Chapter III

Socio-Political Movements in Andhra Pradesh: The Telangana Movement in Perspective

Introduction:
The chapter gives an overview of the important socio-political movements including the causes and rise of the Telangana movement. Before looking into the convergence of media and the Telangana movement, it is necessary to contextualize the movement's history. The chapter explores how the initial Telangana armed struggle against the Nizam was an inspiration for various other movements in Andhra Pradesh and the rest of India. The Telangana armed struggle paved the way for growth of communism and later the Naxal movement; the division among the communist party and its leaders based on their ideological differences gave rise to new groups and organizations. These groups and organizations continue to fight for various socio-political causes.

We can interpret the history of the Telangana movement from the perspective of Media Ecology to make sense of how socio-political movement brings together or balkanize smaller groups. Issue based socio-political movements grow in strength with larger people's participation. On the other hand, motivated movements tend to fail for various reasons. Political parties take advantage of these socio-political struggles and bring to bring about a socio-political change in the society. The growth of the regional political parties is also interconnected with the socio-political movements and the media ecology.

3.1 Overview and Timeline of the Telangana Movement
Andhra Pradesh is the first linguistic state to be carved out of the Indian union in the year 1956. It is interesting and also important to trace the history of the Telangana region for the purpose of this study. It is important to raise some fundamental questions regarding the Telangana movement: Why did people from the Telangana region demand a separate state for six decades? What were the defining and critical moments in the history of the Telangana movement? Who benefited from the merger of the Telangana region with Andhra? Which group suffered from a sense of
deprivation? The erstwhile state of Hyderabad was merged with the state of Andhra in 1956. Andhra was carved out of the Madras presidency in 1953. The Telangana region had been under the rule of the Nizam of Hyderabad for more than 200 years. This is important to take note of since the erstwhile state of Hyderabad was the historical basis of the state of Telangana.

Though India became independent on August 15, 1947, the princely state of Hyderabad got its independence on September 17, 1948. The people of Telangana underwent turbulent periods of resistance against the Nizam and his army from 1944-1948 (Sundarayya 1972). Women and men fought valiantly until their death to overthrow the razakars, the deshmusks and the zamindars in the Telangana region. Hundreds of men and women fought and died protecting their lands and fighting for their rights. In 1948 the Indian army took hold of the state of Hyderabad. Initially the Nizam wanted Hyderabad to be an independent country (Sundarayya 1972:56); later he expressed his desire to join Pakistan. Ultimately, however, he had to concede the Hyderabad state to the Indian union. On September 17, 1948 the Nizam surrendered his army to the Indian state and the princely state of Hyderabad was annexed into the Indian union.

The princely state of Hyderabad was untouched by the British rulers as the Nizam of Hyderabad was paying the colonial rulers in kind and cash. Though the people of Hyderabad state were not under direct British colonial rule, they witnessed the brutal autocratic rule of the Nizam of Hyderabad. The division of India into smaller states started to take shape with the carving of Andhra from Madras Presidency in 1953. The division of Madras Presidency and the carving out of the Andhra state led to a lot of heartburn as people from Andhra were not able to get Madras as their capital. This heartburn had to do with a strong sense of marginalization that was experienced by the people of Andhra vis-à-vis the Tamils. For instance, there was a feeling that the most important jobs in the government machinery went to the Tamils at the cost of the Telugus.

After six decades of the merger of Andhra with Telangana, there was almost a repetition of the same cycle of events. Gradually, the people of Telangana came to complain of the same maladies that had earlier afflicted the people in the Madras
Presidency. The merger of Telangana with Andhra was seen as an imposition. Two hundred years of the Nizam’s rule had brought about a new working style, culture, and religion in the Telangana region. The social fabric of the region was more cosmopolitan and was unique to the context of southern India. Even though the merger was done taking into consideration the language spoken (Telugu) in Andhra and Telangana, the political and social contexts were very different. This difference can be seen even after six decades of its merger.

During the period 1948-1956, Hyderabad was a separate state with an appointed Chief Minister, Mr. Mullath Kadingi Vellodi, a senior civil servant. Hyderabad became a state in the Indian Union in 1950 and in 1952; the first legislative assembly elections were held and Dr. Burgula Ramakrishna Rao was elected as the Chief Minister. The people of Telangana thus enjoyed a breath of fresh air after being under the Nizam’s rule for two hundred years. However, this sense of jubilation did not last very long. Pressure was building on the central government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru to bifurcate Madras Presidency and also to disintegrate Hyderabad. It is said that Nehru was opposed to the disintegration of Hyderabad. Gautam Pingle, in the article ‘The Historical Context of Andhra and Telangana, 1949-56’ writes,

On 16 January 1956, Nehru wrote to chief ministers that he had spoken on the radio and the government had issued a communique on the reorganization of states. In the broadcast he announced that, Bombay city would be centrally administered, Vidarbha would be merged with Maharashtra and Saurashtra and Kutch merged with Gujarat and also that Hyderabad would be split. The communique added that the future of Punjab and the Telangana area of Hyderabad would be decided later (Pingle 2010: 59).

The splitting of Hyderabad and the merger of Telangana region with Andhra did not go well with the people of Telangana region. During the period 1948-1956 when Hyderabad was an independent state there was widespread displeasure among the people of Telangana as officers from the costal and Madras Presidency dominated them in the local governance and in other issues. Ravi Narayana Reddy says,
After Police Action, officials were brought here from the coastal districts and the districts of the then Madras Presidency, for administrative convenience (quoted in Kodanda 2007:90).

The officials who were employed there treated Hyderabad as an occupied territory. This led to the first revolt against the outsiders in Telangana in the year 1952. The movement came to be popularly known as the ‘mulki’ movement. People started to protest against the outsiders (the Non-mulkis) from around the time of annexation itself. Prof. Kodanda Ram thinks that the 1952 agitation is significant because it shaped the attitude of the people towards the issue of state reorganisation. Though the demand for a separate Telangana state had its roots in the Mulki movement it was not articulated by the political groups until the question of state reorganisation became a reality. The States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) was constituted by the government of India in 1953 (Kodanda 2007: 90).

Ignoring the demand of the Telangana people for keeping the state separate, and bowing to the pressure of Andhra leaders, the government on November 1, 1956 merged the two regions. Many intellectuals and leaders from the Telangana region opposed the merger. Even people like B. R. Ambedkar, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Fazal Ali (States Reorganisation Commission Chairman), were against the merger of Telangana with Andhra state. Professor M Sridhar, Information Officer, New Delhi in an editorial written in The Hans India says,

On February 20, 1956 the elderly leaders of Congress from Andhra and Telangana signed certain safeguards for Telangana called ‘Gentlemen’s Agreement’, which means that the terms should be complied with like gentlemen without creating necessity to enforce them (Sridhar 2014).

The people from both the regions, especially the people of Telangana, were thus unenthusiastic about the prospects of the new state. Though the language in the two regions of Telangana and Andhra was the same, the cultures were different and quite
distinctive. The religion, caste and hierarchy structures were also different. While the Rayalaseema had a population dominated by the Reddys, coastal Andhra was dominated by the Kammas (in Andhra). When it came to Telangana, the majority of the population belonged to backward communities. The domination of the Andhra politicians, ignoring the 'Gentlemen’s Agreement' and not adhering to the promises subsequently gave rise to unrest among people of Telangana.

As the 'mulki' rules were not being implemented in the Telangana region people started to lose jobs and other opportunities in education, administration. This gave rise to the 1969 Jai Telangana movement. Students from the Osmania University, Kakatiya University and other colleges participated in the 1969 movement making it one of the bloodiest students’ movements (more than 360 people died in the police firing). When the Supreme Court upheld the Mulki rules in favor of Telangana, the government made sure that interests of the Telangana people was protected and it came up with an Eight Point plan in 1969. Not satisfied with the promises made by the Centre, the leader of the Congress party M. Chenna Reddy floated his own party called Telangana Praja Samithi (TPS). Under his leadership the movement got intensified and the Telangana Praja Samithi won 10 out of 14 parliament seats in the general elections. Seeing the aspiration of the majority of the people, the government of India started to rectify the damages and was forced to implement the 'gentlemen’s agreement'. The people from Andhra agitated against the strict implementation of the ‘mulki’ rules and thus commenced the Jai Andhra movement in 1972 (Benichou, 2000). The people from Andhra demanded the separate state and the agitation went on till the two parties reached an understanding. In the year 1973 the two regions agreed for a Six-Point Formula to implement and also protect the interests of the people belonging to the Telangana region (Kamala 2013: 28). And in 1975 a presidential order was issued for the implementation of a Six-Point Formula providing constitutional safeguards to the people of Telangana. But nothing went according to the agreements.

Even after being provided with constitutional safeguards the people of Telangana felt deprived in every aspect. In 1985 the employees from the Telangana region complained against the lack of implementation of the Six-Point Formula. The then Chief Minister N T Rama Rao issued a government order popularly known as 610 or
that was supposed to correct the irregularities and violations in recruitment. And in 2001 the government appointed the Girgliani commission to look into the violations. However, in every sector people from the Telangana region continued to feel neglected and deprived with regard to agriculture, irrigation, water allocation, culture, and the private sector. Prof. Kodanda Ram says,

Telangana has thus been converted into an internal colony as a result of the economic development process pursued by successive governments. Its resources have been diverted and utilised for the development of other regions. The movement for separate statehood seeks to articulate the demand for a fair share in the resources. It is an outcome of injustice meted out to the region by the successive governments in Andhra Pradesh (Kodanda 2007: 90).

Things started to change when for the first time, again after a gap of 28 years the Bhartiya Janata Party in 1997, raised the Telangana issue and also passed a resolution in Kakinada for the formation of a separate Telangana state. This was followed up in the lead up to the general elections where it popularized the slogan ‘One Vote Two States’. This helped to flare up sentiments once more and brought the demand for a separate state to the forefront of the people. Seeing a ray of hope and also the possibility of reviving the movement with the help of Telangana intellectuals and other supporters Kalvakuntla Chandrashekar Rao, also known as KCR, floated the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) in 2001.

