



## Telugu Desam Party: It's Struggle for power in Andhra Pradesh

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### ***Abstract***

*The Telugu Desam Party emerged as a regional political party in Andhra Pradesh. Since its inception in 1982, the party bitterly criticized the policies and programmes of Congress (I) party. The sudden dismissal of the N.T.Ramarao's TDP Government in 1984 proved that the ruling Congress (I) at the centre was showing hatred and envy towards the Telugu Desam Party in the state. N.T.Ramarao developed friendship with non-Congress (I) parties at national level and brought them on to single platform at the centre to defeat Congress (I) party in 1989 elections. NTR was chastened by the August political crises Naidu rose to the occasion and played a significant role in National Politics. He soon became a prominent leader in United Front and was unanimously chosen the Convener of United Front. In the power game politics, Naidu succeeded in winning the hands of the top political leaders and remained a national figure with his rare virtue of political diplomacy. Naidu rose to the National level by sheer political intellectual prodigious efforts. The TDP in its new avatar in the hands of N. Chandrababu Naidu has been endeavoring to shape a new political order in the State despite its struggle for power.*

**Key Words:** Indian political system, power struggle, *Telugu Desam Party*

### **Introduction**

The emergence of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) brought radical changes to the structure of politics in Andhra Pradesh and in the Indian political system. Increasing dissatisfaction among the people towards the Congress style of functioning provided a fertile ground for the establishment and power struggle of the TDP in Andhra Pradesh. The Telugu Desam party emerged as a strong regional political party in the state of Andhra Pradesh. In its political journey, it had political struggle for its survival. It had great achievements and debacles. The TDP in its government power worked for people and made development in the state of Andhra Pradesh in terms of the

infrastructural initiatives. These included construction of highways and bridges in the city of Hyderabad. The government also made huge investment for technical enhancement of Hyderabad and developed it into IT hub, providing jobs not only to the youth in Andhra Pradesh but also providing opportunities for people from other states. The Telugu Desam party has helped all-round development of the farmers through giving loans at minimum interest, electrification of the rural areas and providing low-priced water facilities and utmost technological modernism to improve the agricultural wealth in the state. Through the National Public Distribution System, TDP distributed cheap rice to Below Poverty Line



families in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Other essential commodities in the families have been provided at subsidized rates by the party. Party has done a lot for women empowerment with 50% reservation for women in elected and constitutional bodies.

### **The Background:**

Telugu Desam party was established by N .T. Ramarao in 1982. The launching of a new political party on March 29, 1982 by the sixty-year-old matinee idol N.T.Rama Rao heralded a new era in the State politics. This regional party was not born out of any sustained movement or struggle, like that of Akali Dal in Punjab or National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir, or any sustained social movement like the DMK in Tamil Nadu. Instead, the TDP in Andhra Pradesh politics succeeded in its power struggle due to substantial anti-Congress opposition in the electoral fray. To the dismay of the Congress leadership, in the elections to the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly held on 5<sup>th</sup> January 1983 the Telugu Desam Party won a landslide victory securing 202 seats in a house of 294. The Congress Party led by Mrs. Indira Gandhi could secure only 60 seats. Thus, the General Elections, 1983 held to the Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly gave a new turn to Indian politics and power struggle. Nara Chandrababu Naidu is leading the party in Andhra Pradesh. The headquarters of Telugu Desam party is situated at N.T.R. Bhavan in the Banjara Hills locality of Hyderabad. The Telugu Desam party formed the government in Andhra Pradesh twice, from 1983-1989 and from 1994-2004. For general

elections in 2014, the Telugu Desam party had political alliance with the BJP and it formed the government in the new State of Andhra Pradesh, i.e., *Navya Andhra Pradesh*.

The Telugu Desam party as established by N.T.Ramarao made commitment to protect the self-respect of Telugus and stated to guarantee to provide food, shelter and clothing to them at reasonable price and accomplish endorsement of ladies, youth and backward sections of society in Andhra Pradesh. Since its inception, the Telugu Desam party also claimed that it attempted to accomplish a unified and executable synchronization with all non-congress opposition parties within the state and likewise within the nation. The TDP made efforts to safeguard economic system and do power reforms within the country and originated majority of program with World Bank aid to develop talented work force to benefit people. NT Rama Rao the founder leader of the TDP, as it is often felt, promoted overall respect for Telugu culture, literature and Language and the welfare of the Telugu people. After the exit of N.T. Rama Rao from the political scene of Andhra Pradesh (1995), the Telugu Desam Party under the leadership of N. Chandrababu Naidu has been engaged in the onerous task of shaping a progressive and sustainable political order. It is not an easy and simple process, specially in the context of (a) the pulls and pressures of electoral politics, and (b) the limited resources and authority of State Governments, and impingement of die policies of the Union Government on tire States in the federal polity of India.



