Caste, Media and Political Power in Andhra Pradesh: The Case of Eenadu

Sambaiah Gundimeda

Abstract
The unholy nexus between media houses and politics is a well-known sad reality. Such nexus is further complicated by the involvement of caste. The present essay examines the trajectory of Eenadu, a Telugu daily in Andhra Pradesh, and its political manoeuvrings in favour of the Kamma-dominated Telugu Desam Party. Describing the entry of Eenadu, the essay moves to examine the newspaper’s consistent support of the TDP and its stance against the Congress in AP through the political fortunes for N.T. Rama Rao, Chandrababu Naidu and Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy.

Keywords
Andhra Pradesh, anti-arrack, Eenadu, media politics, political power, Ramoji Rao

Introduction
The media rarely adheres to the cardinal principles of the fourth estate—impartiality and objectivity. Arguably, its current role relies on manufacturing biased views and opinions rather than providing information and an analysis of news, views or events. In this context, the present essay examines the trajectory of the newspaper Eenadu in Andhra Pradesh (AP), and its political manoeuvrings in favour of the Kamma caste and Kamma-dominated Telugu Desam Party (TDP). The essay focuses on the entry of Eenadu, its consistent support of the TDP and

1 Faculty, School of Policy and Governance, Azim Premji University, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India.
2 Fellow, Nehru Memorial Museum & Library, New Delhi, India.
3 Andhra Pradesh was bifurcated in 2014. In this article, AP refers to the region prior to the bifurcation.

Corresponding author:
Sambaiah Gundimeda, CPRI Staff Colony, Q.N. 72, Type – III, New BEL Road, Bengaluru 560012, Karnataka, India.
E-mail: samgundimeda@gmail.com
its stance against the Congress in the state, through the political fortunes of N.T. Rama Rao, Chandrababu Naidu and Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy.

**The Dominant Castes, Political Power and the Entry of Eenadu**

Political power in AP since the state’s formation in 1956 and until its bifurcation in 2014 has largely been controlled by the elite classes who belonged to the Reddy and Kamma castes through the two main political parties, namely, Congress (I) and TDP. The Reddys, who belonged to the *Sat-Sudra* category in the traditional Hindu social structure, constitute about 8–10 per cent of the state’s population and are spread throughout the Telugu region. They found themselves in a fierce competition for leadership positions in the Congress Party against the Brahmins, who were in dominant positions in both the party and government in the early 1950s. But by the mid-1950s, the Reddys had succeeded in wresting the reigns of the Congress from the latter and from then onwards until the bifurcation steered the wheel of the political power in the state.

The Kammas also belong to the *Sat-Sudra* category and constitute about 4–5 per cent of the state’s population. Unlike the Reddys, the Kammas are mostly concentrated in the fertile coastal Andhra region, especially Guntur, Krishna and Godavari districts. When the Andhra economy began to acquire a new momentum in the 1970s, the Kammas by dominating the utilisation of the Green Revolution facilities such as high-yield variety seeds, chemical fertilisers and easy availability of banking capital to agriculture, proved to be more enterprising than other upper castes. During this time, they began to spread their land wealth into numerous commercial activities such as rice mills, tobacco, sugar production, film industry, hotels and newspapers. This changing economic base not merely strengthened their social status and political power at the grassroots, but even gained them additional ministerial positions in the Reddy-dominated Congress governments. And yet, it did not secure them the position of chief minister, a fact that was resented by every Kamma. Such disconnection, as observed by Atul Kohli, ‘between economic power and the failure to capture the highest political office’ eventually alienated the Kamma community from the Congress.\(^4\) In a political-economic context such as this, two events changed the very dynamics of the Telugu region. The first event was the entry of Ramoji Rao’s *Eenadu* newspaper into the world of Telugu journalism. Cherukuri Ramoji Rao, one of India’s biggest media barons, comes from Krishna district in coastal Andhra region and belongs to the Kamma caste. He started his career as an artist with an advertising firm in Delhi in the mid-1950s. After a brief stint, there he moved to Hyderabad, where in 1962 he, along with two other partners, floated Margadarshi Chit Funds—a savings funds entity that would come to fund his business empire in the years to come. Margadarshi became the base for a range of other enterprises, including Priya Foods, hotels and eventually *Eenadu* newspaper.

on 10 August 1974. With the subsequent rise of the TDP, which was the second event in our story, Telugu politics and journalism (through the Eenadu) came to be intertwined, thereby changing the landscape of both politics and journalism in the state forever.

