

Sonia's Telangana dilemma

By Gautam Pingle

The Hans India

<http://www.thehansindia.info/News/Article.asp?category=1&subCategory=5&ContentId=117819>

Monday, February 4th, 2013

Poll surveys are always to be taken with a pinch of salt. This is especially true in the case of the Telangana statehood issue. Even the August 2011 CNN-

IBN poll carried out by the prestigious Center for Study in Developing Societies (CSDS) was a mess. So one has to be careful as many polls are funded by interested parties and it is difficult to get an honest picture with the interviewer's personal bias if they are from the State. Now a new poll has surfaced.

This voters' survey was conducted between 29th November and 9th December 2012. The sample size of the survey was 3115 voters. The survey was carried out in 51 rural areas and 23 urban and semi-urban centers spread over 32 Assembly constituencies. It was conducted by a little known organization called Centre Right India (CRI) and published on its web site on January 23rd, 2013.

<http://centreright.in/2013/01/andhra-pradesh-opinion-poll/#.UQVDLfIRx-g>

The CRI poll says that in Rayalaseema the YSRC has 42% support with the Congress (22%) and TDP (24%) trailing. For Coastal Andhra, the survey divided the region further. In North Coastal Andhra, the party shares are similar -

Congress (29%) TDP (28%) and YSRC (31%). In South Coastal Andhra, however, the YSRC leads (38%), Congress (26%) and TDP (24%). These estimates seem plausible.

Telangana is also further divided. In Greater Hyderabad plus Ranga Reddy district, TRS gets 9%, Congress 12%, TDP 16%, YSRC 9%, MIM 19%, BJP 15%. This indicates that the MIM and the BJP have almost equal shares in Greater Hyderabad-

Ranga Reddy. If this is true, one can see why MIM is opposed to Hyderabad as a separate entity. In the rest of Telangana, TRS gets 35% share, Congress 18%, TDP 20%, YSRC 11% and BJP 9%.

This seems doubtful. In a clarification to its July 2011 survey, the CSDS stated: "Our survey clearly shows that within the Telangana region nearly two-thirds of those who have an opinion support a separate State." The CSDS had earlier reported that separate statehood had 48% support and 27% 'had no opinion' in Telangana.

The possibility that anyone in Telangana, after a widespread and extended movement, would have "no opinion" is suspect. Further, if you believe that only 13% were opposed to separate statehood and 5% in favor of only a Regional Council as reported by CNN-IBN, then the rest (82%) would be pro-statehood. Thus this does not match the CRI estimates.

Be that as it may, let us take the seat distribution figures given in the CRI survey. Converting voting intentions into seat tallies in the Assembly elections cannot be spelled out accurately due to possible multiple contests by candidates both of parties and independents. In 2009, the new PRP and Lok Satta took a small but significant share and allowed the Congress to beat the TDP in nearly 50 constituencies.

And strong party leaders who are denied tickets are also likely to stand as Independents and take away votes from their former parent party. With this caution, let us look at the broad Assembly results as set out by the Centre Right survey if elections were held now.

It would seem obvious from this table that the YSR Congress will sweep the two Seemandhra regions- more particularly Rayalaseema, where it would get 3/4 of the seats.

All State	Congress	TDP	TRS	YSRC	Total
CA	30	24		65	123
Rayalaseema	7	5		39	51
Telangana	17	19	50	10	119
Total AP	54	48	50	114	293

In Coastal Andhra they would get much less - just over half the seats. The contest in Coastal Andhra is the sharpest between the three contending parties. The survey also gives preferences of each social group which indicate a sweep for YSRC. These may be more reliable than the MLA estimates.

Political preferences of various social groups in Seemandhra regions

	Congress	TDP	YSRCP
Rural women	20%	19%	36%
Youth	17%	22%	34%
Urban voters	18%	26%	28%

In Telangana the outcome is no surprise with the TRS getting under half the MLA seats, though here the estimate for both the Congress and the TDP seems very ambitious if statehood is not granted. On the other hand, the social group's preferences seem to indicate a wider sweep for the TRS, especially in view of the burning statehood issue. In a three-way contest, the TRS is likely to get a lot more than 50% of the seats as the Congress and TDP will divide the vote.

Political preferences of social groups in Telangana

	Congress	TDP	TRS
Rural Women	19%	18%	25%
Youth	16%	18%	33%
Urban voters	16%	21%	29%

If Sonia Gandhi is counting her party seats on the basis of this survey, then a united Andhra Pradesh would mean that it would be a hung Assembly with the YSRC getting the largest share but being unable to form a Government. It would, therefore, need an ally to form a government.

Those available are:

(A) The Congress on terms linked to the cases filed on Jaganmohan Reddy being withdrawn on the YSRC side and with the Congress demanding support in the Lok Sabha (as presumably these results will also be reflected in the Parliamentary election).

(B) The YSRC combining with TRS with the TRS demanding immediate Telangana statehood as a price. However, that will depend not on the Assembly here but on who commands the Government in Delhi.

(C) One assumes that a TDP and YSRC alliance is unlikely - but in politics no one is a permanent foe.

However, if the State is trifurcated before the General Elections, the equations will change substantially. Thus it would seem obvious that:

(1) The YSRC will rule Rayalaseema State on its own.

(2) An YSRC-

Congress combine will be able to form a government in Coastal Andhra State with the YSRC supporting the Congress in the Lok Sabha.

(3) TRS merger with Congress will mean not only a Congress government in Telangana State but also most of the Telangana MP seats for the TRS-Congress.

What will Sonia Gandhi decide? After the recent broadcast of the video clipping showing her promising to "take up" Telangana statehood on a "priority basis" in her speech in Karimnagar in February 2009, does she have a choice? For her own sake and that of her party, trifurcation will end this disastrous dispute which is ruining the State and threatens to ruin her party.

And she needs to keep the division clean with Hyderabad city as an integral part of Telangana. Otherwise that half-solution of joint capital, UT, etc, will only lead to further agitations and disruptions.

--

DR GAUTAM PINGLE
13, PINGLE VENKATRAM BAGH
BEGUMPET
HYDERABAD 500016
INDIA

Telephones: +91-40-6456 0304; +91-40-4017 3050

Mob: +91-98496 39689

E-MAIL: gautam.pingle@gmail.com