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Constructing Telangana Identity in the Context of Bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana States in India

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Abstract:

Constructing cultural identity is a complex phenomenon on par with linguistic identity. Those who observed, Telangana movement can easily distinguish the language, and cultural issues they highlighted in the course of time. Telangana movement, formation of Telangana state, and promotion of Telangana culture, and the process of constructing Telangana identity is evidence for diversification with the same linguistic roots. Subtle differences in historical perspective as well as socio-political dimensions play important role in claiming identity on cultural and traditional grounds.

Keywords: culture, language, linguistic Identity, historical perspective, socio-political

1. Introduction

The notion of Telangana Identity is very important in its existence as a separate state with its long lasting fight for separate Telangana from 1969 till 2014. Historical perspective towards these two bifurcated states namely Andhra Pradesh has number of arguments. If we go down the history, Telangana movement intensified in 1969. There was a distinct difference between Andhra and Telangana regions. Since Andhra was part of a colonial Madras Presidency, (Pingle Gouram, 2010) education levels and development of this region were better than in feudal Telangana. People from Telangana were against merger with Andhra state as they feared they would lose jobs to them. Cultural differences, too, remain. Under Nizam's, and before that, under the Qutb Shahi rule, the culture and language in Telangana bore influences of north India, emphasis on festivals are also different.

Apart from its historical evidences which are available immediately, let us discuss in this paper about socio-political and socio-economical conditions role in framing the notion of Telangana Identity and renaming its places for their traditional and cultural balance. Unified Andhra Pradesh bifurcated in to Telangana and Andhra Pradesh on June 2, 2014 after a massive mass movement. There are political, economical, and social reasons merged into one major demand that is separate Telangana. People from different sections walked into joint action committees which represents Telangana tradition and culture. When the movement was in its pace in various places political and cultural gatherings were organized and representation of Telangana culture and tradition took place through speeches, songs, and dance forms.

'Identity' is a term sometimes used to a sense of integration of self in which different aspects come together. Socio-political problems always play predominant role in creating new identities which gives memory of their ancestors (Hogg et al 1995). Telangana state started replacing Andhra culture with Telangana tradition and culture. We can see some of the instances like replacing the statue of Andhra Matha (Mother Andhra), with Telangana Thalli (mother Telangana), as its first step towards Renaming places (Cohen and Nurit 1992) and Reshaping Identities.

2. Role of Festivals in Identity Construction

Telangana state is promoting its cultural identity through some of festivals like bathukamma¹ (an exclusive woman festival), which celebrates nature and its reflection of purifying human life from different dimensions. Bathukamma is not a religious, but an environmental festival, which revolves around three things, water, woman, and flowers. E. Revathi, professor at the Center for Economical and Social Studies, Hyderabad, offers her opinion that "Bathukamma signifies life, society and even the economy of the new state". Telangana government announced Bonalu and Bathukamma as their official state festivals by replacing unified Andhra Pradesh festivals like Sankranthi and Deepaavali. Despite the criticism made by renowned social and political scientist Kanche Ilaiah, "they (the government) want to give us festivals but not cars and computers. How are such celebrations going to bring any development or education to the people of Telangana", government allocated funds for festival celebrations throughout Telangana region.

3. Language and Movies

Representation of Telangana Tradition and culture in Television and movies got rapid pace. Telangana activists started questioning the representation and use of Telangana dialect in general and in movies particular. Telugu cinema engaged with Telangana to create a sense of “secret fascination of otherness” as cultural theorist Stuart Hall observed, which subsequently resulted in stereotyping of the region its culture and dialect. Sathya Prakash Elavarthi and Vamshi Vemireddy (2015) in their article “Telanganas and Language Politics of Telugu Cinema” accused that Costal Andhra Dialect as the De facto standard and ignored other dialects including that of Telangana. In the process of Telangana movement activists from different fields started using Telangana language not as a mere Dialect for that matter not as a mere language, but it became as an issue of representation and defiant statement of identity in the face of standardization and false universal Telugu identity promoted by all media industry. Mamidi Harikrishna in his article titled “Noorella therapai Telangana Aathma” (The soul of Telangana on Hundred years of screen) criticized that there is no Telanagana in Telugu Cinema. Harikrishnas opined that Telugu movies are not able to reflect the soul, capture the struggles and diversities of Telangana. Through constant use by activists Telangana dialect created cognitive dissonance in the speakers of ‘standard language’ which blended with ‘ethno- aesthetics’.

4. Literature in Telangana

The movement for separate Telangana has made language a vehicle for the identity of the Telangana people. Mallinatha Suri (who wrote comments on all five mahakavyas), Bameera Pothana who wrote (Bhagavatham) all these historical poets from Telangana region belittled by Costal Andhra Media. There is no considerable recognition to some of the renowned Telugu poems in the long run of time though they got momentary appreciation. For example “Telugu Jathi Manadhi, Ninduga Velugu Jaathi Manadhi” (ours is a Telugu nation, ours is a flourishing nation) is a poem written by C. Narayana Reddy, a famous poet from Telangana. Unified state always played a partisan role and discriminated Telangana in terms of promoting literary and cultural activities, while Andhra cultural and literary organizations are funded indiscriminately.