The Power of Media: How Eenadu Wrested Political Power from the Reddy-raj

Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (1923–1996), who was popular as NTR and Anna (elder brother), was a Kamma by caste and a Telugu matinee idol. In a film career that spanned over four decades, he acted in around 300 films. Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao, known for his mythological roles, seemed to have an inclination towards socialism and developed an early reputation for leadership. But that leadership was largely confined to film industry campaigns to raise funds for relief works. The Telugus were taken by surprise when he announced the formation of the TDP on 29 March 1982. Most astonishingly, within 9 months of its formation, the party was voted to power and NTR became the first Kamma and non-Congress Chief Minister of AP. Undoubtedly, NTR’s charisma, his whirlwind tour to every nook and corner of the state in his celebrated Chaitanya Ratham (Chariot of Awakening) and his sentiment-arousing slogans, such as Telugu jati-atma-gouravam (self-respect of the Telugu Nation or Telugus), coupled with the decline of the Congress worked in favour of the TDP.

Until the TDP’s victory in 1982, the Congress had ruled the state without a break since 1956. During this time, the authoritarian high command of the party in Delhi turned the state party into a helpless instrument by changing chief ministers at will—between 1977 and 1982, the state saw four chief ministers. Further, there were several instances of humiliation suffered by the state leaders at the hands of the Delhi leadership. Rajiv Gandhi’s alleged slapping of Tanguturi Anjaiah, the then chief minister, at the Begumpet airport in Hyderabad in 1982 is an often-cited example. In the following year, when NTR invoked this incident as an insult to the Telugu’s self-pride and called on the masses to fight against the dictatorial centre headed by Indira Gandhi, the Telugus obliged and voted him to the seat of political power. In addition to this, in line with Indira Gandhi’s Garibi Hatao...deshbachao (remove poverty and rescue the country) rhetoric and a number of pro-poor policies and programmes which politicised the lower castes and considerably empowered the marginalised sections scuttled the stable patronage system that had prevailed until then, which, in turn, led to fears of instability and social polarisation. Such a state of affairs struck a discordant note among the upwardly mobile Kammas. They saw in their interests to back NTR and rallied behind him.

A very crucial cause behind the rise of the TDP was Ramojirao’s Eenadu. Interestingly, Ramojirao did not approve of NTR when he launched the TDP, for he had a low opinion of film stars joining politics and of NTR himself: ‘Cinema people don’t fit into politics. NTR is in the habit of taking away even the shoes and towels

from the producer. He is the kind of man who steals spoons from the dining table.'

