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Title: Vernacular Elite, Literary and Political Confrontations in the Princely State of Hyderabad: Examining Golkonda Patrika as Spatial Substrate

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Abstract: Newspapers and periodicals have been looked at as historical artefacts in the research around print culture, but most of the studies in the Indian context are limited to investigating them as objects produced in the colonial state around anti-colonial nationalist struggle. This paper examines the spaces of literary and cultural production, set up and patronised by the Telugu literary elite through the archives of Golkonda Patrika, a Telugu bi-weekly run by Suravaram Pratapa Reddy during the early decades of the 20th century in the Princely State of Hyderabad. In examining these spaces, the paper attempts to understand the dominant discourses around imagining the region during the early decades of 20th century. The vernacular elite primarily claimed to be divided on the fronts of literary and political imaginations- where the question of linguistic region was perceived to be literary, and the question of territorial region was essentially political. Golkonda Patrika published articles on political and literary imaginations of the region- civil society institutions like *Nizamrashtrandhra¹ Maha Sabha*, *Nizamrashtrandhra Saraswata Parishat*, are extensively discussed as spaces of diverse oppositional claims to the region. The narratives around these binary imaginations and their manifestations in print spaces are of primary interest to this paper. I attempt to understand the emergence of network of institutions and their diverse cultural imaginations of Hyderabad through print archives, where the region gets manifested through print and the print spaces in turn become possible through the diverse imaginations of a region. As the question of linguistic identity continues to remain an unresolved one, the paper engages with the debates happening during the early 20th century to understand dominant narratives associated with imagining a region.

Keywords: *periodicals, print spaces, Golkonda Patrika, diverse imagination*

Introduction:

The early 20th century marks an important historical trajectory with the nationalist movement and the events that unfolded during this period having set precedent for the eventual making

¹ The word *Nizamrashtrandhramu* was popularly used to refer to the Telugu speaking regions under the Princely State of Hyderabad by literary and political institutions around the late 19th and early 20thcenturies

of the Indian nation. This context brings together the conflicts and conversations between nation, region and language.

The Telugu literary elite in their articles and biographies commented on the absence of public life/engagement and *chaitanyamu* (awakening) among the Telugu speaking population of the Princely State of Hyderabad till the early years of 20th century and mark the establishment of first Telugu library Srikrishnadevarayandhra Bhashanilayamu (1901) as the beginning of public engagement (S. P. Reddy); (M. H. Rao); (M. N. Rao); (R. N. Reddy). Vernacular elite with support from the *samsthaanas*² were associated with creating a network of Print and Publishing spaces in the capital city of Hyderabad, along with schools and hostels that become active spaces for literary and political engagement through the 20th century.

Most of the Telugu newspapers and journals seem to be published with support from *zamindaars* (feudal elite) of various *samsthanaas* who showed interest in patronising Telugu by establishing schools and venturing into supporting publishing enterprises. But such enterprises did not seem to gather public support as there was limited education in Telugu, leading to limited readership and these ventures had to eventually shut down. Hitabodhini (1913), Tenugu Patrika (1922), Neelagiri (1922), etc., were among the few periodicals which managed to survive for few years before shutting down (Sadanandam)

Golkonda Patrika started in the year 1926, as a bi-weekly under the editorship of Suravaram Pratapa Reddy (who later identifies himself as a moderate Congress nationalist) with patronage from Kotwal Venkata Ramireddy who was a civil servant with the Princely state of Hyderabad. The paper based out of the Hyderabad city, made sure to repeatedly declare its distinctive “Telugu linguistic” character, secure its position in the larger Telugu literary and cultural networks and at the same time distance itself from anti-colonial nationalist struggle to avoid immediate confrontations with the ruling monarchy.