**Objectives of Telugu Desam Party:**

After the formation of the Telugu Desam Party, N T Rama Rao stated many a time that he came to politics neither for power nor for money, prestige and status. N.T.Rama Rao emphasized that the Self-respect of the Andhra people was threatened by the Congress (I). He promised people to protect the "*telugu prajala atmagowravam* '(Telugu People's Self-respect) and to provide an honest government. The first *Mahanadu* (General Conference) of the party workers and a public meeting was held at Nizam College grounds in Hyderabad on April 11, 1982, Later Telugu Desam conducted the *Mahanadu* at various places like Vijayawada and Tirupathi. the prosperous *kamma* caste men saw in the Telugu Desam, a hope for *kammas* to become the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. The electorate by the time was also in search of an alternative and a leader who can bail out the State from the Congress culture with rampant factionalism and ubiquitous corruption and the political instability into which the Congress leaders had dragged the people of the State for several Decades. He promised a clean government and urged the people to reject the 'degenerated' Congress leaders seeking to reap fruits in the name of its glorious past. The press projected him as savior of the people.

At the time of launching of Telugu Desam Party, N.T.Rama Rao announced a 13-point programme. They were said to be the objectives of the TDP. These objectives include providing drinking water facility to all people; providing rice for the poor, at a price of Rs. 2/- per kg; implementing mid-day meal scheme for school children; Distribution of surplus **land** and

Government land to the landless poor; Implementing **development schemes** for the upliftment of backward classes, through District gural Development Agency, Integrated Tribal Development Agency, Schedule Cast, Schedule Tribe, and Backward Classes Corporations; Implementing special welfare schemes for weavers fishermen and rickshaw pullers; administration to be aimed at the welfare of the people; the use of Telugu as the official language at all levels of administration; development of cottage and small scale industries; Implementation of National programme for rural development and employment schemes.; supply of seeds and fertilizers to fanners, inauguration of minor irrigation projects and rural electrification; special welfare schemes for women and for the youth.

Chandrababu Naidu who assumed the TDP leadership after N.T.Ramarao, has a firm conviction that performance and institutional competence of the Government is a key factor for political stability and social progress.. In fact, such heavy reliance on the performance of an efficient, honest, and responsive bureaucratic system is the reverse of charismatic politics of N.T. Rama Rao. Further, Naidu had the compulsive necessity to make himself and the Government visible and helpful to the people to consolidate his position, soon after he assumed the office of Chief-Ministership of the State. Perhaps the character of Telugu Desam Party, which is a mass based and leader centred party, is another factor to be noted in this connection. An active and responsive government to solve the problems of people is a corollary of democratic political system, and is an essential instrument for promotion of social and



economic development. The series of Tele-conferences of the Chief-Minister with the district collectors, and the conferences with the staff of Secretariat are also helpful aids to the process. An attempt has been made in the early stage to take the administrative order to the door- step of people. This idea and process has been well defined and institutionalized, and implemented in the Janmabhoomi programme. The aim is simply to make the administrative system visible and close, responsive and accountable, and transparent and fair or equitable to all sections of people. The application of computer technology in carrying out administrative work is directed to achieve speedy and effective public service. The State is said to be a trend setter for others in electronic governance. Electronic governance became a useful device and gained the confidence of the public. A lot more remains to be done to deal with corruption and authoritarian spirit, which are deeply entrenched in the system. Chandra Babu Naidu introduced some new schemes during his second tenure apart from continuing the above mentioned schemes to consolidate the power structure of the TDP government.

#### **The Beginning of TDP's Struggle:**

The Telugu Desam Party captured power in Andhra Pradesh in January 1983 Assembly elections. N.T.Rama Rao first year in office was marked by a number of far reaching changes in the administrative set-up. He abolished the posts of Karnams and Munsiffs in Andhra region, and the Patel and Patwari set-up in the Telangana districts. His initiation of anti-corruption acts and his approach to

the age of retirement also faced the wrath of the Non -Gazetted Officers in the State. For these and other reasons, the first crisis to the party came within a year. It experienced a vertical split on August 16, 1984. The elections were held to the State Assembly in January 1985. The mid-term election of 1985 gave a clear mandate to N.T.Rama Rao and his allies who won 236 out of 294 seats. This time N.T.Rama Rao continued the seat adjustment with the non-Congress (I) oppositions. In these elections the Telugu Desam Party got 202 seats out of 249 seats for which it contested.