More than 1000 people died for the cause of Telangana in the last decade. The Telangana Rashtra Samithi led the third phase of the movement, and forced the other political parties to concede to the demand for a separate state. It went into an alliance first with the Indian National Congress in 2004; the then central government under the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) included the Telangana issue in the Common Minimum Programm. In 2008 the Telugu Desam Party passed a resolution for a separate Telangana state and went into an alliance with Telangana Rashtra Samithi in the 2009 elections.
After the general elections Kalvakuntla Chandrashaker Rao (KCR) undertook a fast- unto-death, shaking the political system and also making the movement very intense. The government, sensing that the movement could turn violent as the students started to agitate and take over, announced a road map and initiated the process for creation of a separate Telangana state on December 9, 2009. But the central government delayed and kept it on hold as there were large scale protests and resignations from elected representatives in Andhra and Rayalaseema region. On December 23, 2009 the government made a statement that it would like to move ahead after having consensus on the Telangana issue. The Indian National Congress party at the centre once again bowed to the pressure mounting from the Andhra and Rayalaseema leaders as they constituted the majority in the Andhra Pradesh assembly, while people from Andhra and Rayalaseema had 175 elected representatives or MLAs the Telangana region only had 119. In February 2010 the Home ministry appointed a five member committee to look into the issue of separate state headed by Justice Sri Krishna, which submitted its findings and report on December 2010, giving six options for the government to decide on the fate of Andhra Pradesh. In between (in the period of 2010-2012) there were several by-elections that were held in the Telangana region because of the resignations given by the MLAs (Member of Legislative Assembly) of Telangana Rashtra Samithi and also other political parties. It was the Telangana Rashtra Samithi that won all the by-elections and people stood by the Telangana Rashtra Samithi and the MLAs (Member of Legislative Assembly) who had resigned for the cause of Telangana. In 2010 Prof. Kodanda Ram was elected as the Joint Action Committee Chairman. Talking about the movement and the by-elections, he says,

The movement has now gained wide support among the people of Telangana. In the recent by-elections to the Karimnagar parliamentary constituency, located in the Telangana region, people voted for Telangana Rashtra Samithi irrespective of their political affiliations only to show that they support the demand for separate Telangana (Kodanda 2007: 93).

Under his leadership political parties and various non-political and social groups worked together and added steam to the movement. Various protests were held under
his leadership and under the umbrella of Joint Action Committee (JAC) from 2010-2014. In February 17, 2011 they had a non-cooperation movement for sixteen days, and in March 10, 2011 they had Million March in Hyderabad, including the Sakala Janula Sammya (All people's strike) on 13 September 2011. All these protests and strikes had a severe impact on the state government, the political parties and also on the central government.

Sensing the mood and the political will of the Telangana people after witnessing the intensity of the movement, the national leadership of the Indian National Congress and Bharatiya Janata Party kept their promise and in July 30, 2013 the Congress Working Committee took the decision to support the Telangana state. On October 3, 2013 the union cabinet appointed a Group of Ministers (GoM) to listen to the political parties and other stakeholders of Andhra Pradesh. Based on the recommendations suggested the union cabinet approved the draft of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Bill 2013 on December 5, 2013, paving the way for the Telangana state. Though the Andhra Pradesh assembly rejected the bill sent by the President of India, the central government passed the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Bill 2013 in the Lok Sabha on February 18, 2014 and in the Rajay Sabha on February 20, 2014 making the Telangana the 29th state in the Indian Union.
The state of Andhra Pradesh was a unification of the erstwhile Hyderabad Princely state and the colonized British areas of the costal Andhra and Rayalaseema that were under the Madras presidency till 1953. The two regions were unified in the year 1956 under the first SRC (states reorganization commission) based on language.

3.2 Telangana Arms Struggle and the Naxal Movement

The oppression, inequality and hegemony of one group in social, political, cultural and economic life are the root for many struggles that have taken place in erstwhile Hyderabad and Andhra Pradesh. Andhra Pradesh has a unique place in history for social and political struggles. Till 1956 the Hyderabad state also known as Telangana, or Nizam Area, had a long history of political and social struggles. The Telangana region under the Nizam rulers witnessed brutal suppression of people. The people of the region revolted against the Nizam, known as Razakar movement, or Telangana arms struggle or the peasant’s struggle that has come to be considered as a historical struggle in Indian history (Sundarayya 1972). People from different parts of the Telangana region got united in defeating the Nizam’s army (known as Razakars); the Communist Party of India played a vital role in the revolt and stood with the common peasants.
Besides the poor, agricultural labour, small peasants led by the Party, a broad section of middle peasantry, small, petty business people, intelligentsia supported the armed struggle and saved our underground leaders during the most difficult times. Poets, writers, journalists, government employees, Hindus, Muslims stood by the armed struggle. Women played an important role (Reddy 2010).

The people and the parties play vital role post liberation or armed struggle and according to Fanon,

As for the peasants, they improve their knowledge through practical experience and prove apt to lead the people's struggle. A wave of awareness and mutual enrichment flows between the nation on a war footing, and its leaders. Traditional institutions are reinforced, expanded and sometimes literally transformed. The tribunal for local the conflicts, djemaas, and the village assemblies are transformed into revolutionary tribunals and politico-military committees. (Fanon 1961: 92)

The peasant struggle, also known as Telangana arms struggle, drove the Razakars (Nizam Army) out of the villages which they had control over; following the communist ideology new laws were implemented by the peasants to govern themselves. The land was distributed among the villagers; bonded labour was abolished; minimum wages for agriculture and manual labours were fixed. According to the new laws, the villages were ruled by the Village Peasant Committees. During and after the peasant's movement (for a period 12-18 months), the people of the Telangana region achieved what Mahatma Gandhi always dreamt of: “Gram Swaraj” (power with the people at the local level, to solve the local problems). Sundarayya referred this as Gram Raj (Sundarayya 1972: 2).

People of Telangana displayed to the rest of India that Gram Swaraj could be a reality, and not merely a dream. The success of the Gram Swaraj can be mainly attributed to the communist ideology; second reason can be the equality among the castes (majority of the communities belong to backward class) and third is the
decentralization of power. The agrarian revolution in the independent India had its seeds sown with the peasant’s struggle of Telangana. P. Sundarayya (1972 b) in his book *Telangana People’s Struggle and its Lessons* explains that the Telangana peasants’ struggle has redrawn the map of India, calling into being larger brotherhoods cutting across state-boundaries. There is no doubt in his argument that the peasants struggle is the struggle for the legitimate rights of the oppressed (1946-1951), which later inspired many other social and political movements in India, especially the communist movement in rural India (Sundarayya 1972: 3).

The Communist Party of India strengthened its presence in the peasant movement of Telangana. The Communist Party of India inspired many peasants and rural youths to join various such movements; under the Party’s guidance many organizations were formed. These organizations moved into the country side and other states making the ordinary masses to revolt against the suppression. The Communist Party of India and its cadres played a vital role in propagating and influencing the people with the communist ideology. Till date the communist ideology and its ideals influence the people of the region for a common cause; it unites the people of the region especially to resist the hegemony of the ruling classes and the dominance of the Andhra people over Telangana. The division of the communist party in to two groups – one in favor and the other against the armed struggle, was in fact a blow to the Telangana region. One of these groups favored the Vishalandhra Communist Party of India (Marxist) (combining all the Tefugu speaking regions into one). The other wanted a separate Telangana.

After the annexation of Hyderabad state to the Indian union in 1948, a semblance of normalcy in the political and social conditions was restored. However, very soon this normalcy got disrupted once again when the Hyderabad state was merged with Andhra on linguistic grounds in 1956. The apprehensions expressed by Syed Fazal Ali who headed the States Reorganisaton Commission (SRC) came true.

The educationally backward people would be exploited by the people of Andhra and any models like the ‘Scottish devolution in the United Kingdom’ or any sort of guarantee would not serve the special needs of
Telangana; so it was recommended to retain its separate entity. (Madhusudan 2011)

The political, cultural and economic power of the Andhra people dominated the Telangana region for the last six decades (Kodanda 2007). The agreements that were signed between the two parties while merging the two regions were ignored and overwritten by the powerful political and economic classes belonging to Seemandhra region (Pingle 2010). The gap that existed between the three regions especially in terms of caste, culture, economy, education, and lifestyle widened in the last sixty years of unification. In the 60 years of movement for separate statehood, many agreements and special development councils were granted to protect the legitimate rights of the people of Telangana, by the state and the central governments through various amendments and acts in the constitution, but none of the agreements guaranteed were followed in principle by the state and centre. People of the region were left with no choice but to fight for their rights till the end for a separate state. It all started with the Singareni employees in 1968 G. Innaiah said in a personal interview,

The Telangana agitation first started in Singareni in Kothagudam and Palwancha in 1968. It started there because people who were working in the mines, especially the sons and daughters of lower grade employees were not getting seats in the local colleges. In contrast, the wards of higher salaried employees, who incidentally belonged to other districts (from Andhra), started to get more seats. On paper the Mulki rules were still applicable in the Telangana region; however, these rules were violated and the locals started to fight for their implementation.

The politicians, employees and students agitated for implementation of the agreements guaranteed by the government for their rights and also for protecting their jobs and other benefits. The active participation of students, employees and others in the movement of 1969 became very crucial. Osmania University became the nerve centre of the movement. A total of 360 students were killed in the 1969 struggle, mainly consisting of students from the Telangana region. The failure of the movement
and U-turn by political leaders, made many students and others to join the Naxal movement. The growth of the Naxal movement in Andhra Pradesh was also because of the Telangana movement.

The Naxal movement is also known as the Naxalite movement, People's War movement, or Maoist movement. The history of the Naxal movement in India, starting from Naxalbari (1967) in West Bengal, to the present shows an increase in strength and has become a threat to the Indian state. The communist ideology attracted the youth not just in India but throughout the world in the period 1950-60. Without going into its history and operations with regard to Telangana or the Hyderabad state the communist ideology and its support was crucial in fighting against the Nizam and the Razakars. The communist movement had grown in strength but later got divided into various groups based on their ideological differences – the Communist party of India (Marxist) and the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Lenin). In Andhra Pradesh it got divided into People's War Group, the Janashakti and various other groups. The groups led a movement against the Indian government for over more than five decades. As said earlier, it was an offshoot of the initial Telangana Sayudha Poratam (Telangana armed struggle or Telangana peasants struggle or Razakar movement). People in the Telangana region got attracted to the movement for various reasons. One reason was the suppression of the individual rights by the Nizam and the Razakars and the lack of basic amenities. The second reason was the merger of Telangana with Andhra. The third reason was the Patel, Zamindar, and Reddy domination of the backward communities in Telangana. Finally, it was the domination of the Andhra people in employment, education, and jobs which led to the 1969 Telangana agitation. After a letdown by the politicians, many youths in the institutions, universities and colleges joined the Naxal movement with the idea of liberating the people from bonded labour and establishing a socialist regime by giving the people their basic needs and basic rights. Fighting for the separate state of Telangana was also a part of the agenda. S. R Venkateshwar Rao a participant of the 1969 struggle and now an active member of the railway joint action committee member said in a personal interview,

Though we had the Naxal movement initially in Srikakulam in coastal Andhra, it was successful in all the ten districts of Telangana. But it
was a flop in Andhra. People of Telangana have accepted the Naxal movement because they have already fought the Nizam and the Razakars who had suppressed them on all fronts. The seed of revolt and the revolutionary spirit has been an integral part of the Telangana people, so this has led the people to easily identify with the peoples war movement after the 1969 movement.

