

Suicide as Protest against the Failure of Democracy: A Critical Study of Telangana State Formation Movement

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Abstract

Suicide has emerged as one of the most important social concerns in the world today. It is one of the worst humanitarian crises facing the world today. It is estimated that every year over 100,000 people commit suicide in India. India alone contributes more than 10 percent of suicides in the world. The suicide rate in India has been increasing steadily and has reached 10.5. Every four minutes, one person takes their life in the country, and one in three victims is a youth below the age of 30 years. 'Accidental Deaths and Suicides, National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Government of India 2009 in India, it is reported that about 1,27,151 people committed suicide in 2009. 68.7 percent of these were between the ages of 15 and 44. Suicides have reached an alarming level in India, especially in the south, which now has one of the highest suicide rates in the world. Interestingly, all people are not committing suicide for personal reasons, and sometimes, people sacrifice their life for the community's purpose. Sociologists, Psychologists, and other behavior scientists sufficiently discussed and theorized the suicides time to time. But thousands of people sacrificed their life during Telangana movement for separate State since 2009.

This paper explains how suicides register a protest in a democracy, focusing on the recent suicides in the Telangana region of South India. The first part deals with the socio-economic aspects of the phenomenon of suicides, based on an empirical analysis. Furthermore, this part also focuses on religious and theoretical notions of suicide in Asian societies, particularly from the Hindu and Buddhist perspectives. The second part explains how Indian democracy has failed to respond to the shrieks of Telangana people for decades. This part examines how a democratic government's actions and inactions have led to the spate of suicides in the region. An attempt is made to find various sociological causes of the phenomenon based on empirical and field experiences. This paper adapts Durkheim's methodological inputs to investigate the nature of suicides. According to the movement's leadership, those who have committed suicide to form a new state are the martyrs who have sacrificed their lives for liberation and self-respect.' In Durkheim's sense, it is an "altruistic" behavior where personal sacrifices for the benefit of the community.

I. Introduction

According to a study by the British Medical Journal, Lancet, around 50,000 people in the four states of South India kill themselves yearly (Lancet 2004). These statistics become even more alarming when we notice that the total number of suicide cases recorded in India in 2002 was 154,000. The study states that the suicide rates among young men and women in southern India are the highest globally.

Apart from personal reasons, people often opt to kill themselves to draw the attention of the rulers toward unresolved problems and anti-people policies. This tendency is on the rise in India as well. People opt for such a "silent departure" whenever the democratic systems fail to listen to the voices of the people and do not recognize the people's aspirations. When the policies fail to be "inclusive. Such "non-violent" self-immolations, which register a kind of protest the state, have become a phenomenon in India. Most of the suicides in India are reported among indebted farmers, women, and Dalits ---a sign that the Indian democracy has failed to hear the weaker voices. Suicides as a protest a particular decision or the government's indecisiveness are emerging as a troubling trend. According to the Government, the number of such politically and ideologically motivated suicides in India doubled between 2006 and 2008, and the statistics for last year were unavailable. While the overall number remains small, mental health experts say that these deaths illustrate the increasing stress on young people in a nation where the masses often feel powerless despite their right to vote. The recent statistics released by the police in Andhra Pradesh, a south Indian state, reveal shocking facts. According to the latest report of the State Crime Records Bureau (SCRB), in 2010, about 42 people committed suicide every day in the state. In a year, the data says, more than 15,529 people ended their lives; this number was higher than the previous year by 1,702. (Deccan Chronicle,2011)

These statistics reveal several political as well as policy-related facts. The SCRB officials reported that the number of men who ended their lives was double that of women. Around 4,827 women committed suicide in

a year, as against 10,672 men. It is important to note that most of these suicides are victims of government policies. Farmers who could not find agriculture feasible due to the costs in the post-reform period; weavers who became jobless in the market economy; and migrant laborers who returned from Gulf countries without good work occupied the prime portion of the suicide chart.

