

The Elections in Andhra Pradesh

K Balagopal

Happy days are here again for the class of touts, brokers and middlemen—the class that was first consolidated and shown a place in the sun during Chenna Reddy's earlier incumbency as the state's chief minister. The unusual joy with which he was welcomed by the employees of the state secretariat was in part a democratic reaction to the humiliation they suffered during NTR's rule, but also in significant measure a thoroughly reprehensible joy at the return to power of the man who institutionalised corruption in Andhra, and structured a fine network through which all concerned could make money.

THE ruling classes' search for a way out of the mess they have landed themselves and the country in, has not even managed to create a new political context for itself with these elections. It is not just that the National Front has not swept the polls; it would have been no different if it had. That the 'Nehru model' needs updating/repair/rejection, that the economy needs some more opening up, and that it is no longer very prudent to talk of land reforms, are points that are accepted by all sections of the ruling classes, though some of them continue to pay obeisance to old times for ideological reasons. But that is where analysis ends. A more intelligent and capable ruling class would have at least generated some alternative models and put them before the electorate, but what we have had is a little more of what we have been seeing for the last decade: the unending search for a political leader, party of formation that will hold everybody together and propose an alternative. These elections have not provided even this much. Viswanath Pratap Singh affects a tight-lipped manner, apparently in the belief that still waters will be presumed to run deep, but his silence merely means that he has nothing to say which Rajiv Gandhi has not said before him.

What these elections have proved yet once more is that the search for an alternative, given the context of a completely disillusioned and irreverent—though, unfortunately unorganised—electorate, will necessarily be a very violent one. The various sections of the ruling classes are jostling each other in the hurry to put themselves at a vantage point in the hoped-for restructuring of the national consensus that is nowhere in sight. This necessitates not only violent conflict among themselves, but also a very violent suppression of the masses, partly because no section of the ruling classes knows of any other way of convincing the masses to go along with it rather than with the

others, and partly to stop the dangerous possibility of the masses rejecting the professed framework and seeking an alternative to it.

The visible strengthening of the opposition and the weakening of the Congress(I) does not represent any of the things it is supposed to represent: the victory of morality over corruption, of decentralisation over centralisation, of democracy over authoritarianism, of the 'Gandhi model' over the 'Nehru model', of the 'rich peasantry' and the 'regional elite' over the monopoly bourgeoisie, or of the old bourgeoisie over the new buccaneers. It is not that the Congress(I) is not corrupt, or that it is not authoritarian, or that it does not believe in a centralised polity, or that the new racketeering type of flashy operators of the corporate world have not got a very generous welcome from that party. It is much more doubtful that the Congress(I) or its Nehru model have exclusively or principally served the urban capitalists as against the poor and oppressed rural gentry and regional elite. However, that is not the point at all. The point is that what the opposition represents is by no means what it professes to represent. Its professions and protestations are tailored to appeal to the democratic sentiments of the masses. Rural vs urban, small vs big, Gandhi vs Nehru, are all polarities well suited for this purpose. It is a myth diligently propagated that these polarities define a new paradigm about which anybody is at all serious. The shape that the economy and the polity were given in the fifties has long since got entangled in a web, and while the cutting of the threads of self-reliance and state control has everybody's approval, that tinkering has not satisfied anyone. The Tatas and Birlas (about whom some people are already getting nostalgic) are as dissatisfied as the Nusli Wadias and the Vijay Mallyas; and the upstart rural and regional elite is as dissatisfied as either of them. The ongoing

scramble is principally a rush to be at the head of the field in the hunt for an alternative, and secondarily a prudent desire to loot as much as possible in the meanwhile. If their own incapacity to produce a single ruler capable of solving the problem is the ruling classes' fault, the increasing restlessness of the masses in the interim is their misfortune. And yet, given the compulsions of electoral democracy, which they find prudent to stick to, not because they believe in its liberal precepts, but because in the first place the masses will not accept anything less and secondly because it provides the only feasible framework for sorting out the differences of as diverse a class as India's ruling class, they must willy-nilly carry the masses with them. And hence the all round violence, both among the contending political formations, and against the masses.

