CHAPTER IV

THE ERA OF CONGRESS RULE IN
THE STATE OF ANDHRA
PRADESH (1957-1982)
For nearly 26 years after the formation of the State the Congress party remained dominant in State politics, as it won all the elections held for the Parliament and Legislative Assembly in the State since 1957. Even when the 'Congress system' was breaking down elsewhere in the country during the 1960s, especially when the non-Congress parties formed governments in several States in 1967, Andhra Pradesh remained the 'citadel' of the Congress party. Whatever the threats that it encountered came from factions within, often taking the toll of the incumbent Chief Ministers, without either posing a challenge to the Congress dominance in the State or the Central leadership. Its 'retentive capacity' proved to be very high, as the party was able to retain different factions and groups in the party fold, often by the intervention of the Central leadership. The period also witnessed a further decline in the strength of the communists. Other parties could not develop in a way to constitute an alternative to the Congress and as such remained at 'periphery'. This was also the period during which the Congress had emerged as a “catch-all” party, with an overflow of electoral support. However, the decline of the Congress had set in by late 1970s as the negative side of factionalism began to reveal itself. Sections hitherto supported the party began to opt for other parties and the traditional non-Congress elements began look for an alternative, paving the way for the emergence of a regional party.

The consolidation of the Congress party began with the emergence of the State itself. Like in other States, it had certain advantages as the party that led the freedom struggle, of having well-educated, experienced and highly respected leadership and a well-developed organization in all regions of the State. By mid 50s the party acquired an image of a progressive one trying to restructure the society on socialistic lines, without destroying the private enterprise and individual liberties. The impact of reservations in education, employment and politics began to be slowly felt. The integration of Andhra and Telengana regions led to a preponderance of Reddis in power structure, who became the mainstay of the Congress party in the State for decades to come. The introduction of the three-tiered panchayati raj system in Andhra Pradesh Gram Panchayat, Panchayati
Samithi, and Zilla Parishad in 1959 further strengthened the Congress hold in the rural areas. The 'democratic decentralization' provided fresh avenues of power and prestige to the rural elites. They utilized government machinery, resources and patronage in exercising control and commanding loyalty from the lower classes. Factional networks were built right from the village to samithi to district and to State level. These rival factions within the Congress party became crucial in Congress functioning.

Unlike several other States, Andhra Pradesh did not have a 'supreme leader' at the State level, in the sense of one who could authoritatively take decisions in organizational and governmental matters and who enjoys an overwhelming following in the general public. The stature of most of the leaders, who played some role in the freedom struggle and politics later, was on a comparable level. This led to multiple power centres within the Congress party. Just at a time when Sanjiva Reddy's hold on the government and party appeared to be solid, he was persuaded by Jawaharlal Nehru to take over the Congress presidency in January 1960. That had reopened the doors of factional struggle in the APCC once again.

There was division in the State Congress on choosing successor to Sanjiva Reddy. Finally the choice fell on D. Sanjeevaiah, a young and energetic dalit leader from Rayalaseema. He was the first dalit to become Chief Minister of a State in India. Among the reasons advanced for his candidature for the position of Chief Minister, one was that as a dalit at the helm of affairs he would neutralize or slowly erode the communist influence among the weaker sections, especially the Harijans and the Madigas, and bring these numerically large social groups closer to the Congress party. In pursuance of this strategy, which also suited him to promote his own popularity, Sanjeevaiah began to woo the 'weaker sections' through several means. In May 1961 his government issued orders providing for 25 per cent of reservation of seats in educational institutions and jobs in government services to the socially and educationally backward classes or the officials backward classes (a euphemism for backward castes). While the programmes initiated by Sanjeevaiah were generally welcomed, they also led to resentment among the forward caste leaders, who formed a strong opposition within the Congress in the name of 'Unity Group'. The organizational wing was dominated by forward caste leaders and it created
friction between the 'organizational' and 'ministerial' wings of the party. However, it can be said that the policies of Sanjeevaiah government helped in the gradual building of a powerful and reliable support structure for the Congress among the lower castes, who constituted the bulk of the population in the State and accounted for an overwhelming majority of the proletariat.

During this period the Congress had to contend with a new all-India political party, the Swatantra party (Party for Independence), which came into existence in 1959. N.G. Ranga, one time a popular leader of Andhra and a known champion of peasants' interests, resigned the position of secretary to the Congress party in Parliament, to become one of its founder leaders and its chairman. Ranga had been a strong opponent and a bitter critic of communist politics in the State. The Swatantra party in Andhra Pradesh provided a platform to those opposed communism and also the socialist-oriented policies of the Congress, that it feared would result in too many state controls putting restrictions on individual liberties and private initiative thus impeding economic progress and social well-being in the long run. Swatantra party was frankly conservative and emerged as the authentic 'right' party. It favoured free and private enterprise and protection of peasant interests. However, belying its expectations, there was no exodus from the Congress into it. Nor it was able to attract non-Congress, non-communist elements as it was expected to do in 1959.

