



## Urgent Need for Temporary Open Shelters in Andhra Pradesh to Protect Vulnerable Children

B.V.S. Kumar



Former Chairman  
Child Welfare Committee  
Krishna district

As part of safeguarding child rights under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, as amended in 2021, the primary responsibility of rescuing vulnerable children, ensuring their care, rehabilitation, and reunification with families rests with the State Government.

As mandated under the Act, every district must have a Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) and a Child Welfare Committee (CWC), which are empowered to pass orders relating to the care, protection, rehabilitation, and restoration of children in need. Rescued children, identified by Childline services, NGOs, Police, and the Department of Women and Child Welfare are required to be produced before the CWC and temporarily accommodated in licensed Open Shelters until they are safely reunited with their families or rehabilitated in suitable Child Care Institutions.

Following the reorganization of districts in Andhra Pradesh from 13 to 26, the Government issued G.O. Rt. No. 38 dated 12.04.2023, sanctioning the establishment of JJBs, CWCs, and District Child Protection Units (DCPUs) in the 13 newly created districts.

Accordingly, the Department

of Juvenile Welfare, Correctional Services and Welfare of Street Children, Government of Andhra Pradesh, has issued a notification dated 22.12.2025 for the appointment of Chairpersons for Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) and Social Worker Members for Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs) across all 26 districts of the State. The interviews for these positions were conducted by the duly constituted Selection Committee from 4th April 2026 to 20th April 2026. The Child Welfare Committees and Juvenile Justice Boards are expected to commence functioning in the respective districts shortly.

While these statutory bodies are expected to pass orders on production of vulnerable children before them in temporary Open Shelters for safety and to take steps to reunite them with their parents or to place them in some licensed Child Care Institution as a part of rehabilitation, a critical gap remains here.

There are no Temporary Open Shelters for boys and girls in several new district headquarters. This poses significant challenges in implementing CWC orders, especially during emergencies and night rescues, as children must be transported to distant

neighbouring districts for temporary accommodation. Such delays can adversely affect the safety, well-being, and timely rehabilitation of rescued children.

In light of these concerns, there is an urgent need for the Government of Andhra Pradesh to:

- Establish Temporary Open Shelters in all newly formed district headquarters
  - Ensure separate facilities for boys and girls
  - Collaborate with local NGOs and the Department of Women Development and Child Welfare for effective management
- Further, until such shelters are established, the Government should identify and officially notify "Places of Safety" at district headquarters to facilitate immediate placement of rescued children, ensuring compliance with the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act and minimizing hardship to children and their families.

Timely intervention in this regard will significantly strengthen the child protection system in the State and uphold the rights and dignity of vulnerable children.

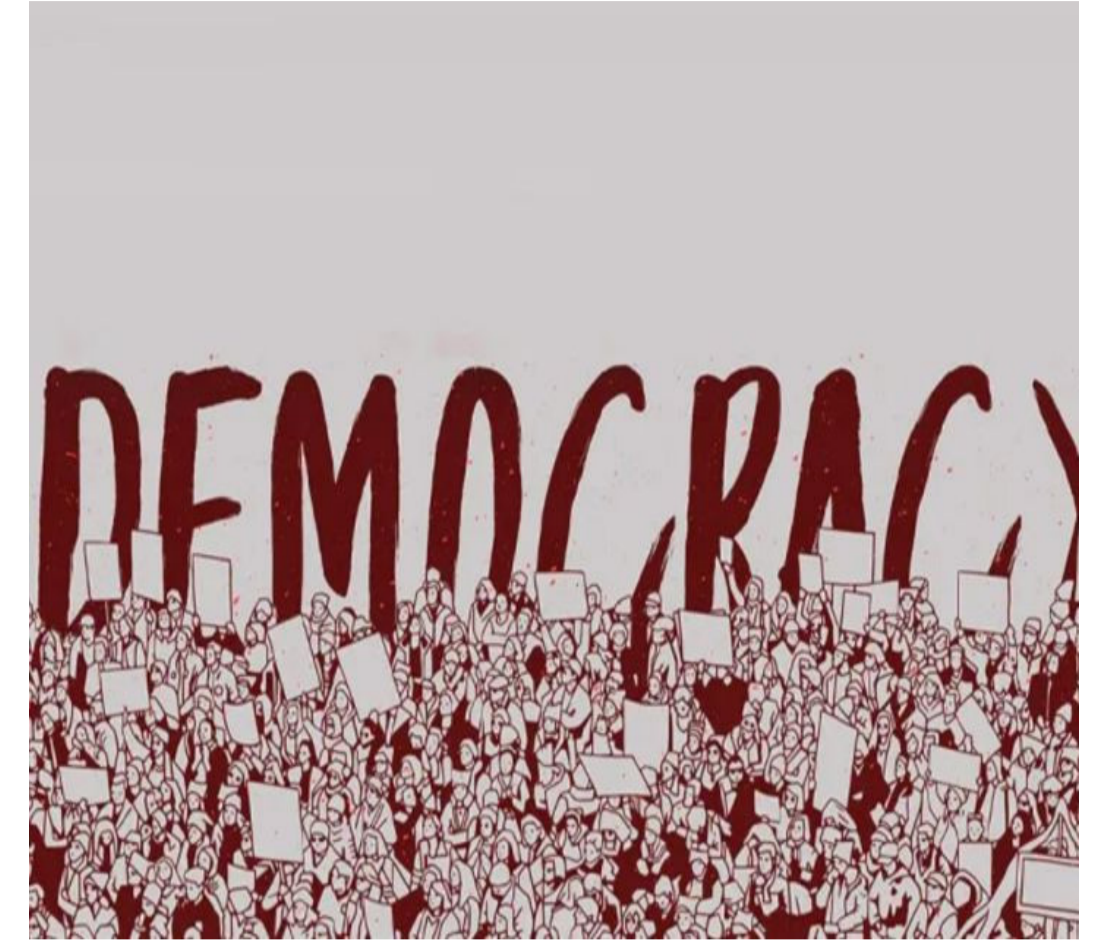
Public life demands restraint, dignity and a sense of responsibility. Politicians are expected to disagree sharply, but without abandoning propriety. Yet recent remarks by senior political leaders show how quickly public discourse can slip from debate into insult. What should have been discussions on governance and policy are increasingly turning into personal attacks, sensational accusations and reckless statements.