But when Ramoji Rao met NTR, he was convinced that NTR had the capacity and ability to mobilise the masses. The subsequent closeness between the two changed the political history of AP. Ramoji Rao was determined to see NTR win the Assembly elections, which was scheduled for January 1983. Towards this end he threw the entire weight of his company, especially his newspaper, then with a circulation of 3.5 lakh and a readership of 35 lakh people and a network of 250 correspondents, including 50 full-timers, behind NTR and his party. As a consequence, besides feeding NTR with ‘good information’, the Eenadu offices and tele-printers became the communication system for the TDP. During NTR’s electoral marathon campaigns in his Chaitanya Ratham, a photographer and a reporter from the paper travelled along with him; and it was through the reports of the paper that the people of AP came to know that NTR slept in his van, shaved and bathed in the open by the roadside, ate with Dalits, danced with Adivasi women and offered comforts to old people, etc. Yelamanchi Sekhar, Eenadu’s chief reporter was deployed to help write NTR’s speeches. Besides this, Ramoji Rao also did his bit in preparing the party’s manifesto and personally supervising the designing of hoardings, posters, badges, pamphlets and other publicity material through his Kiran Ads. The final powerful stroke came on the day of the elections on 5th January 1983, when Ramoji Rao, through a signed editorial on the front page of Eenadu, pleaded the people to ‘Create history in Telugu Desam (Telugu country or Andhra Pradesh)’ by voting the Telugu Desam Party to power. On 7th January 1983 when TDP won the election by bagging 202 of the 293 seats it contested, Eenadu printed a staggering 5.4 lakh copies, giving the news of NTR’s victory under a banner that read: ‘Telugu Desam—A Super Hit!!’ Surely, NTR’s TDP won the election. But behind that victory stood Ramoji Rao’s carefully crafted publicity juggernaut. This was precisely why Indira Gandhi reacting to her party’s electoral rout in the state said: ‘Who says NTR has won. It is Ramoji Rao who has won.’ Yet, the electoral victory of the TDP should not be seen as the victory of merely two individuals. The entire Kamma caste stood solidly behind them, for they were representing Kammas’ social aspirations, economic interests and quest for political power. No wonder that when NTR became the first Kamma chief minister of the state, his rule came to be called the ‘Kamma Raj’. On his part, Ramoji Rao carefully guarded that Raj by not criticising NTR’s ministry in his paper. He also placed the weight of Eenadu once again behind NTR, when the latter’s ministry was dismissed in 1984 by the Congress high command, using a ‘puppet’ Governor, Thakur Ramlal. Eenadu became the voice of the struggle that widely denounced the betrayal of democracy, and NTR was restored to the seat of power within a month.

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Incidentally, the Telugu people who in 1982 waited on the roads hours together to catch a glimpse of their matinee idol, NTR, were no longer enchanted by him. While the decision-making within the TDP was highly centralised, the populist schemes of NTR’s government could not be implemented properly on account of lack of adequate thought on their feasibility, allocation of sufficient funds. The civil servants were also disoriented due to NTR’s high-handedness. Moreover, NTR’s whimsical ways of appointing and sacking of his own cabinet in February 1989, the interference of his two sons-in-law (Daggubati Venkateswara Rao and Nara Chandrababu Naidu) in party activities and day-to-day administration of the government, a pro-Kamma bias in important appointments and conveniently forgotten promises like the 30 per cent reservation for women, etc. all created a disinclination towards the TDP among the people. NTR was also at a disadvantage as his populism made him unreliable for his own community. While most newspapers in the state grew critical of him, Eenadu, understandably, did not take any critical stand against NTR for a long time. Ramoji Rao reportedly said, ‘I haven’t taken a negative stand on NTR. You have to give some time for milk to turn into curd… Why not give him a chance?’ Of course, eventually, Eenadu did criticise NTR, especially after his loss to Congress (I) in the 1989 assembly elections. The criticism should perhaps be viewed as suggestions to NTR, who by now had earned the epithets ‘whimsical’, ‘autocratic’ and ‘megalomaniac’, to mend his ways.

Orchestrating a Social Movement to Regain Political Power for TDP

Since the fall of the TDP government in 1989, and until its return to power after the 1994 Assembly elections, Eenadu’s main objective had been discrediting and thereby destabilising the Congress government. Towards that end, the paper not just reported events, but took a political stand in all the major public issues concerning AP. The paper also rather skilfully exploited events like an anti-arrack protest that took place in a remote village in AP to its own and the TDP’s advantage.

