

REGIONAL IDENTITY AS A CATALYST FOR THE TELANGANA STATEHOOD MOVEMENT

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ABSTARCT

In the state of Telangana, the party that spearheaded the demand for statehood enjoys massive support and became the heir to the movement and the throne. This, however, also comes with an enormous burden to lift the state from social and economic backwardness and poverty. So far, the TRS (Telangana Rashtra Samiti) has deftly managed the politics, meeting some expectations of the people. However, the state's politics happens in the context of a weak opposition and a weak civil society which have failed to provide robust opposition. Besides, the politics in the state is characterized by high stakes on symbolic politics. While the TRS government has so far sufficiently met the symbolic and emotional needs of the people, the real burden of raising the standards of living of the people and meeting their concrete expectations depends on going beyond these, and translating the prolific promises made into reality. The Telangana statehood agitation represents a significant chapter in India's regional political movements, characterized by a unique coalition of civil society actors and student-led mobilizations. This study explores the critical role played by these groups in shaping the discourse and momentum of the Telangana movement, which culminated in the formation of India's 29th state in 2014. Civil society organizations, including NGOs, intellectual groups, and regional advocacy networks, provided ideological direction, policy critique, and grassroots mobilization. Their collective efforts challenged established political hierarchies and brought national attention to longstanding grievances related to regional identity, underdevelopment, and perceived injustices. It also reflects on the implications of such mobilizations for democratic participation and regional autonomy in India.

Keywords: statehood agitation, regional identity, Telangana movement, regional autonomy

INTRODUCTION

Telangana statehood and the role of political parties participating in the electoral politics. The people of Telangana have been demanding a separate state even before the merging of Telangana region with Andhra state to form United Andhra Pradesh. The movement has been consistently rising frequently by political parties and other organizations. All the time majority of Telangana people rallied behind this movement and political parties were also often supporting the demand for separate statehood to make use of Telangana sentiment and in such a way the issue of Telangana has become an instrument to all the political parties to obtain political mileage out of this Telangana agitation, except the political parties like Communist Party of India and Communist Party of India (Marxist). The Telangana statehood movement stands as one of the most significant and sustained regional agitations in post-independence India. While political parties such as the Telangana Rashtra Samithi played a central role in articulating the demand at the legislative and electoral level, the momentum and moral force behind the movement were largely driven by the active involvement of civil society organizations and student movements. Civil society— including NGOs, cultural activists, rights groups, and media collectives—provided critical platforms for advocacy, public education, and non-violent protest. Parallely, student communities, especially those from Osmania University and other regional institutions, emerged as the backbone of mass mobilization, organizing protests, rallies, and awareness campaigns that galvanized public

sentiment across rural and urban Telangana. This article aims to explore the contributions of these non-political actors in advancing the Telangana cause. It examines how student unions, civil society groups, and cultural organizations worked both independently and in collaboration with political forces to sustain a movement that spanned decades. The study also aims to assess the impact of grassroots mobilization on the democratic process, and how the Telangana struggle exemplifies the power of people's participation in shaping statehood and identity within the Indian federal framework. democracy such as universal adult franchise and equality for all. According to CBR guidelines, Political Participation is the sum of broad range of activities through which people express their opinion and thought in the various political process and take part in the decision making process. Mainly driving the Telangana movement is perceived socioeconomic inequity along with a desire for sovereignty over local resources. This study explores the regional ambitions for self-rule and looks at the elements that influence popular support for Telangana's statehood. It also takes into account the expectations and reaction of the general people once Telangana became a state. An understanding of the Telangana movement gives light to the larger picture of regional identity, development, and autonomy as well as the structural and political background of statehood claims in India.