Series of articles in Golkonda Patrika, reveal that there have been political tensions within civil societal organisations through the early decades of 20th century, with conflicting ideas around imagining a region. There were competing claims of identities, with two major political and literary organisations opposing each other – Nizamrashtrandhra Maha Sabha

²Samsthaanas was the term used to refer to a group of villages under the rule of the landed gentry in the Princely state of Hyderabad. The landed gentry were predominantly from the Reddy and Velamacommunities and held generous land holdings and levied taxes and paid a portion of those to the Hyderabad state.

(will further be referred to as NAMS) and the Nizamrashtrandhra Saraswata Parishat (will further be referred to as NASP. These two organisations were actively functioning during 1930-45, when the nationalist movement was in its mature form. The opposing ideas and ideologies of both these organisations were published in Golkonda Patrika, where the periodical was filled with details of meetings conducted, activities done, resolutions passed during the meetings, etc., through a period of 15 years.

The case of the Princely state of Hyderabad shows the conflict between political (territorial) region and the cultural (linguistic) region. These binary notions of territorial and cultural region appear in the literature around that time where the Telugu elite literati of the Hyderabad State wanted to align themselves with cultural conception of region, which according to them was not political in its demand for popularising and patronising the Telugu language. In the following sections, I establish the nature of the substrate, where the debates around binary imaginations of a region occur and how civil society organisations attempted to make language a unifying object of association and were not successful in their attempts to create regional solidarities solely based on linguistic affiliations.

Examining the Substrate

In this section, I would like to establish the context of emergence of Telugu literary and political institutions during the 20th century and the dominant discourses that shaped the imaginations of the region. Derrida and Prenowitz in their article “Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression” discuss how an archive needs to be understood as existing in a substrate. For my work, I look at the substrate as a constitutive environment in which objects exist and events occur in relation to each other. I look at textual archives in a substrate where they exist in relation with structures of power and hierarchy and also in relation with the communities that those texts belong to.

As noted earlier, most of the periodicals, during the late 19th century and the early 20th century could not survive long and had to eventually shut down due to lack of patronage and subscriptions. In the introductory remarks of Hitabodhini, the editor B. Srinivasa Sharma outlines the difficulties involved in setting up the journal, he elaborates on the difficulties in acquiring funds for setting up the paper and laments at the lack of public support to his venture:

I request the Telugu readers to patronise this journal, the annual subscription fee is Rs.5/- but would be available for Rs.3/- for women and students.” He also calls for support from other

magazines by asking them advertise Hitabodhini and in turn give their advertisements in his journal and also freely exchange copies of journals and newspapers among fellow publishers”³

Similarly in Golkonda Patrika, there were advertisements for subscription in the early stages of its establishment and also repeated notices from the editor to support the periodical by regularly paying the subscription charges. Advertisements regarding subscription models, non-payment of subscription charges was a common sight. Golkonda Patrika received its funding from the Hyderabad bureaucrat Kotwal Venkata Rami Reddy and the advertisements and regular notices in the periodical evidently show that there were not many subscribers. The letters to editor section (titled *jaabulu*) carried announcements for the subscribers to not stop their subscriptions just because their articles submitted to the periodical are not being published. But by late 1930s, with the association of the periodical with various socio-political movements of that time, the paper seemed to have started stand sales.

Golkonda Patrika anchored the activities of political and literary organisations like Nizamrashtrandhra Maha Sabha and Nizamrashtrandhra Saraswata Parishat and published articles that calling for funds and announcing and promoting the activities of these organisations. It supported the attempts to generate an active reading public by aligning itself with the library movement and also published articles to increase participation in libraries, memberships in literary organisations.