* * *

The poet Sri Sri, like most progressive Andhraites of his generation, suffered from a certain sense of pride in his Telugu identity; he used to say that in all matters of political significance, it is Andhra that shows the way to the nation. Whether that is necessarily a matter for celebration is a bit doubtful—for the path that the nation has been traversing is not altogether commendable—but it is true that the alignment of social classes, and the politics of the ruling classes as well as that of the most extreme opposition, has exhibited itself most starkly in Andhra Pradesh. If one counts out Bihar, where electoral violence is no longer a matter for comment—no longer an abnormal mode of political discourse, in currently fashionable language—the maximum amount of electoral violence was seen this time in Andhra Pradesh. About 32 persons were killed on the day of the polling and the next two days (one cannot be exact because one has to make allowance for rumoured dead bodies on the one hand and likely coincidences on the other), and about 19 died in pre-poll violence, ten in intended murders and nine in the accidental explosion of bombs that were meant for killing other people. Among those murdered were an independent candidate in Raychoti in Cuddapah, and a polling officer in the same district. Rigging was so extensive that re-poll was ordered in about 570 booths (this was announced with an unbecoming but audible sense of pride by the chief election commissioner, Peri Shastri, who is himself an Andhraite). The quantity of explosives the contestants hurled at each other is beyond estimation. The kind of terror this caused among the public is new to Andhra politics. Everyday during the month-long campaign—and more so on the days of polling and

counting—people lived in a constant expectation of a blood bath. As the poll results were expected to come out after 5 pm of November 26, both the public and the shopkeepers at many places got ready for an extended curfew. People purchased what they would need two days hence, and where they themselves did not think of doing so, friendly shopkeepers urged the precaution upon them. The worst affected districts were Cuddapah, Kurnool and Anantapur, where the conflicts of traditional landlord gangs has in recent years taken on the political form of intra-Congress(I) or Congress(I)-TDP gang fights, and the prosperous districts of Guntur, Krishna, Prakasam, Chittoor and the environs of Hyderabad, where the recent phenomenon of vicious intra-elite violence, and the violence of the vulgar new rich against the dalits has found most lethal expression. Ministers, ex-ministers and prospective ministers went around in jeeps carrying tons of explosives and other lethal weapons, supplemented by the rifles of their officially sanctioned security guards. It was these security guards who contributed quite a bit to the violence; in the execution of their duty of protecting the lives of these ministers and ex-ministers, they unwittingly became part of the marauding gangs. Being trained and permitted to open fire at the least excuse, they were usually the first to score hits.

The 'mainstream' reaction to this violence and to the general debasement of the electoral process is quite interesting. Most people would be outraged if one compares this violence with Punjab or with naxalite violence. An unstated presumption permeates the establishment 'common sense' that somehow this violence is part of the natural order of things, as indeed is all that is depraved and vulgar about the ruling classes. Violence is kshatra dharma, and all that one can do about it is to ensure that one is not around when the bombs are exploding. This traditional Hindu attitude has been reinforced in Indian politics by Gandhism, whose precept of non-violence is addressed to the masses and never to the rulers, and forms a major impediment to any objective discussion of the question of political violence. Two hundred people killed in Punjab in six months is a cause of much horror, but an equal number killed in a matter of a week in Bhagalpur in police violence and in communal riots engineered and inspired by the ruling class parties merely causes regretful clicking of tongues, as if it was an earthquake that killed them. What really happened in Andhra Pradesh on the day of polling would never have been guessed by someone who depended for his knowledge of things upon the pronouncements of the

press and of men of public affairs, throughout the one month prior to the day of polling, a constant fear was expressed that the People's War Group of the CPI-ML would render polling impossible in Adilabad and Karimnagar districts by attacking booths and killing voters as well as poll officials. Brave reports were written in the press declaring somberly that those who venture to vote in those districts would be jeopardising their limbs. A large police force was deployed in those districts to save democracy from the extremists, Exhortations were made to the People's War Group not to employ violence on such a sacred occasion as voting day. That group, for its part, made life miserable for the campaigning candidates by declaring large areas out of bounds for them and setting on fire the vehicles of those who ventured into forbidden territory. But they did nothing to harm or obstruct the people who chose to go and vote, as indeed a large number did even in the areas strongly dominated by the People's War Group, and voting day passed off in absolute peace in the most feared districts where all the police were deployed, and all the violence happened where the police were taken from, and that violence was the doing of defenders of democracy and non-violence.

