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TEBHAGA MOVEMENT AND **TELENGANA MOVEMENT**

TEBHAGA MOVEMENT

The Tebhaga movement is probably the greatest peasant movement in the history of India. The Tebhaga movement was a movement of the sharecroppers of Bengal demanding two-thirds instead of half as their produce. Basically from this principle demand the name 'Tebhaga' movement comes. The small peasants also joined hand with the sharecroppers as the gambit of the demands increased. Gradually with the intensification of the movement the charter of demands even touched the revolutionary idea of 'land to tiller' concept.

The movement reflected the development of the political consciousness of the poor peasants and tribal sharecroppers and it may safely be opined that it marked a turning point in the history of agrarian movements in India. Prof. Sunil Kumar Sen, a distinguished historian and peasant leader, opines that the author has broken "new ground in focusing on the role of the major political parties during the Tebhaga struggle as well as the enduring success of this struggle in stemming the tide of communal killings on the eve of Independence". Though the struggle did not achieve immediate success so long as success is measured by the actual implementation of tebhaga of the gross produce as rent but what

looks like a failure in the eyes of one spectator may well take on appearance of the redeeming sacrifice of pioneers who laid the foundation for a better tomorrow.

The author in his scheme of seven chapters has discussed the Tebhaga movement in the role and perspective of various political parties in the chapters third, fourth and the fifth and in sixth and seventh chapter he has studied this movement in relation to Dinajpur and Kakdwip respectively. The role of women, students, workers and middle class is also examined by the author and this transformation of various sections of society reflected in his political environment of West Bengal today. He rightly puts a question “can it be said that the Tebhaga struggle made its own contribution to the perception of left front parties, the two communist parties in particular, in which the peasantry and the countryside have occupied a position of great importance”.

The movement in 24 Parganas

During the Bengal Famine of 1943 the Communist Party of India provided relief to the peasantry of the Sundarbans area. In September 1946 Bangiya Pradeshik Kisan Sabha decided to launch the Tebhaga movement. The peasant movement broke out in Kakdwip, Sonarpur, Bhangar and Canning. Kakdwip and Namkhana were the storm centres of the movement. The movement aimed at improving the share of the peasant engaged as sharecroppers.

The prominent leaders of the movement were: Kansari Halder, Ashoke Bose and Rash Behari Ghosh. Peasant leaders like Gajen Malik, Manik Hazra, Jatin

Maity, Bijoy Mondal and others rose to prominence. The movement continued till 1950, when the Bargadari Act was enacted. The Act recognised the right of the sharecropper to two-thirds of the produce when he provided the inputs.

During 1946-1950 the Tebhaga movement in several parts of the 24 Parganas district led to the enactment of the Bargadari Act. Although the Bargadari Act of 1950 recognised the rights of bargadars to a higher share of crops from the land that they tilled, it was not implemented. Large tracts, beyond the prescribed limit of land ceiling, remained with the rich landlords. In 1967, West Bengal witnessed peasant uprising, against non-implementation of land reforms legislation, starting from Kheadaha gram panchayat in Sonarpur CD block. From 1977 onwards major land reforms took place in West Bengal under the Left Front government. Land in excess of land ceiling was acquired and distributed amongst the peasants. Subsequently, “Operation Barga” was aimed at securing tenancy rights for the peasants.

TELENGANA MOVEMENT

In the western world, especially in Europe, it may not be so complex to distinguish between the nationalities of different people as it is mostly based on the identity of language. However, in the case of India, it can be too ambiguous as the country is a great mixture of various ethnicities, diverse languages and religions. Though after

independence, the Indian government adopted a similar way to demarcate different states on the basis of language, this differentiation was too simple for a country like India.

Many regions which were too distinct culturally and even linguistically were assimilated with each other as a single state. For example, Gujarat and Maharashtra were one state, however, had their own different language and culture. All these were seen as an oversimplification and mere a blind westernized act. Hence, the further separation of states within India as a nation started. The main point to be focused is how one country can survive despite being too diverse and the sociological patterns it left behind. The formation of Telangana as a state can be taken as the same case where under the identity of one nation, the identity of a region got separated.

The demand for separate state arose not only because of power politics that neglected to develop the Telangana region but also because of systematic exploitation of the region which was denied its share of resources, discrimination that existed in matters of employment, education, and industrialisation.

The formation of Telangana as a separate state was substantive for the people to exercise their political power in order to protect not just their economic interests but also dignity, self-respect and distinct culture. The Telangana movement can be seen as a fight against the hegemonic domination of Andhra culture. This is just not a demand for a separate state and recognition of Telangana culture. It is a fight against the power politics of

dominant feudal castes. If the caste issues are left unaddressed, the crux of Telangana problem remains untouched.

A Historical Analysis:

Telangana, the Telugu speaking region of the then feudal Hyderabad State, (which included Maratha speaking and Kannada speaking regions as well), has its own distinct culture, variation of language, and customs. The aspiration of Telangana as a separate state has its roots since the mid-20th century, prominently from the Non-Mulki Movement of 1952.

1948-1956:

The princely state of Hyderabad, which was under the exploitative Nizam rule, was taken over by the Indian armed forces on September 17, 1948, so that it could be merged with the Indian Union. This day is now celebrated as Telangana Liberation Day. But the Hyderabad state of Indian Union consisted of present-day Telangana and parts of present-day Karnataka and Maharashtra. The people of this region were dominated and oppressed by the Nizam's exploitative taxation policies. The dominant feudal caste, the Nizam's middlemen, exercised domination over the deprived sections of the region even after its so-called liberation. Thus, the struggle for a democratic share of resources and separate identity initiated in the region.