Suicide is now recognized as a significant problem in the complex development scenario. Worldwide, suicide is one of the leading causes of death, especially in the 15–35-year age group, and one of the three leading causes of death among those aged between 15 and 44. World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that each year approximately one million people commit suicide, representing a global mortality rate of 16 per 100,000. This means one suicide every 40 seconds and one attempt to commit suicide every 3 seconds, on average. It is predicted that by 2020 the suicide rate will increase to one every 20 seconds. The WHO further reports that in the last 45 years, suicide rates have increased by 60 percent worldwide.

Suicides, Democracy, and Politics

The formation of new states in India was a simple procedure because the framers of the Indian constitution anticipated future needs and developed a transparent and democratic process for forming new states in the Indian Union. Article 3 of the Indian Constitution elaborates on the "Formation of new States and alteration of areas, boundaries, or names of existing States. It says, "Parliament may by law form a new State by separating the territory from any State or by uniting two or more States or parts of States or by connecting any environment to a part of any State. (Bakshi, PM 2002). The steps for creating a new state are as follows: A bill on a new form has to be recommended by the President. In India, the Cabinet usually requests the President to do that. Article 3 clarifies that Parliament is the sole authority in deciding on a new state. The President refers the bill to the State Assembly for its views and gives it a specific period. Parliament is not obligated to act according to the beliefs of the State Assembly. If the State Assembly does not express its opinion within the specified time, the bill could be introduced in Parliament after the expiry of the specified period.

The separate Telangana movement is one of the critical reasons for the increase in suicides. Recently, in the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh, hundreds of people, mostly youth and students, committed suicide to register their protest with the government for not conceding their democratic demand for separate statehood. Telangana people have been demanding a separate state for more than five decades now—a fair and constitutionally valid request. The statehood movement began in 1969 and turned into a "human shivers" phase after several stages and different forms over the last few decades. In the case of Telangana, this process was interrupted, and the rulers in the last half-century betrayed the people. The result is the present agitation for a separate state, which is leading to the suicides of hundreds of young men and women. Interestingly, most of those who committed suicide in the movement have mentioned in their suicide notes and recorded death statements that they were ending their lives with the hope that the government would respect people's aspirations. For instance, Yadaiah, a 19-year-old boy who immolated himself during the agitation, clearly stated that he was killing himself in protest of the government's indifferent attitude.

"I am SiripuramYadagiri; I lost my parents in my childhood. I have completed my education up to matriculation in an orphanage. I have no job, no money. My dream is to see a ray of happiness in the eyes of the people of the Telangana region. A serious movement has been going on for separate statehood for Telangana for the past few decades, where hundreds of youths have sacrificed their lives. However, the government is not responding. I do not understand why the government is not considering a democratic demand. I am committing suicide to make the government open its eyes; please do not stop this movement till we achieve Telangana. I am giving my life for this cause today. People like me will get jobs if we have a separate Telangana state. Hail Telangana Movement".

This is the summary of the suicide note of a young boy who self-immolated in public for the cause of Telangana State. Yadagiri (19) is among over 600 who have committed suicide over the Telangana issue in the last year. On February 20, 2010, at 2 pm, the protesting students were stopped by the police near Osmania University gate. They decided to abandon their efforts to break the police cordon and proceed to the State Legislature Assembly. Yadagiri took out a bottle of petrol from his bag, doused himself, and lit a match. He succumbed to the burn injuries. Yadagiri's suicide is a grim reminder that an increasing number of Telangana youth have started to believe that all their troubles would be over with the formation of a new Telangana state. "He came prepared for it. The suicide note in his bag shows that he was frustrated due to a lack of proper employment. "The police inspector who registered the case says that a separate Telangana state would ensure jobs for hundreds of youths like him and that he was immolating himself in protest against the delay in the formation of the new state." Indian Express Monday, February 22, 2010. It may be a crime according to the law, but for Yadagiri, it is a sacrifice and a celebration.

Not only Mr. Yadagiri but hundreds of students, young boys and girls, lost their lives in pursuing a separate statehood for their region. In a democracy that promises a better life to its people, one need not end life to fulfill their wish. About 600 people gave up their lives in different ways to protest against the government's

inaction in a year. All these were planned, and most have either orally or in written form spelled out the reason for the suicide. It is alarming that innocent and emotionally upset young students die of despair and frustration. They are the victims of the silence of their governments and the perpetuation of selfish and power-centric politics in the name of democracy.