Two recent controversial comments by prominent politicians have once again highlighted this decline in standards. These were not merely isolated slips of the tongue or harmless political rhetoric. They reflected a larger problem, the growing erosion of civility in Indian politics, where outrage often replaces reason and provocation becomes a substitute for ideology.

Political leaders occupy positions of trust and influence. Their words shape public opinion and often set the tone for national conversation. When they indulge in irresponsible remarks, the damage extends far beyond a news cycle. It weakens democratic institutions and encourages supporters to normalize hostility and division.

The language used in politics today has become increasingly coarse. Instead of discussing unemployment, inflation, education or healthcare, public attention is diverted toward personal controversies and provocative statements. Leaders often attack each other's families, personal lives or identities rather than policies. Such behaviour reduces politics to spectacle and leaves governance in the background. This trend is dangerous because it lowers public expectations. Citizens begin to accept abuse as normal political conduct. The focus shifts from accountability to entertainment. Elections become contests of outrage rather than contests of ideas. This harms democracy because democracy depends on informed debate, not verbal warfare. The judiciary has repeatedly reminded politicians to be more tolerant and "thick-skinned." Public figures must learn to face criticism and should not rush to courts over every perceived insult. Criticism and adverse comments are part of public life, and politicians should not turn courts into battlegrounds for political rivalry.

This advice is both practical and necessary. Defamation cases filed by politicians against



rivals are clogging already burdened courts. Many such cases are less about genuine damage to reputation and more about silencing opponents or gaining sympathy. Political disagreements are increasingly dressed up as legal disputes over "hurt sentiments," consuming judicial time that should be reserved for more serious matters.

A healthy democracy requires leaders who can absorb criticism without treating every attack as a personal injury. Sharp criticism, satire and public scrutiny are essential tools of accountability. Citizens must be free to question their leaders, and leaders must have the maturity to respond with arguments rather than anger.

Unfortunately, many politicians display the opposite tendency. Once in power, they become less tolerant of jokes, criticism or dissent. They seek protection from public scrutiny while continuing to use aggressive language against opponents. This double standard weakens trust in leadership.

Propriety is not simply about politeness; it is about maintaining standards that protect institutions. It includes decorum, appropriateness and the willingness to respect both opponents and democratic processes. When politicians ignore propriety, they signal that rules and conventions are

optional.

This concern is not new. Earlier debates around public appointments also raised questions about propriety, particularly when decisions appeared to ignore convention or legal norms. Even if an action is technically legal, it can still violate the spirit of institutional integrity. The larger fear is that once governments stop respecting conventions, they may also begin to ignore broader constitutional principles. That same logic applies to public speech. If leaders feel free to insult, provoke and demean without consequence, the decline spreads downward. Party workers imitate them, television debates become louder and social media grows more toxic. Civility disappears from the political ecosystem.

There is also an important distinction between criticism and abuse. Genuine criticism focuses on actions, policies and decisions. Abuse targets identity, family or private life. Democracies flourish through criticism, not humiliation. Leaders should encourage scrutiny of their work, not suppress it through intimidation.

Some argue that politicians also deserve protection from false accusations and malicious attacks. That is true. Freedom of speech cannot mean freedom to spread lies or hatred. But legal protection should not become a shield

against legitimate dissent. The balance must favour open debate, especially during elections when citizens need the fullest possible information.

Political culture must therefore change from within. Leaders should recognise that dignity enhances authority, while recklessness weakens it. They must learn that responding calmly to criticism demonstrates strength, not weakness. Public office demands thicker skin and greater humility.

