

## **HISTORICAL ASPECTS OF STUDENTS' ROLE IN 1969 MOVEMENT FOR SEPARATE TELANGANA- AN OVERVIEW**

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### **Abstract**

*The 1969 Movement for a Separate Telangana was a significant political and social upheaval in India, marked by widespread student participation. This movement emerged in response to perceived injustices and inequalities in resource distribution and political representation between the Telangana region and the Andhra region within the state of Andhra Pradesh. The discontent in Telangana was rooted in promises made during the 1956 merger of Andhra and Telangana, which many felt were unfulfilled. Students played a pivotal role in the 1969 movement, acting as the driving force behind its momentum and fervour. They organised and led protests, strikes, and demonstrations, which spread rapidly across the region. Educational institutions became hotbeds of political activity, with students demanding the implementation of safeguards for Telangana as outlined in the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1956. The student-led agitation highlighted issues such as employment opportunities, educational access, and equitable development, which resonated with the wider populace. The involvement of students in the movement also brought a sense of urgency and youthful energy, galvanising public opinion and drawing national attention to the cause. Their activism was instrumental in mobilising various sections of society, including political leaders, intellectuals, and the general public. Despite facing severe repression, including police crackdowns and arrests, the students' persistent efforts kept the movement alive and pushed the agenda for a separate state into the political mainstream. In summary, the 1969 Movement for Separate Telangana was significantly shaped by student activism. Their role was crucial in articulating the grievances of the Telangana people and in sustaining the momentum of the movement.*

### **Introduction**

The 1969 Telangana Agitation stands as a seminal event in the history of Andhra Pradesh, India, marking a significant chapter in the broader struggle for regional identity, autonomy, and self-determination. This movement, which called for the creation of a separate Telangana state, emerged against the backdrop of widespread discontent with the perceived injustices and socio-economic disparities between the Telangana region and the coastal Andhra areas. While numerous factors contributed to the agitation, one of the most notable and dynamic forces was the involvement of students, whose activism and leadership played a crucial role in shaping the movement's trajectory and outcomes.

The origins of the 1969 Telangana Movement can be traced back to the States Re-Organization Act of 1956, which merged the Telugu-speaking regions of Telangana, formerly part of the Hyderabad State, with the Andhra State, forming the new state of Andhra Pradesh. Despite the promises of safeguards and special measures to protect the interests of Telangana, grievances quickly surfaced over issues such as employment, education, and resource allocation. The perceived failure of the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1956, which was intended to ensure fair treatment for Telangana, further fueled the sense of regional discrimination and neglect.

Students, who were particularly attuned to these injustices, became the vanguard of the agitation. Their involvement was not merely incidental but instrumental in articulating the demands for a separate state and mobilizing widespread public support. The student

leadership, characterized by its youthful vigor, intellectual acumen, and organizational capabilities, galvanized various sections of society, from farmers and laborers to professionals and political leaders. They employed a range of strategies, from peaceful protests and hunger strikes to more confrontational tactics, thereby maintaining the momentum of the movement and drawing national attention to their cause.

This research aims to explore in-depth the multifaceted role of students in the 1969 Telangana Agitation. It seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of how student activism influenced the movement's dynamics, strategies, and eventual outcomes. By examining the historical context, key events, and individual contributions, this study will illuminate the pivotal role that students played in advocating for regional justice and autonomy. Furthermore, it will reflect on the broader implications of student-led movements in shaping political discourse and effecting social change.

In the following study, the research work will delve into the socio-political landscape of Telangana prior to the agitation, chart the course of the student-led protests, and analyze the interplay between student activism and broader political forces. Through a detailed examination of primary sources, including contemporary accounts, government records, and interviews with key participants, this study will provide a nuanced understanding of the 1969 Telangana Movement and the enduring legacy of student activism in regional and national politics.

### **Socio-Political and Economic Conditions in Telangana Prior to the 1969 Movement:**

Before delving into the events of the 1969 movement, it is crucial to understand the backdrop against which it unfolded. Telangana, originally part of the princely state of Hyderabad, became part of the Indian Union in 1948. In 1956, Telangana was merged with Andhra State to form Andhra Pradesh, based on linguistic lines. However, this merger brought to light significant disparities and regional imbalances that set the stage for future unrest.

**Socio-Political Conditions:** Telangana had distinct cultural and linguistic identities compared to the Andhra region. The merger led to fears among the people of Telangana about potential cultural domination and marginalization by the more politically and economically dominant Andhra elite. Political representation and leadership from Telangana were perceived to be inadequate, fostering feelings of neglect and alienation.