For the present study, data were collected on about 100 cases registered between December 2009 and February 2010. In November 2009, Mr. K Chandrasekhara Rao, the leader of the TRS party, announced a fast-unto-death as a final resort to achieve statehood for Telangana. The government disallowed Mr. Rao's hunger strike to hold back the movement, and the police foiled his attempt by arresting him. This led to a severe upsurge of emotions in Telangana. People involved with the movement began to commit suicide in protest against the government's actions. Within no time, it spread like wildfire across the ten districts of Telangana. Within a month, the number of suicides crossed 160, which led to serious public concern across the country. The New York Times covered a unique story on the suicides in Telangana where SudhirKakar, a prominent Indian psychoanalyst and psychologist, commented, "Young people see this as a way to give meaning to what seems meaningless lives." (New York Times)

The first suicide in this series took place in November 2009. Out of 600 forced deaths, around 380 are registered by the police as suicides. Of these, in at least 160 cases, suicide notes were also found where the person had either mentioned that they were sacrificing for Telangana or was dying in protest against the government's indifferent attitude towards the demand of the Telangana people. The illiterates, who could not write a note, shared their anguish with friends and relatives, and some of them raised slogans of Jai Telangana (Hail Telangana) while committing suicide. In a way, most people recorded their sentiments and protests before they committed suicide.

The data reveals that most of the people who commit suicide are young. Of the 100 cases studied for this purpose, 62 were below 30. Of the total number of suicides, 18 percent were under the age of 20, 44 percent were between the ages of 21 and 30, 29 percent were between the ages of 31 and 40, and only one percent were over 50. It indicates that the youth and students are the most frustrated in the movement. It is a fact that students and youth in Telangana are more attached to the cause emotionally. They have been more vocal and active in their demand for a separate state, and many have been directing the movement as leaders. The educational qualifications or background of those who committed suicide also prove essential in analyzing a context like this.

Educated young people are significantly more likely to commit suicide than those who have not. Out of several hundred cases, only 12 percent were illiterate. Literacy levels in Telangana districts are generally around 50-60%. However, among suicide cases, the literature was about 88 percent, with four being university graduates in professional education. In contrast, 11 percent were graduates, 29 percent had completed college-level education, 31 percent had high school education, and the remaining had less than high school education. Of course, the majority of them were male. Female suicides account for only 8% of all suicides. The participation of women will be relatively less in social movements guided by political ideology in a patriarchal society like India.

On the other hand, many youths active in the movement are first-generation entrants into higher education from disadvantaged groups. The hope for better education and jobs in a new state has drawn them into the action. Most of the victims of the suicides belong to the "lower strata" in the caste hierarchy of Indian society. Of a hundred people who committed suicide, it is found that only nine are from upper castes, and a vast majority, i.e., 67, are from backward castes such as artisans, weavers, fishermen, etc. The remaining belonged to the 'lowest' rung of society, known as untouchables in Hindu culture. It again reflects the aspirations of the social groups who have not yet enjoyed the fruits of democracy and development. Intellectuals involved in the Telangana movement believe that approximately 89 percent of the total population of the Telangana region belongs to lower castes (known as SCs, STs, OBCs, and minorities), giving it a social character distinct from the other two parts of the state, known as Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema; it will be a more socially, economically, politically, and economically equitable and inclusive state on its own. It is argued that reservation benefits would go up for all these social groups in proportion to their population, and they would not have to compete, mainly, with better-endowed coastal Andhra groups and individuals in the separate state.