In 1962 elections the Congress faced two major opponents - the communists on the left and the Swatantra on the right, justifying its characterization and centrist party. For the first time, after the State formation, Assembly elections were held in the entire State. In the elections the Congress polled 47.4 per cent of votes winning 177 seats out of a total of 300. The communists faced the elections with an obvious handicap due to the newly demonstrated belligerence of China and the consequent divisions in the party. The equivocal stand of the left wing of the CPI, known as the pro-China wing, made an adverse impact on the agitated nationalist mind. There was a sharp decline in their vote - a drop of 10 percentage points compared to the earlier elections (from 29 per cent to 19 per cent), although they could win more number of seats (51), It emerged as the single largest party after the Congress, ahead of the Swatantra. The Swatantra party won 19
seats (nine from Rayalaseema, seven from Circars and only three from Telengana) accounting for 10.4 per cent votes. One important feature of this election was the elimination of socialist parties, which played an important role in State politics earlier. The combined vote of Samyukta Socialists and Praja Socialists was below one per cent. All but one of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh's 70 candidates lost deposits.

During the period between the third and fourth General Elections India witnessed momentous political changes in the country at large. The Chinese aggression, Nehru's demise, split in the Communist party and war against Pakistan came one after the other in quick succession. Among these, the first three had great impact on the State politics. The leadership vacuum created by Nehru's death was sought to be filled by a groups of senior Congress leaders (known as the 'Syndicate') consisting of some strongmen of different major States, which included Sanjiva Reddy from Andhra Pradesh. It made the factional fights more virulent in the State.

The split in the CPI into a moderate wing (CPI) and an extremist wing (CPM) had far reaching consequences to Andhra Pradesh politics. The reasons for the split in the communist movement at the international and national levels are well known. While the ideological controversies and differences over strategy and tactics have their own place in the split, the relative strengths of two factions differed from State to State due to specific situation that prevailed in different States. What distinguished Andhra Pradesh from other States, as far as the split was concerned, was that the party was split almost vertically, both claiming to be the legitimate successors of the undivided party. Compared to the communist pyramid with rigid and centrally controlled party structure, which does not allow dissenting factions to survive in the party or tolerate internal opposition to the 'party line', the Congress party, with its loose organizational structure approximating the 'stratarchy' as described by Eldersveld, appeared to be more democratic. It had been more flexible, open and accommodative to diverse interests and divergent views. It allowed one faction to dominate the scene for some time and another faction at some other time. It did not close doors for dissidents, allowing them to function within, unless some one in sheer frustration leaves the party on his own.
On the other hand the ‘rightist’ Swatantra party also could never become a strong political force in the State. It proved to be no match to the Congress in playing the caste and regional factors to build up support. It could not make use of the situation arising from the factional troubles in the Congress or the split in the Communist movement to strengthen itself.

Although initially some regarded Swatantra as the ‘real opponent’ to the Congress, it could not increase its sphere of influence beyond some parts of Rayalaseema and Coastal Andhra. Virtually it was a non-entity in Telengana. As time passed on there were more defections from this party into the Congress. The party in Andhra Pradesh mainly articulated the grievances and demands of the rural land owning classes even as much of its support base consisted of rural rich peasantry and large landowners. The party leaders openly declared that theirs was a peasant party. Precisely because of its ‘kulak’ character, it found it difficult to mobilize the support of agricultural workers and marginal peasants. In fact, the party activities in Andhra Pradesh appeared to be at variance with its all India stance to promote market economy and private enterprise. For instance, the party in Andhra Pradesh vehemently fought against the proposed land ceilings and challenged the State government to bring such laws on urban property, business, employees and industrialists. The bias towards agriculturists and opposition to accumulation of wealth in urban classes had adverse impact on the growth of the party. Another important problem for the Swatantra was that the Congress leaders too hailed from a similar background as the Swatantra’s and they too claimed to stand for the protection and promotion of peasants’ interests.

The 1967 elections were held in the wake of a mass agitation in Andhra region for locating a steel plant at Visakhapatnam, under consideration at that time by the Central Government. The Anglo-American Consortium, in its experts’ report, felt that Visakhapatnam could be a suitable place for that and the Union Ministry of Steel had accepted it. However, other States such as Orissa, Tamil Nadu, and Mysore too brought pressure to set up steel plants in their States. Fears grew among Andhras that the location might be changed to appease other State leaders doing injustice to the State in the matter...
of industrialization. In July 1965 the Andhra Pradesh Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution for the steel plant at Visakhapatnam during the Fourth Five-year Plan period.