Hundreds and thousands of writers and poets came in to the main stream movement with their enraged literary quest to present the very soul of Telangana rural spirit. Poets like Gaddar², Jayaraju, Andhe Sree, Goreti Venkanna, Vimalakka (youtube videos are available) and many more presented issues like Hyderabad free Zone, KCR’s hunger strike, Sreekantha Chari’s self- immolation, December 9, December 23, Osmania University emerging as a capital of movement, Police repression of students, continued suicides, appointment of Srikrishna committee, the Sixth recommendation of the Srikrishna committee, the Eighth chapter of the same report, the Million march, the destruction of the statues on the Tank bund.

5. Tank Bund Incident

The statue as political propoganda was there at its pace in the Roman Empire. A.W. Lawrence (1972) writes, “Specifically Roman sculpture.... was political as much as an artistic creation, its purpose being to give visual expression to Augustus’ ideology of Empire....His theoretically super human status was demonstrated at Rome and throughout the empire by the dissemination of portraits idealized into embodiments of beneficent but dispassionate authority”.

As John F. Kennedy said “those who make peaceful revolution impossible, will make violent revolution inevitable”, happened on the eve of million march day (10-03-2011)³. K. Tharaka Rama Rao, son of present Telangana CM, K. Chandra Sekhar Rao, commented on vandalizing the statues on Tank Bund and said “we damaged statues as most of the people of them were of Andhra region”. KTR in his speech October 2010 demanded the AP state government to install Komaram Bheem statue on Tank Bund. We can witness series of incidents in the process of identity construction. In any given region one should respect that region’s values and self-hood over period of time. Activists in Telangana movement extensively talked about these idols because costal Andhra politicians failed in maintain the Balance while representing three major regions equally, for example out of 33 statues on tank bund 27 statues are from seemandhra region. Dasarathi, Padhmavibhushan award recipient Kaloji, Vattikota Alwar Swami, are some of the legendary personalities who lost in the memory of Telangana without recognition by main stream politicians. Decade back installation of statues on Tank Bund is undoubtedly a matter of political conspiracy and politics of idol-ism (srinivasulu 2012). Installation of these statues of literature, culture, and social reformers restores Telugu jathi of its “self-respect”. The very “self-respect” of Telugu we talked about is purely anti-congress and anti-central politics, to blow on regional development.

6. (Re) Naming Process

Reorganization of districts in the Telangana state is in the process and some people proposed to change some of the district names after some social activists and who led Telangana movement. Telangana government changed its only agricultural university after Prof. Jayashankar⁴ (Prof. Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University), an academician and Telangana ideologist who has been writing and mobilizing from 1960 onwards. Its name in the unified Andhra Pradesh was Acharya NG Ranga Agricultural University after a great freedom fighter, kisan leader, and parliamentarian from Costal Andhra. Hyderabad- New Delhi- Hyderabad Express train earlier called as AP Express, after bifurcation it got name after Telangan state (now it is Telangana Express). In 2014, in the month of November, Central Government of India took a decision to rename the domestic terminal, in the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, samshabad, after former unified AP chief minister N.T. Rama Rao. Telangana CM K. Chandra Shekar Rao and Telangana State Assembly unanimously opposed and made an appeal to the Central Government to rename it after a tribal Gond leader Komaram Bheem, not after an Andhra leader. Telangana activists, and politicians accused Mr. Ashok Gajapathi Raju (TDP minister from Costal Andhra), Central Aviation minister for this. In august 2014, Deputy Chief Minister of Telangana State Mohd Mehmood Ali himself said in an occasion to change the name of Kasu Brahmanandha Reddy(Costal Andhra leader and former CM of AP) park (KBR park,

Hyderabad) , to Asafjahi park⁵ as part of Muslim Identity. Outsiders may think what is there in the name, but who is closely associated with any particular culture will get that in group sense. For example, we have been arguing why English names in our text books, if we have names from our culture and tradition we can identify easily.

7. Conclusion

Region and regional identities are mushrooming across the globe by renaming and reshaping its existence. Regions and identities are in an integrated conceptual frame work along with idol worship in modern politics. In order to win at least passive approval of a fairly large number of people for the action of the state, it became necessary to project images in public to brand a person great, powerful and legitimate. Regional identification can be effectively constructed through idols in public places, as well as honor our culture and tradition representing in the names.

8. Notes

1. Many Bathukamma songs have patriarchal overtones. The lyrics of some Bathukamma songs are available on websites such as [http:// www.telugulyrics.org/](http://www.telugulyrics.org/). While most Telangana ideologues value these traditional songs in the name of Telangana traditions, some left-oriented artists like Vimalakka are trying to give them a political orientation. Her interviews and performances can be seen on YouTube.
2. Gaddar and his team have many songs eulogizing the peasants and youth who participated in the peasant struggles, Naxalite movement, and the Telangana movement. Most of them are on YouTube.
3. "Million March in Hyderabad: Statues On Tank Bund Demolished - Hyderabad News on fullhyd.com". Fullhyderabad.com. 10 March 2011. Retrieved 2011-10-11.
4. Telanganastateinfo.com. Retrieved 1 March 2014. Some important works of Jayashankar on Telangana include *Telangana Rashtram Oka Demand* (Telugu), 2004; *Telangana Movement: A Demand for a Separate State*, 2006; and *Viability of Telangana and Andhra as Separate States*, 2012.
5. Deputy Chief Minister Mohd Mehmood Ali himself. "We are not against anybody but we want to give the right name to the park which is part of the Chiran Palace," he remarked. *The Hindu* August 21, 2014

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