Sometime in mid-July 1992, some inspired neo-literate women in a remote village of Dubagunta of Nellore district in coastal Andhra region organised a protest against arrack auctions and demanded a ban on the sale of arrack. This protest took the form of a social movement when it spread to north Telangana districts, such as Warangal, Karimnagar and Adilabad, at the behest of the CPI (ML). Ramoji Rao, who was shrewd enough to see a weapon in the arrack agitation that can be used against the Congress government, personally saw to it...
it that Eenadu gave maximum coverage to the movement. Eenadu was the first newspaper to report the agitation in its Nellore district tabloid. But the daily did not confine its role to mere reporting. It started a special page on the anti-arrack movement titled Saara-pai-samaram (the war against arrack) in October 1992. This page was completely devoted to reports and responses related to the movement by various political parties and activist groups. It also carried the interviews with women legislators seeking their opinion on the on-going movement, statements of various film stars, religious leaders and organisations like ISKCON in support of the anti-arrack movement. In addition to this, it carried the reports of deaths due to illicit liquor consumption and authoritative medical evidence by a range of experts, such as cardiologists, psychiatrists, neurosurgeons, gynaecologists and gastroenterologists. Eenadu also took upon itself the task of coordinating and guiding the activities of the movement across the state. It supplied paraphernalia, such as a flag, a pledge, slogans and songs. Ramojirao himself wrote 21 signed front page editorials on the issue of arrack. In short, it was through Eenadu that an agitation in a small village turned into a state-wide movement. It should be noted, however, Eenadu’s endorsement came at a cost. A number of the initial demands of the women like their right to basic amenities, such as water, healthcare and education, were underplayed. By presenting prohibition as a panacea to all the problems suffered by the people in the state, the daily had successfully erased the other political, social and economic aspects of the struggle. 

Unquestionably, Eenadu’s campaign against arrack and the response of the people to that campaign did reflect the proactive role of a newspaper for a better and healthy society. Yet, the paper’s role and stance in the campaigns related to the anti-arrack movement was arguably informed by political interests of the TDP. The agitation was a perfect opportunity to destabilise and thereby topple the Congress government. Both in its reports and editorials, the newspaper called on the Telugu people to bring in a government that would implement total prohibition. For instance, in an editorial on 6th October 1993, Ramojirao appealed to the women who were fighting against liquor, equating them with Shakti-swarupini (goddess Kanakadurga), and exhorted them to slay the demon Saraasura (the devil of liquor) by ousting the government that did not have the courage to announce total prohibition and bring in a party that would do so, namely, the TDP. What is further interesting is that this front page editorial published alongside a report announcing the TDPs support to the struggle for total prohibition. The intended message through such juxtaposition was too obvious to require any explanation. Predictably, during the next assembly elections in 1994 the TDP fought the electoral battle around the issue of total prohibition and when it won the election, NTR rather dramatically signed the prohibition bill within minutes of assuming power on 16 January 1995.

Hand in Glove with Chandrababu Naidu to Dethrone NTR

The social aspirations of the Kammas represented by Eenadu, as Balagopal argues, go much beyond the TDP’s return to political power. Their ultimate goal was economic development and industrial modernisation. The essential requirements towards achieving those goals were political balance, efficient and expeditious governance that would appeal to local, national and multinational capital. It is here that NTR could not meet the expectations of Eenadu and the elite sections among the Kammas and other upper castes. In fact, they all came to perceive NTR as a failed force and looked for a new face to replace NTR when the latter married the politically ambitious Lakshmi Parvathi. In such context, Eenadu found in Chandra Babu Naidu not merely a worthy opponent to NTR but also someone who was ably suited for the role that Kamma elite and the likeminded elite from the other upper castes hoped for. Once it made up its mind in favour of Naidu, Eenadu started a relentless campaign in the form of cartoons against Lakshmi Parvathi. Its cartoon, made around the theme of patriarchal distrust of an ambitious woman who gets married to a wealthy and powerful old man, most ignominiously depicted Lakshmi Parvathi as an ambitious schemer and NTR as a hapless husband emasculated by her. For instance, a cartoon showed NTR cooking in the kitchen in a sari; in another, he was a small child, hiding behind Lakshmi Parvathi’s sari pallu and telling the party workers that she holds all the power. Clearly, these cartoons were aimed not only at lampooning Lakshmi Parvathi but importantly towards discrediting NTR. When Naidu finally organised a coup against NTR in August 1995, Eenadu gathered not only the required support of the MLAs but also turned public opinion in his favour through its editorials and hourly news bulletins in the then recently launched ETV Telugu channel.Remarkably, the paper insisted that NTR’s replacement by Naidu was a historical necessity for the people of AP. Unsurprisingly, the coup brought Eenadu and Naidu together and cemented their friendship for the years to come, which was amply beneficial for both parties.