Sanjiva Reddy, who was the Union Minister for Steel, accused his opponent and the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Bramhananda Reddy, of fomenting unrest in the State by whipping up popular emotions over the steel plant issue. What he meant was that the agitation was aimed to embarrass and defame him. Members of the Bramhananda Reddy group openly accused that Sanjiva Reddy failed to stand by the decision to set up steel plant in Andhra. The agitation gradually gathered momentum and by October-November 1966 it turned militant. There were two aspects to this agitation. It reflected the anxiety as well as desire of the people to secure a proper share of public investment in industries in the state, because the government was the largest investor in this field and a feeling that government would not yield unless popular pressure was brought on it. Secondly, it also reflected the power struggle between the rival groups in the Congress. The opposition parties tried to take advantage of the troubled situation by moving a no-confidence motion against the State government for its mishandling of the steel plant issue. As a climax 67 MLAs of opposition parties (31 CPI, 20 C.P.M and eight Swatantra, two National Democrats, one SSP and five independents) resigned their membership of the Assembly in November 1966, just on the eve of the 1967 general elections. But the opposition parties became mutually suspicious of each other. Each of them did not want to see the other to gain in strength. The eagerness of opposition parties in the State to strike at both the ruling Congress and rival opposition parties simultaneously damaged the prospects of opposition unity against the ruling party.

The Congress won the election with a comfortable majority. The result showed that the Congress in Andhra Pradesh, despite the open factional rivalries, was growing strong when it was losing ground in several other Indian States all over the country. The loss of Congress dominance in other States was due to the desertion of some sections, the consolidation of non-Congress forces under a single regional party (such as DMK in Tamil Nadu) or the unity of the non-Congress parties. In Andhra Pradesh, however, neither of these factors was at work. Political analysts and commentators spoke of Andhra Pradesh as the bastion of Congress hegemony in the South.
The combined strength of the communists came down from 51 in 1962 to a mere 20 in 1967 elections. They were involved in their own fratricidal struggles. Together they could win only four seats in the coastal delta districts. While the CPI polled more votes than the CPM in 10 districts, the latter polled more votes in exactly same number of districts than the former. They were virtually decimated in their erstwhile strongholds. The final outcome was that the communists lost the position of main opposition to the Swatantra party, lost a sizeable proportion of popular vote and many of its top leaders were defeated. The decline of communist strength in Andhra Pradesh was in contrast to the increase in the Left vote in other State Assemblies and Union Parliament. Bharatiya Jana Sangh was successful for the first time to send three of its party men to the Assembly. However, 69 out of its 80 candidates lost their deposits. Its popular support was as low as 2.1 per cent. It bore the character of an urban high caste (especially the Vysyas) oriented party banking upon the Hindu vote, socialist parties were virtually wiped out.

The period between 1969 and 1973 witnessed two massive and violent agitations, one after the other, with a demand for separate Statehood, first in Telangana and then in Andhra region. The impetus and leadership for both the separatist agitations came not from the opposition parties but from the 'dissident' factions of the Congress. These two agitations are classic examples of how the disgruntled leaders in the ruling and dominant party could put the regional identity and a sense of injustice that prevails among the people of a region to political use. The way these separatist agitations arose and experienced a sudden death also reveal the inner dynamics of Congress party politics.

What started as an agitation in Khammam district by a small group of students and employees for 'safeguarding' domicile rules for employment in Telangana region, soon snowballed into a major agitation spread over several districts. By early 1969 the Telangana Praja Samithi (TPS) was established by a group of young lawyers, teachers and journalists, which set itself the task of coordinating activities of Telangana students and non-gazetted officers (NGOs) in the State service. A feeling was generated that people from Andhra region were dominating in Telangana, cornering larger share of employment and growing rich in Hyderabad City and around. The Telangana region and
its people were discriminated by the government and that the development of Telangana was possible only if it was a separate State, the leaders argued. Initially there were no professional politicians in the agitation. Shortly thereafter, Konda Lakshman resigned from the Andhra Pradesh State Ministry and associated himself with the Telangana Praja Samiti. Chenna Reddy, who was biding his time after he was forced to resign from the Union Ministry following a Supreme Court decision making his election in 1967 invalid (due to malpractices), declared himself in favour of a separate State for Telangana and became the top leader of the Telangana Praja Samiti. He nursed a grievance against Bramhananda Reddy that the latter did not come to his rescue, when he was entangled in legal problems. A separate Telangana Congress Committee was formed including some Congress MLAs from Telangana.