Furthermore, they argue that this distinctive social composition will enable the weaker sections to escape upper caste hegemony and create a more just society in which lower castes and minorities will have greater access to political power and economic benefits. Given the above configuration, the lower castes and minorities feel they can overtake the upper castes in a separate Telangana as higher numbers will give them a larger share of political power. Telangana, historically, felt dominated by the upper castes and has always struggled against this hegemony. A noted Indian economist and former member of the Planning Commission, Ch. Hanumanth Rao argues, "Thus, the weaker sections constituting a large majority of the population in Telangana and, for that matter, in Andhra, would be better able to articulate their problems and politically assert themselves in separate, smaller, and relatively homogenous states. Forming a Telangana state would thus

strengthen the forces of social inclusion and secularism in both states. (Rao, Hanumanth, 2010). The movement appears more democratic because the participation of disadvantaged and weaker sections is more significant in the agitation, which is unfortunately also true in the case of suicides.

The data reflects the anguish of the people involved in the movement. According to the media reports, the victims used to discuss the Telangana issue with their colleagues, family, and friends and express their distress over the developments. Writing suicide notes, raising slogans during the death and the nature and form of suicides also reveal that the people have suffered within themselves and finally conclude that they should register their protest against the state and society. The data shows that about 33 percent of the victims consumed poison to kill themselves. Consuming poison is not considered an emotional act as it gives ample time to think and implement the decision. In most of these cases, people consumed pesticides readily accessible to the people in villages. Hanging was the second most popular method of suicide; approximately 28% of victims suspended themselves during that period, while about 24% immolated themselves. Self-immolation is the most severe and emotional kind of "protest" of all the modes of suicide. Apart from this, Telangana suicides have brought in several other strange forms of suicide. In one incident, a college student ran and was hit by a running train, and some jumped from the trees into wells, and in a few cases, the victims offered their lives to the local deities. All these things are very emotional and political, making people talk about Telangana worldwide.

Interestingly, most people who commit suicide are educated and can articulate their problems. But the desperate death statements show that their anguish was not heard correctly. For instance, Sai Kumar Meegada, a 20-year-old chemical engineering student at the prestigious Osmania University in Hyderabad, committed suicide during the peak days of the movement. He returned to the hostel from breakfast, slipped a length of clothesline around his neck, tied it to the ceiling fan in his dorm room, and hanged himself. "For the people of Telangana, this is my final salute," said a note he left, referring to the decades-old struggle to create a separate state. To make the rulers listen to his voice, he requested that his dead body be taken to the Legislative Assembly. His request may sound like a silly wish, but the deep-rooted anguish of the people of his region is manifest in the letter.

These suicides achieved two objectives: one, they successfully registered their protest in a human form, and two, their suicides contributed to sensitizing their fellow citizens to decide on a separate state. This demand for an independent state had been persistently expressed for over fifty years in Telangana, where socio-economic deprivation and political exclusion were causing much frustration. Language is no more a crucial point of identity, but it is economics (development), self-respect (dignity), and self-rule (localization) that now determine the dynamics of Indian federalism.

Suicide: a problem or a solution?

People who attempt suicide see it as a solution to their problems. According to Kevin Caruso, an anti-suicide campaigner, "suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. 'Inclination toward suicide might be quick, but people see a permanent solution. For the individual who commits suicide, the act usually represents a solution to a problem or life circumstance that the individual cannot change and that will only become worse.

Suicide is not a disease; it is not, in the opinion of the most objective observers, immorality; and, finally, no single theory will ever fully explain a phenomenon as diverse and complex as human self-destructive behaviors. In general, it is probably correct to say that suicide always involves an individual's tortured and tunneled logic in a state of inner-felt, intolerable emotion. In addition, this mixture of constricted thinking and unbearable anguish is infused with the individual's conscious and unconscious psychodynamics, such as hatred, dependency, hope, etc., playing themselves out within a social and cultural context, which imposes various degrees of restraint or facilitates suicide. This definition suggests that committing suicide involves thinking about death, that it combines a person's conscious wish to be dead with his action to make that wish would come true, that it focuses on his intention, which others can infer, and that the goal of action is death, and that it focuses on the idea of the end of the person's conscious, introspective life.