This hypocritical attitude towards violence and 'extremism' exhibited itself in another direction too. Two other CPI-ML groups set up candidates in quite a few assembly and parliamentary constituencies in about seven or eight districts. One seat, Yellandu in one of the 'disturbed areas' of Khammam district, was earlier held by a CPI-ML group, and Sirsilla, also a 'disturbed area' of Karimnagar district, was felt to be a stronghold of another CPI-ML group. For quite a few months prior to the election, the people of Yellandu—a mixed forest and coalmine area, populated largely by tribals—were subjected to systematic assault by the Special Task Force (STF) policemen led by an additional superintendent of police, one Krishna Prasad, self-confessedly Vengala Rao's man. The police warned them that this time they should not vote for the CPI-ML candidate but for the Congress(I). Every night for the whole week prior to polling day the STF policemen, specially trained to kidnap, torture and kill, went around the constituency armed with self-loading rifles and sten guns, dragging people out of their homes, thrashing them and threatening them with dire consequences if their MLA won again. The SP even challenged that he would discard his uniform if the CPI-ML candidate won again. On poll day the STF policemen, armed with their ugly weapons, went

round the polling booths, a visible symbol of terror to the tribal masses. Much the same happened in Sirsilla in Karimnagar. It was as if it was a contest between the police and the CPI-ML. In the end, to the chagrin of the police, both the CPI-ML candidates won the elections, frustrating the heroic efforts to save democracy from the 'extremists' by the use of brute force on the poor voters.

However, the hypocrisy is not confined to violence. Money and country liquor, which are a major means of mobilising votes, are two other dimensions of the debasement of the election process. And the hypocrisy extends to these dimensions too. It is not that this debasement is not noted and condemned. But a studious attempt is made to avoid drawing any conclusions from it. The more obscene electioneering becomes, the more it is idealised in principle. The right to vote, from being a political right of doubtful utility sold for money or liquor, becomes an object of—liberal or feudal—reverence, and a subject for high—liberal or feudal—preaching. Gun-totting goons and the newspaper hacks who plead their cause for reasons of pecuniary gain or political advantage talk of the 'vote' in worshipful tones. The English press invests it with liberal sentiments whose place in Indian politics is carefully never questioned, and the less inhibited Telugu press describes the vote as the *vajra* or *pasupata* weapon of democracy with which the poor illiterate voter (somehow the poverty and illiteracy themselves acquire a mysterious power when people say this) can fell the mightiest ruler. Everybody knows today that electoral democracy in India is merely the optimal political framework for the complex task of sharing out of the nation's resources among the propertied classes, and withal a legitimising seal for the less-than-optimal option of gang-fights whose purpose is again the same; but then the more illegitimate the *raison d'etre* of electoral democracy becomes, the more the 'vote' must be idealised and mythicised. The reverence one exhibits for the vote must be carefully severed from any considerations of how it is being mobilised or what use it has been put to by those who have been favoured with it in the past. That is the only way to ensure that the vote is cast. This idealisation of the vote has penetrated significantly into popular consciousness, where it co-exists with the people's perception of the vote as a medium of self-expression: if you do not like your MLA you may not be able to do much about it but you can at least tell him off by voting against him.

But even so it is a mystery that in a country where people so commonly say

about the ruling parties that 'all of them are thieves', voting at election time continues to flourish. Why people vote, and why they vote for whoever they vote for, is a very difficult question to answer. One can evade the question by making recourse to statistics, computers and the sociological imbecility that has beset all the social sciences, and indulge in macro-level arithmetic analysis of 'swings' and 'waves', but the real question is a very difficult one. There seem to be basically four kinds of voting: rigged voting, mobilised voting, politically conscious voting, and the kind of voting that takes place because everybody else is voting and there is nothing much else you can do on poll day. These different categories shade off into each other at the edges. Mobilised voting, for instance, is the kind of voting that takes place through the distribution of money or liquor, or when a local leader or elder or a plain goon urges or commands the people to vote for the candidate he favours, it being imprudent to disobey. This latter situation is not very different from rigging. On the other hand a considerable amount of politically conscious voting takes place on the basis of loyalty to a party or an individual, or as an opportunistic quid pro quo in exchange for some benefits, and then it is difficult to distinguish it from mobilised voting. Equally, those who believe that they have mobilised a large number of voters by means of bribes in cash and kind may discover that the votes have been cast for someone else as an act of political slap-in-the-face.