In May-June 1969 there were clashes between police and demonstrators with police firing on the processions. The NGOs went on an indefinite strike, paralyzing district administration. Students boycotted colleges and universities. No harm was done to non-Andhra businessmen and settlers in Hyderabad. Large sums of money came from different interested groups to sustain the movement. The Chief Minister, Bramhananda Reddy, and the central leadership of the Congress stood firmly against bifurcation of the State. The leaders of the Telangana Praja Samiti began to demand the resignation of the Chief Minister, and his replacement by a Telangana Congressman. More than the safeguards and separate State, this demand later became more important. The communist parties opposed the agitation describing it as diversionary, misguided and misled. A majority of Muslims remained indifferent, fearing that Telangana Hindus were more communal minded than the Andhra’s. Even a majority of the Congress MLAs from Telangana were not in favour of separate State.

The fears of some in the Telangana Praja Samiti that the taking over of the movement by professional politicians would mean that it would be used in the Congress factional struggles came true. By August 1969, the agitation began to wear out. Chenna Reddy and others sent sufficient indications that they would reconcile if Bramhananda Reddy was asked to go. Interestingly both the factions in Andhra Pradesh State Congress, opposing and spearheading the separate Telengana agitation, stood by the side of Indira
Gandhi when the Congress was split in November 1969. In March 1971 mid-term elections to Parliament the Congress headed by Mrs. Gandhi secured a landslide victory in Andhra region. But the popularity of the Telangana Praja Samiti became evident when it emerged victorious in 10 out of 14 seats in Telangana region. The High Command, wanting the Telangana Praja Samiti leaders to come back to the Congress fold, conceded some of the demands of the Telangana Praja Samiti, including the removal of Bramhananda Reddy from Chief ministership. As a result the Telangana Praja Samiti merged with the Congress in August 1971. After consultations, P.V. Narasimha Rao, a leader from Telangana without any factional affiliation, but highly loyal to Mrs. Gandhi, had emerged as the choice and became the first Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh from Telangana region on September 30, 1971. Thus the ruling Congress party was able to reabsorb a section of its leadership who had gone out of the party, to retain its electoral base, and to prevent the emergence of a rival party. While the opposition parties, which were expected to launch agitations and create embarrassing situations to the ruling party, appeared defensive and lackadaisical, the dissident Congress leaders took the credit of guiding and leading the agitation which led to the downfall of the Congress Ministry.

The continued dominance of the Congress reached its zenith in the 1972 Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections. As part of Mrs. Gandhi strategy to undercut the dominance of the intermediary State leaders hailing from upper castes, the party wanted to give more seats to 'weaker sections' in the name of restructuring the party leadership in the State. It created some psychological impact on the electorate. The number of women (26) and Muslims (10) legislators elected on Congress tickets had gone up. However, there was no significant increase in the backward caste representatives. The performance of the opposition parties touched a new low and all of them put together polled only 15.6 per cent votes and won 11 seats. However, what was significant was the large percentage of votes polled and seats secured by independents, although much of it was attributed to the rebel Congress candidates and internal opposition within the Congress.

Following the 1972 Assembly elections P.V. Narasimha Rao again became the Chief Minister. There were objections to his reappointment from other aspirants, but once the Centre's wishes were made known he was 'unanimously' elected as leader by the
Congress legislature wing. A feeling of resentment had gained in Andhra region that the Congress leadership was trying to appease the Telangana people since separate Telangana agitation, ignoring the rightful interests of the Andhras. The students, youth and employees felt that they were deprived of opportunities in education and employment, even in State capital. The spark that ignited the brewing discontent in Andhra was the Supreme Court judgment on 3rd October 1972 upholding Mulki Rules as legally valid (under the Mulki Rules - Rules of residency in force in the Nizam’s Hyderabad State - no person could be appointed to a superior or subordinate service of the State if he had not been a permanent resident of the Hyderabad State for at least 15 years). While it was welcomed in the Telangana region, students in Andhra reacted swiftly to the judgment by organizing meetings and strikes with a demand to scrap the Mulki Rules if the integrity of the State should be preserved. Total strikes (bandh) were organized and the Andhra NGOs went on an indefinite strike. At the State level the relations between Andhra and Telangana ministers deteriorated and they began to meet in separate regional groupings. The agitation got escalated as the Jana Sangh, Swatantra, some dissident Congress leaders and independents rallied together with a demand for separate Andhra. Supporters of P.V. Narasimha Rao alleged that the movement was led by vested interests and landlords, as they were threatened by the 'progressive' land reforms initiated by the P.V. Narasimha Rao government. But it is difficult to say how far the land reform policies were responsible for the agitation. As in the case of Telangana agitation the communists opposed bifurcation of the State, as they saw the problem arising essentially due to imbalances in development between the two regions. They characterized the agitation as reactionary since, according to them, it was launched to serve the interests of landlords and businessmen. However, the splinter naxalite groups supported both the agitations. There were a series of meetings between the Prime Minister and the leaders from Andhra and Telangana. A new formula was worked out rendering the continuance of Mulki rules unnecessary. P.V. Narasimha Rao resigned as part of the package as Mrs. Gandhi chose J. Vengala Rao (a Velama from Telangana region but a migrant from coastal Andhra, who was more favourably inclined towards the Kammans and Andhras) as Chief Minister in December 1973.
The two regional movements had demonstrated the strength of regional identities in State politics. They had cut across caste divisions. The Reddi leaders of Telangana and Andhra fought against each other. They also showed that emotional integration between the people of Andhra and Telangana had not been brought about. They also proved that when two regions with unequal development were brought together, the people in the relatively backward region would develop a tendency to complain of 'injustice' and 'neglect'. It was through the slogans of fighting against 'injustice', 'neglect' and 'discrimination' the emerging elites would seek to promote their self-interest. It is difficult to estimate the extent of the role of envy, jealousy and resentment in the separatist agitations. The dissident factions in the Congress in both the regions fanned these feelings with a motive to secure political power themselves. The same leaders, who vowed to sacrifice their lives in the cause of separate State, found no difficulty, immediately after the agitations, to become Ministers in the Congress government. They left the people bewildered and frustrated with their political maneuvers.