At this juncture, however, the Congress under the leadership of Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy—popular as YSR—outmanoeuvred both the TDP and Eenadu. Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy-formed electoral alliances both with the Leftist Parties—CPI and CPI (ML)—the former allies of TDP, and also the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS), which had been demanding a separate Telangana state. Further, he undertook a 1600-kilometre long padayatra through the state to express solidarity with the rural masses reeling under the third successive year of drought. In his two-month-long yatra, and during the subsequent election campaigns, YSR ruthlessly targeted TDP’s alleged corruption, its failure to manage the drought and the high levels of unemployment and poverty in rural areas. He succeeded in drawing public attention by focusing on the omissions and commissions of the TDP government, such as its gross neglect of agriculture and irrigation, and issues of migration, farmer suicides and by bringing the development issue to the

15 Eenadu cited in Praveen Donthi, op. cit.
fore. YSR’s campaign struck a chord among the Telugu people and catapulted the Congress to power in the 2004 assembly elections.

**Confronting the Congress’ Reddy-raj Head-on**

Once the Congress under YSR’s leadership returned to power, *Eenadu* resumed its role as the chief critic of the Congress and its government. In response to YSR government’s clearance for the 159-kilometre Outer Ring Road for Hyderabad, *Eenadu* on 25 September 2006 published an exclusive report titled, *Peddalaa... Gaddalaa...?* (‘Elders or Eagles?’). In this report, *Eenadu* alleged that the YSR government had forced the Hyderabad Urban Development Authority to change the alignment and contours of the project. It was also further alleged that the motive was to allow YSR loyalists to purchase land flanking the radial road at cheap rates. The article even published a list of beneficiaries of the project. Strictly speaking, most of the information in the report was correct. But *Eenadu*, as revealed by AP Media—a popular blog run by anonymous journalists from AP—did not report the names of Kammas, who also bought land along the course of the road. ‘What the paper’, the blog went on to say, ‘most shamelessly hid from the public is the loss to its owner Ramoji, who desperately lobbied and moved courts to avoid losing land’.16 YSR did his best to counter the criticism levelled against him by *Eenadu* and also *Andhrajyothi*, another Kamma-orientated newspaper. There were a number of instances when YSR quoted reports from these two newspapers in the state assembly to point out their blatant tilt towards the TDP. He even urged the people to not to read those two newspapers.17 Writing about YSR’s media legacy Sevanti Ninan, a media critic, says: ‘He [YSR] had to wield power in a state with a media opposition more potent than the political opposition. Practically from the day he took office in his first term he had Eenadu and Andhra Rajyothi ranged tirelessly against him.’18

A number of other reports in *Eenadu* and ETV channels levelled severe accusations against Congress ministers, politicians and senior government officials. One report, for instance, debunked the official claim that the number of farmer suicides had dropped during the Congress regime. In fact, *Eenadu*’s report showed more than 300 farmers had committed suicide in the first month of YSR’s leadership.19 Undoubtedly the report acquired some prominence in the light

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19 The official figure of deaths for the same period was 194; see V. Sridhar, ‘An Agrarian Tragedy’, *Frontline* 21, no. 13 (2004), http://www.frontline.in/economy/an-agrarian-tragedy/article6805283.ece (accessed 10 January 2016).
of YSR’s electoral triumph in 2004 that was majorly attributed to his pro-farmer slogans. Yet, *Eenadu*’s political stance behind these disclosures was pro-TDP rather than pro-people. Interestingly enough, YSR ordered three separate judicial inquiries to probe the allegations against his government and declared that the government had nothing to hide and defaulters, if any, would not be spared. YSR’s brave public statements although candid were hardly convincing. For during the first 3 years of his regime there were as many as six judicial commissions were announced by the government, out of which only two submitted their recommendations, none of which have seen the light of day.

Incidentally, the then unveiled financial improprieties of Margadarsi Financiers, gave YSR the much-awaited opportunity he needed to crack down on *Eenadu*. In September 2006, V. Arun Kumar, a Congress MP and staunch YSR loyalist, wrote a letter of complaint to the Finance Minister, P. Chidambaram, about financial wrongdoings and failure to pay depositors by Margadarsi Financiers, one of the primary companies of Ramoji Group. The Margadarsi Financiers owned a 95 per cent stake in Ushodaya Enterprises, Ramoji Rao’s own company that runs *Eenadu* and ETV news channels. Chidambaram directed the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to investigate the matter. The RBI, in turn, disallowed Margadarsi from accepting any more deposits and also directed it to pay depositors as and when their deposits matured over the next three years.