LITERATURE REVIEW

V. Jayasree [2024] Regional parties dominate the political context of India, expressing local interests and demands. Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) and Telugu Desam Party (TDP) are added to it as the parties that promoted the interest of this region and played an important role in shaping the mood of citizens. Major developments like the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh in 2014 are evaluated to examine what role they would play in terms of governance, socio-economic development, and cultural identity. The research demands both qualitative and quantitative data that will describe the relationships between election results, effectiveness of the local policy, and local socio-economic variables. Since the analysis is placed in a larger domain of federalism and regionalism, this paper will reiterate the long-term importance of regional parties toward determining the social-political landscape of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The results demonstrate how these parties accommodate the local desires and national politics of governance and give an understanding of the messy relationship between identity politics and state policies in modern India.

Bhukya Pameela [2023] Telangana activists like Intellectuals and employees initiated the second phase of Telangana Movement. The movement for Telangana state has always become a political agenda. Though students, employees, people have been joining the movement. the Telugu Desam Party also tried its level best to avail issue of Telangana on the eve of elections in order to get people's votes and reversing their stand immediately after election results were announced. The Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP) is basically in favour of smaller states for convenience of governance and its electoral gains. The Congress party was also included the issue of Telangana in its National Common Minimum Programme in 2004. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) in principle, which has supported the formation of new states.

Krishnaiah K [2022] "Folk songs are instrumental in people's mobilization for social movements. In the cultural and social context, the folk art forms played a crucial role in raising the social consciousness towards various social movements in Telangana. Folk arts are instrumental in shaping the people's consciousness. The role of folk songs is pivotal in social

movements. The research paper depicts, how the folk songs had brought the collective identity and consciousness among the people of Telangana and had brought the separate statehood. From the time of Telangana armed struggle to Telangana State formation, the role of folk songs is enormous and played a definite significant role in the formation of Telangana... The folk song which had undergone metamorphosis into protest and revolutionary song had raised the voice against all major social exclusion and inclusion indicators like feudalism, social and economic exploitation, denial of power, resources exploitation, water crisis, underdevelopment, drought, poverty, alienation, suppression of cultural identity, social injustice, bonded labour, migration of labour, suicides, gender inequality, caste discrimination and for separate statehood in Telangana".

Hannah Moscovitz [2021] This article explores the interplay between regional identity and economic development in Wallonia. Relying on a critical reading of economic policy texts and political discourse relating to both the domestic and foreign policy spheres, the study examines the manner in which Walloon political actors discursively construct the relation between economic development and regional identity. The findings point to a perceived mutually reinforcing role between economic development and identity, offering a more nuanced approach to current studies exploring this relationship. Facilitated by the analytical division between domestic and foreign policy spheres, the study also highlights an important link between two facets of 'regional identity': the regional consciousness of inhabitants and the image of the region itself.

The Movement for Telangana Statehood

This study examines how the Telangana movement started, what provoked the movement, and how the Telangana section of Hyderabad state was combined with Andhra to establish a new state called Andhra Pradesh. The objective of this study was to broadly outline the important events such as the Telangana Armed Struggle, Gentlemen's Agreement, the Telangana movement, different agreements, and other important events that happened along the way. It also portrayed some advantages and disadvantages of the Telangana movement while fighting for liberation. The Movement for Separate Telangana State was born from long desires for political autonomy, socioeconomic fairness, and regional identity, thus becoming a defining moment in Indian political history. Originating from a sense of marginalization and neglect of the Telangana region's residents, this movement was an attempt to finally resolve longstanding complaints regarding political representation, resource distribution, and cultural acknowledgement. This would reflect in the passage of decades through military conflicts, negotiations, and popular mobilizations in the intricate plays of regional politics under the federal system of India. The creation of Telangana as the 29th state of India in 2014 was a result of the ultimate victory of the movement and more importantly reflected on the intricacy of the relationship between regional ambitions and national politics.