For emotionally charged youth like Ishan Reddy (21), suicide is a celebration. He simply offered his life to the goddess on the eve of the victory of the Telangana political party in the elections. Mr. Ishan immolated himself on the Osmania University campus, the center of the Telangana movement. In his handwritten suicide note found near the body, Ishan said that he was fulfilling his 'wish' as all 12 legislators, who had resigned for the cause of Telangana, were re-elected.' I prayed before *Maisamma* (deity) that I would sacrifice my life if D. Srinivas and other ruling party candidates were defeated in the elections. Now that they are defeated, I am fulfilling my wish,' he said. All the candidates who argued for Telangana won the election, and the procrastinating Congress party, which is in power at the national and state level, was defeated. Ishan Reddy completed his B Tech and prepared for the GRE TOEFL exams. Ishan was the fourth among the educated who immolated themselves within three months of the movement. The first one was Srikantha Chari, a Physiotherapy graduate; the second was Mr. Venugopal Reddy, a Master's degree holder in computer applications (MCA); and

the third one was Mr. Yadagiri. In March, Sai Kumar, a second-year B Tech student of Osmania University, ended his life by hanging in his hostel room as he was upset over the delay in forming a separate state.

Traditional studies on suicide have looked at the problem from a mental health perspective. For the first time in the sociological perspective, Durkheim (1858–1917), a French sociologist, provided the central theoretical and methodological framework to understand suicides and proposed four types of suicide based on the degree of imbalance of two social forces, i.e., social integration and moral regulation. Suicide, Durkheim's third major work, is of great importance because it is his first serious effort to establish empiricism in sociology. It would provide a sociological explanation for a phenomenon traditionally regarded as exclusively psychological and individualistic. According to him, "the term suicide is applied to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result." From his methodology, Durkheim drew theoretical conclusions on the social causes of suicide.

Though Durkheim dismissed altruistic and fatalistic suicide, one of the four types of suicide he proposed, as unimportant, altruism in contemporary society is gaining importance where individuals give primary consideration to the interests and welfare of other individuals, their community, and society as a whole. Socio-biologists argue that altruistic behavior has its roots in self-interest, the unconscious desire to protect one's genetic heritage. Critics of sociobiology respond that altruism is evident among individuals and in social situations and cultures of a society where people are genetically unrelated and claim that human conduct and motivations cannot be explained without reference to the values and norms of culture.

In Indian society, an individual is shaped by complete altruism. In the Hindu way of life, a human being is associated with his family, community, caste, religion, or region at any point in life. In Durkheim's sense, altruism is the opposite of individualism and the egoistic personality, in which the individual is highly attached to the community or society. It is probably because the religious cultures of the region taught people that an organization is more critical than an individual. Undoubtedly, altruism is at the heart of the mystical traditions propagated by great religions cradled in India, i.e., Hinduism and Buddhism. Though Hinduism and Buddhism do not encourage suicides and forced deaths in general, both religions allow sacrifices in the interest of people, community, society, etc.

Hinduism disapproves of such deaths. Suicide has traditionally been condemned in Hindu scripture because, being an abasement of life, it creates unseemly karma to face in the future. However, in specific cases, self-willed deaths are permitted. The principle for such "exceptional" cases is that either the person making such a decision declares it publicly, which allows for community regulation or distinguishes the act from suicide performed privately in traumatic emotional states of anguish and despair. Hinduism generally perceives suicide as an act against humanity and an amoral, reprehensible act of destroying lives. According to Hindu beliefs, if a person commits suicide, he neither goes to hell nor heaven. He remains a lousy spirit that wanders till he completes his allotted lifetime. After that, he goes to hell and suffers more severely. According to Hindu doctrine, suicide is considered a horrible death because, in Hindu doctrine, suicide is violent, premature, and uncontrolled and occurs in the wrong place and at the wrong time. Such deaths terminate the chances of rebirth.

For instance, ancient lawgivers in Hinduism cite various stipulations to allow a person to commit suicide. For example, the inability to perform regular bodily purification; if he feels that death is imminent or the condition is so bad that life's pleasures are nil; in such cases, the action must be done under community regulation. Sati is a Hindu custom in India where the widow has to burn ashes on her dead husband's pyre. Another way of ending life is Sajeewa Samadhi. Burying a person alive was a ritual practice in ancient India. On the other hand, "sacrifice of self or soul" is the ultimate form of suicide when a person's self-esteem and self-respect are at risk. Several kings in the history of India committed suicide after they were defeated and held captive by their enemies. According to modern law, an attempt to commit suicide is punishable under Section 309 of the Indian Penal Code.