The YSR government, ostensibly in the name of protecting the interests of the depositors, issued two separate Government Orders (GOMSs 800 & 801). Through these GOs, the government appointed its financial advisor N. Rangachari to examine all records of Margadarsi Financiers, and authorised Krishna Raju, the Inspector-General of Police to take action under the provisions of RBI Act, 1934. Rangachari reported that the assets shown by the company were ₹1315.61 crore, but it was in debt for over twice that amount, to the tune of ₹2685 crore. As a result, Margadarsi could repay every creditor only 49 paisa in a rupee. Following this report, the state police carried out search operations at the Margadarsi offices located in and around Hyderabad ostensibly to protect the interests of the company’s depositors.

If allegations against Margadarsi Financiers were to be proved, that would unquestionably incriminate Ramoji Rao and his numerous businesses, especially his media business. This, in turn, would have negative ramifications on the TDP and its future in the state. Not surprisingly then, Chandrababu Naidu was the first person to come out strongly in support of Ramoji Rao. He protested, ‘This is clearly an act of vindictiveness...and an attack on the freedom of the press’. Soon after, other leaders from various opposition parties, especially, the Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP) Venkaiah Naidu, Lok Satta’s Jayaprakash Narayan, B.V. Raghavulu of CPI (M), expressed support and accused the Congress government of attempting to ‘intimidate and gag’ the media in the state. Incidentally, as AP


Media pointed out, they all belonged to the same (Kamma) caste. On his part, Ramoji Rao fervently refuted the findings of Rangachari Committee as being politically motivated and tried to defend himself and his company. He also asserted that Margadarsi could fulfil all its financial commitments to its depositors by divesting 26 per cent of its holding in Ushodaya Enterprises Limited. That money, Ramoji Rao announced, would come from Blackstone, the world’s largest leveraged buyout firm. It appears Blackstone had valued Ushodaya Enterprises at an enormous rate, ₹4690 crore, and even came forward to invest US$ 275 million (approximately ₹1238 crore) in it. Had the deal gone through, it would have been the biggest foreign investment in the media sector. However, it failed to receive the mandatory clearance from the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) and the Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs (CCEA), despite the appeals of industrialists like Ratan Tata to the finance minister on Ramoji Rao’s behalf. It is conjectured that YSR used both his weight in the Congress as well as his goodwill with the party President Sonia Gandhi, to create these obstructions.

It was at this juncture that a Mumbai-based investment banker, Nimesh Kampani, founder and chairman of JM Financial group came to Ramoji Rao’s rescue. Apparently Kampani’s deal valued Ushodaya Company at ₹6780 crore—at least a third more than the Blackstone valuation. In recent years, it has come to light that the capital invested in Ushodaya was actually come from Ambani’s Reliance Industries Private Ltd (RIL). The RIL diverted its shareholder’s money through shell companies of Nimesh Kampani and Vinay Chhajlani of Nai Dunia into Ushodaya Enterprises.

The government’s action against Margadarsi was projected as revenge for carrying reports against its irregularities—an attack against the freedom of the press—both by Eenadu and Andhra Jyothi. A sample of the headlines published in the two newspapers on 23 February 2007 illustrates their campaign against the government: *Kalampai Kattulu* (‘daggers over pen’); *Kalaalaku Sankellu* (‘fetters to pens’). Ramoji Rao also approached the Editor’s Guild of India for support.