The point of saying all this is that it is an arguable hypothesis that whereas mobilised voting used to be the single largest category in the early decades after independence, it is gradually yielding place to rigged voting on one side and politically conscious voting on the other. This is, by the way, another reason for the increase in electoral violence. "Elections can be peaceful only so long as—or to such extent as—the votes can be manipulated and mobilised; the other two situations require violence. The increase in politically conscious voting means that to that extent the people are consciously casting their votes, though it is more often against someone than for someone. That this change should take place simultaneously with an all-pervasive disgust for not only the various ruling class political formations but for the polity as a whole is a seeming paradox. But all paradoxes are only apparent: that is their law. They merely serve to indicate an unresolved contradiction, in this case that the people are not able to perceive that their vote is something that legitimises and reproduces the polity which they find so

disgusting and repellant; instead they have learnt to see the vote as a means of self-assertion, a way of telling off those in power. The realisation that the more enthusiastically they turn out at election time to vote out of power a corrupt or authoritarian regime, the more they reinforce the system that produces the corruption, is something that is yet to penetrate popular consciousness. Mere increase in disgust will not bring about that awareness. An alternative form of political assertion—assertion against the system as such—must take concrete form for that to happen.

But in the meanwhile how effectively the people have told off the whole lot of them this time! Perhaps nobody has been taught a more thorough lesson than NTR. In history there is a type of ruler who has the misfortune of acquiring a reputation for invincibility in foreignlands. NTR is one such person. His invincibility was taken so much for granted outside AP that it is doubtful that even the most pessimistic of the National Front's crystal-gazers foresaw his defeat. But the invincibility was a myth nurtured as carefully by the press as Rajiv Gandhi's was by Doordarshan and AIR. Without wishing to equate state monopoly over the electronic media with the conscious political partisanship of the press, it must nevertheless be said that the press—not only *Indian Express* of great notoriety but most of the Telugu Press too—did a lot to promote NTR's image as the undisputed leader of the Telugu people. Proof of his invincibility was seen even in his ability to throw out from the cabinet and the party everyone who disagreed with him (what must be rankling him most today is that all but one of them have now come back to the assembly on Congress tickets, and some have been made ministers), and more proof of the same was seen in his ability to dismiss his entire cabinet one fine evening, go off to Delhi for two days, and come back and reconstitute the cabinet with 21 new faces. A champion of democratic politics like the *Indian Express* then editorially expressed awe at the man's "grip" over his party, and even those who criticised him for acting with such arbitrariness nevertheless held up his masterly control over the party affairs as a commendable contrast to the infighting in Rajiv Gandhi's party. The sands were receding fast under his feet but they were all admiring his grip up there. It was not merely the popular support that was receding, even the class base of the Telugu Desam Party was deserting NTR in disillusionment. Ramoji Rao's Eenadu, the authentic voice of that section of the Andhra elite that created the TDP, and the most faithful friend of the

class even when it criticised the party and leader, as it did with increasing frequency during the last year or so, gave out signals of this desertion in the mute impartiality that characterised its attitude towards the election campaign, in sharp contrast to its unbridled and vulgar partisanship during previous elections.

For the rest the press was busy with that inane vocation called psephology which appears to think that if you know what percentage of votes each party got in all the previous elections, and if you are further capable of adding three per cent of subtracting five per cent in deference to a 'wave' whose likelihood and direction there is no way of knowing, then that tells you all that you can ever know about the coming elections. The Telugu press evidently found this novelty very gripping, for all possible information about percentages of votes polled—district wise, constituency-wise and booth-wise—was collected and printed day after day. It *does* not appear to have struck anybody as absurd that so much effort and newsprint should be expended trying to guess what everybody would anyhow know in a couple of weeks' time. The remarkably similar way in which the press treats horse-racing and elections must immediately strike anyone with a sense of the incongruous. As elections are supposed to serve a higher purpose in a democracy than horse-racing, the press would have served its readership better if it had described the problems raced by the people in each constituency, and analysed the contribution of the past governments, and the professions of the present contenders, in solving those problems. That the role of the press during elections is to predict the outcome is a very odd belief, but it comes next only to the less odd but nevertheless unacknowledged belief that the duty of the press is to egg on people to vote for one party or the other.