Sudhakar, member of the Peoples’ War Group (Cultural Front), also shares the same opinion with growth and influence of Naxal movement. He said in a personal interview,

In 1969 it was initially the students who led the Telangana movement. The movement was then at its peak, but after 1972 many students and others were influenced by the Naxalite movement mainly in the Warangal district.

One of the groups that emerged strong after the 1969 movement was that of the students. The successive movements thereafter slowly but steadily gave rise to many groups. G. Innaiah, said in a personal interview,

The early Naxal leaders have formed mass organizations to bridge the gap between party activities and the common people, this is the period when you had students organization, youth organization, peasant organization, cultural organization, writers organization that later became the revolutionary writer's organization was the first organization to be formed.

With the concerted efforts of various groups, the impact of the movement spread and it also helped in democratizing the society at large. Groups like Employees Union, Workers Union, Farmers Union, Backward Class Union, Schedule Caste & Schedule Tribe Union, the Writers Group, the Jana Natya Mandali and later Praja Natya Mandala, the Women’s Union, Tribal Unions, and many others asserted their rights and also actively participated in the various other movements. The caste based movements were the offshoots of the Telangana movement. These groups and unions
became a part of the Telangana agitation and they played a vital role in highlighting the problems and achieving certain rights.

The youth leaders and the radical group leaders of the 1969 movement who got associated with the Naxal movement became the top leaders of the Maoist movement. Over the years they have been very supportive of various movements in central India especially in states like Odisha, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar apart from Andhra Pradesh. They have been fighting for people’s rights in these states, especially for the tribes and the lower caste communities. They have supported many farmers’ movements, land movements, tribal movements, caste movements, women’s movements and various other movements. The group is still fighting against state atrocities and injustice for the last four decades. People in different parts of the country have thus drawn their inspiration from the earlier movements that have taken place in Telangana.

The students groups which played a vital role in the Telangana agitation especially highlighted the lack of education and employment in the region. This made the government to establish a few good colleges and institutes in the region. Later many groups involved with the agitation turned into full-fledged organizations. Today we have the Dalit movement fighting for the rights of Schedule casts, the Tribal Movement fighting for land/forest rights and development, the civil liberties movement, and the women’s movement fighting for equal justice for women in family and at workplace. To a large extent these groups were all the offshoots of the Telangana movement and the Naxal movement and they completely transformed the political and social systems in Andhra Pradesh.

3.3 Women’s Participation in Socio-Political Struggles

The subjugation of women is a common trait found in many societies, but revolts by women are probably not as common. Though women participated and contributed a lot in India’s freedom struggle many of these narratives are missing in the history books. Very few people have written and acknowledged women’s participation and contribution in the freedom struggle of India. The women in Telangana have shown remarkable strength in taking on the mighty Razakars along with the men in 1946-51. They were active participants in the movement; they fought in the frontline, carrying
arms and ammunition. The women stood their ground when their men were killed or had to take shelter elsewhere. Women fought till the end to liberate themselves from bonded labour, abuse and sexual exploitation. P. Sundarayya explains in detail how the women in Telangana revolted against Razakars, police, and feudal land lords (Sundarayya 1972). The first revolt of Chakali Ilamma in the small village of Palakurthi in Jangaon Mandal inspired many women to stand for their rights and to protect the lands, even when women were raped by the Razakars (Nizam army) and the landlord goons; the women of Telangana were not deterred even when their husbands were killed in front of them. Mallu Swarajyam who was an active member of the Telangana movement mentions the experience of thousands of women like her who participated in the Telangana struggle.

I was part of an armed struggle, but arms did not come into our hands in the beginning. Initially the weapons that we used for the struggle were sticks, sickles, chilli powder and knives. Only the military division was given arms. We were in the political struggle. Women, however, participated both in the military division and in the political division at leadership levels as well as at the level of the cadre (Swarajyam 1998: WS-31).

Fanon mentions how the movements can sustain for longer periods from the narratives that are told and retold about he says

In order to maintain their stamina and their revolutionary capabilities, the people also resort to retelling certain episodes in the life of the community. The outlaw, for example, who holds the countryside for days against the police, hot on his trail, or who succumbs after killing four or five police officers in singlehanded combat or who commits suicide rather than "give up" his accomplices, all constitute for the people role models, action schemas, and "heroes." (Fanon 1961:30)

The stories of brave village women such as Acchamma of Parsaipalli, Lingamma of Chilapakuntla, Lachamma of Nadigadda, Jainabbi of Rajaram passed through word of mouth and in the form of songs inspiring thousands of women to come out and fight
during the struggle. Hundreds of women have been raped and killed but the inspiration did not die. Women seized the opportunity to break the shackles and to liberate themselves. P Sundarayya says

It is not surprising that we had women participating in large numbers in all agricultural labour strikes, or in seizure of grain from landlords' and deshmukhs' warehouses and gadis (Sundarayya 1972: 330).

Many women saw the opportunity of liberating themselves forever in a do or die battle of the Telangana armed struggle. This gave an opportunity for the women to move outside their domain that was largely confined to household kitchen and agriculture. But the majority of the women who participated in the struggle were from the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities (as Telangana has a large population of these communities). Another reason for the large participation of women was that it enabled them to liberate themselves from the abuse that they had to face regularly, especially the sexual abuse by the landlords. Mallu Swarajyam says

One of the reasons why women came in was the fact that at that point, no beautiful woman, in the village was spared by the landlord. If a landlord saw a beautiful woman in the village or someone he was attracted to, she had to be immediately sent to him. So among the girls, who came and joined the movement as Karyakartas, were girls, who were likely to face this kind of harassment. There were also destitute women, who came into the movement as karyakartas, because they also would not be spared by the landlord. Young girls who had been married to old men and found no meaning in their lives came and became karyakartas in the movement because here they found some cause for which they could dedicate their lives. At that time, we also had a consciousness of women's issues (Testimonies of Struggle 1998: WS-30).

Vimalakka the balladeer, a revolutionary leader who heads the Arunodaya Samskritika Samakhya (ACF) who fought on various issues concerned with women said in a personal interview,
No movement is successful without women and women’s participation; women today are saying that we are one-half of the sky and we are one-half of the struggle. Aarootla Kamama Devi, Chakali Ayilama Mallu Swarajam, fought against the Nizam, and today in the ongoing movement thousands of women have participated. Women’s role has become vital in the first and the present phase of Telangana movement but the opportunities provided for women continue to be far less compared to men.

The large participation of women in the Telangana armed struggle paved the way for the formation of many women’s organizations; the Communist Party of India also encouraged women’s participation. And this encouragement has also led them to the forests along with men to wage armed rebellion against the government. Many women were active participants of the cultural groups like Jana Natya Mandali, Praja Natya Mandali, and other groups like Arunodaya Samskritika Samakhya (ACF). Some of the other women became active participants, wielding guns as members of the banned People’s War Group. Women became the unknown and unseen strength in many movements that took place in India, playing a vital role in sustaining the movement and providing the required support.

Women had participated equally along with the men and due to this, it became easier for the Gram Committees, Sangham and Party to campaign against the age-old ideas prevalent in the society that women were inferior to men. Gram Raj Committees proclaimed and campaigned that, men and women had equal rights. (Sundarayya 1972:126)

The 1960-70 period is crucial in terms of women’s participation as many of them joined the Naxal movement that saw an increase in numbers after the second phase of Telangana movement of 1969-72. In this phase women’s role increased and the left parties were ready to accommodate the women and also assign them roles and responsibilities. The women became very vocal and also the left party leaders and groups brought the issues of gender and gender equality within the official discourse
of the party; this gave the opportunity for the women in Andhra Pradesh to fight patriarchy and violence against women. Gradually women started to lead the movement in women-centric issues; the political parties took note of the strength of women in Andhra Pradesh during the anti-arrack movement (1992). The anti-arrack movement mobilized women like never before; the literacy drive that was started by the state National Literacy Mission helped the women in relating to the issues.

The anti-arrack movement that started in a small village of Dubagunta in Nellore district by Rossamma started to spread like wild fire. Many women in Andhra Pradesh were victims of domestic violence and most often than not such women were married to alcoholic husbands. Women easily identified with the movement and opposed the auctions for liquor sale in their villages and district headquarters. The women who were part of the Self Help Groups in Andhra Pradesh took an active role in the anti-arrack movement.

The political parties took advantage of the movement and the main opposition party went one step further and said that it would impose prohibition the day it comes to power. This was a major victory for women as the government imposed the ban on liquor sale and production in Andhra Pradesh. The upper and middle class women along with women of the villages (especially women who were part of the Self Help Groups) played an active role in mobilizing the masses and few of them became presidents of political parties at the district and state level. Prof Katyayani Vidmahe, Sahitya Akademi awardee 2013, while speaking at the sixth general body meeting of Progressive Organisation of Women (POW) said

\[ \text{SHGs stalled women's movements; the women's movements had always seen ups and downs. Whenever there were atrocities against women, agitations were taken up but with the introduction of Self Help Groups (SHGs), the women's movement took a backseat for some time as political parties viewed women just as a vote bank. (The Hansindia March 3 2014)} \]

Though women in Andhra Pradesh have made some progress in the political, social and economic arenas they are still lagging behind with regard to achieving equal
rights. Prof Rama Melkote says “Religion and culture played an adverse role in the forward movement of women’s struggle. The mindset of the people had to change (The Hansindia March 3 2014). Women in villages are ready to fight male dominance and violence through courts and police stations. Many women in the recent past have been bold enough to lodge protests and fight for justice; women’s organizations have supported the individuals on several occasions. There have been a few cases of justice to the individual with the help of women’s organizations.