Veena Naregal in her work “Language Politics, Elites and the Public Sphere” comments on the nature of Print and publishing ventures in Colonial Bombay, points out that the processes of standardisation of vernaculars for print; efforts towards mass education happened even before the emergence of a reading public – as opposed to the West (Naregal). Princely state of Hyderabad engaged with modernization and administrative reforms by the late 19th century and the emergence of reading publics and modernization of vernaculars was happening almost simultaneously. The vernacular print, here I am referring to the efforts in Telugu, were also influenced by the similar processes through cross-border interactions with the vernacular elite of the Madras Presidency. The literate and culturally powerful communities had to generate formal systems of knowledge and learning that would continue their traditional forms of authority and at the same time seal their already existing superiority into emerging scientific and secular learning spaces, this reflected in their patronage towards

³Introductory remarks, Hitabodhini, May 1913

establishing newspapers, setting up schools and hostels, donating to civil society organisations run by vernacular elite.

To understand the multiple constructions and imaginations around region, I look at the archives of Golkonda Patrika (a bi-weekly) trace the articles published around civil societal organisations like the Nizamrashtrandhra Maha Sabha (NAMS) and the Nizamrashtrandhra Saraswata Parishat (NASP). Both these civil societal organisations emerged during 1930-40 and were in conflict with each other by the 1940s, owing to their respective political and partisan affiliations which I would discuss in detail in the next section.

The meetings of NAMS happen between 1930-1945, during the height of nationalist and reform movements, making it an important venture to look into both in terms of political and cultural history - of how language and nation shape the making of dominant discourse on identities of the Telugus in the Hyderabad State. The members of NAMS start their annual meetings from 1930 and meet regularly to discuss conditions of education, employment and conditions for improvement of Telugu language in Telangana (M. H. Rao).

In this scenario, the propagators of the NAMS had to repeatedly clarify their non-political character and push for “only linguistic fervour” to get permissions smoothly from the government and also not upset the feudal elite who were supporting the enterprise. Though language and linguistic aspirations were also political in nature, drawing inspiration from the language movement in the Madras Presidency, the propagators looked for upholding the purely “non-political” nature, as discussed in various works on Madapati Hanumantha Rao and several articles of Golkonda Patrika. The resolutions (*teermanamulu*) taken at the Nizamrashtrandhra Maha Sabhas during the initial years were mainly around compulsory primary education, education for women, abolition of child marriages, widow remarriages, education in mother tongue, prominence to Telugu, etc., which were extensively discussed in Golkonda Patrika at various occasions⁴.

NAMS begins having annual meetings for addressing the concerns of the Telugu speaking population from the 1930s and is soon taken over by issues concerning the dominance of landed elite castes and practices like “*vetti*” (bonded labour). This shift causes eventual fissures within this amorphous organisation, as it was patronised by the landed upper

⁴ Golkonda Patrika, Jan 1931

caste communities (Reddys and Velamas; also Vyshyas). Eventually through the 1940s, the Communists explicitly state their partisan stance and their interest in the class struggle, irking the nationalist moderates and leading to emergence of the Nizamrashtrandhra SaraswataParishat (NASP), where NASP wants to establish itself as a “cultural organisation with nationalism as its founding discourse” (Sharma) and distinguish itself from NAMS.

NAMS was organising itself from the patronage received by the business establishments (*VartakaSangamulu*) led by the businessmen from the Vyshya community and also by the local ruling elite (*Samsthanadhipathulu*) who belonged to Velama and Reddy communities. The accommodation of the interests of the dominant upper caste ruling elite by the NAMS also shows its mode of political affiliation that does not question the immediate repressive structures (considering the monarchical rule and also dominant caste support required for “larger” nationalist movement) instead moderately negotiates without questioning the status quo.

NASP emerges in 1943, during the late colonial and nationalist discourse, where partisan affiliations of both the Congress and Communists become more obvious and explicit. NASP in its founding document, wants to establish itself as a solely independent literary organisation that would not indulge in politics (which it claimed would dilute the efforts towards improving Telugu as language and eventually its people). Their attempts were to generate literature to strengthen Telugu in public life and produce history to establish and revive the ‘glory’ Telugu language once had. They conducted proficiency exams in Telugu through which they wanted to enable its speakers for better opportunities of employment in the yet to be born independent nation. In the following section I place articles from Golkonda Patrika published during the 1940s surrounding the debates between literary and political imaginations of dominant communities, in conversation with each other to understand the demands of each of these groups.