Another movement that attracted the attention of people during the 1970s in Andhra Pradesh was the movement by 'communist revolutionaries', popularly known as Naxalite movement, named after the abortive uprising of the peasants of Naxalbari area in West Bengal. Those who split away from the CPI to form the CPM in 1964 accused the CPI leadership, which was in control of the party, that it became revisionist and abandoned the revolutionary path. After the split some front rank leaders of the CPM, a large number of them being from Andhra Pradesh, inspired by the 'China path', felt that the Communist party should immediately wage an armed struggle to overthrow the Indian state as it stood thoroughly exposed and the Indian masses were ready to wage an armed struggle. However, national leaders of the CPM maintained that armed struggle was not the only means available to the communists in India in bringing about the revolution, although such a struggle might become necessary to capture power in the crucial stages. As a result fissures developed within the CPM leaders and cadres. The 'revolutionaries' accused the CPM leadership for trying to put chains on the revolutionary spirit of the people and termed it as 'neo-revisionist betrayal'.
Once again the CPM was vertically split in the State in 1967. Those sections who left the CPM were temporarily united under the Andhra Pradesh Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (APCCCR), with an aim to launch a 'new democratic revolution' against the semi-colonial and semi-feudal state headed by 'comprador bourgeoisie'. They called themselves Marxist-Leninists, although their guiding philosophy was Maoism. However, differences soon cropped up among them on the strategy, tactics and timing of the armed struggle that further led to several splits within splits. One group led an armed struggle in Srikakulam district, primarily in tribal areas, which was hailed as 'Yenan of India' by the CPI(ML), with an aim to 'seize' state power. The armed struggle could not be sustained for long. Another group tried to conduct armed struggle in Telangana area, but with little success. They had to face severe repression by the state for several years, during which hundreds of their leaders and activists were killed, often in fake encounters. However, as a result of the girijan struggles led by the Naxalites, the government brought in legislation to protect the interest of the girijans and also introduced welfare and developmental schemes meant for them.

Although the Congress lost heavily in the crucial Lok Sabha elections held after the end of 'Emergency' period in March 1977 in most of the States, the party stood its ground in Andhra Pradesh by winning 41 out of 42 seats in the State. While the Congress could secure only 34.5 per cent of the total votes polled in the country, in Andhra Pradesh surprisingly it could secure 57.4 per cent votes, interestingly this was higher by two per cent than the votes it secured in the 1971 elections, held at the height of Mrs. Gandhi popularity. For the first time the opposition parties, except the communists, gave up their separate identities and came together to fight under one symbol. The significant aspect of the election was that the Janata party secured 35 per cent of vote, though it could win only one seat - that of Nandyala by Sanjiva Reddy.

The defeat of the Congress party in the Lok Sabha elections in the country led some Congress stalwarts in the State to believe that it was a sinking ship. When Mrs. Gandhi split the party in January 1978 and declared it as the real Indian National Congress under her presidency there was a split in the State unit too, majority of the
senior leaders of the party chose to remain with the 'official' Congress led by Bramhananda Reddy. The APCC leadership also rejected Mrs. Gandhi's new Congress party, describing its formation as 'illegal, unconstitutional and dictatorial, aimed at destroying collective leadership and establishing personality cult'. Chenna Reddy was one prominent leader who played an important role in the formation of Indira Congress in Andhra Pradesh.

