

Comprehensive History and Culture of Andhra Pradesh Project: A Success Story

Laxmi Narayan Kadekar

Vakulabharanam Ramakrishna

Andhra Pradesh History Congress

EMESCO

Contents

Prologue

A Brief Outline of the Comprehensive History and Culture
of Andhra Pradesh Project

Appendices

Appendix-I. Members of the Advisory Board of the
Comprehensive History and Culture of Andhra Pradesh

Appendix-II. Contents of All the Volumes

Appendix-III. Some Reflections

Appendix-IV. Newspaper Clippings

A Brief Outline of the Comprehensive History and Culture of Andhra Pradesh Project

The Beginnings

The idea of preparing a Comprehensive History of the Telugu Speaking People (Andhra Pradesh including Hyderabad State (now Telangana) had been in the minds of the founding fathers of Andhra Pradesh History Congress in a seed form, since the inception of the organization in 1976. However, the organization did not pursue the idea seriously for almost two decades. A few active members were discussing it informally from time to time. However, the task of undertaking such a project remained limited to a few of us.

It was in 1997, a year before my retirement from the University of Hyderabad, that a proposal was put forward that we in the University of Hyderabad should host the annual session of the Andhra Pradesh History Congress. We faced many practical problems including resources. The major problem was to accommodate a large number of delegates in the hostels, which were not vacant during that period. Nevertheless, it became inevitable as no other suitable venue was found for hosting the History Congress. With great trepidation and hesitation, I agreed to hold the session after discussing with my colleagues and friends in the university. The university administration, headed by the then Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Govardhan Mehta, gave us green signal, but without financial assistance. As I was the Local Secretary, and also a senior member in the organization, the onus of collecting funds fell on my shoulders. We met people of all kinds, right from bureaucrats to private industrialists. Response was positive, though not encouraging. Some of them agreed to sponsor breakfasts, lunches, and dinners. Sri N.Ram, the editor of *The Hindu*, English daily, Reddy Labs, and others supported financially. The fund collection was done with an idea to save at least Rs.1 lakh as seed money to start the Comprehensive History of Andhra Pradesh Project.

The A.P. History Congress, held between Jan 10-12, 1998, went off well with the active cooperation and involvement of the faculty of social sciences, who shouldered the responsibility of several sub-committees. The conference was for three days, a day more than the usual duration of the annual sessions. It was so because of a National Symposium on 'Identities in India Since Independence: A Historiographical Survey'. Eminent historians and civil rights activists namely Prof. Irfan Habib, Prof. Sumit Sarkar, Prof. Asghar Ali Engineer, Sri K.G.Kannabiran, Prof. G.Haragopal, and others participated in it.

The Session was inaugurated by the then Governor, Sri C.Rangarajan, who in his inaugural address talked about the need for preparing a Comprehensive History of Andhra Pradesh. He made it a point to focus on its significance. Similarly, in his valedictory address Prof. Velcheru Narayana Rao (University of Wisconsin-Madison) made a fervent appeal to undertake the project. However, in the Executive Committee meeting when I came up with the proposal, it was not well received. The members raised doubts about its feasibility, while appreciating the same. Well, then I had to make the Committee agree for constituting a subcommittee to look thoroughly into the proposal, and make its recommendations. The subcommittee, headed by Prof. Y.Sudarshana Rao (Kakatiya University, Warangal), submitted a report in favour of the proposal.

In May 1998, I retired from the University and joined the NALSAR University of Law, established in the same year, to teach history. This new opening in my career helped me to be active in teaching, and also be in touch with my academic work to keep my spirits going.

Rupees one lakh, saved from the conference funds, was transferred as per the resolution, to State Bank of India under the account, 'Comprehensive History Fund', making it operative jointly by me and K.S.Kameswara Rao (Kakinada), who is my close friend, and former General Secretary of A.P. History Congress (The bank account continues to be in operation under our joint name).

Soon I decided to organize meetings (two we did) with historians, intellectuals working in different disciplines, well-wishers who otherwise are not historians, including the editor of Orient Longman (now Black Swan). NALSAR (Barkatpura campus) provided the needed space. These meetings discussed threadbare the proposal, made suggestions about chronological approach to be adopted in writing the contents, and so on. We made it clear that we were intent on adopting the secular and scientific approach, and incorporate along with political history, socio-economic and cultural aspects too, in a chronological order. The response to the two meetings was overwhelming. It made our resolve stronger and encouraging.