Peasant movements of the period took place in Telugu speaking parts but not in the parts of

Kannada and Marathi speaking sections of Hyderabad state. Therefore, contemporary scholars consider these movements purely a struggle for identity rather than for resources. Thus, the movement started as a struggle for separate identity but later on, aspects like resources, control over jobs, power relations added on.

1971-2001:

This period of 30 years in the history of Telangana Movement is considered to be a re-energising phase. While resistance was in the minds of the masses, it was new political forces that overshadowed the movement, resulting in a long pause. Though there emerged a new political party, **Telangana Praja Samithi** (TPS), it ended up merging into Indian National Congress due to the charismatic leadership of Indira Gandhi.

The particular phase experienced the emergence of strong new political forces in the state, like **Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao** (NTR) who was known for his charisma in Indian cinema and politics. The emergence of NTR as a strong political force was possible because of the implementation of his policies like abolishing traditional Patel-Patwari system in Telangana region and bringing meritocracy to the office of Patel which was earlier hereditary. Being a person from Coastal Andhra, he contested from three constituencies of Telangana showcasing himself as a “**person of all**”.

Moreover, he encouraged candidates from backward classes to contest the election. Though he belonged to one of the dominant feudal castes of Andhra,

he worked for unbiased welfare and especially worked for backward class mobilisation. Social and democratic development was considered as core agenda of his regime, which was the main propaganda of the movement too. Hence, the movement and resistance were not active during his regime. When the ruling class satisfies the aspirations of masses, there would be lesser possibility for resistance.

In 1990s, during and after LPG reforms, the political hold of Andhra Pradesh drastically shifted to coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema, benefitting the business class, contractors of their regions in the new market model of so-called “development”. A series of Chief Ministers since then, were from the Seemandhra region (Rayalaseema and coastal Andhra), namely Nedurumalli Janardhana, Chandrababu Naidu, Y.S.Rajasekhara Reddy, Kiran Kumar Reddy, eventually benefited the people of their respective regions right from diversion of water to diversion of funds from Telangana.

2001-2009:

Active left-wing in radical extremism and in political structure in the region were responsible for taking up the idea of separate state deep into every corner of the region and the minds of the masses. Chief Ministers, Chandrababu Naidu (1995-2004) and Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy (2004-2009), took effective measures to clear extremism in Andhra Pradesh especially in Telangana region. And hence the responsibility to effectively take

forward the movement shifted onto the shoulders of civil societies and political parties in particular.

This period can be considered as the decade of **Telangana Rashtra Samithi** (TRS), a political party which was established by the present Chief Minister of Telangana State, Kalvakuntla Chandrasekhar Rao (popularly known by acronym KCR) with the basic agenda to “Achieve Telangana”. TRS contested the 2004 general elections and turned out with six Members of Parliament and 24 Members of Legislative Assembly. These elected representatives stood by the popular aspirations of Telangana, resigned their membership in 2006 and tried political tactics but failed in front of the century-old Congress. After its massive defeat in 2009 general elections, TRS took a resolution – Telangana can be achieved not on tactics but through mass movement.

KCR, demanding for Telangana as a separate state, went on indefinite hunger strike, after the sudden demise of Y.S.Rajasekhar Reddy, the then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, in September 2009. The Congress central body released a notice that states – “The process for the formation of Telangana starts on December 9, 2009.”

After 2010:

After the demise of Rajasekhar Reddy, Andhra Pradesh suffered an able leadership crisis. On the other hand, there was chaos in all the three regions, agitations for a separate state in Telangana and counter agitations in other two

regions for united Andhra Pradesh, emotional connotations driven by political motivations.

Civil societies (Telangana Joint Action Committee) and political parties, especially TRS realised the weak state of affairs and took the movement to every possible level. Organisations which had been inactive for ages took rebirth to take advantage of people's emotions. Meanwhile, Sri Krishna Committee, which was appointed in 2006, gave its report after taking out a comparative study. The study states, *“According to statistics, Telangana region is comparatively not backward and rich in resources than the other regions of Andhra Pradesh.”* As the main focussed issues – resources and backwardness were proven wrong, civil societies and political parties influenced by dominant caste groups, gave an emotional push to the movement, *“We have already been divided by heart, we can't get back together.”*

The last resort was political tactics, which was applied well in passing the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act in parliament. If one needs to know how political power influences modern-day democracy, the trends of Telangana state right from merging into Andhra State to today's Telangana as a separate state, is the best example to study.

Role of Civil Societies in the Movement:

In the initial stages of the movement, one can trace that even the civil societies were influenced by dominant castes. And hence, they worked as organisations reinforcing the dominant power structure.

Eventually, the deprived sections of these organisations recognised this and gradually shifted their focus from issues of water and irrigation to caste and cultural question. Gradually, caste-based divisions in the civil societies started dismantling due to the strong left-wing emerging both in radical and parliamentary terms. Writers, revolutionary singers like Gadhar and academicians like Prof. Jayashankar, Prof. Kodandaram, Konda Lakshman Bapuji with their works strengthened the movement.

Conclusion:

A revolution or a movement is said to be successful when all forces come together over a spectrum of demands. In these terms, Telangana movement succeeded but in terms of the aspirations and issues of the movement, the majoritarian political class failed the spirit of the movement. Telangana movement aspired to eliminate caste colonialism, but it is still prevalent in the so-called 'Golden' Telangana.

The movement aspired for social and democratic development, whereas the present government still follows the same Hyderabad-focussed development. Telangana movement was known for its self-identity but the present government is not respecting the diversified culture and only focusing on dominant caste culture. Main stakeholders have been left unrecognised and the civil society is not being involved in the policymaking.

[Reference: Google](#)