#### **TDP's Dominance in Politics: The Struggle for Power Continues:**

After the 1985 elections, the Telugu Desam Party under the leadership of N.T.Rama Rao introduced administrative and the subsequent political changes. These had a far-reaching impact on state administration and politics. The Mandal system was introduced in the place of Samithis and taluks, which were replaced by the Mandals. The system of direct election to Zillah Parisian! Chairman and Mandal President were introduced. The system of reservation to **Backward** Classes and Women was also introduced by the Telugu Desam Party. Another feature to election to local bodies was that the elections are to be held on party basis. With the introduction of these changes, new social groups such as backward classes and women and youth got the chance to share the power at the grassroots level. On par with the rural local bodies, changes were introduced with regard to the urban local bodies in the 1987 elections held to the local bodies. Direct election was also introduced to the post of Municipal Chairman. Out of 1104 Mandals and 23



Zillah Praja Parishad elections, elections were held to 1058 Mandals and 22 Zillah Parishads. The Telugu Desam Party captured 632 Mandals and 19 Zillah Parishads by securing 51, 37 percent of votes. The election proved a serious setback to the Indian National Congress which hitherto enjoyed total dominance over the local bodies. The Telugu Desam Party now occupied the position of dominance in the state politics. Another important outcome of this election was the shifting of power from upper castes to backward castes women and youth for the first time after the formation of the **Panchayati Raj** bodies in 1959.

In January 1986, N.T.Rama Rao assembled national opposition leaders at **Hyderabad** wherein leaders of 13 parties issued a statement criticizing the Congress leadership. The meeting led to the formation of the National People Front (NPF). The National Front Government came to power in the 1989 General Elections held to Lok Sabha. V.P.Singh became the Prime Minister. However, the TDP under the leadership of N.T.Rama Rao suffered a setback in Andhra Pradesh, as the Indian National Congress was successful in the State level Assembly Elections, which were held simultaneously, defeated Telugu Desam. During the period of 1985-89, the Congress regained its lost ground by attacking the functioning of the TDP and its leader N.T.Rama Rao.

After his defeat in 1989 Assembly elections, NTR coordinated the formation of National Front Government at Centre. But leaders of national parties did not give due recognition to NTR. Dr. M.Chenna Reddy was sworn in as Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh on December 3, 1989. The new Chief Minister abolished all

the policies introduced by his immediate predecessor, NTR. The dissident leaders within Congress (I) party in the state reported to their high command about misrule of Chenna Reddy. So, he was replaced by N.Janardhan Reddy who took certain unpopular decisions like, enhancing the subsidy rice rate from Rs.2 to Rs.3.50, enhancement of electricity charges of farmers from Rs.50 to Rs.150 etc. Besides he also made futile attempts to destabilize TDP legislature party. NTR started his campaign against misrule of Congress Chief Minister. Mean time mid-term elections to Lok Sabha were held in May 1991. During this elections campaign, Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated. The assassination evoked strong protest all over India. In this Lok Sabha elections, TDP bagged 13 seats, in spite of sympathy waves in favor on Congress Party.

Meantime, interesting developments took place in the personal life of NTR. The biographer of NTR, Smt. Lakshmi Parvathi came closer to NTR. The free interactions between them led to their marriage. NTR married Lakshmi Parvathi on September 11, 1993. The marriage became the fundamental cause for the split in TDP in 1995. Soon after her marriage, Lakshmi Parvathi entered into politics, to help her better half. In 1994 election, she played crucial role in selection of candidates to Assembly. She also actively participated in several party meetings. On the other hand N.Janardhan Reddy the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, due to dissident politics within the party, failed to provide clean administration to the people and similarly Kotla Vijay Bhaskar Reddy who succeeded





N.Janardhan Reddy could not provide an administration which was appreciated by the people. Under these circumstances elections to the State Legislative Assembly were held in 1994.

The 1994 Assembly elections restored the Telugu Desam Party to power once again. Out of the total of 294 seats in A.P, Assembly elections were held for 292 seats in two phases on December 1 and December 5, 1994 and elections for two seats were countermanded due to the death of contesting candidates. In 1994 Assembly Elections in Andhra Pradesh, the Congress (I), contested to all the 292 constituencies, and secured only 26 seats. In a way the 1994 elections signified a repeat performance of TDP in 1983 and 1985 elections.

N.T.Ramarao as the leader of the TDP became a victim of the second political crisis, in which the people had no role to play. N.T.Ramarao was embroiled in a struggle for power between Nara Chandrababu Naidu, his second son-in-law, and Lakshmi Parvathi, whom he married in his 70<sup>th</sup> year. N.T.Ramarao was defeated by his own family members in a prolonged struggle in the TDP and its government. On September 1, 1995, Chandrababu Naidu was sworn in as the new Chief Minister. He won his vote of confidence in the Assembly on September 7, 1995. He continued in office for 9 years as the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh upto May 2004, when TDP lost power in 2004 A.P. Assembly elections. In the 2004 Assembly Elections, the Telugu Desam Party and its ally the Bharatiya Janata Party contested for 267 and 147 seats respectively. The Telugu Desam Party won 47 seats and the Bharatiya Janata Party won 2 seats. The Congress and its

allies won the 2004 elections and the Telugu Desam Party witnessed the crushing defeat.