Celebrating the One Billion Raising awareness campaign in Hyderabad, Vasant Kannabiran, co-founder, Asmita Resource Centre for Women remembered the women who sacrificed their lives fighting for equal justice and rights and the prominent women leaders of the Telangana movement: “Ailamma’s name was engraved in the history as the woman who started Telangana Peasant Struggle” (The Hansindia February 15 2014). Women in Andhra Pradesh, especially the urban middle class educated women, who were part of the Andhra Mahasabha, fought on women issues related to wages, land rights, violence at work place, and domestic violence; it gave the women an opportunity to assert their presence through participation in various struggles. Talking about the leadership qualities and the awareness that has been created by their group and other women’s organizations Vimalakka said in a personal interview,

Women leadership has grown over the years; women are no longer a show piece nor do they want to do things for media attention; the movement has given the strength to move forward and question the system. They do not wait for orders and they are bold enough to take their own decision. Women who participated in the movement are bold enough now and they are ready to fight for their rights.

Today there are numerous women’s organizations in Andhra Pradesh that are working on issues concerned with women in fields ranging from empowerment to education for women. The Progressive Women’s Association is the leading women’s organization in Andhra Pradesh. The Progressive Organization of Women (POW) and its leaders, including the president V. Sandhya, asserted their power by highlighting women’s issues on various platforms and in seeking equal justice, thousands of
women participated in the ongoing Telangana movement. Taking the past experience into consideration, the women’s organizations in Telangana are demanding Women’s Reservation Bill to be passed by the Telangana assembly now that statehood is a reality; various organizations are demanding for recognition and equal justice along with men in all fields. The women’s organizations are careful and are ready to record the history with the help of the academia and Telangana intelligentsia.

3.4 Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS)

The Dalit movement has a long history in India; many great leaders and social reformers have fought for their rights. Unlike other Dalit movements in India seeking justice and equal rights, the Dalit movement (MRPS) in Andhra Pradesh was fighting for sub-reservation within the SC community (15%) based on their population. Madigas (forming around 47 per cent) and the Malas (36 per cent) are two dominant communities. The Madiga population is large in Telangana when compared with the Andhra region; the lack of opportunities, backwardness in education and employment when compared to the Mala community led the Madiga community to fight for justice starting from the early 1980s.

It was in 1995 that the Madiga Reservation Porata Samiti (MRPS) came on the scene. It declared that the scheduled caste quota of reservations was being availed of disproportionately by the mala community and demanded that the 15 per cent quota allotted to the SCs in the state be sub-divided and fixed quotas allotted to properly-identified subgroups of the 59 dalit communities. The demand the madigas raised was plain, simple and easily understood: divide up the SC reservation quota and give us our due. It was moreover felt to be unproblematic since the backward class reservation in the state has long since been subdivided into four subgroups, which subdivision has been upheld by the Supreme Court (Balagopal 2000:1076)

The Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MPRS) founded in 1994 by Manda Krishna Madiga had a great influence on the political and social system in Andhra Pradesh. The movement fought for the community and their rights on various issues with regard to their self-respect. Seeking proportional justice based on the population was
its goal. The Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS) was able to get support from various political parties in the implementation of the reservation policy under the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) government in Andhra Pradesh but the Supreme Court objected to it and rejected the implementation of the sub-reservation within the SC community. Over the years the Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS) has fought for the upliftment of the Madiga community in Andhra Pradesh. The political parties have used the reservation card in every election to gain votes. The Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS) used every opportunity to its advantage to use the political parties in achieving certain goals. The government of Andhra Pradesh has recently implemented the sub-plan for schedule caste and schedule tribe (SC/ST) communities. The Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS) was a strong supporter of the Telangana movement and it was instrumental in various strikes organized by the caste based Joint Action Committees which were in the forefront of the Telangana movement. The MRPS or the Madiga community could benefit with the division of Andhra Pradesh as it believes that it can get all the benefits in various sectors including the local and general body elections of the government. In the larger context it could also solve the sub-reservation problem as the Madigas are larger in number in the Telangana region. Recently the MRPS leader launched a new political party called the Mahajana Socialist Party. The cultural, economic and political hegemony of one region over the other has been the cause for various political and social movements in Andhra Pradesh (Kodanda 2007). The rise of the socio-political movements and rise of regional political parties is directly or indirectly linked to political, cultural and economic suppression; the leaders of the movement take advantage of these movements and float new political parties or organizations that promise equal justice and opportunities in every field. While some political parties change the course of history and the lives of people to certain extent with their success, others take advantage of the movements. It is interesting to see how the 1969 Telangana movement was a failure while the 2001 Telangana movement was successful.

3.5 Telangana Movement and the Rise of Political Parties (1969-2001)

Telangana Praja Samithi (TPS): Apart from the Telangana armed struggle the 1969 movement is considered as the defining movement in the history of Telangana. It was the socio-political and cultural upheaval in the state of Andhra Pradesh. The 1969 movement showed to the world the consequence of undermining the rights of the
minority; rights that were guaranteed by the state are ignored by the ruling class. As said, the agitation started with the employees in the Singareni coal mines demanding justice for their children in colleges in 1968; later, students and politicians joined the protests demanding the continuation of safeguards (Mulki rules) for the Telangana people, along with demanding jobs, education and budget allocation. It started in the district of Khammam and later spread to other parts of the Telangana region as many students started to participate in the agitation demanding a separate state of Telangana.

Dr. Marri Chenna Reddy mobilized public support in favour of separate Telangana. His party won eleven Lok Sabha seats. Smt Indira Gandhi tried her level best to cool down the movement by offering minor development programmes. It is also very important to understand the development that neglected in the Telangana region during the Telugu Desam Party’s regime. People of Telangana region thought that Andhra educated youth robbing the employment opportunities of local youth (Jagan 2009:21).

The protests continued under the leadership of Mari Chenna Reddy who headed the political party called Telangana Praja Samithi (TPS) demanding a separate state. Around 360 students died in the police firing during the agitation. Govardhan, a Cultural Artist, said in a personal interview,

During the period between 1969 and 1972 the people of the region were still lingering in the shadows of the Nizam Saiudha Poratam (armed struggle). It was the communist movement and the people’s war party which made the Telangana resolution for separate state and also helped the Telangana Praja Samithi (TPS) to win the majority of seats in the Parliament from the Telangana region. The Telangana Praja Samithi (TPS) won because of the students and their sacrifice.

A railway employee S. R Venkateshwar Rao who participated in the movement of 1969 had to say this with regard to the rise of Telangana Praja Samithi and the influence of the Reddy community in the Telangana region, in a personal interview,
Channa Reddy became very popular in the Telangana region as he supported the movement. Also the Reddy community was very powerful and popular in the Telangana region as they were the “elite class” and had command over the people at the village level. There was a meeting held in Secundrabad parade ground and majority of the people who attended the party meeting belonged to the Reddy community from all over the Telangana region. As the Communist Party of India got divided into two, the Indian National Congress became very powerful. But the Telangana Praja Samithi (TPS) lead by Channa Reddy was the sole representative and only alternative for the people of Telangana during the elections.

The Telangana Praja Samithi (TPS) contested the general elections in 1971; the party won an overwhelming majority of 11 parliament seats out of 14 in the Telangana region. As the central government headed by Indira Gandhi was not in favor of the Telangana state the movement slowly disintegrated when elected representatives from the Telangana region joined the ruling Congress party. Though the government of India reached an agreement to correct the injustice that was done through the 1973 Six-Point Formula, the people of the Telangana region were not satisfied, as the apprehension still continued. The following governments in the state of Andhra Pradesh did nothing to implement the 6-point formula and this gave an opportunity for other political parties to take advantage of the situation. First it was the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1997 with a slogan of ‘one vote two states’. Then the Congress in 1999 and Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) in 2001 raised the single point agenda of realizing the Telangana state.

Telangana Rashtra Samithi: The Telangana movement found its lost momentum after the launch of the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) by Kalvakuntla Chandrashekher Rao who in the year 2001 launched the new party for spearheading the separate Telangana cause. He was a senior legislator belonging to the Telugu Desam party in the Andhra Pradesh assembly. He represented the Siddipet constituency in Karminagar district in Telangana region. As he was not given a cabinet berth in the government headed by Chandra Babu Naidu (Telugu Desam), Kalvakuntla Chandrashekher Rao (KCR) resigned from the party citing injustice to the politicians.
belonging to the Telangana region. His single point agenda was to free Telangana from the domination of the Andhra rulers and seek justice for the people of Telangana. Very few occasionally have talked about injustice done to the region after the 1969-72 movement. Govardhan, an active member of the cultural group said in a personal interview, “Very few people dared to talk about Telangana. People in the Telangana region were afraid to protest as the region has the past history of fake encounter killings and state atrocities”. None of the leaders talked about or fought for Telangana till Kalvakuntla Chandrashaker Rao (KCR) launched the party.

Political leaders responded to the demand only after the movement gained wide support from the people. The present phase of the movement led by various civil society groups started in 1989 and intensified from 1996 onwards. The Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) was formed only in 2001, after the movement gained strength. It has given political expression to the movement. (Kodanda 2007:93)

Telangana United Front Party leader and Member of Legislative Council, K Dilip said in a personal interview,

Kalvakuntla Chandrashaker Rao (KCR) seized the opportunity to bring back the Telangana cause to limelight. When he started to fail and saw that the movement was being hijacked by the other political parties, he floated the Joint Action Committee that constituted all the political parties.

The TRS party strategically got all the parties to accept the demand for a separate state by forming an alliance with the two principal parties of Andhra Pradesh (Telugu Desam Party and Indian National Congress) in the 2004 and 2009 Lok Sabha and assembly elections. The success of the party in the elections was largely due to the regional aspiration of the people for a separate state, and also the awareness campaigns launched by the party in the Telangana region. The alternative media became an integral part of the Telangana society and it turned out to be more effective than the mainstream media.
The year 2010 turned to be the year of Telangana as the central government was forced to concede to the demand of separate state after a fast-unto-death by K Chandrashaker Rao, Member of Parliament and founder of the Telangana Rashtra Samithi after six decades of struggle. When the center delayed in delivering the separate state of Telangana, the people of the region adopted various means to achieve their goal for separate statehood. All peaceful methods from street protests to non-cooperation, hunger strikes to fast-unto-death were employed by the people of the Telangana region during the movement period. Though the Naxalite/Maoists supported the cause, they did not resort to any violence during the movement. The Telangana movement was successful because it was an issue based movement; it became the people’s movement and not that is motivated by self-interest by an individual or an organization.