On the other hand, Buddhism sees death as not the end of life but simply a transition; suicide is, therefore, no escape from anything. In the early Sangha (community of followers of the Buddha), suicide was, in principle, condemned as an inappropriate action. But the early Buddhist texts include many cases of suicide, which the Buddha himself accepted or condoned. The Jataka tales narrate the suicides of several disciples. Such evidence reveals that while suicide may be acceptable for people who have achieved enlightenment, it is not for others. Marilyn J. Harran writes, "Buddhism in its various forms affirms that, while suicide as self-sacrifice may be appropriate for the person who is an arhat, one who has attained enlightenment, it is still very much the exception to the rule." The Encyclopedia of Religion by Marilyn J. Harran, In the 1960s, Buddhist monks in South Vietnam drew the attention of the West to their protests against the President by burning themselves to death.

For the greater good of others, suicide is often celebrated in India and several other Asian countries. For instance, Mahatma Gandhi went on a hunger strike several times, although every time he was stopped before dying, it appeared as if he would have willingly succumbed to starvation. This attracted attention to Gandhi's cause and generated great respect for him as a leader. In Indian history, one can find followers and

servants who killed themselves to save their people. Durkheim argued that such a sacrifice is imposed by society for social purposes, and the individual personality must have little value, a state Durkheim called altruism. Whatever the reason, the suicides certainly had an immense and enduring impact on their times and societies.

As far as India is concerned, the suicide of Chinnasamy (1965) is considered the first protest to show the democratic aspiration of the people of a particular region. Mr. Chinnasamy self-immolated in January 1965 in protest against the imposition of Hindi as the national language for India, a multi-lingual country. Everyone who was killed, maimed, or injured these days of the uprising against Hindi imposition was a Tamil martyr, a Tamil hero, a Tamil warrior (Tamil Tribune), and, of course, they succeeded in bringing down the government. Such examples are amply available in every society.

India is known as a democratic country to the outside world. The elected governments also preach democratic principles to their people within the country. For more than six decades, the people of India have been trying to follow the norms with great hope and trust. Still, on several occasions, the state and its political systems have ignored the democratic aspirations of the people. The Telangana case is the best example of contempt for democracy in India.

Andhra Pradesh, the largest state of South India, was formed in 1956 by merging Andhra, a Telugu language-speaking part of Madras State, with Telangana, part of Hyderabad State, on a linguistic basis. Telangana was opposed to being considered part of Andhra Pradesh even then, and Telangana intelligentsia argued that there was a distinct difference between Andhra and Telangana regions. Since Andhra was part of a colonial Madras Presidency, education levels and development of this region were better than in Telangana, which was under the rule of feudal lords.

When the Indian government created Andhra Pradesh by merging Andhra State and Telangana, the people vehemently opposed the proposal. They feared that the merger would subjugate them. The reason for the opposition of the people of Telangana to join the new state was fear of neglect and injustice in the enlarged form, and the reason for their refusal to continue in the present form was the experience of becoming victims of negligence and injustice. After a dispassionate assessment of the feelings of the people of Telangana and the fears entertained by them, the SRC favored a separate Telangana state and elaborated the reasons for recommending statehood for the Telangana region:

One of the principal causes of opposition to Visalandhra also seems to be the apprehensions felt by the educationally backward people of Telangana that they may be swamped and exploited by the more advanced people of the coastal areas." The real fear of Telangana is that if they join Andhra, they will be unequally placed among the people of Andhra. In this partnership, the major partner will derive all the advantages immediately, while Telangana itself may be converted into a colony by the enterprising Andhras. The committee's recommendations were ignored, and the state of Andhra Pradesh was created undemocratically. In addition, the Prime Minister of the time, Jawaharlal Nehru, was not in favor of merging Telangana with Andhra Pradesh. He ridiculed the demand for Andhra Pradesh as an idea bearing a "tint of expansionist imperialism. (Indian Express, October 17, 1953). After the decision was made to merge both the regions to convince the people of Telangana, Nehru himself compared it to a matrimonial alliance having a "provision for divorce" if the partners in the partnership cannot get on well. (Deccan Chronicle, March 6, 1956).