Nevertheless, the TDP emerges as the main gainer in 2009 Assembly elections.

In the 2009 Andhra Pradesh Assembly election, the Congress had taken the lead, winning 156 of the 294 seats in the Assembly. As the leader of the Congress Legislature Party, Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy was invited to form the Government by the Governor. Unexpectedly, the Government lasted for 4 years 9 months and the president rule was imposed later. The Election Commission of India (ECI) decided to hold the Assembly elections along with the general election. The election in each Assembly constituency (AC) was held in the same phase as the election to the corresponding Parliamentary constituency that the AC falls under. On 3 October 2013, the Union Cabinet of India approved the creation of the new State of Telangana. The new state of Telangana was carved out from Andhra Pradesh on 2 June 2014. The 2014 General Election was the last election that a united Andhra Pradesh took part in, as the state was bifurcated into Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states less than a month after the polls. In 2014, in Andhra Pradesh there are 25 Lok Sabha constituencies, as Andhra Pradesh (Total 42 seats) was bifurcated into Telangana (17 seats) and Andhra Pradesh (25 seats) states.

In the 2014 Andhra Pradesh Assembly election, the Telugu Desam Party led by former chief minister and opposition leader N. Chandrababu Naidu emerged as the single largest party with 117 seats while 88 were



required for majority. Besides many factors, Narendra Modi and Pawan Kalyan factors helped the TDP consolidate its political base, The promise of waiver of farm loans by the TDP has proved to be a big hit with the people of Andhra region. Meaningful dialogue on several issues in numerous politburo meetings strategized the party's way forward for the TDP. Naidu was invited to form the government as part of the fourteenth Andhra Pradesh Assembly by Governor of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana E. S. L. Narasimhan. It was the first Assembly in Andhra Pradesh after the bifurcation of the State into Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. And the TDP has been proving its metal. TDP's withdrawal from the National Democratic Alliance in March 2018 following the disputes between the TDP and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) regarding the Special Category Status (SCS), a part of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014 has resulted in competition between the two parties – the TDP and the BJP. Y. S. Jaganmohan Reddy has been campaigning in the state since November 2017. Meanwhile, Pawan Kalyan's JSP had been gaining significant support in Uttarandhra (North Coastal Andhra Pradesh).

Assembly Elections are due to be held in Andhra Pradesh in April or May 2019 to constitute the fifteenth Legislative Assembly. These elections are to be held concurrently with the Indian general election, 2019. The incumbent Telugu Desam Party headed by the chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, the YSR Congress Party headed by opposition leader Y. S. Jaganmohan

Reddy and Jana Sena Party headed by actor-turned-politician Pawan Kalyan are considered to be the main contestants in the e

#### Conclusion:

The Telugu Desam Party emerged as a regional political party in Andhra Pradesh by challenging the misrule of the ruling Congress (I) party in the state. Since its inception in 1982, the party bitterly criticized the policies and programmes of Congress (I) party. The Telugu Desam Party repeatedly criticized that the state Congress (I) leaders were mortgaging the Telugu pride in the streets of New Delhi, in the name of high command. The sudden dismissal of the N.T.Ramarao's TDP Government in 1984 proved that the ruling Congress (I) at the centre was showing hatred and envy towards the Telugu Desam Party in the state. So, N.T.Ramarao took active interest to weaken the popularity of Congress (I) Party not only in the state but also in India. To this end he developed friendship with non-Congress (I) parties at national level and brought them on to single platform at the centre to defeat Congress (I) party in 1989 elections. NTR was chastened by the August 1984 political crisis and the next five years of his term as Chief Minister was marked by a constant fight with the Congress (I) Government at the Centre, and with Congress (I) leaders in the State. NTR concentrated on building up a national alternative to the Congress (I). Since its formation in 1983, the TDP has been demanding for more regional autonomy and has been struggling hard to retain its power. Chandrababu Naidu followed the TDP leader N.T.Ramarao. Naidu rose to the occasion and played a



significant role in National Politics. He soon became a prominent leader in United Front and was unanimously chosen the Convener of United Front. In the power game politics, Naidu had succeeded in winning the hands of the top political leaders and remained a national figure with his rare virtue of political diplomacy. Naidu rose to the National level by sheer political intellectual prodigious efforts. The TDP in its new avatar in the hands of N. Chandrababu Naidu has been endeavoring to shape a new political order in the State despite its struggle for power.

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