**Economic Conditions:** Telangana's economy was predominantly agrarian, but it lagged in terms of infrastructure development and industrial growth compared to the Andhra region. Irrigation projects, educational facilities, and employment opportunities were less developed in Telangana, leading to widespread dissatisfaction. The promises made at the time of the merger, particularly regarding safeguards for Telangana's economic interests, were seen as unfulfilled.

### **Understanding the Grievances and Demands that led to the Agitation for a Separate State:**

The grievances that catalyzed the 1969 movement were multifaceted, rooted in both historical and contemporary contexts. Key issues included:

**Employment and Education:** The people of Telangana felt that job opportunities in government and public sectors were disproportionately given to candidates from the Andhra region. There was a perception that educational facilities and opportunities for higher education were skewed in favor of the Andhra region, limiting the prospects for the youth of Telangana.

**Resource Allocation:** There was widespread belief that Telangana's resources, particularly water from the Krishna and Godavari rivers, were being diverted to benefit the Andhra region. This was coupled with the perception that Telangana's share in the state budget was inadequate, further hampering its development.

**Cultural Identity and Political Representation:** The cultural distinctiveness of Telangana was often overlooked or overshadowed by the dominant Andhra narrative. Politically, Telangana leaders felt marginalized, and there was a growing demand for more significant political representation and autonomy.

**Promises of Safeguards:** At the time of the merger, certain safeguards were promised to protect the interests of Telangana, such as the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1956. However, the perceived failure to implement these safeguards consistently led to a sense of betrayal and injustice among the people.

By thoroughly examining these socio-political and economic conditions, and understanding the specific grievances and demands, the study aims to provide a comprehensive historical context for the 1969 movement. This foundational understanding is crucial for analyzing how these factors converged to create a powerful movement advocating for a separate Telangana state, and how students became pivotal actors in this struggle.

### **Review of Existing Literature:**

**Historiography of the Telangana Movement:** Conduct a comprehensive review of existing literature on the Telangana movement, including key works by historians, political scientists, and sociologists. This will help identify prevailing narratives, gaps, and debates in the scholarship.

**Indian Student Activism:** Examine the broader context of student activism in India, looking at significant movements across different regions and time periods. This includes the role of students in India's independence movement, the anti-emergency protests in the 1970s, and other regional agitations.

#### **1. Research Objectives**

- To analyze the students' role in 1969 Telangana movement.
- To examine the importance of the 1969 Telangana Movement.

#### **2. Research Methodology.**

The present study is completely descriptive in nature based on the existed study available.

**Data sources:** Secondary data has been taken for the analysis of the study

#### **Role of Students in 1969 Movement**

The students played a pivotal role in the 1969 Telangana Agitation, transforming it from a

localized protest to a widespread movement. Their involvement began on December 6, 1968, when students from Viveka Vardhini College in Hyderabad took out a procession, which was attacked by individuals recruited by integrationists and the police. This initial incident catalyzed further demonstrations across Telangana, including in Khammam, Warangal, and Nizamabad. The students' energy, organizational skills, and willingness to confront authority helped sustain the momentum of the agitation. They organized rallies, strikes, and sit-ins, effectively communicating their demands and grievances to a broader audience. The students' calls for a separate Telangana state and protections for the region highlighted their critical role as catalysts for change.

### **5.1 Student Leaders and Organizers**

Key student leaders and organizers were instrumental in steering the 1969 Telangana Movement. Among the most prominent was Mallikarjun, the President of the Osmania University Student Union. His leadership was crucial in organizing meetings, rallies, and strikes that maintained the pressure on the government. Another notable figure was Ravindranath, whose indefinite hunger strike in Khammam on January 8, 1969, demanding protection for Telangana, became a significant flashpoint in the movement. The Osmania University Student Union played a central role, convening meetings and articulating the students' dissatisfaction with the political leadership from the region. These leaders and their organizations galvanized student participation, ensuring that the movement had a structured approach and clear objectives. On 25 March, 1969, the Telangana Peoples Convention transformed as Telangana Praja Samithi established by Telangana intellectuals and youth which aimed at including students and employees of the region. Sridhar Reddy, a student leader, was elected as the president of Parallel Telangana Praja Samithi which supported by the majority of the student community of Telangana region. Pj Suri, G M .Anjaiah, S .Raghuveera Rao were the some of the prominent student leaders of this party.