According to Prof. Jaya Shankar, an economist who has been advocating the cause for over 50 years and is the 'ideologue' of the present Telangana movement, the state of Andhra Pradesh was formed on November 1, 1956--ignoring the wishes of the people of Telangana, against a categorical recommendation of the SRC, and contrary to the views of the tallest leader of the time, Jawaharlal Nehru. It was the outcome of manipulative politics. (Telangana: A Requirement, 2000)

For the past five and a half decades, Telangana has constantly been demanding the implementation of the provision of divorce, a democratic option. The divorce was not granted. On the other hand, the concerns about Telangana were manifold. The region had a less developed economy than Andhra, but a more extensive revenue base, which the people of Telangana feared might be diverted for use in Andhra. They also stressed that planned dam projects on common rivers would not benefit Telangana proportionately, even though Telangana controlled the headwaters of the rivers. The Telangana region feared that the people of Andhra would have an advantage in jobs, particularly in government and education. A common language, Telugu, bonds the Andhra and Telangana regions, but the commonality ends there, according to the leaders of Telangana. Since the merger in 1956, the people of Telangana have opposed the unified state, arguing that language cannot be a single principle for creating a form. Furthermore, they say that the two regions have separate sub-cultures and festivals and speak different Telugu dialects. When there are nine states for Hindi-speaking people, why not two for Telugu, they contend? Telangana and Andhra speak the same language but have contrasting economic interests. The latter is accused of exploiting the former's resources.

There are ten districts in Telangana, nine in Andhra, and four in Rayalaseema. Out of these, seven communities in Telangana, three in Andhra, and one in Rayalaseema are severely backward. Telangana provides

45 percent of the income but consumes just 28 percent of state funds as its share. Moreover, its cause for concern was strengthened when it did not see a single completed development project in the previous five years when several projects were completed in Andhra and Rayalaseema. The merger of Telangana with Andhra was, however, not unconditional. It was facilitated by several solemn promises made and constitutional safeguards given to the region's people as a protective umbrella against the possible exploitation of the enlarged state. Nothing, however, could stop successive governments from exploiting this region in every way imaginable — economic, political, administrative, cultural, and linguistic. For instance, during the merger, the "gentlemen's agreement" provided several assurances to the Telangana people. In the following years, however, the Telangana people complained about implementing agreements and guarantees.

Within a decade of unification, demand for demerger spread across the region. Instead of listening to the democratic voices of the people, the government suppressed the emotions of the area by using a police force. Discontent with the 1956 gentlemen's agreement intensified in January 1969 when the agreed-upon guarantees were supposed to lapse. A student-driven protest in 1969 turned historical for the number of people who participated in it. The Congress (National Party Under the leadership of Indira Gandhi), which was in power both in state and center, offered assurances that Mulki, disadvantaged local people, would replace non-Telangana civil servants in the region and that revenue surplus from Telangana would be returned to the area. The protestors, however, were dissatisfied, and severe violence, including mob attacks on railroads, road transport, and government facilities, spread over the region. Over 350 students were killed in police firing and other excesses. Osmania University, the only higher education institution in the area then, was the movement's hotbed. The movement mobilized millions of people, mostly youth, with the slogan 'Jai Telangana' (hail Telangana). The government overwhelmingly crushed it; thousands were arrested and put in jail. Student agitation for the continuation of the agreement began in Hyderabad and spread to other parts of the region. Government employees and opposition members of the state legislative assembly swiftly threatened "direct action" in support of the students.