Organisations based on Linguistic Identity and the conflicts within

Vernacular Elite maintained that Literature and history had to be produced for the region to establish itself as the one that has a tradition of literary culture. But this unified imagination of linguistic solidarity tried clearly demarcating itself from questions of political representation, immediate questions of power and hierarchy.

The articles that appeared in *Golkonda Patrika*, during the period when annual *mahasabhas* of NAMS were happening, spoke about the efforts of the organising committee in obtaining permissions from the Nizam government at the *taluk* level; appointment of the chairperson of the organising committee and their details; visits of the members to different regions to garner public support and invite representatives, etc., The visits of the NAMS leaders were linked to mobilization for revival of local libraries in the district, stating the interconnectedness of NAMS with library movement and also *Golkonda Patrika*.

The proceedings of the meetings were published as a booklet the following year that also contained the negotiations of the organising committee with the Nizam for permission to conduct the meetings; opening remarks and speeches made by the leaders of the NAMS and its organising committee members and a critical review of committee's organising capacities for that year. This booklet was made available for people at 2 annas per copy and free copies were distributed to public libraries and social organisations.

While discussing the presence and possibilities of civil society in Princely state of Hyderabad, Rama Mantena mentions Suravaram Pratapa Reddy's idea of civil liberties and how for the activists of Hyderabad being "political" meant questioning the form of self-representation that Hyderabad state should imagine for its future. Question of civil liberties was used as a rhetorical strategy to enter into political negotiations with the princely states (Mantena). Linguistic commitment therefore was an affective attachment as much as it was connected to political representation and power.

According to the archival sources of *Golkonda Patrika*, by the 7th NAMS, the Communists make their explicit political presence in the meetings and Raavi Narayana Reddy⁵, leads the 7th Maha Sabha, irking the nationalist moderates who later set on to establish NASP. According to the moderates, the dominance of Communists in NAMS sidelined the question of Telugu (Andhrabhasha) and socio-political and economic concerns of the region begin to come to the forefront causing rifts within the NAMS, leading to the eventual division of NAMS into Congress and Communist fronts.

During the early 1940s *Golkonda Patrika* announced setting up NASP and published an article titled "*Hyderabadu Rashtrandhra Saraswata Sevukulaku Vignyapti- Bhasha Sevaku*

⁵Raavi Narayana Reddy presided over 7th NAMS and openly declared his Communist ideological stance with support from several other members of NAMS with similar ideologies. It is said that after this meeting NAMS was completely taken over by the Communists and was not supported by the members who held moderate nationalist views.

Pilupu- Reddy Hostel lo samavesaniki pilupu”(A request for literary enthusiasts of the Hyderabad State- Call for serving the language-Invitation for a meeting at Reddy Hostel), which was an open call for people to participate and contribute in discussion (at Reddy Hostel) about setting up an organisation, to strengthen the Telugu literary scenario. The invitation was undersigned by Burgula Ramakrishna Rao, Mandumala Ramachandra Rao, Yallapragada Seethakumari, Madapati Ramachandra Rao, RaavadaSathyanarayana, IllindulaSeetharama Rao, Shankaranarayana Rao, Kodati Narayana Rao, Pasumarthi Venkatalakshmaiah and Suravaram Pratapa Reddy⁶. It discusses the need for establishing an independent literary organisation that is solely dedicated to the cause of Telugu language and literature, by quoting the failure of existing NAMS in addressing these questions and also pointing at the lack of support from government and interest from people.