Within a month of the formation of the new Congress party, elections were held to the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly in February 1978. These elections became crucial because they were seen as a test to judge the claims of the rival Congress parties to survive they had to demonstrate their electoral strength. A good number of fresh candidates could enter the fray as there was dearth of candidates for the Congress (I). There were mostly triangular contests as the Congress (R) and Janata parties contested separately.

The Congress won an absolute majority of seats (175 out of 294) in the elections, while the Janata party got 60 and the Congress (R) 30. The resilience of the Congress party could be seen from the fact that the same Chenna Reddy who led the violent agitation not long ago for a separate Telangana State became the Chief Minister. For the first time a strange situation had arisen where the Congress was out of power at the Centre and the State unit was in power. However, the Congress victory in the mid-term elections in 1980 changed the equation between the High Command and the leader of the Congress Legislature Party in the State. Andhra Pradesh had the distinction of having four Chief Minister during the tenure of the same legislature (1978-82), though the ruling party enjoyed a comfortable majority throughout. Congress governments were pulled down not by the opposition parties, which generally happens in any parliamentary democracy, but by their own party men that too with the blessings of the party's central leadership. The main difficulty for the new Chief Minister in composing his Cabinet was in dropping some of the senior Ministers in the earlier Cabinet. Most of the senior Ministers belonged to what in Andhra political parlance came to be known as the 'headquarters quota', meaning that they owe Ministries to their direct contacts with the High Command. The Chief Minister had to seek Centre's permission for every change in
his Ministry. He had to fight in the initial months with the dissident factions to settle down and later to placate them and the central leadership so that he would not be eased out of his position.

During the period 1978-82 the democratic principle of electing the Chief Minister by the legislators was totally ignored. Deputing an observer to find out from the legislators their choice became a shallow democratic exercise. All the Chief Minister’s during Mrs. Gandhi’s time asserted in their days that the High Command was not interested in replacing them. Still they found all around them opinion gathering for their ouster beginning with a whispering campaign, snowballing into a dissident struggle, finally assuming the dimensions of a major political crisis shaking the foundations of their governments. Since Mrs. Gandhi became the sole factor in the Congress, with power in the party and government was highly centralized, most of the State leaders turned into sycophants. It led the factions in the party to resort to all kind of means to impress upon the High Command about their influence in the State.

The preoccupation of the State leaders in the game of changing the Chief Minister and party leaders made them insensitive to the problems of the people and the State. The factional divisions in the State, which were often abetted by the central leadership, proved to be a problem as their number became too many. It was not easy to keep the delicate balance between factions in and out of power, with too many leaders aspiring for ‘coveted posts’. Scant respect for political values, erosion of inner-party democracy, destruction of local leadership with some amount of self-respect and extreme cynicism in party politics, all combined to widen the gulf between the Congress and the people. The State began to slip away from the Congress rule. More than the policies of the government, the disgusting factional politics and farcical developments in the party were primarily responsible for the electoral collapse of the Congress in Andhra Pradesh in 1983.

Reasons for the decline of congress in Andhra Pradesh:

One of the major reasons for the decline of congress in Andhra Pradesh was the corruption, which had been institutionalized by the successive congress governments.
The congress ministers were not only arrogant but also corrupt to the core. The M.L.A.'s were in the habit of running to Delhi with money suitcases to seek the favour of the party high command. The Chief Minister’s performance was judged by his ability to raise funds for electioneering. The Congress governments were not only unmindful of corruption in high office but also virtually encouraged it for their own survival. The way in which the funds were raised by the members of the party to celebrate the ‘Shastipoorthi’ ceremony of a former Chief Minister, Dr. Chenna Reddy vindicate this contention. During the regime of Dr. Chenna Reddy, it is alleged, Mrs. Indira Gandhi who was out of power, asked him to collect funds for the 1980 Parliament Elections. The Congress which has limited resources to raise funds for the elections concentrated on Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka where it has still retained its hold.

Dr. M.Chenna Reddy was removed from the office and T. Anjaiah a trade union worker occupied the office. T. Anjaiah celebrated his daughter’s marriage spending Rs. 60 lakhs and later he came to be worth Rs. 6 crores. A number of scandals were unearthed by both the opposition and ruling party members such as Baga Reddy’s cement scandal, land grab scandal etc., Administrative and political corruption spread to every nook and corner of the state. Though he was replaced by Bhavanam Venkatram, the latter failed to eradicate corruption which had taken strong roots by that time.

