

Movement for Telengana and Vidarbha

Majority are concerned of neglect but only half of them support separation

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Despite AP Chief Minister's consistent advocacy that a smaller State is not good for development, and that a significant per cent of voters in Telengana do not agree with him on this, many of them would nevertheless vote for his TDP. For, they think he is more "responsive and hardworking" leader. Even a higher per cent of voters among educated Telanganites support TDP notwithstanding their preference for a separate State.

TWO-THIRDS of voters in Telengana and Vidarbha think that their region has been neglected. However, only half of them are in favour of a separate State. Many of them would like to see other alternatives being explored and followed up more sincerely than pursuing separation. Nearly two-thirds of educated Telanganites do not think Andhra Pradesh is any more united today than it was ten years ago.

Despite the ruling party, both in the case of Telengana and Vidarbha, is against a separate State, half of those who prefer a separate State, would nevertheless vote for the ruling party. Half of voters in both the regions think the leaders campaigning for separate State are "self-interested politicians"

These are some of the highlights of the latest Centre for Media Studies (CMS) research in Telengana and Vidarbha districts. The survey was

conducted in the wake of renewed activities in both the States more recently and formation of a National Front for smaller States.

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In the absence of a regional party, Vidarbha continues to be stronghold of Congress party. In Telengana, on the other hand, the regional party Telengana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), has made inroads. Today, TRS has about one sixth of voters favoring it - mostly at the cost of Congress party.

Interestingly, despite AP

Chief Minister's consistent advocacy that a smaller State is not good for development, and that a significant per cent of voters in Telengana do not agree with him on this, many of them would nevertheless vote for his TDP. For, they think he is more "responsive and hardworking" leader. Even a higher per cent of voters among educated Telanganites support TDP notwithstanding their preference for a separate State.

Nearly a fifth of voters, both in Telengana and Vidarbha, are for an integrated State. One-third are for separation and the others rather prefer alternative initiatives but tend to get swayed away with aggressive local party.

Compared to a similar study by CMS two years ago in the wake of birth of regional party (TRS), the regional party has improved its support in Telengana. Thanks to more

recent controversies to do with sharing of river water, TRS has received a shot in the arm.

An interesting point that comes out of this CMS study is that people appreciate if political leaders come forward with initiatives to develop the region rather than only talk of separation. And, that avoiding a stand on such an issue may be risky to political parties.

Unlike, Kammas and Reddies in Telengana, a majority of whom are against separation, a majority of Marathas in Vidarbha want a separate State. No wonder why Sharad Pawar has come out this week in support of

| Is the State more unified & integrated today | | | |
|--|-------------------|-----------------|---------|
| | (per cent) | | |
| | Yes, more unified | No, not unified | No idea |
| Region | | | |
| Urban | 39 | 47 | 14 |
| Rural | 34 | 50 | 16 |
| Education | | | |
| Illiterate | 28 | 46 | 25 |
| Middle | 37 | 41 | 22 |
| Metric | 40 | 51 | 9 |
| Graduate & above | 31 | 69 | - |

Highlights of field survey

Are they better off today?

How do they perceive themselves?. Half of voters of

Telengana districts do not consider themselves better off economically compared to ten years ago. However, forty five per cent think that they are better off today. Overall, it could be said that despite backwardness of the region, apprehensions of people were responsible for periodic separatist movements and not much seems to have been accomplished. In fact, 52 per cent of voters in rural areas think that they are not better off

| Better off today than 5-10 years ago | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|-------|
| | (per cent) | |
| | Urban | Rural |
| Yes, better off | 47 | 44 |
| No, not | 47 | 52 |
| Not sure | 6 | 4 |

Vidarbha.

CMS conducted the systematic field study in 6 districts of Telengana and 6 districts of Vidarbha in the first of September 2003. In all 600 carefully selected voters for each region were personally interviewed on a range of related issues in the context of ongoing agitations for separate State.

The demand for smaller States is not merely to do with opportunities, but also quality of leadership and transparency in public policies. As one respondent in Amaravati has observed the need is not "badkaaneke" but "bataaneke" about pros and cons of dividing the State.

| Do Separatist leaders reflect public view? | | | |
|--|----------------------|-----------------|---------|
| | (per cent) | | |
| | Yes, they do reflect | No, they do not | No idea |
| Sex | | | |
| Male | 31 | 52 | 16 |
| Female | 32 | 39 | 29 |
| Education | | | |
| Illiterate | 33 | 41 | 26 |
| Middle | 29 | 51 | 20 |
| Metric | 33 | 50 | 17 |
| Graduate & above | 27 | 58 | 14 |
| Region | | | |
| Urban | 33 | 50 | 17 |
| Rural | 31 | 48 | 21 |

| Any other way to separation? | |
|------------------------------|------------|
| | (per cent) |
| No other way to separation | 21 |
| Yes, should explore | 29 |
| Remain united | 14 |
| No idea | 36 |

today. That it is TDP which has been in power during most part of this period does not seem to have gone against that party.

Is the State more unified/integrated?

All voters of Telengana were asked for their views as to whether the State of Andhra Pradesh is more unified and integrated today than 5 - 10 years ago. Half of Telengana voters do not think the State is more unified or integrated today than it was 5 - 10 years ago. One-sixth has no view. In fact, among higher educated ones, 69 per cent think so. There is not much difference in urban and rural areas.

How much "separatist leaders" reflect people's view?

All respondents were enquired whether in their view leader's advocating a separate Telengana reflect the feelings of people of Telengana or are they promoting their own interests? Not more than one-third of voters think that these leaders are reflecting the feelings of people of Telengana. This per cent is expected to be higher (than one-third) as the movement for Telengana is a couple of decades old with high and low points. On the other, nearly half of Telengana voters feel that leaders who are advocating a separate State are promoting their own interests. In fact, 58

per cent of graduates (or above) think so. The trend is similar in urban and rural areas. One-fifth have no idea.

Any other way to resolve, instead of a separate State?

One-sixth of voters of Telengana would like to see the

| Support the idea of a separate Telengana | | | |
|--|--------------|----------------------|---------|
| | (per cent) | | |
| | Yes, support | No, not for separate | No idea |
| Sex | | | |
| Male | 34 | 42 | 24 |
| Female | 25 | 39 | 36 |
| Region | | | |
| Urban | 35 | 51 | 14 |
| Rural | 31 | 39 | 30 |
| Age (yrs.) | | | |
| 18-29 | 32 | 43 | 23 |
| 30-49 | 29 | 44 | 26 |
| 50 & above | 40 | 27 | 33 |

State remain united. Nearly thirty percent would like to see some other option being explored instead of pushing separation. One-fifth, on the other hand, think separatism is the only solution. About 35 per cent have no idea.

Should the State be split?

To the enquiry whether Andhra Pradesh be split into "smaller states", three-fourth expressed against, against one-fifth who are in favour. One-

sixth of those who are against the split of State into "smaller States" nevertheless support a separate Telengana. This sentiment against "smaller" is apparently reflecting TDP's position. Relatively, a higher per cent of Reddies and Kammas are against the division of the State.

Support for a separate Telengana

However, to a more direct question whether they support a "separate Telengana", one-third expressed positively. About 41

per cent do not support the idea of a "separate Telengana". In fact, half of urban voters do not support a separate Telengana. Nearly 30 percent have no idea or are not sure.

Relatively, a higher percent among better educated voters support a separate Telengana. Relatively more among OBC (47 per cent) support Telengana.

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