Golkonda Patrika anchored the activities of NASP and published articles that spoke about the importance of promoting Telugu, promoting activities of NASP, calling for funds and announcing its activities. It carried numerous articles concerning the ideas of education in mother tongue, political nature of NAMS that has diluted its efforts towards serving Telugu, worrying concern of official language status of Urdu and lack of patronage from the state towards Telugu. Most of these articles were published under the section *Jaabulu* (Letters to the editor) or anonymous open letters. Through these open letters, Golkonda Patrika also criticised NAMS heavily for its political engagement and wastage of funds. The articles published between 1943-45 around the issues of linguistic identity and in relation to NASP, have to be read as parallel opposing voices i.e., NAMS (vs) NASP as political and literary organisations respectively. In an article titled “*Andhra Saraswata Parishattu*”, in what seemed like an editorial/opinion column without any mention of the author. The article talks about the beginnings of *Andhra Jana Sangham* (that later became NAMS) and its efforts to serve *Andhra bhasha*⁷ by setting up libraries and also *parishodhakamandalali* (research units) But with the rifts caused in the Nizamabad NAMS, there were rearticulations about language and its use by civil society organisations, where official language Urdu was posited against

⁶ Golkonda Patrika May 1943

⁷ The term Andhra was interchangeably used with Telugu speakers. From the review of literature available. Andhra did not just mean the territorial region (as it is construed under current political circumstances) but it was extended as a term that would refer to Telugu speaking population across territories, hence Telugu and *Andhra bhasha* were used synonymously

another dominant vernacular Telugu. Later, NASP emerged as a literary organisation and it is only fair that NAMS shares its funds for literary cause now⁸.

In an article titled “*JeelakarrakuJeelagabenduSamadhaanam*”⁹, which ran in response to the article that was mentioned above, sets out to question the “bravery” and the author (Mallikarjuna Sharma) questions the integrity of activities of NAMS and accuses them as an organisation for mere **political agitation** without working for the cause of language or people. From multiple articles that I have reviewed it is evident that Golkonda Patrika and its allied institutions and individuals were concerned with Public use of Telugu language; the periodical and felt that the concern of language to be a sole unifying factor that should go beyond caste lines but seemed troubled with the lack of it; more importantly they saw linguistic concern to be “non-political” in the tensed political climate they were in. This made the early attempts of print and publishing ventures and allied literary spaces by vernacular elite very exclusive enterprises caught in binary imaginations of literary and political understandings of the region.

The reasons why NASP wanted to remain literary and not political is because it felt that NAMS which initially started out with questions around linguistic fervour branched out to address what were perceived as political concerns. NASP wanted to maintain linguistic purity in its organisational activities but keeping the discussions around immediate troublesome questions like *vetti* in the zamindaris, political representation and the state’s future in the upcoming Indian nation and expected the question of language to bring all its speakers together – a non-political unifying linguistic affiliation was imagined.

Parishat conducted regular meetings and its members extended their purview to other districts of the Hyderabad state where they tried setting up regional offices to bring attention and encourage the literature produced from those regions. Since the members were earlier involved with the popular library movement and also the NAMS, they conducted visits and meetings in Alampur (they also published a book later titled “Alampurusithilalu” from the regional office), Khammam, Nalgonda¹⁰, etc., to establish regional offices.

⁸ Golkonda Patrika 31st May 1943

⁹ Golkonda Patrika 25th Nov 1943

¹⁰ Golkonda Patrika –30th Aug 1943; 25th Oct 1943; 6th Dec 1943

In the year 1943, supporting the membership to NASP, Golkonda Patrika published an article titled *Andhra Saraswata Parishattu*, the relevant translated excerpt read as follows....

There is no worry of politics in this Saraswata Mahasabha. Professors, as in people designated as *Acharya*, pundits, employees, rich, *patel* and *patwaaris*, socialists (saamyavadulu), atheists, nationalists, theists, orthodox, traditionalists can all participate fearlessly¹¹.