3.6 Acceptance and Success of Issue based Movements (Telangana Movement)

Political and social movements, irrespective of place and time, can always influence others; movements are contagious and their impact can spread far and wide. Whenever movements arise histories are rewritten, new facts are quoted by the people, and the media carries forward the message, often acting as a catalyst making people believe and act. Political and social movements with the help of media can also manipulate the facts according to their needs from time to time. As new stories and facts emerge over a period of time, the media (mainstream or alternative) conveys these messages to the audience adding new dimensions to the movements. Today the information that is available is huge and people are often perplexed as what to believe in and what not.

We are witnessing an increasing trend of political and social movements getting disintegrated very soon; the united movements are not able to sustain too long, as it is easy for the forces with vested interest to divide the groups on ethnic, regional, religious and cultural identities. Innaiah elaborating on the movement’s that have come up in the past few decades said in a personal interview,

Movements are of two types – one is issue-based and the other is motivated for personal interests. We find people using caste, religion, region, and gender in motivated movements. These movements have a
very limited life; we have seen such movements in a few states of India. In motivated movements emotions are not sustained for too long. On the other hand issue-based movements are universal and do not depend on caste, religion and region; these movements are universal and are for the betterment of whole community and society, these movements can sustain for long and can be expected to be more successful.

In majority of the movements we see the personal and motivated interests of a few. Even in the issue based movements we have seen people getting divided and losing sight of the common goal. Another reason can be the role of media; in the past two decades the media has played a significant role in disintegrating the social and political movements rather than integrating the movements for the larger cause of society.

The various methods employed by people in political, social and cultural movements may vary from place to place. While some groups tend to believe in a violent approach to achieving the desired goals, others prefer a non-violent method. Many peaceful and non-violent movements have been successful to a large extent in achieving their goals in comparison to the violent methods adopted by few movements. (E.g. Salt Satyagraha, Indian Independence, State of Andhra, Telangana movement, Narmada Bachao Andolan, and Anti-corruption Movement in India). G Innaiah while talking about the movements said in a personal interview,

According to me no philosophy is violent or non-violent; this concept is introduced by the state when they want to divide a movement and frame it from their point of view. Some issue-based movements, though initially confined to a particular region, can slowly spread to other areas. The freedom movement in India, the trade union movements, the Naxal movement, and the latest anti-corruption movement are issue-based movements because we don’t find discourses of religion, caste, gender, or region dominating in such movements. There has been a setback for issue-based movement in
India in the last 15-20 years. We see a decline in such movements that are of common and universal concern.

We can see that issue based movements that are of general concern for the larger population has more chance to be successful; the participation of people irrespective of religion caste and creed make a movement successful. For example, while the anti-arrack movement, the Telangana movement, and the anti-corruption movement are issue based movement became successful, on the other hand the reservation movement (sub-quota) movement carried by the Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi (MRPS) was a failure till date because it is concerned with one community and it is very limited.

The Telangana movement, right from its origin in 1956, was peaceful and adopted a non-violent approach to achieve the goal within the framework of the Indian Constitution. In the six decades of the movement’s ups and downs, many students died in police firings or self-immolation for the cause. There were no incidents reported of attacking the non-locals (people from Seemandhra). The people of the Telangana region have adopted various means to protest against the government. Having faith in the Indian government and parliamentary democracy people voted in favor of the Telangana representatives and political parties in all the elections and by-elections that were held during the days of the movement. Over the past six decades the people have been fighting the biased nature of the governments (Telugu Desam Party and Indian National Congress) that ruled the state. The political parties and leaders have used the Telangana issue and the backwardness of the region to their advantage by promising to fight for a separate state from time-to-time. During the past two upsurges of the movement the government of India managed to dose off the flames by manipulating and making amendments to the constitution as a temporary relief, starting from gentlemen’s agreement to the Six-point formula, Development Council, then the 610 GO (local jobs). However, all the agreements and special protections granted for the people of Telangana were ineffective as the successive governments headed by people from the Seemandhra region have ignored these special provisions and agreements granted by the centre and the state.
Knowledge and the geography of the Telangana region along with its socio-political and cultural conditions is crucial to understand the Telangana movement, as these factors contributed to the methods employed in the long history of the Telangana movement. A few centuries of rule under the Nizam not only brought the literature, art, architecture, culture and food of the Middle East to the region, but also made the ruler of the Hyderabad state one of the richest man in the world. The coexistence of different religions and mutual respect has been the tradition of the Telangana region. When compared to rest of India, the state of Hyderabad displayed greater social tolerance than many other parts of India. Different communities and traders were encouraged to settle in the region and also practice their own faith and culture as long as they did not go against the authority. The rulers not only brought a new religion but also a new culture and language (Urdu); the top administrative and judicial positions were held by the minority rulers. The schools were mainly Urdu based as it was the language spoken by the Nizam; all administrative and judicial works were carried out in Urdu. Hindus, Muslims and other communities took part in the celebration of each other’s festivals. People of the region, irrespective of their relation, call each other not by names but as someone belonging to the same family (for instance, a lower caste person will call the upper caste person as Anna (brother), Mama, Pedaiah, Chinnaiyah, Kaka (uncle), rather than calling names; the same is with the women, they also call the other women as Akka, Vadhina, Aatha, Kodala (sister, sister-in law, aunt)). This bond within the people of the region irrespective of religion, caste, culture and social status has helped in creating and sustaining a collective identity for the Telangana movement. Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper (2001) argue that collective identity is “an individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. It is a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly, and it is distinct from personal identities, although it may form part of a personal identity” (Polletta and Jasper 2001: 285).

Apart for the above categories a region can also strengthen and bolster a sense of collective identity. In the Telangana region the experiences of shared status or relation is not imagined but a reality. Dr. Bhangya Bhukya, who participated in the movement and also represents the under privileged communities, has this to say in regard to the unity of the people of the region in a personal interview,
The factor which unites the people of Telangana is the rule of the Nizam under whom peasants and laborers, irrespective of their caste and community, constituted a homogeneous class. The British rule was a landmark in Indian history as it brought modernity to India. However, Telangana was completely untouched by the British. Thus the cultural uniqueness and a sense of communal solidarity persisted in the region. One can see a cultural blending in the communities of the Telangana region. The Brahmanical and upper caste domination is less compared to many other places in India. One can find a lot of similarities between the communities and their culture in the Telangana region. This is visible when one looks at the worship pattern, the Muslims and Hindus have their places of worship built side by side, and in some temples you can see the Dargahs (tombs of peers) inside the places of worship of other communities.

Professor G. Chakrapani had to say this about the unity of the people in the Telangana movement said in a personal interview,

The movement has not only united the people of the region living in Telangana but it has united people of Telangana wherever they live around the world, irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds. The programmes initiated by its leadership as part of the movement contributed for cultural unity among the people of different classes, castes and religions.

With regard to the Telangana movement one can see the unity and integrity among the people; the Telangana cause preceded the individual, religious, caste and class issues. Thus we can say that the Telangana movement was successful in projecting itself as an issue based movement that sought to unite the people for a common cause.
3.7 Understanding the impact of the Telangana Movement: Reporting from the Field

When one compares and contrasts the Telangana movement with other socio-political movements of India in the recent past, it is undeniable that it has been unique in terms of its inclusive nature. People from all walks of life participated in the movement. I interviewed people from diverse backgrounds in the districts of Hyderabad, Karimnagar and Warangal. The following is a graphic representation of the response that was generated from the field on the basis of questionnaires that were distributed amongst three hundred and fifty respondents. I tried to make the sample of the respondents as inclusive as possible, including students, employees, housewives, farmers, labourers, and academics. The pattern that emerged from the field was unmistakable. Not only was the verdict clearly in favor of the state of Telangana but it was obvious that the role played by the indigenous media in the growth of the movement was tremendous.
1. Have you participated in the Telangana movement?

Fig. 1.4

2. Is Telangana state important for you?

Fig. 1.5
3. Which media has given you the required information and made you aware of the movement?

Fig. 1.6

4. Do you find any media bias in its approach towards the Telangana movement?

Fig. 1.7
5. Do you feel that the communication technologies like print, radio, television including the internet and mobile communication helped in building up the Telangana Movement?

- To an Extent 5%
- Not much 3%
- No 3%
- Yes 89%

6. During the agitation of the Telangana movement did you feel deprived of information in media?

- To an extent 8%
- Not Much 5%
- No 11%
- Yes 76%

Fig.1.8

Fig.1.9
7. Are you aware of the Telangana Dhoom-Dhaam?

- 1%
- 99%

Fig. 1.10

8. Do you feel that the Telangana Dhoom-Dhaam highlighted the Telangana movement?

- Yes 90%
- To an extent 7%
- No 2%
- Not much 1%

Fig. 1.11
9. Do you feel that songs and dance performances by cultural groups and singers had an impact on you and others in the Telangana region?

Fig.1.12

10. Do you know anyone who has a Telangana song as a ringtone for his/her mobile?

Fig.1.13
11. Do you know people like Gadhar, Vimalakka, Gorenti Venkanna, Rasamai Balakishan and other balladeers and singers?

- Yes 84%
- I know them 15%
- I never heard 0%
- No 1%

Fig.1.14

12. Do you think people like Gadhar, Vimalakka, Gorenti Venkanna, Rasamai Balakishan and other balladeers and singers have contributed to the Telangana movement?

- Yes 73%
- To large extent 22%
- Not much 4%
- No 1%

Fig.1.15
13. Do you think that the native media has played a major role in highlighting the Telangana movement?

- To large extent: 21%
- Not much: 2%
- No: 1%
- Yes: 76%

Fig. 1.16

14. Do you think the Telangana culture, traditions and lifestyles have been highlighted by the singers in Dhoom-Dhaam?

- To an extent: 10%
- Not much: 3%
- No: 3%
- Yes: 84%

Fig. 1.17
15. Do you think that the Telangana culture has been revived by the Telangana movement?

Yes 84%
To an extent 9%
No 6%
Not much 1%

Fig. 1.18

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

Yes 85%
To an extent 8%
No 3%
Not much 4%

Fig. 1.19
17. Do you think the songs by the various artists highlighted the sacrifices made by the people during the Telangana movement?

- Yes: 84%
- To an extent: 10%
- Not much: 3%
- No: 3%

![Fig. 1.20](image)

18. Are you aware of the Telangana amaraveerula stupam (martyrs)

- Yes I know: 82%
- I know the story: 15%
- I don't know: 3%
- Never heard: 0%

![Fig. 1.21](image)
19. Do you get inspired by seeing the Telangana amaraveerula stupam (martyrs memorial)?