The Indian National Congress has taken a different stand against the people and party cadres' wish to create a Telangana state. The top leadership of the party regarded the demand as "anti-national." As a result, the Congress party collapsed in the region. A new political party, Telangana PrajaSamithi (Telangana People's Association), was founded in 1969. With popular support, Telangana PrajaSamithi (TPS) won 11 of the 14 seats in the 1971 parliamentary elections. The Congress played its cards and "managed" the leaders of TPS to stop the movement and merge the party into the Congress based on some assured benefits, including appointing the movement leader as the Chief Minister of the state, a six-point formula to ensure jobs for local youth and sustained economic aid for development. But again, successive governments failed to keep up the promises because of the flaws in democracy.

Democracy as a principle is a great idea, but in Indian practice, it is purely a number game. Though democracy gives freedom, it is the institutionalization of majority-endorsed freedom. In Indian democracy, a decision is made according to majority rule, where 51 voters out of 100 are "politically" equal to 100 voters, and the remaining 49 (contrary) voters are "politically" equal to zero. While Telangana accounts for 119 seats out of the 294 assembly seats and 17 Lok Sabha segments, the rest of Andhra Pradesh has 175 assembly segments. Moreover, in Indian democracy, political parties are the major players in the show. All the political parties, national or regional, work with their agendas. They never consider the sub-regional sentiments, and the majority always tries to mute the voices of Telangana legislative members and ministers.

It went on for decades, and finally, in 2001, the second phase of the movement for a separate state was geared up with the formation of a sub-regional political outfit, Telangana RastraSamithi (TRS). For about a decade, the TRS was confined to parliamentary politics—elections, political lobbying, and joining coalitions at central and state levels, which did not yield any fruits. Finally, the TRS chief, K Chandrasekhar Rao, went on a "historical" indefinite hunger strike (fast-unto-death) to achieve statehood for Telangana, which turned the movement more emotional and sensitive. KCR's hunger strike united the rank and file of his party and the people of Telangana. Keeping the situation in view, the Government of India asked the Andhra Pradesh government to take the opinions of all the political parties represented in the state. The all-party meeting on December 7, 2009, unanimously resolved to form Telangana state without further delay. Based on the resolution, on December 9, 2009, the Union Minister for Home Affairs announced that the Indian government would start forming a separate Telangana state. KCR thus ended his 11-day fast, saying from his hospital bed that this was a "true victory of the people of Telangana." The decision was taken at a late-night meeting between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath after two rounds of consultations in the Congress Core Committee with Sonia Gandhi and senior Cabinet colleagues.

Pro-Telangana supporters celebrated the central government's decision while the political leaders from the Andhra Region (Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema) protested against it. In fact, within a short time of the Home Minister's declaration, contrary to the resolution of the all-party meeting, MLAs from the Andhra regions submitted their resignations in protest of creating a new state within Andhra Pradesh. By December 16, at least

147 legislators from the non-Telangana region (majority in the Legislative Assembly), including some members of the state cabinet and Members of Parliament, had resigned in protest of the government's decision to begin discussions on forming a new state of Telangana. Keeping the developments in mind, the Government of India announced on December 23, 2009, that no action on Telangana will be taken until all parties reach an agreement. In the name of consensus, the Government of India postponed the decision on the formation of Telangana, which has created a crisis. The anguish and unrest in the region are still going on.

II. Conclusion

The case of Telangana reveals that when collective aspirations are not respected, people choose their solutions. In general, most people consider "suicide" a problem, but careful analysis of suicides reveals that people find solutions to their problems by sacrificing their lives. In suicide cases, the victims themselves feel that it will produce the result.

On the other hand, people are becoming altruistic and deliberately committing suicide with the feeling that their death would benefit a group, an entire nation, or a social cause. This shows the dominance of collective responsibility and group interest over narrow personal goals. This is a value-oriented suicide. In the recent past, the tendency to die for a common cause has been increasing across the world. In a few countries and communities, it has taken the form of violence and terror by targeting the state and society. This is very much known as suicide terrorism, where "suicide squads" and "suicide bombers" are involved. Such activities are leading to violence, fear, and terror worldwide.

Unlike violent and terror-based suicides, Telangana suicides are more altruistic in nature. According to the movement's leadership, those who have committed suicide to form a new state were sacrifices for liberation and self-respect. In this process, people turned "altruistic," and some who wholly identified with the issue chose suicide as the only way to sensitize the government.

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