They condemned the AP government’s ‘blatant attempt to muzzle the media’.28 Their caution to the AP government is worth quoting here:

The Guild cautions the Andhra Pradesh Government not to use the investigations against the financial company owned by Mr. Ramoji Rao and his family to settle scores with an independent newspaper... The Guild expects the Government of India and the civil society to intervene strongly against any witch-hunt against Eenadu and its Editor Mr Ramoji Rao. A newspaper cannot be hounded just because the Government of Andhra Pradesh and the ruling party in the State dislike the editorial policy of the newspaper... (and) any move by the police to search the offices of the newspaper and its Editor amounts to a direct attack on the freedom of the press.29

It can be argued that the YSR government’s measures against the Margadarsi were vindictive. At the same time, it is possible that those measures were not directed against Eenadu or aimed at destroying the freedom of the press. The failure of Margadarsi to repay the depositors was a legitimate grievance. Further, the company’s illegal collection of deposits to the tune of ₹2200 crore, of which a loss of ₹1100 crore had been incurred, was bound to provoke action. Though not addressed by Ramoji Rao and his supporters, these points were emphasised by the Supreme Court. Following the Rangachari Report on Margadarsi Financiers, the AP government attempted to invoke the Andhra Pradesh Protection of Depositors of Financial Establishments Act (APPDFA) to attach the properties of Margadarsi on the charges of misuse of investors’ money. Consequently, Margadarsi filed a Special Leave Petition in the Supreme Court, in which it accused the state government of resorting “to witch-hunting and creating panic among depositors”.30 The Supreme Court, while refusing to stay the inquiry ordered by the state government, made a few important observations. Justifying the government’s action against Margadarsi, Chief Justice, K.G. Balakrishnan remarked: ‘Financial institutions are always in trouble. Why can’t the state government intervene?’ One of the judges even said: ‘When the CM makes a mistake you pointed it out. Similarly when you did wrong, the state government has acted. Your client (Ramoji Rao) is wearing two hats. One is a newspaper owner and the other is proprietor of a chic fund company.’31 Further, reacting to the intervener applications filed by N. Ram of The Hindu and senior journalist

Kuldip Nayar, the Court observed that ‘it has nothing to do with the freedom of press. It is only a financial business.’

Perhaps it should also be noted that in addition to confrontations with Ramoji Rao and Eenadu, YSR had at times resorted to extreme tactics while dealing with the media, such as arresting of journalists to intimidate them. Of course, YSR was also aware that his battles against the Kamma-dominated media and his measures against the journalists were only temporary and most of the time they will be backtracked. As such he needed his own platform, an idea that became a reality with the launch of Sakshi (Witness) newspaper on 23 March 2008 by YSR’s son Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy (Jagan) in Hyderabad. Sakshi, which was designed by renowned designer Mario Garcia, stormed into Telugu media with 23 editions. It was also the first newspaper in Telugu media to have all 30 pages in colour; and at ₹30 per month the cheapest daily in the market. At Sakshi’s launch, Jagan, announced that unlike other Telugu newspapers his paper would not become a mouthpiece of any political party. Instead, it would aim to fight against the biased media. This statement of Jagan was turned out to be a statement of politician. For, during the Lok Sabha and state assembly elections a year later, when Eenadu and Andhra Jyothi mounted criticism against YSR and his government over corruption, Sakshi carried several stories to counter their anti-Congress campaign and helped Congress to recapture political power in the state in 2009.

**Conclusion**

On 2 September 2009, barely 5 months into his second term as the CM of AP, YSR died in a helicopter crash in Nallamala forest in Rayalaseema region. To a large extent, his death altered both the political history of AP and the fortunes of political parties. On 2 June 2014, AP was divided into Telangana and AP. With this bifurcation, Telangana witnessed the re-emergence of the political dominance of the Velamas through the rise of the Kalvakuntla Chandrasekhara Rao (KCR)-led TRS. The Kammas managed to secure power in AP during the 2014 Assembly elections. While AP will continue to be a battleground for political power between the Kammas and Reddys, there is ample scope for the emergence of new political forces in Telangana. Incidentally, the bifurcation also strengthened the nexus between the media and political parties. In AP, Eenadu and Andhra Jyothi continue to be TDP mouthpieces, and Sakshi is playing a similar role for the Jagan-led YSR Congress. In Telangana, the Telugu daily Namaste Telangana is close to being the mouthpiece of the TRS. The answerability of the press to the public and the close nexus between press and political power remain pertinent topics for further discussion.


33 Nineteen of them are from AP and four others are from metropolitan cities: New Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Chennai.