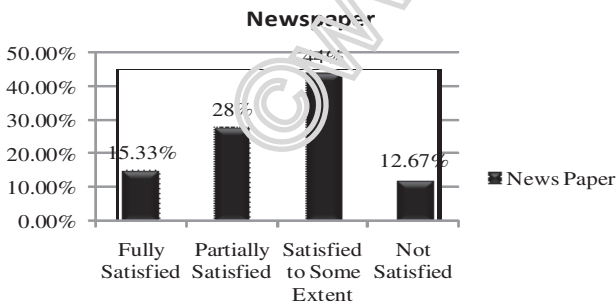


Figure 6. Levels of Confidence among the Audience: Telugu News Channels