At the end of it all NTR lost rather badly, and that repulsive breed of human beings called Congressmen are back in power at Hyderabad. There was a definite shift of voters' preference away from him, and all of it cannot be attributed to accident or rigging. Rigging was extensive, but all of them rigged anyway. Notwithstanding all the righteous outrage about Amethi, and notwithstanding Viswanath Pratap Singh's studied projection of a humble profile of low-cost and high morality electioneering, the fact is that they all spent huge amounts, and they all rigged. But the voters just did not want NTR and his 'friendly opposition parties'. It would be insulting the people of Andhra Pradesh to say that they actually wanted the Congress(I) back, but they had no choice. The question why NTR lost is

VAM ORGANIC CHEMICALS LTD

NOTICE

It is hereby notified for the information of the public that Vam Organic Chemicals Limited propose to make an application to the Central Government in the Department of Company Affairs, New Delhi under Sub Section (2) of Section 22 of the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969 for approval to the establishment of new undertaking/unit/division. Brief particulars of the proposal are as under:-

1 Name and Address of the Applicant:

Vam Organic Chemicals Limited
3rd Floor, Skyline House,
85 Nehru Place, NEW DELHI - 110 019

2 Capital Structure of the applicant organization

	Equity	Preference
	(Rs. in lakh)	
a) Authorised	545.00	40.00
b) Issued and Subscribed	516.42	38.50
c) Paid up	516.24	38.50

3 Management structure of the applicant organization indicating the names of directors including managing director/wholtime director and manager, if any. The company is managed by the Board of Directors consisting of

1. Shri M L Bhartia - Chairman
2. Shri S S Bhartia - Managing Director
3. Shri H S Bhartia - Wholtime Director
4. Shri A. Ray - Director
5. Shri H. J. K. Klouman - Director
6. Shri P K Khaitan - Director
7. Shri L. Ivnas - Director
8. Shri S. S. Kanoria - Director
9. Shri J B Dadachanji - Director
10. Shri R. K. Bhargava - Director
11. Shri K. S. Raghavan - Director
12. Smt. Sunanda Prasad - Director

4 Indicate whether the proposal relates to establishment of new undertaking or a new unit/division

A Division

5 Location of the new undertaking/unit/division:

Gajraula, Moradabad Distt., U.P.

6 Capital structure of the proposed undertaking :

As mentioned in Sr. No. 2

7 In case the proposal relates to the production, storage, supply distribution, marketing or control of any goods/articles, indicate:

- (i) Name of the goods/articles and proposed licensing capacity:-
High Performance Chemicals for Construction Industry. 2500 MT/Yr.
- (ii) Estimated annual turnover: Rs. 6.25 crores

8. In case the proposal relates to the provision of any service state the volume of activity in terms of annual measures such as value, income, turnover, etc.

Not Applicable

9. Cost of project : Rs. 2.00 crores

10. Scheme of Finance, indicating the amounts to be raised from each source:

Internal accruals : Rs. 0.65 crore
Borrowings : Rs. 1.35 crores

Any person interested in the matter may make a representation in quadruplicate, to the Secretary, Department of Company Affairs, Government of India, Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi within 14 days of publication of this notice, intimating his views on the proposal and indicating nature of his interest therein.

FOR VAM ORGANIC CHEMICALS LIMITED

Sd/-
(S S BHARTIA)
MANAGING DIRECTOR

Dated this 18th day of December, 1989

a meaningless question to those who know how the state was being run. There is no intelligible reason why he should not have lost. His regime was as unresponsive, inefficient and authoritarian as any previous Congress regime. The vulgar debasement of the Congress was replaced by ludicrous aggrandisement and unseemly antics. Corruption and favouritism were kept intact, but centralised so much that a large section of his own party was dissatisfied. There is perhaps no other party whose lower-level leadership resented the top leader as much as NTR's TDP. It was partly a just resentment at his habit of treating them the way a police officer treats his orderlies, but partly a less reasonable resentment that all the graft gets into the pockets of NTR and his sons-in-law, and they don't get to even smell it. The class of brokers, touts and middlemen is a very important group in Indian politics, and the Congress has survived principally by satisfying each individual One of them separately and adequately. This class stretches ail the way from village and *mohalla* leaders to chairmen of co-operative and marketing societies, MLAs and ministers, PWD and excise contractors, and government servants in the departments like civil supplies, excise, revenue, forest and police. NTR managed to create a lot of disaffection among these people. As they would frequently put it colloquially, 'the Congressmen would eat and allow you to eat as well; this man wants to swallow everything himself. This statement is not literally true, for many of them made a lot of money in these six years, but it is certainly true that NTR has always exhibited a distinct distaste for sharing the loot with others. The disaffection of this class of middlemen did play a role in bringing him down, and yet he could not appeal to the people against them because he was not fighting corruption as such. Nevertheless he would have continued to get popular support if he had done anything at all for the people. He did just nothing, except to provide a certain quantity of subsidised rice to some of the poor, and a lot of free entertainment to the newspaper reading public. Nothing that involved any financial commitment from the state government ever got approval from him: recruitment for posts in government departments and educational institutions; enhancement of pay for government servants or employees of aided institutions; maintenance works for roads or irrigation tanks; adequate drought or flood relief; and so on. And to top it all, his own inherent authoritarianism, the fascist nature of the kind of new rich class that forms his social base, and the over-centralised administration, combined to increase the importance

of the police during NTR's rule. The general increase in police violence was so much, and the autonomy given to the police from civilian control was so total during' these six years, that 'police excesses', from being a peripheral concern of civil liberties groups, has now come into the mainstream of the state's politics.

