

What Next After Telangan?

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Parliament has pronounced on the partition of Andhra Pradesh and the President has applied his seal to this decision. This is the stage at which I feel almost like one of the spectators watching a Greek tragedy of epic proportions unfolding itself. Did Shakespeare write the script? Unfortunately it is P. Chidambaram who wrote it, because it is he who pronounced loudly as a member of the Union Cabinet that if Telangana was not conceded there would be a blood bath in Hyderabad. He claimed that his views were based on reports from the Intelligence Bureau. My friends in IB tell me that they have painted no such a scenario and I understand from reliable sources that Narsimhan, the Governor of Andhra Pradesh and a retired Director of IB, had also made no such a gloomy prognosis.

No sooner had the ink dried on the President's signature than the demand for Gorkhaland remerged good and strong. Naturally neither Mamata Banerji nor the Left Front in West Bengal will countenance this move. We have a long history of succumbing to localised violence, however unreasonable it be. Sometimes we act even before violence occurs in the hope of averting it, resulting in the kind of situation we have today after we broke Punjab into the mountainous State of Himachal Pradesh and the Hindi speaking Haryana with the residue being the Punjab. What we have as a result thereof is a highly parochial Haryana State whose leaders obviously look backward with appreciation at a society which is almost medieval in its social values, organisation and mores. In the Punjab extreme Sikh polarisation resulted from the partition of the State and even today lurking beneath the surface is the fear of revival of Khalistani militancy and a call for separation from India. This reminds me of what a very distinguished Sikh police officer of Madhya Pradesh Cadre once told me. He said, "Sir, If India is to stay together as one country then the minorities must be a minority in a State so that on the one hand they are singled out for development assistance and on the other they are prevented from assuming a dominant role in a State in which they might be a majority in isolation". He was referring to the Punjab and how its partition has created immense problems. I may not subscribe to his views in the context of majority and minority of population, but I do feel a heterogeneous society has more chance of developing on liberal lines rather than one in which homogeneity has deteriorated into narrow minded bigotry. This is something on which we must cogitate.

I am not a Nostradamus, Bhrgu Rishi or even Bejan Daruwala and, therefore, have no claim to an ability to foresee the future. I am not even the Oracle at Delphi and cannot make pronouncements on a course of action which is preordained to follow a certain path. Therefore, I refrain from making any prophesy on what will happen to the State from where geographically South India begins, Andhra Pradesh, after it is partitioned. Andhra Pradesh is heir to a rich ancient and medieval heritage encompassing history, religion and culture. Kuchipudi is a major classical dance form which originated in Andhra Pradesh. Lepakshi is the symbol of Telugu culture, arts, crafts and skills, not to mention religious symbolism. Telugu, the language, is itself a bridge between the Sanskrit based Oriya and the Adi Dravid language from which Tamil has emerged. The great Bahmani dynasty ruled over what is today Telangana and the Kannada speaking districts of old Hyderabad State which are now transferred to Karnataka. Politically the Telugu speaking region may have been a part of the

old Madras Presidency and erstwhile Hyderabad State, but in terms of language and culture the area which became Andhra Pradesh has always been one. Of course the Telangana District have had the Muslim culture of Hyderabad superimposed on them, but then equally important is the tribal culture of the tribes which, broadly speaking, belong to the Gondi group which forms the mainstay of tribal Chhattisgarh and of Chandrapur and Gadchiroli Districts of Maharashtra. Andhra Pradesh subsumed all these cultural strains. Telangana will only accentuate the differences between the main Telugu speaking people of Telangana, the Muslims of Hyderabad and the tribal people who live in the valley of the Indravati River. The partition of Andhra Pradesh will not only divide that State, but Telangana will create three separate sub cultures, tribal, Muslim and Telugu which are not necessarily happy partners in cohabitation. This has what initially led to the massive, violent Communist movement in Telangana in the days of the Nizam and with the paternal umbrella of Andhra Pradesh being removed, old memories and enmities are likely to revive in Telangana.

Without being a soothsayer I can almost sense the following things happening in partitioned Andhra Pradesh:-

1. Because it would retain its homogeneity, its British inherited administrative culture of a government based on systems and laws, the very rich Godavari basin, the port of Visakhapatnam and the massive educational complex developed by the Tirupati-Tirumala Balaji Trust, Andhra Pradesh will continue to make progress and, over time, will compensate for the loss of Hyderabad.
2. Bereft of the entrepreneurship of the Andhraites, Hyderabad is likely to slip back into the sloth which was its hallmark under the Nizam. Any slowing down of the economic growth of Hyderabad will harm Telangana, but it will also be a major national loss as one of our great metropolitan cities declines.
3. There will be considerable infighting between politicians in Telangana as each tries to grab power so that the wealth of Hyderabad city can be milked.
4. The Andhra Pradesh Government, with its large resources, was able to substantially reduce Naxalite violence in the Telangana, to the extent where many top Naxalites fled to Chhattisgarh and Maharashtra. As happened in Chhattisgarh after it broke away from Madhya Pradesh the smaller State with its limited resources was unable to tackle Naxalism. This means that in the truncated State of Telangana the return of violent extreme Left insurgency cannot be ruled out.

When Shivaji's forces captured the Fort of Raigarh his General, Tanaji Malusare, who was known as the Lion, was killed in the moment of victory. Shivaji, when this was reported to him said, "Gadh ala, pun Sinh gela", which means we have won the Fort but lost the Lion. In the case of Telangana they may have won the State but in the process lost the larger picture.