Indian politicians could also learn from examples elsewhere, where leaders often respond to satire with humour rather than outrage. A mature democracy is one where criticism is tolerated and even valued as part of public accountability. Governance improves when leaders listen rather than react defensively.

Ultimately, propriety is not a luxury, it is a democratic necessity. Citizens deserve leaders who elevate public conversation, not degrade it. The measure of political leadership lies not only in winning elections, but also in preserving the dignity of democratic life.

When politicians lose their sense of propriety, democracy itself pays the price. Restoring civility is not about softening politics; it is about strengthening institutions and ensuring that public debate remains worthy of the people it is meant to serve.

## MAMATA'S LAST BID AND BJP'S BHABANIPUR PUSH SET STAGE FOR HIGH-STAKES CLASH

West Bengal politics has once again turned into a high-voltage battle, with Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) locking horns over the crucial Bhabanipur Assembly constituency. What appears to be a by-election is, in reality, a larger political test of prestige, power and survival for both sides.

For Mamata Banerjee, Bhabanipur represents more than just another constituency. It is her political home turf and, more importantly, her path to continuing as Chief Minister after losing the Nandigram seat in the 2021 Assembly election. Though the Trinamool Congress (TMC) secured a sweeping victory across West Bengal, Mamata herself suffered a narrow defeat against former aide-turned-rival Suvendu Adhikari in Nandigram. That defeat created a constitutional necessity—she had to win a by-election within six months to remain Chief Minister.

Bhabanipur quickly became the centre of this political drama. Mamata had earlier represented the constituency and enjoyed strong support there. It was considered the safest seat for her political comeback. TMC MLA Sovandeb Chattopadhyay vacated the seat to make way for her, turning the

bypoll into a symbolic referendum on Mamata's leadership.

But the BJP was determined not to allow an easy return. Instead of treating Bhabanipur as a routine contest, the party transformed it into a prestige battle. It sought to challenge Mamata directly in her own stronghold, hoping to create political pressure and question her authority even after the TMC's state-wide victory.

The BJP's strategy was clear. It aimed to convert Mamata's bypoll into a larger narrative of legitimacy. The party argued that a Chief Minister who lost her own seat should not be given a smooth passage back into office. By making Bhabanipur a high-profile contest, BJP attempted to project itself as the principal challenger in Bengal and keep political momentum alive after its defeat in the Assembly elections.

The campaign soon moved beyond local issues and became a clash of political narratives. For TMC, it was about protecting Bengali pride and defending Bengal from what it described as outside interference by the BJP-led Centre. For the BJP, it was about exposing what it called TMC's misgovernance, corruption and political violence. Mamata's campaign focused



heavily on emotional and symbolic appeal. She projected herself as the protector of Bengal's identity and repeatedly accused the BJP of trying to destabilise the state through central agencies and political pressure. Her message was simple: Bhabanipur was not just electing an MLA, but defending Bengal's self-respect.

The BJP, on the other hand, framed the contest as a democratic necessity. It argued that Mamata should face serious scrutiny rather than enjoy a

ceremonial victory. The party intensified its campaign, hoping to make the election closer than expected and send a message that the opposition remained strong.

This battle also revealed the changing political nature of Bengal. Once dominated by ideological debates between the Left and Congress, the state has increasingly shifted toward personality-driven politics. Elections are now often seen as direct contests between Mamata Banerjee and the



BJP's central leadership. Bhabanipur became another chapter in that larger confrontation.

There was also a deeper strategic concern for Mamata. A weak victory would damage her authority within the party and strengthen BJP's claim that her political dominance was fading. For a leader who has built her image on personal credibility and direct mass connection, symbolic victories matter immensely.

For BJP, even a respectable performance would serve its long-term goals. It would reinforce the idea that Bengal is no longer a one-party political space and that TMC's dominance can be challenged seat by seat. The party hoped Bhabanipur would help preserve its relevance and organisational energy after the Assembly setback. The election also drew attention because of the heavy political mobilisation around it. Campaigning was intense, public rhetoric was sharp and

both parties treated the bypoll like a mini-assembly election. The national media followed every move closely, reflecting how one constituency had become a national political battleground. Ultimately, Bhabanipur was never just about numbers. It was about perception. Mamata needed a convincing victory to restore complete political authority after Nandigram. BJP needed a strong challenge to prove that its Bengal project was still alive. History eventually showed that Bhabanipur strongly favoured Mamata. She won the seat by a huge margin, re-entering the Assembly and securing her continuation as Chief Minister. But the larger political story remained significant—the BJP had succeeded in turning a constitutional formality into a major political contest. The Bhabanipur push and Mamata's last bid reflected the fierce new reality of Bengal politics, where every election is treated as a battle for narrative control. Victory is no longer measured only in seats, but in symbolism, perception and political momentum.

In that sense, Bhabanipur was not just a by-election. It was a referendum on leadership, resilience and the future direction of West Bengal politics.