Cultural Significance of Telangana

Telangana is culturally different from the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh; the latter is essential because the Telangana movement articulated and presented its case as they are different from the people of the Andhra region, which was merged with the Telangana region in 1956. On the

other hand, they argued that they have been subjugated and culturally suppressed. The movement also blamed 'Andhra communities and dominant castes' for their political hegemony over the region. In the context of the formation of the new State, knowing the composition of its population is historically significant. Telangana's social and cultural design differs from Andhra Pradesh in terms of Caste, religion, language dialect, food habits, and religious rituals. In this context, the study presents the socio-cultural aspects of the Telangana people.

In Indian society, caste is a fundamental social component and has always formed the basis for public policy. Structurally, the community is built on Caste, which has functional value. Functionally, it is a complex and culturally unique social system that combines some aspects of descent based on hereditary occupation and strictly follows endogamy.

Telangana movement, a desire for equity

The demand for a separate state of Telangana from the viewpoint of diverse social and cultural groups inhabiting the three regions of the state. These social groups have visibly and vocally participated in the movement, articulating their reasons for wanting or not wanting the separate state of Telangana. The chapter also puts into perspective regionalism and regional identity as a basis for contemporary demands for statehood and argues that while this does not necessarily reflect an unhealthy trend (when viewed in terms of providing a platform to different social groups to express their genuine concerns), such demands have to be viewed on a case by case basis. Several factors have to be taken into consideration - the genuine nature of the demand has to be objectively assessed; whether the constituent units will be better off on division as well as the possible national repercussions. The Telangana movement can be interpreted as a desire for greater democracy and empowerment within a political unit.

Politics and Identity

An important aspect of Telangana state politics today is the absence of a credible opposition. We say credible opposition because during their long rule of the state previously, both Congress and Telugu Desam party consistently opposed the state's bifurcation though in the end it is the Congress party at the Centre which acceded to the demand for statehood. Democracy requires that there be an opposition to critique and counter-balance the ruling party. The two main opposition parties, Indian National Congress and the Telugu Desam Party, have some presence in the new state. The marginalization of opposition has its roots in the past. In the united state of Andhra Pradesh, either Congress or TDP ruled the state. Both under the Congress and TDP, the Telangana region was marginalized and the political leaders hailing from Telangana were given a raw deal. For example, there has never been a Chief Minister for a full term from the Telangana region. The demands of Telangana for irrigation water and employment in government sector too were ignored under the dispensations of the Congress and the TDP.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: This study will be based on a qualitative research approach that emphasizes understanding the nuances and intricacies of the Telangana separation movement. Case study methodology will be used to investigate the political, social, and economic factors that influenced the call for statehood. This approach will allow for a detailed examination of historical events, political strategies, and stakeholder opinions. **Research Method** The research will majorly use semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. Documentary analysis will consist of an investigation into the relevant literature, official reports, media

pieces, and policy papers that may be deemed necessary for gaining contextual information. Semi-structured interviews will help engage in meaningful conversations with influential people like political leaders, activists, and intellectuals familiar with the Telangana movement. **Sample Size:** Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a sample size of 20-30 participants. This would be enough to achieve the saturation point at which an additional interview will provide "minimally new" information. To ensure that we have a good spread of viewpoints, we will vary the selection based on one's experience and engagement with the Telangana secession movement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The media owned by the Andhra leaders and industrialists was full of fictional stories and allegations against the movement. They degraded the movement; if the people's turnout for a meeting or an event was poor, they would say that the bubble of the Telangana movement would burst very soon.