The 'friendly opposition parties' are now saying 'I told you so', but they will not say how much they themselves have contributed to this state of affairs. Their role in Andhra politics has been to blackmail NTR and the people with the threat of 'return of the Congress', and get seats from NTR and votes from the people, in return they have provided NTR with a shameful respite from criticism and exposure. The BJP, whose social base of brahmins, banias and the landholders of the Telengana districts has little love for NTR, would indulge in ridicule of his apparel and antics, but took good care to defend his regime; and come election time it would snuggle up to him for seat adjustments. The CPI(M) stuck to NTR like glue, to the point of condoning every misdeed of his, and exhibiting more loyalty than his own partymen in times of internal crisis in his party. Everyone who questioned NTR and got thrown out of the party was dubbed a Congress(I) agent, and all criticism of NTR -was dubbed Congress(I)-inspired. The CPI behaved likewise for a long time, but about a year ago it turned around and started attacking the TDP and Congress(I) equally. For the first time in its long exigence the party was not running behind any ruling class party. Instead it cobbled together a Left and Democratic Front consisting primarily of itself and a few peripheral organisations and discards from NTR's party, and went round the state abusing both TDP and Congress(I) as reactionary ruling class parties. Whatever the seriousness and the sincerity of the leaders in making this switch, its cadre, especilly the youth, were jubilant. For the first time in many years they breathed an air of self-respect. For communist cadre, there can be nothing more suffocating than a tactical alliance with a ruling class party, and when such an alliance with one or the other becomes a permanent feature, that can have a stultifying effect on the cadre. The spirit of liberation that the CPI cadre must have enjoyed for more than a year can be easily imagined. And when elections were announced, the CPI declared that it would go it alone and would not have seat adjustments with NTR. But suddenly, just a couple of days before the close of nominations, the CPI leadership did a total turn about and entered into seat adjustments with NTR, and even put up a high and successful bid. The party

cadre were furious; there were rumours of manhandling of party leaders by the cadre at the party's Hyderabad headquarters, and many resignations from the party followed.

* * *

Chenna Reddy is back in power at Hyderabad. His victory does not mean a defeat for the regional elite of AP, for it is a false notion that the Congress(I) represents exclusively or principally the monopoly bourgeoisie, it does no such thing, it is a principal achievement of the Congress that it has always represented all the propertied classes of the country, though with a definite formula for the running of the economy and the sharing of economic resources and political power. That formula is now well past its usefulness for the ruling classes, and is discredited and dishonoured. The NTRs of the country have merely asserted this demise without evolving a coherent alternative, but NTR's defeat does not mean that the pressure is to be written off; indeed, even NTR himself cannot yet be written off.

In the meanwhile Chenna Reddy is going to do nothing to resurrect and bring to life the old Congress formula; he would regard it as beyond his limited mandate, in any case. He will merely ensure that in the interim looting of the country that defines the current phase of Indian politics, the section of the regional elite that felt deprived during NTR's rule will get their own back. Having castigated TDP rule as 'kamma' rule and campaigned so long against it, he has packed eight Reddys into his 19-member cabinet. This is no doubt meant merely as a gesture of self-assertion, and others—especially the backward castes—will be accommodated in further bouts of cabinet expansion.

For the rest, happy days are here again for the class of touts, brokers and middlemen, the class that was first consolidated and shown a place in the sun during Chenna Reddy's earlier incumbency as the state's chief minister. The unusual joy with which he was welcomed and escorted to his office by the employees of the state secretarial—the ceremony resembled the return from exile of a beloved raja—was in part a democratic reaction to the humiliation the employees suffered during NTR's rule, but also in significant measure a thoroughly reprehensible joy at the return to power of the man who institutionalised corruption in Andhra, and structured a fine network through which all concerned could make money. This is the only social group in Andhra that really loves Chenna Reddy, and their days have truly come back again.