The frequent changes of Chief Ministers was not very much appreciated in Andhra Pradesh. Faceless wonders were send to Andhra Pradesh as Chief Ministers. ‘The Times of London’ wrote “the people had voted against Mrs.Indira Gandhi’s determination to install her won creatures as Chief Ministers.” Interestingly, certain incidents involving the Union Government have acted as catalysts for the feelings of provincialism in the State. T.Anjaiah may not have been among the best loved and admired Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Yet when for no particular fault of his, he was openly and rudely upbraided by Sri Rajiv Gandhi at the Begumpet Airport, the Chief Minister earned a surge of sympathy from among his people. “Whatever opinion we might have held about his capabilities as Chief Minister, he was after all our Chief Minister. An ordinary member of parliament and that too not from our state, had the
check to insult him publicly. It was an 'insult to each one of us here' was a commonly expressed sentiment at that time.

Anjaiah, who constructed his castle with the support of the dissident congressmen decided not to displease his supporters. He knew that the conservative and the Congressmen. Hence he wanted to appease the MLA's and other congressmen by distributing lucrative offices like ministers, chairmen of the newly formed Corporations etc. In this process, he was compelled to expand his ministry to a record number of 61 by December 2nd, 1980. The Congress (I) High Command intervened and advised him to prune his ministry. He reduced his cabinet to 44 on February 9, 1981. He unnecessarily created corporate bodies to accommodate the disgruntled Congressmen and the number of corporations reached to 48, including five statutory bodies. Though he declared himself as a six annas coolly, he had given importance to pomp and pageantry, and extravagantly spent the money from the state exchequer to purchase helicopters, a galaxy of cars and other amenities to his army of ministers, chairmen of corporations and other dignitaries.

Anjaiah was elected as MLA from Ramayampet, Medak (district) Constituency on March 16, 1981, defeating 12 opponents. He sorted out his differences with G.V. Sudhakara Rao, Minister, Major irrigation. However, D.Surendra Rao, N.Kondaiah and Venkata Rao, all MLAs and former APCC (I) General Secretary, M. Ramachandra Reddy issued a strongly worded statement on April 19, 1981 in which they pointed out that the Congress (I) had faced the danger of obliteration due to the (inept) administration of Anjaiah. Following discussions with Anjaiah, they withdrew their statement leaving traces of dissatisfaction among the Congressmen due to the non-implementation of the new 20 point programme by the Chief Minister and his inefficient administration. Under the leadership of G. Rajaram, Finance Minister, and the leader of the Backward classes and also contender for the Chief Ministership, a group of backward class legislator started attacking the policies of Anjaiah which failed to implement developmental programmes for the benefit of the weaker sections. This group lost their voice when their leader Rajaram was killed in a road accident on May 10th, 1981.
Elections to Panchayat Raj Institutions

The credit for conducting the abnormally postponed and much feared elections to the Panchayat Raj institutions and local bodies; went to Anjaiah. He introduced direct elections to the post of President of Ranchayat Samiti and conducted elections from May 27 to June 5 inspite of severe dissident activity in the Congress (I) party. Infighting within the party reached such a chaotic peak that the beleaguered Chief Minister had to withhold fielding official candidates but kept the party's door open to whosoever won. Of the 328 Panchayat Samiti Presidents, as many as 172 got elected in the face of stiff opposition from the local Congress (I) MLAs.

The High Command which was sore by Anjaiah's weak performance gave the green signal to foment trouble. It was alleged that the green signal to foment trouble. It was alleged that the Congress has lost its ground to the Janata and Communist Parties in local bodies elections and Assembly by-elections. Anjaiah failed to weed out corruption which was institutionalized during the tenure of Dr. Chenna Reddy. Moreover, corruption increased and Anjaiah's ministerial colleagues amassed wealth and indulged in several scandals.

Finally, the High Command lost confidence in Anjaiah while N. Janardhan reddy staked his claim to head the state and Bhaskar Rao's claim was ignored by the central leadership. But P.V. Narasimha Rao, Foreign Affaire Minister, wanted to install his own man and projected Kona Prabhakara Rao whom he had by then managed to make the APCC President. P.V. Narasimha Rao effectively be settled the chanced of Janardhan Reddy. Bhavanam Venkatram Reddy (MLC) as Chief Minister and Jagannatha Rao Backward Class leader from Telegana, as Deputy Chief Minister took charge on February 24, 1982.

Factionalism

Another important reason for the decline of national party is factionalism. Factionalism is the identification of State Congress elite with regional and local politics. These factors played a major role in the formation of ministry, election of members of the State party executive and appointments to the chairmanship of various corporations.
Though factionalism was a characteristic feature of the Congress, it became rampant since 1980. The central Ministers shepherded their own group and continuously interfered in the state administration to change the leadership and include or exclude certain ministers.