- Yes 70%
- Not much 3%
- to a great extent 25%
- no 2%

Fig. 1.22

20. Which political party has taken advantage of the Telangana culture more?

- TRS 86%
- INC 8%
- BJP 5%
- CPI 1%
- 0%
- 0%

Fig. 1.23
3.8 An Analysis of the Feedback

A whooping majority of the people who were interviewed said that they participated in the movement 88%. (Fig.1.4). Similarly, an overwhelming majority of 94% (Fig.1.5) of people said that Telangana state is very important for them. Though 94% of the people said that they need a separate state it would be interesting to know how and what made the people aware of the issues and the injustice done to the region as claimed by the politicians and academicians. The Telangana region had a high rate of illiteracy rates during the Nizam’s period and also thereafter; this partly explains people’s dependence on indigenous media. It is interesting to know that it was the indigenous media (including time biased media) that was the backbone for the Telangana people and for the movement in the last six decades. It would be also interesting to note that the People’s War Group with the help of indigenous media made the ordinary folk of Telangana villages to revolt against the Patels, Patwars and Zamindars and Reddy community leaders in the 1970s. When the mainstream media slowly distanced itself from the movement in the third phase, and started to frame the movement from the state’s point of view, the Telangana indigenous media offered a different point of view through the Dhoom-Dham. In the process, the indigenous media regained its lost glory and became the symbol of the Telangana movement.

It was through the Dhoom-Dham that majority of the people in rural Telangana were made aware of various issues that were believed to afflict the region. Overall, 45% (Fig.1.6) of the literate and illiterate urban and town people have depended on the mainstream media for information as they are connected to the cable and satellite networks. People were found to be interested in watching the morning news analysis with politicians and other eminent media personalities and academicians. The words of political analysts like Prof. Chakrapani, Prof. Nagaeshwar Rao, writers and editors like Krishna Rao, Telakapalli Ravi were keenly followed. Apparently, even the politicians were of the view that their analyses were unbiased. People were literally glued to the television sets when watching the news analyses of these personalities in channels like TV5, TV9, NTV and others. Their columns and editorials evoked a lot of interest. Interestingly, almost 51% (Fig.1.6) of the respondents got information about the movement through the indigenous media and through word of mouth, and only 6% (Fig.1.6) of the respondents said that the information about the movement
was derived from all the sources – mainstream media, indigenous media, and word of mouth.

During the movement, the media framing of the Telangana movement by the pro-Andhra groups and media houses was questioned by the political parties belonging to Telangana region. It will be discussed in chapter IV how the media framing was carried out. The reporting and the discussions in the mainstream media were largely centered on questions such as ‘How can things be improved for the people of Telangana if the state is united? What can be done for the development of the Telangana people in a united Andhra Pradesh?’ The discussions therefore generally revolved around the proposed welfare schemes of the government along with the rhetoric of development of the Telangana region. There was also a lot of discussion regarding the stand to be adopted by the major political parties in case the government decided to go against the formation of the separate state. The underlying message in such discussions was the fact that the aspiration for a separate state was unfounded and the movement itself was futile.

Govindh, an artist and singer from the Telangana region, said in a personal interview,

> It is people and not the media that make movements. The people have to rise on their own and fight; media can’t do it if people are not interested in the issues. In Telangana, people from all walks of life have participated in the movement. The media had to obey the public; the mainstream media or any other media has to report the issues they see and hear. If they are not doing it, then they are going to perish. Many corporate channels are against the formation of the Telangana state.

An advocate G Ravi Kumar in the district court and an active participant in the movement said in a personal interview,

> 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
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.1.7) 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.

One important thing noticed during the third phase of the movement (2001-2014) is the exponential growth of the media. Quantitatively, it had almost doubled in the last ten years in Andhra Pradesh; print as well as television channels created a space for themselves among the audience. Few news channels and newspapers came up as part of the political establishment; these channels were literally used as the party mouth piece to take forward their political agenda. The third phase of the Telangana movement grew with the help of the communication technologies. The new communication technologies that the media used today and also the communication tools available with the citizens gave the required boost to the movement. ‘Breaking News’ was ‘breaking’ 24x7 in all most all the news channels; events and programmes of “lesser” importance were telecast live. The transmissions of events changed the media landscape and other environments. The communication tools like the mobile phones and its applications including the internet have played their part in carrying forward the movement. Any incident that was shown on television had its impact within a few minutes; the city centers and corners were filled with protestors and the moment there was an incident of lathicharge or firing it immediately went viral. Dr. Bhangya Bhukya, who had seen the movement up close in the Osmania University and its surroundings, said in a personal interview,

The modern communication tools and technologies like mobiles and internet have played a major role in the movement. I think with the help of cell phones people were able to connect with each other immediately and also mobilize huge gatherings whenever required, especially in the Osmania University.
An overwhelming majority of the people 89% (Fig.1.8) 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.

Different media forms were active during the movement and one could also see people immersed in the media, still people of the region felt that the information flowing out from the media outlets needed to be taken with a pinch of salt. People could see through the contradictory nature of information given by the channels and the newspapers about the political situation. After the submission of the Sri Krishna Report, (as discussed in detail in chapter IV) the media of Andhra Pradesh followed the guidelines given by the committee in its 8th chapter report to a large extent. However, this chapter was not made available to the public citing reasons of confidentiality.

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.1.9) 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. People’s dissatisfaction also had to do with the fact that the flow of information was very often regulated. During this period of time, people from the Telangana region became aware of the media’s role and their political affiliations. People went to the extent of boycotting some channels and newspapers in the Telangana region. This helped to create a new space for the media from the region which gained popularity; they were quick to capitalize on this popularity and further consolidated their position by adding a local flavor. Some of
the channels even used the Telangana dialect. The newspapers such as Namasthe Telangana and television channels like Raj TV thus gained popularity. Gradually, the other television channels bowed out of pressure from the state. This raises doubts about the media’s role and responsibility towards the society. When the mainstream media ignored the events and facts and, at times, acted according to the will of the political parties and government, the indigenous media took centre-stage in informing the people and also kept the momentum going.

At a stage when the movement was at a low because of political interference, the common citizens with the help of indigenous media kept the spirit alive. The balladeers and their cultural groups performing the Dhoom-Dham (chapter IV) became synonymous with the Telangana movement. Throughout the Telangana region for almost last five years Dhoom-Dham were day-to-day affairs. People would throng to the areas in thousands even if they had to walk miles; thousands of participants, young and old, men and women including enthusiastic children, were active participants. Television channels and newspapers at times covered the event for their own promotion and popularity. The Dhoom-Dham never disappointed the audience for they were loaded with information. It provided the kind of information that people were actually looking for, such as, information about their cultural history, social injustice, deprivation and marginalization of the locals, corruption by the political leaders. People became active participants during the performances; there were speeches given by many leaders, but people eagerly waited for the songs that targeted the political class of Andhra apart from the songs that highlighted the Telangana culture and lifestyle. When people demanded songs and dance performances that celebrated the Telangana culture and its glory, the balladeers and performers invariably obliged them. 99% (Fig.1.10) of the respondents were aware of Telangana Dhoom-Dham; the response from the people proves the popularity it gained during the movement.

The Dhoom-Dham was thus the undisputed media during the Telangana movement. The performances by singers, writers and hundreds of other artists enthralled the people. Every Dhoom-Dham in all the ten districts of Telangana was unique and all of them showcased the cultural flavor of the region. The songs were either humorous or sad; sometimes they celebrated the sacrifices of the martyrs and remembered the
legends. They were also provocative in the sense that they encouraged the masses to participate in the movement and resist those who were opposed to the Telangana cause. The narratives were about life, nature and the coexistence of the cultures in the region. The balladeers would transport the people into a different time and space and made the people recollect the past. People would dance and sing, making the event spectacular and even, emotional during the Dhoom-Dham. The people who participated in the Dhoom-Dham would carry the information back to the communities. The response was almost contagious; it quickly spread from one to the other. 90% (Fig.1.11) of the people responded by saying that the song and dance performances had an impact on them as well as others.

During my field work I observed that even school going kids sang the songs of Jai Telangana or Jai Bolo Telangana; the impact of the Dhoom-Dham was visible everywhere. These songs were played in the roadside tea stalls and even in hotels and restaurants; one could hear these while traveling in autos, taxis, and even public buses. There was no difference between the city and village during this period of the movement. Almost every street corner and all the road side shops were buzzing with the songs of Telangana contributed by various artists. The song and dance performances given by the balladeers did not stop with the performances; the people who came to watch and listen recorded the songs and speeches and made it available to thousands of others through SMS and MMS. The college and university students in most of the meetings were singing the songs of Telangana; every political party in its meetings would play the songs of Telangana. Though the mainstream media tried not to cover the performances and other movement-related activities it was impossible to ignore the events that were unfolding. The public sphere was buzzing with talk of the Telangana movement. Majority 70% (Fig. 1.12) of the people responded by saying that these performances had a great impact on them.

The impact and influence was so widespread that I observed that throughout the Telangana region there was no shortage of people who were hardcore supporters of the movement. These were people who at any given point of time would love to talk in support of the movement. The movement led to a suspension of religious, class and caste differences. There was no difference between the politician who was fighting for Telangana and the common man like the autorikshaw puller as both of them used the
same technology (mobile phone) to claim their connection to their land. Almost everyone used the Telangana songs as their mobile ringtones. This was a clear indication and proud declaration of their support for the cause of Telangana. Thus, popular culture of Telangana during the last one decade was primarily shaped by the movement. There is no doubt that the songs of the Dhoom-Dhaams would generally be included under the undignified rubric of popular music. But the immensely strong impact that popular music can have on an audience was reflected in the course of the Telangana movement. As Michael R Real says, “Popular music was not mindless, tasteless, and useless but was capable of complex, sophisticated, subtle, popular expression within its social context (Real: 1996: 31). Technology enabled people to convey the message loud and clear and it also helped in disseminating the message to the larger audience. 51% (Fig.1.13) of the respondents said that they knew people who use Telangana song as their mobile ring tone.

People like Gaddar, Vimalakka need no introduction in Telangana; they were the brand ambassadors of the Telangana movement and culture. These balladeers have been known for their singing and also for their association with the People’s War Group. The names of Gaddar and Vimalakka became synonymous with the idea of revolutionary change; their songs inspired thousands of men and women to join the People’s War Group and also inspired many to become balladeers and singers who became part of the Jana Natya Mandali and Praja Natya Mandali.

The Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) party was quick to take advantage of the Dhoom-Dham and capitalized on its popularity to further the cause of the Telangana movement. The TRS utilized the talent of the writers, poets and other artists in carrying forward the movement and also penetrating into the rural areas; this gave the scope for larger participation and also gave the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) party the recognition it needed. Apart from Gaddar and Vilamaka there were many others who contributed through their songs. Singer and artist Shanker Rao says,

In the political meetings and movements it was not the speeches that added to the enthusiasm of the audience but the songs of 4-5 minutes by the balladeers that could give a complete picture of Telangana from its merger to the present. Many songs by Vimalakka, Gorenti
Venkanna, Sudhala Ashok Teja were more popular than any film songs in the Telangana region.

These balladeers became the face of the movement; even the children knew about Gaddar, Vimalakka, Rasamai Balakishan and Venkanna. These were the people who were leading the movement from the front and inspiring many others to participate and fight. 84% (Fig. 1.14) of the respondents said that they knew the balladeers; 15% of the respondents said that they personally knew these balladeers. The popularity of these singers is because of the simplistic lifestyle they lead and also could be because of them being the grass root workers in a party organization earlier.

The contribution by the common man and the artists strengthened the movement and made it sustainable. Though the Telangana Rashtra Samithi party regularly appealed to the people to make them believe that the dream of separate statehood was not very distant, the hope was largely generated by the balladeers, writers, singers and other artists. People throughout the Telangana region would accept the contribution of the singers and artists, as they became the voice of the people; they represented the people more than the political parties in the Telangana region. The balladeers and artists were in the front row and they led the movement; even small events and gatherings were attended by the artists, in the process the majority of the artists got employment and also recognition. In a way, the movement actually generated employment for thousands of artists.

The Joint Action Committees formed during the movement have immensely contributed to the movement as every committee would arrange a meeting from the local to the district levels; during these meetings the artists were called for performances as it would give the required boost. As mentioned earlier, the people would love to listen to these singers as they would render the voice from the common man's point of view. I would consider the balladeers like Gaddar, Vimalakka, Gorenti Venkanna, Rasamai Balakishan and many other writers, singers other artists who emerged during the Telangana movement as 'Zines'. In his book *Key Ideas in Media and Cultural Studies*, Mike Edwards quotes Atton who said that people who 'turn to themselves, to their own lives, their own experiences, and turn these into the subjects of their writing...at the heart of the Zine culture is... the study of self, of personal
expression, sociality, and the building of community’ (quoted in Edwards 2003:109). The Telangana movement produced hundreds of Zines who not only narrated their personal stories but also the stories of their community.

Many of the writers were deeply touched by the events that were unfolding during the movement. The balladeers successfully narrativized the past of Telangana; in fact, they could in this way connect the past to the present, showing people the continuing relevance of the past. Thus, the past was brought to life through their personal experiences during the movement. This imparted a sense of authenticity to the narratives that was lacking in the seemingly biased reports of the mainstream media and politicians. These narratives were made available in Youtube and other internet sites. Thus, the unheard stories of the struggle of the people of Telangana gained wide circulation thanks to the internet. The contribution of the balladeers and artists was acknowledged by the politicians and the common masses alike. 73% (Fig.1.15) of the respondents were of the firm conviction that the balladeers had contributed a lot to the sustenance of the movement. The balladeers and other artists encouraged the people to participate in the movement. They were successful in mobilizing people belonging to different communities who contributed to the movement in their own way. The non-violent and traditional ways of protests took centre stage as each community performed songs and dance that were unique to their culture and region. Thus, songs and dances became the new language of protest.

The unique character of the Telangana movement was the participation of women and women’s political awareness. Women participated in large numbers; the protests were enacted in the form of songs that they sang in the fields. These songs had to do with the everyday life of women. The Bathukamma songs generated renewed interest; during the time of the Bathukamma festival women and men dressed up in their traditional attires and came out to the streets to protest. These songs, dances and traditional attires were missing from the public space for longtime. But the movement brought back the old form of media to the forefront. Such was the impact of the traditional songs and rituals that the Dhandoora, for instance, became a very common means of protest; women carrying the Bathukamma became a symbol every time there were some protests or processions by the political groups and Joint Action
Committee rallies. Women moved in thousands and played Bathukamma at city centers and main junctions.

The tribal communities, especially the Lambadas with the traditional dresses and songs, were special attraction at the events. People from the districts like Nizamabad, Adilabad and Khammam with large tribal populations joined the movement with their traditional dances and wielding the native tools. The Yadavs in their traditional attire was also a special attraction; in the processions and protest rallies they played their drums and sang their traditional songs. People also dressed as Potharaju, Mallanna, Polayruamma, and Misamma, the local gods and goddesses. Dr. Bhangya Bhukya, who was part of the movement and saw the Telangana movement from close quarters, has written about the tribal and other backward communities in Telangana, said in a personal interview,

The Telangana movement has enabled many downtrodden castes to express their anguish through the movement, through the movement they were able to express their culture, tradition which was rejected by the upper castes. The downtrodden castes were able to put their issues and agenda through the regional sub-nationalism by participating in the Telangana movement. The movement has given the people a huge political consciousness that I think the people would be able to utilize this in the future.

Every community of the Telangana region participated in the movement with their traditional attires, songs, dances that were unique to them and their communities were visible during the protests. This indigenous media was missing from Telangana region from the time it merged with the Andhra. While 76% (Fig.1.16) of the people responded by saying that the indigenous media played a major role in highlighting traditional culture. In the third phase the movement was more visible because of the cultures and traditions that had slowly begun to disappear from amongst the communities in the region. Michael R Real says,

Culture is a shorthand label for everything that sets us apart as human beings. Culture is a way we mentally structure our interactions with
other people and our environment. Culture is the way we collectively express ourselves as human beings. Culture is meaning constantly being created. Like sound, culture is observed as it is emerging and disappearing from existence. (Real 1996: 2)

But the Dhoom-Dham that was held in different parts of the region offered the public their own culture and tradition; each singer-activist was well-versed in the local dialect and they were quite familiar with the local myths, legends, and traditions. These activist-singers highlighted the plight of the common men and women; they sang about the struggle of the common man and his exploitation in the capitalist system. Interestingly, these songs also raised valid concerns about the onslaught of globalization and cultural imperialism; for instance, they sang of how television invaded the rural communities and how technology had come to disgrace manual labour. They also dealt with the cultural imperialism of Bollywood and Telugu cinema and television that threatened to wipe out the local cultures and traditions.

Murali Madhu, the balladeer, poet and singer said in a personal interview,

In my opinion the Telangana culture has been revived and had reached its peak because of the movement. Through the Dhoom-Dham we were able to revive the language and the local traditions; these traditions were missing amongst the younger generation, and some are completely unaware of such traditions. People have abused the Telangana language and culture in cinema and television; but we were able to revive the culture, the language and were able to create political and cultural awareness through the Dhoom-Dham.

People appreciated the work of the balladeers and singer in the Dhoom-Dham and also felt proud to participate in the movement. In fact, 84% (Fig.1.17) of the respondents said that the singers highlighted the Telangana culture. Interestingly, the movement also witnessed the merger of old and new cultures.

K Narsinga Rao said in a personal interview,

I was under the feeling that the Telangana Kalalu (Art) would be extinct; it was almost on the verge of extinction because of the
mainstream popular culture. With the movement people like Gaddar, Gorenti Venkanna, Arnodhya Vimalakka, Maboomi Sandhya, Sudhala Ashok Tej, Dr Ande Sri, Deshpathi Srinivas, brought new life to the Telangana arts and the unique culture of Telangana and also the people who are associated with various arts at the grassroots level.

Dr. Bhangya Bhukya said in a personal interview,

After the merger of Telangana with Andhra there was a cultural discrimination especially against the Telangana culture; the government has standardized the language affecting Telangana identity and dialect. The movement has also brought the dialect forward as leaders and people again started to take pride and started talking in the local dialect.

Balladeer Vimalakka adds,

The culture was revived to a large extent by the movement, especially the language, the local culture, the age old traditions. The participation of women in large numbers in local events and festivals helped the movement and also the culture of the Telangana region.

Vimalakka and others singers and artists including the political and cultural analysts feel that the Telangana culture was revived to a great extent and this was visible during the movement. University students who would generally want to be in denims were seen in their traditional attires during the procession and political protests. The girls showed interest in joining the women with Bathukamma and also carrying them. Those people who were shunning the traditional culture and attire for the modern were seen participating in the movement with the traditional forms and also taking pride in their culture and traditions. MLC K. Dilip said in a personal interview,

The movement has revived the Telangana culture and it was successful in reviving the entire culture of Telangana, men and women have equally participated in the movement with their traditional cultural and livelihood tools; women during the movement participated and showcased the Telangana culture; college students and elderly women
may have done so because they are asked by the student leaders and other JAC members but in the process this has revived the Telangana culture. And seeing these images on television many such processions and activities were held throughout the ten districts, and all these events have helped the Telangana culture to revive.

Majority of the people feel that the Telangana culture has been revived by the movement and some feel that the movement has given new life to the culture that was ignored and abused under Andhra “domination” and “rule”. The policy of cultural assimilation that was adopted in Andhra Pradesh in the six decades of the movement is reminiscent of the American model of melting pot, which suggests that cultural assimilation is important for national unity. Quite obviously, this model does not seem to have worked in the context of the Telangana region; in spite of the fact that the regions of Seemandhra and Telangana were merged on the basis of linguistic affiliation, the cultural differences persisted and revealed deep chasms. A majority 84% (Fig.1.18) of the respondents felt that the culture of Telangana was revived during the movement. The Telangana movement is thus a classic example of the way in which hegemonic models are subverted by popular people’s movements.

Though the mainstream media did have a hold over people who were inclined towards the modern culture, the movement has brought back the people and identified them with the geography and culture of the region. Thus, the Telangana movement, apart from other things, is a saga of the heroic resistance of a people against cultural imperialism. There was large literature that was made available to the common man during the movement; the availability of literature made the poets, writers, singers, artists to reach out to the public with new songs and other forms of communication.