The above sentence marks NASP's idea of language as a homogenous unifying factor, across communities and ideologies. Against the open affiliation of the Communists with NAMS leadership, NASP seemed to have wanted to establish itself as a literary organisation beyond political affiliations. This imagination that linguistic unity would blur the boundaries of class, caste, community, and oppressive structures of power and hierarchy was indeed problematic. In an attempt to prove its loyalties to the Telugu linguistic fervour, NASP tried neatly separating itself from the conflicted society it was in but members of NASP and its publications did not exist in a world where language existed independently, and linguistic solidarities were an immediate unifying concern. The key members of NASP themselves were closely associated with the Hyderabad State Congress which was formed in the 1938. Suravaram Pratapa Reddy and Madapati Hanumantha Rao, wanted to separate themselves from political discussions in their activities in relation to NASP, but were strongly nationalist Congressmen when it came to setting up a separate wing called "*Jaateeya Paksham*" (nationalist cohort) to oppose what they saw as a Communist intervention in the *NizamrashtrandhraMaha Sabha* (NAMS). And in identifying itself as a nationalist organisation, Parishat was aligning itself with then INC.

To conclude, the civil society organisations and their allied publishing ventures were receiving generous support and patronage from the upper caste ruling elite of the *samsthaanas*. This was evident in the articles published in Golkonda Patrika which regularly announced details of support received from various *samsthaanas* in setting up libraries, schools, publishing books and even contributions made to the running of periodicals. Golkonda Patrika, NAMS and NASP were all set up with support from the upper caste landed elite and were also managed by them. So, it became important to impress upon people the idea of linguistic unity as a form of horizontal allegiance. They imagined language to perform a complex role of unification, where all Telugu speakers would come together and unite only based on linguistic concerns. But the articles of Golkonda Patrika and the biographies of

¹¹ Golkonda Patrika 31st May 1943

several literary figures who are shown criticising the Telugu speakers for not staying true to their linguistic roots in supporting vernacular ventures shows that these political and cultural goals harnessed around language remained very exclusive and continue to remain so.

Supporting the activities of NASP, Golkonda Patrika published an article, and the relevant excerpt reads as follows.

...since the Telanganandhras are far behind (in comparison to British Andhras) in terms of scientific knowledge and linguistic fervour, there is a need for such sabhas to happen. Our Telugu language has deteriorated. The Andhras from the British India mistake the Telugu of our *Bhoyis* and *Harijans* to be something other than Telugu! When our educated upper class, i.e., the *Reddys* and the *Golkonda Vyaparis* talk, more than half of their words are in Urdu, Persian and Arabic and the essence of rest of the Telugu used is also very crude. If these *avalakshanamulu* (bad influences) have to be wiped out, such a Saraswata Parishat is necessary.¹²

This article resonates the concerns that key figures behind Nizamrashtrandhra Saraswata Parishat had in connection to Telugu linguistic fervour in Princely state of Hyderabad. They were concerned with the public use of language and felt that the concern of language to be a sole unifying factor that should go beyond caste lines but seemed troubled with the lack of it; they also were deeply influenced and at the same time anxious by the language reform and modernization projects that were happening in the *British Andhra* (Telugu speaking regions under the Madras Presidency); more importantly they saw linguistic concern to be “non-political” in the tensed political climate they were in, seeking reforms towards representative democracy in the 1940s. The language question that the NASP was interested in therefore existed in relation to the monarchical state, language debates happening in the Presidencies, conflict with the existing civil societal organisations and also nationalist discourse. NASP that was set up in this context attempted to create a unified linguistic identity that would help the Telugu speakers have a secular affiliation with the upcoming Indian union, where they can compete for positions of power, but this unified imagination tried clearly demarcating itself from questions of political representation, immediate questions of power and hierarchy. The distinctiveness of language alone could not consolidate the Telugu speakers to come together, making *Parishat's* project of equating region solely with language not a very successful one.

¹²Golkonda Patrika, 11th Jan 1945

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