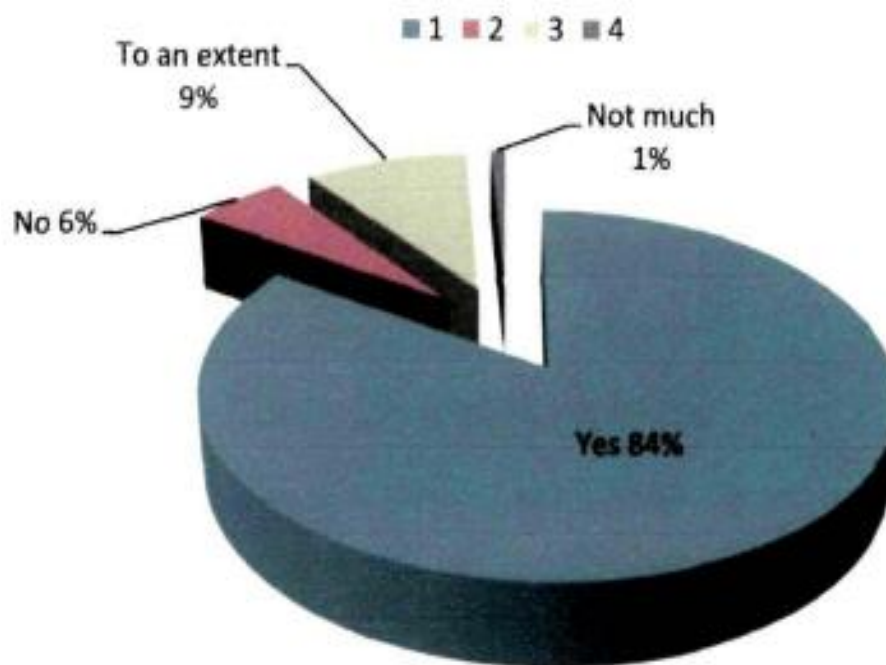


Fig. 1 Do you think that the Telangana culture has been revived by the Telangana movement

When the question was put across to the respondents regarding bias in the media reporting with regard to the Telangana movement, it was interesting to find out that a majority of the people 81 % (Fig. 1.) sensed a biased approach towards the movement. This perception was not unique to the common man but even members of the academia and intellectuals of the region felt the same way.

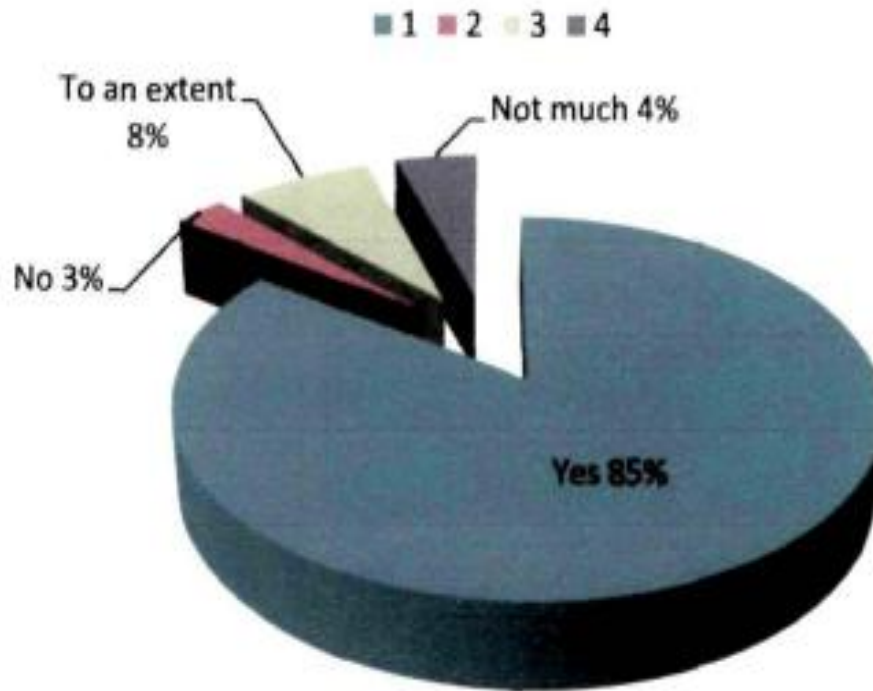


Fig.2 Do you think the Telangana movement has given new life to writers, poets, singers, performers and various others