The information that was part of Telangana’s history was recirculated or recycled during the movement. The massive literature that saw the light during the movement has made many people aware of the facts that were not known earlier or at times were kept away from the public; the dissemination of information during the third phase of the movement with the help of communication technologies helped in people’s mass participation. As said earlier, when the movement was losing a sense of direction with the ambiguous role of the political parties, it was the common man with the support of
balladeers and artists, poets, writers and singers with their Dhoom-Dham who stood by the movement. In fact, more information was revealed to the public during these performances than the political speeches and it is the indigenous media that led the movement. Dr. Bhangya Bhukya shared the same view in a personal interview

When slowly the arts were dying with the rapid invasion of the capitalist and commercial media the movement has once again brought the various traditional art forms to the forefront and was able to give recognition to the writers, poets, singers and other artists.

Govardhan, the balladeer and artist said in a personal interview,

It was first in Karimnagar that Gaddar in a Dhoom-Dham program that he introduced many other artists to the public; many of these artists were not known to the public. Artists got recognized due to the Telangana movement as all the political parties started to use the artists for their meetings especially to promote their party agenda, but still we were happy to do so because we are doing it for Telangana cause.

Murli Madhu, singer and balladeer, said in a personal interview,

It is indubitable that the Telangana movement has given life to many poets, singers, and writers. The people who we see today were neglected and ignored by the mainstream media. Telangana art was suppressed, but things started to change when the movement picked up, and every artist got a new lease of life through the movement.

More than the common man it is the artists, writers, poets, balladeers and others from the field who accept that the movement has given a new life to the art and culture of Telangana. Thousands of new artists were born, and to accommodate each and every artist the communication technologies came in handy for the artists to reach out to the audience. Today we can see and hear thousands of songs related to Telangana culture, lifestyle, festivals, resources and day-to-day struggles including the songs of communal harmony that are unique to the region. One was not able to escape the impact of the artist in the past one decade of the movement. 85% (Fig.1.19) of the respondents felt that the movement gave new life to the artists who contributed to the
movement, while 8% felt that the movement gave life and recognition to the artists to a great extent.

The songs of thousands of writers have gone beyond the boundaries with the help of technology, and people were helping the movement in large numbers by contributing with their songs. Every district in Telangana had people who were ready to play their part. Advocate G Ravi Kumar said in a personal interview

The movement has given one lakh orators and intellectuals to the region, and thousands of singers, writers and poets have been born during the movement.

K Narsing Rao too said in a personal interview,

With the movement in its peak, stage artists were emerging from almost every village of Telangana region. The emerging artists started to write and sing songs related to their village and communities in the context of the movement. Artists like Rasamayi Balakishan, Madhupriya (child artist) Mittupalli Surender and many more poets, singers and other artists became popular with their art during the Telangana movement. The movement has brought in new generation of artist who are extremely talented in reviving traditional forms of arts, also contextualizing and presenting it with modern themes like politics, culture, society, economy and education to the Telangana audience.

The artists though were singing sub-nationalism songs that encouraged the public; they did what came natural to them; many writers, singers and artists praised the martyrs who gave their lives for the Telangana cause. People who became martyrs in the earlier movements were praised during the Dhoom-Dham, and other events. This has not only got the people to connect emotionally but also glorified the sacrifices of the people. The sacrifices had a huge impact on the Telangana people. Students who participated in the movement were in huge depression during the last five years especially post December 23, 2009 as the central government under pressure from the Andhra region, had to hold back the Telangana process. During this period many students, employees, and also police personal committed suicide for the cause of
Telangana; many of them undertook self-immolation. The political parties and the Telangana joint Action Committees held various meetings in Osmania University and Kakatiya university and other districts colleges to urge the students and the people in general not to commit suicide "Aatmahatyalu vaddu, barigeesi kotlaadudaam" (Stop Suicides – Lets Fight For Telangana). Political parties like Telangana Rashtra Samithi Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Communist Party of India (CPI) New Democracy, students Joint Action Committee, Advocates Joint Action Committee, writers, intellectuals and many NGO’s took out rallies and conducted seminars encouraging the students to fight but not commit suicides.

A suicide in the heart of Delhi just 100 yards away from the parliament shook the nation and emotionally charged the Telangana region. A police constable shot himself for the Telangana cause, an MBA student self-immolated, students ran opposite to the approaching trains and committed suicide, and many such incidents were reported every day. Professors like Chakrapani, Nageshwar Rao, Haragopal and many other intellectuals and politicians urged the students in meetings and through their articles to not commit suicide. The peaceful protests in Telangana region in the past decade had seen hundreds die.

The sacrifices made by the students and others have been highlighted by the balladeers, writers and singers. Every singer would dedicate a song to the martyrs and the bravery shown to the cause of Telangana, singers through their songs appealed to the public not to commit suicide. One would find hundreds of songs on Youtube and other internet sites dedicated to martyrs and also urging them not to lose faith in the fight. Technology was used to convey the message to millions of people in Telangana region, through SMS, MMS and other forms of communication to fight for Telangana in a peaceful manner. The print and television channels played a role in stopping the suicides in the name of Telangana. 84% (Fig.1.20) of the respondents said that the balladeers and other artists highlighted the sacrifices made by the students and other people during the Dhoom-Dham and other political and cultural events.

The Telangana movement to a large extent has utilized all the available media to reach out to the people; we can see a combination of media environments used during the movement. The political parties have also utilized the media according to its
needs. But it was the indigenous media (oral media) that has gained lost ground; at the same time, the movement provided scope for the time biased media to play its role in the movement. What Telangana had lost in the last 50 years, was revived by the movement in the last one decade with the movement gaining strength and also with the launch of the Telangana Rashtra Samithi party.

The party was using time biased media to make the Telangana movement popular in the last six-seven years like Telangana talli statue and Amaraveerula stupam in all the ten districts of Telangana region. This made the people to connect to the movement culturally and emotionally. We have the Telangana talli statue and Amaraveerula stupam in almost all the city centers and people are identifying with the newly erected memorials and statues. In the past one decade the Amaraveerula stupam (martyrs memorial) has become a symbol of respect for every political leader and the common citizen of the new state called Telangana. In the past one decade of the movement people have become more aware of the sacrifices made by the students in the earlier movement. 82% (Fig.1.21) of the respondents have said that they are aware of the Amaraveerula stupam (martyrs memorial).

The ‘Gun Park’ (1969 martyrs’ memorial) has been inspiring thousands of students and men for the past 40 years, and today we see the replica of the memorial in every district, the movement has taken the memorial and the memories attached to it to every district of Telangana. People of Telangana have been grateful for the sacrifices made by students then and even now; they honor the sacrifices and praise them with highest regard. Politicians and the masses alike say that the 29th state of Telangana is dedicated to sacrifices made by the people, and for those people who kept the movement alive. The person who is and was behind the present phase of movement, and also the one who participated in the 1969 Jai Telangana movement and oversaw the construction of the ‘Gun Park’ (martyrs memorial) is Professor Jayashankar who was an ideologue of the Telangana movement. During my field work 70% (Fig.1.22) of the people responded that they are inspired by the memorials.

In the overall movement of Telangana it was politician Kalvakuntla Chandrashekar Rao (KCR) and his party Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) that revived the Telangana aspirations and brought back the issue to the forefront, though professor Jayashankar and other Telangana intellectuals were behind the movement and were
fighting and keeping the issue alive. Academicians like Professor G. Haragopal, Professor Balagopal, Dr. G. Ajay, Professor G. Chakrapani, Professor Nagaeshwar Rao, Professor M. Sridhar, and many others have been writing about the issues related to Telangana, and have also been advocating their voice on many platforms. Kalvakuntla Chandrashaker Rao (KCR) with the launching of his party was able to reach out to the public and was able to convince the people on the need of the Telangana state. Initially people were skeptical of the success in the early stages of the party launch in April 2001, but things started to change when people who were associated with the movement openly supported the cause. The biggest support though morally was given by the Peoples War Group, and also those who have become the ex-members of the PWG. Kalvakuntla Chandrashaker Rao (KCR) with his command over the language and also the knowledge with regard to the Telangana region was able to convince the majority. Slowly but steadily the party was unfolding the agenda and started to implement it phase wise. People like Prof. Jayashankar advised the party on key issues and also in its implementation with deep understanding and strategic thinking. The party was able to galvanize the public within limited time as people were emotionally attached with the cause of Telangana; the party slowly implemented all the strategies phase wise, and made the political parties to accept the cause. The party in order to move into the public and also to garner the support used all forms of media, starting from indigenous media to the new media, in all the party has used the space biased and time biased media at the same time in the movement. At every stage the party has used the Telangana dialect (language), the culture and the indigenous media for its complete advantage, apart from using the mainstream media. Prins and Bishop talking about Carpenter’s work, quote him from his article “The New Languages,” and say,

Carpenter provided a succinct analysis of modern media based on years of participant observation in broadcasting and publishing: “Each medium, if its bias is properly exploited,” he noted, “reveals and communicates a unique aspect of reality, of truth. Each offers a different perspective, a way of seeing an otherwise hidden dimension of reality. It’s not a question of one reality being true, and others distortions. One allows us to see from here, another from there, a third from still another perspective (Prins and Bishop 2001-02:116).
As the party has foreseen the hurdles, they were able to plan and utilize the media according to the needs, I feel the party was apprehensive with regard to its media coverage, so they planned to utilize the indigenous media through Dhoom-Dham and other forms of protests, and in doing so they were able to get more attention than what the mainstream media could have provided. People both literate and illiterate were equally attracted to the party, as the party was able to highlight the local culture and the traditions that were part of the region. In every Dhoom-Dham one could see the songs connected to local issues and also local events, also artists who were performing with the local attire made the people connect to the issues and movement emotionally. 86% (Fig. 1.23) of the respondents said that it was the Telangana Rashtra Samithi party that has revived and taken advantage of culture and traditions more than any other party.

Conclusion

The Telangana arms struggle became a starting point and inspiration for many socio-political movements not only in Andhra Pradesh but throughout India. There is no doubt in saying that the issue based movements garner larger support compared to the motivated movements and the role of media becomes crucial in these movements. People and media rally around issue based movements as it represents larger sections of people in the society. Movements like the Telangana arms struggle, the anti-arrack movement, the anti-corruption movement and the Telangana movements had representation of not just one group or community or caste, but the people of the region.

From the field analysis one could understand and conclude that the Telangana movement was a people’s movement, as it reflected the aspirations of people, who wanted to liberate themselves from outside hegemony. The use of people’s media or the alternative media helped the movement in not only highlighting the issues, but in the process revived the local culture and traditions that were dormant or sidelined because of popular culture. The revival of the old forms of media gave new life to various artists and writers and many other professional artists giving them recognition and livelihood. The use of time biased media played a vital role the Telangana movement.