Whenever a Chief Minister was changed the realignment of factional groups was active. The two Union Ministers P.V. Narasimha Rao and Shiva Shankar had their own groups in the State apart from the already existing groups shepherd by Chenna Reddy, Anjaiah, N. Janardhan Reddy, and other minor regional and caste groups. The Congress leaders who supported Mrs. Indira Gandhi in the 1978 split and were instrumental for the emergence of Congress (I) in the State criticized the selection of K.Vijaya Bhaskar Reddy, a defector from Congress (U) as Chief Minister. They argued that they had provided funds for the success of Mrs. Indira Gandhi during her hay days without deserting her, sacrificing their political career while some leaders left her, enjoyed power and cleverly defected to occupy positions in the Congress (I). They accused the Prime Minister of giving more importance to those defectors ignoring the real congress (I) leaders. They further alleged the new Chief Minister forming his own group with the assistance of his old friends and insulting the real Congress (I) partymen.

The above changed circumstances resulted in new alignment of groups in the process. The original Congress (I) party men and former Ministers who were denied ministerial berths and formed a separate group under the stewardship of the former Chief Ministers Anjaiah and Venkatram. The Congress (I) High Command summoned Bramhananda Reddy, Anjaiah and Venkatram, former Chief Ministers to attend the Congress working Committee meeting on 9th and 10th October, 1982, to discuss party affairs and to workout strategy for the ensuing assembly elections. Anjaiah and Venkatram decided not to attend the Congress working Committee meeting as a token of their resentment towards the party High Command regarding the treatment they were receiving from the new Chief Minister as well as the High Command. This decision was taken at an informal meeting which was attended by Anjaiah, Venkatram, K. Prabhakara Reddy, P.V. Chowdary, G.V. Sudhakara Rao, Divi Kondiah Chowdary, Goka Ramaswamy and E. Ayyapu Reddy besides a number of zilla Parishad Chairmen,
Panchayat Samiti Presidents and legislators on October 3, 1982. Later on October 7, the two former Chief Ministers announced their decision to ignore the call of the High Command, instead they called for a convention of the Congress (I) legislators and party workers on October 18th and 19th 1982 in Hyderabad to explain their misgivings. They stated that they would then go to Delhi to appraise the party leadership of the intensity of their feelings. The two maintained that their decision did not amount to defiance of the party leadership. The party High Command viewed their decision seriously and the representatives of the High Command contacted them just before midnight of October 9, 1982. Their move to call a meeting of the ‘original’ Congress (I) workers was dropped as the Party High Command was ‘seized’ of their grievances and they attended the Congress working committee meeting on October 10, 1982.

The Repeated Game of Musical Chairs

The Congress (I) High Command realized by the end of August, 1982 that it was losing ground to N.T. Rama Rao, the State Congress (I) became a divided House and as heading for the debacle. They wanted to relieve the weakling Chief Minister and rejuvenate the party. After a week long cliffhanger in early September, the donnish and ineffectual Venkatram Reddy was asked to pack after seven months. N. Janardhana Reddy, Revenue Minister who was struggling for his chance since 1980 was almost crowned as Chief Minister but inexplicably side lined. Vijaya Bhaskara Reddy, M.P. Kurnool and former detractor of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the follower of Brahmamanda Reddy was selected as successor to Bhavanam Venkatram.

The performance of Congress (I) in 1983 in the reserved constituencies, when analysed regarding the support structure of Congress (I), shows poor performance. The reserved constituency offers the necessary socio-economic base for the ruling party to derive necessary support from the socially, economically and educationally backward voters.

The Congress leaders of Andhra Pradesh are fully conscious of the charismatic leadership of Mrs. Indira Gandhi. They give her a free hand in the state politics because
of their own electoral success mainly; depends upon her favour. This is one of the reasons for the decline of national party in Andhra Pradesh.

The rise of a film star N.T.Rama Rao, as the saviour of Telugu Atmagouravam or the self-respect of 6 crore Telugu people. N.T.Rama Rao’s charisma worked wonders with the electorate on the eve of the poll. His popularity as a film hero, his cine roles of ‘Krishna’, ‘Rama’, ‘Lord Venkateswara’ (Lord of seven Hills) and such other Godly roles which endeared him to the common man came in handy during the elections. Thousands of people flocked to see their God in flesh during the election campaign. In addition to this N.T.Rama Rao’s image was not tarnished because he had no prior political background. N.T.Rama Rao provided them the required opportunity to change the Congress (I) government to install a new government. This is the very essence of parliamentary democracy. These are the factors for the decline of the national party Congress (I) in Andhra Pradesh in the 1983 Assembly Elections.
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