An overwhelming majority of the people 89% (Fig.2) said that the communication technologies have indeed helped the movement to grow stronger and also make people aware of the movement. We see a symbiotic relationship between the movement and the media, accommodating each other and also accommodating the other media environments in the larger media ecosystem

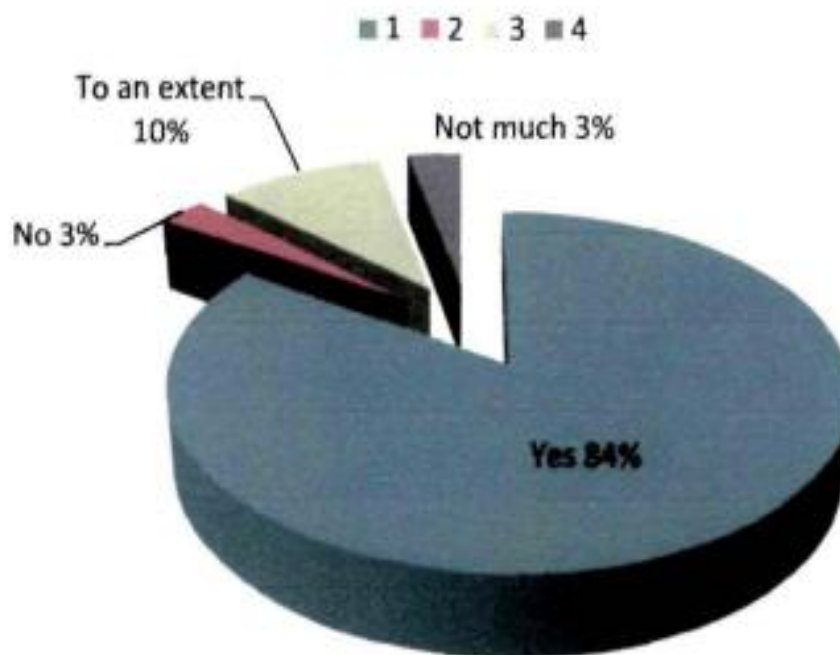


Fig.3 Do you think the songs by the various artists highlighted the sacrifices made by the people during the Telangana movement

Once the report was out in the open it could be seen that the state had imposed restrictions and regulations on the media; for instance, there was a restriction against the live telecast of any event that had to do with the Telangana movement and also against the reporting of any incidents that was perceived to have the potential of escalating tensions. On numerous occasions there was a black out of channels; this self-moratorium by the media or the imposed moratorium by the state left people confused with regard to the veracity of information provided by the media. Professor Chakrapani, calling it a case of media distortion, says that the media distorted information during the movement. 76% (Fig.3) of the people from the region felt that they have been deprived of information. By and large, it can be safely concluded on the basis of my field investigation that people of the Telangana region were unhappy with the media coverage of events.

CONCLUSION

This inclusivity ensured sustained mass participation over decades, transforming the struggle into a people's movement rather than a purely political campaign. Political leadership strategically harnessed regional and cultural identity to convert emotional unity into organized political action. By aligning cultural pride with constitutional demands, leaders were able to frame statehood as both a democratic right and a moral necessity. The success of the Telangana Movement demonstrates how identity-based mobilization, when rooted in genuine grievances and cultural authenticity, can effectively challenge centralized power structures within a democratic framework. The formation of Telangana state marked the institutional recognition of regional identity and cultural distinctiveness. However, the conclusion of the movement does not signify the end of cultural or identity-based challenges. The post-statehood period places new responsibilities on governance to preserve cultural heritage, promote inclusive development, and ensure that the aspirations expressed during the movement are realized in practice. Cultural recognition must now translate into equitable policies, regional development, and social justice. In retrospect, the Telangana Movement highlights the interconnectedness of culture, identity, and politics in shaping regional struggles in India. It illustrates that movements for statehood are not solely administrative rearrangements but deeply emotional and cultural processes.

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