### **Student Protests in 1969**

On January 20, 1969, for the first time, the police conducted a firing on school students in Shamshabad. This incident sparked widespread protests, particularly at Nizam College of Osmania University, where approximately 200 students gathered to express their outrage against the police's actions. The protest was led by student leaders Sridhar Reddy, Pulla Ruddy, Puli Veeraman, and Madhusandar Reddy. During these protests, the police arrested these student leaders. Infact, the appointing Dr.D.S Reddy, who hailed from Andhra region, as Vice- Chancellor of O.U for consecutive three terms laid foundation for the Telangana Movement of Osmania students.

The situation escalated on January 24, 1969, when another police firing occurred at Sadasivapet in Medak district during a procession conducted by school students and youth. This firing resulted in the death of a 19-year-old youth named Shankar and injuries to 25 other people's

.Hence, Shankar remained as the first martyr of the history of this movement.

The following day, January 25, 1969, a student meeting was conducted at the Engineering College, where the participants committed to the movement with significant sacrifice. Their efforts were recognized and applauded by the newspapers.

Further momentum was gained during a convention held on March 8 and 9 at the Reddy Hostel in Hyderabad. In this meeting, students played a crucial role and decided to start an indefinite strike to achieve a separate Telangana state. Following this decision, the Telangana movement intensified, particularly after March 28, 1969. Students from Osmania University attacked and set fire to the Jamia Osmania railway station near the university campus, resulting in the deaths of two engineering students. In Warangal, sixty students were arrested as the protests continued to escalate. This period marked a significant chapter in the Telangana movement, driven by the dedication and sacrifices of the student community, whose efforts played a pivotal role in the push for a separate state.

In January 1969, a significant general body meeting was conducted by representatives of the student unions at Osmania University, where the Gentlemen's Agreement was denied. Presided over by Vekatrami Reddy, President of the Students Union, Osmania University, the conference resolved to organize activities starting from January 15, 1969, to safeguard the Telangana region. The students, led by Vekatrami Reddy, demanded specific safeguards for Telangana, receiving support from the All India Students Federation (AISF), the student wing of the CPI. This movement was further endorsed by activities organized at Vivekavardhini College, Hyderabad. In response to the growing demand for a separate Telangana state, students formed the Telangana Action Committee, electing Mallikarjun as its secretary, and initiated their activities from Nizam College.

### **Impact of Student Participation**

The participation of students had a profound impact on the 1969 Telangana Agitation. Firstly, it brought significant attention to the movement, both regionally and nationally. The students' ability to mobilize quickly and effectively kept the issue in the public eye, ensuring that it could not be easily dismissed by the authorities. Their involvement also intensified the pressure on the government, leading to the closure of educational institutions and compelling the Chief Minister, Sri Brahmananda Reddy, to announce the shutdown of all schools and colleges until January 27, 1969. The sacrifices made by students, including those who lost their lives in police firing, underscored the seriousness of the movement and garnered sympathy and support from various sections of society. Moreover, the student-led agitation highlighted the broader socio-economic grievances of the Telangana region, paving the way for future movements and contributing to the eventual formation of the state of Telangana in 2014. The legacy of the 1969 movement demonstrated the power of student activism in effecting political and social change.

### **Outcomes of the Study**

#### **Socio-political Outcomes**

#### **The Immediate and Long-term Effects of the 1969 Movement on Telangana's Quest for Statehood:**

The 1969 Telangana movement had profound effects on the region's socio-political landscape, both in the short term and over the ensuing decades:

#### **Immediate Effects:**

**Political Recognition:** Assess how the movement brought the issues and demands of



Telangana to the forefront of regional and national politics. This includes examining any immediate policy changes, promises of development, or concessions made by the government in response to the agitation.

**Awareness and Identity:** Evaluate how the movement heightened regional consciousness and solidified a distinct Telangana identity among its people. This period saw a surge in regional pride and a collective understanding of Telangana's unique socio-economic and cultural issues.

### **Long-term Effects:**

**Continued Advocacy:** Analyze how the 1969 movement laid the groundwork for ongoing advocacy for statehood. The persistence of regional discontent and the continuous demand for a

separate Telangana state can be traced back to the mobilization and awareness generated during this period.

**Formation of Telangana State:** Examine the eventual success of the statehood movement, culminating in the creation of Telangana as a separate state in 2014. Investigate how the legacy of the 1969 movement influenced later phases of the struggle, including key events, leadership, and strategies that led to the ultimate realization of Telangana statehood.

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